Myles Standish State Forest 10 year Pine Barrens Restoration Project

December 5, 2018 – DCR South Regional Headquarters – Stakeholders and Public Meeting

Two meetings were held: A "stakeholders" meeting for local fire officials, town officials and abutting landowners where the proposed project was presented by the Department of Conservation and Recreation officials (DCR) and Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) officials was conducted at 3:00 PM. A meeting for the general public where the proposed project was presented by the DCR and DFW officials was conducted at 5:00 PM.

Note that the responses listed below have been augmented to clarify the project's intent and reflect the collaborative effort by the DCR and DFW.

Stakeholders Meeting 3:00 PM

Comments and Responses

1. What is the value of white pine to the overall project?

   Throughout the entire 2,300 acre project area, which includes portions of four adjacent properties (Myles Standish State Forest, Camp Cachalot Conservation Easement, Southeast Pine Barrens Wildlife Management Area, and Maple Springs Wildlife Management Area) up to 500 acres includes enough white pine timber to support commercial, publicly bid wood products sales, and these sales will likely be carried out during 2019-2021. The value of the white pine timber in these future sales will enable in-kind services such as road work to occur within the greater project area. The white pine included in the current 500 acre contract for mowing/mulching in FY2019-FY2020 does have enough value to enable it to be harvested through a commercial timber harvest. The state is paying for the mowing/mulching work to occur.

2. Will this affect cottage owners insurance?

   Since the project reduces the fuel load which reduces the wildfire danger, the insurance on cottages seems unlikely to change.

3. Why can't the cottage owners cut trees along the ponds near their cottages?

   There a many pond shore rare species that need to be considered. While the cottages are privately owned the land including the trees are state owned.

General Public Meeting 5:00 PM

Comments and Responses

1. Are you cutting and leaving white pines? Will there be heavy traffic from logging trucks? Who will do the removal of white pines?

Throughout the entire 2,300 acre project area, which includes portions of four adjacent properties (Myles Standish State Forest, Camp Cachalot Conservation Easement, Southeast Pine Barrens Wildlife Management Area, and Maple Springs Wildlife Management Area), most of the white pine is relatively small (1-9" dbh) and will be mulched in place to reduce fuel loads and support future prescribed burning.

Within the 2,300 acre project area, up to 500 acres includes enough larger white pine (10-20" dbh trees) to support commercial, publicly bid wood products sales, and these sales will likely be carried out during 2019-2021. The value of the white pine timber in these future sales will enable in-kind services such as road work to occur within the greater project area.

There will be some heavy logging traffic at some times. The removal will be done by the highest bidder.

2. Map Clarification. Is the dark green area on the map in or out?

Yellow hash lines indicate the project area. Camp areas are not part of the thinning project area.

3. Leaving all white pines as snags?

White pine over 14" dbh will be left as snags. Reduces mulch, and cost. Snags will be left about 15' tall.

4. Comment: Animals will be queuing up to use this habitat

5. How open will the cut area be? Similar to Mast Road? I like Mast Road work.

Less trees here than the work done along Mast Road. The result here will be an open pitch pine woodland with a thick understory of scrub oak, blueberry, and other native plants: Showed picture on Power Point and Celino talked about thinning project along Mast.

6. What was the original state of forest? Prior to the 1700s?

More white pine and oak forest, pockets of pitch pine and Scrub Oak. After the iron furnaces and continual clearing of the forest resulted more wildfire and pitch pine.

7. Is this the specific / only areas (for thinning)? Or will it be the whole forest?

We are trying to restore globally rare barrens habitats, which improves habitat for numerous plants and animals of conservation concern. Wwe look at sites and decide what condition/state would be the most beneficial. Pitch pine, scrub oak (PPSO) barrens provide huge ecological value. We may consider other areas of the forest as well in the future, but itmay not be the same treatment in all areas.

8. Is this project profitable?

No, the current 500 acre mowing/mulching project will cost tax payer money. From Environmental Bond bill. Subsequent wood products sales on other portions of the 2,300 acre project area will generate some value that will be reinvested back in project.

9. Is there a plan for treating invasives in project area?

Machines will be cleaned before entering the work areas, and we will conduct monitoring for invasives. This is a harsh environment and the native plants compete well with the invasive plants. Talked about buffer with quail area.

10. Question on Quail area invasive plan

Actions are being taken, a plan is being developed. It is a high priority

11. Off road vehicle issues in project area?

This is a common/standard issue. We identify major entrance points and use gates/stones. Ongoing issue with ongoing efforts being made.

12. Out of the project budget, how much is spent on offroad vehicles? 100k?

It won't be that big of a cost. Biggest costs first 1-2 years. We have some gates, will need to purchase some more as project unfolds.

13. Maple Springs area seems like it is already a healthy barrens? Will the same work be done there?

We work with contractor unit by unit. We will likely mow portions of the Maple Springs WMA before burning to insure public safety, although mowing will not need to be as heavy here as in other portions of the project area.

14. As a cottage owner I am happy about fuel reduction. Will the work continue to the north? Will this mean less RX fire?

There are areas to the north where work will occur, perhaps not using the same specs. This will add to the amount of RX fire in forest. This project will reduce fuel and make forest safer. We talked about camper safety.

15. Relationship between the state, the projects, Plymouth FD?

We have ramped up fire since 2009. Plymouth FD has been partner and supports work. On all burns in the forest the towns give permission to burn. Important training for Fire Departments.

16. Comment: Since 1964 population has grown, people aren't aware of fire risk and how it can be mitigated. State should do more to educate.

Public safety is an important concern and increased safety is an important outcome of this work. Talked about camper safety, how volatile the fuels are and talked about the benefits of thinning to instant-savannah rather than thinning by burning.

17. From Six Ponds Home Owners Association: Comment people don't know the risks we want to learn more. Trees down in neighborhood.

State has programs and can provide education.

18. What are the results of the work that has been done already? Are things reacting as expected?

Talked about fire behavior during burns on Martha's Vineyard. Much less fire behavior in areas recently treated at Myles Standish, Southeast Pine Barrens, and Camp Cachalot. We notice that pine barrens come back fast and thrive after treatments. We are working on a mosaic structure over time and repeated burns and treatments.

19. Much of the forest is shaded. Will you seed once thinned? Are reservoirs of species identified some they can reestablish in treated areas?

No. No seeding. There is a tremendous soil seed bank in place, and mowing/burning will create favorable conditions for those seeds to germinate and grow. Will happen on its own after thinning and burning.

20. Lessons learned from red pine project?

Roads and access is difficult. Need for better roads.

21. Comment: Heard 49 Prairie Warbler calls, 100+ oven birds on cruise after red pine removal (commenter gives red pine project credit for increasing birds) Any point surveys for birds?

Multiple bird surveys in SE mass and State wide. Birds use multiple habitat types, including pitch pine/scrub oak barrens, and many birds that use barrens habitats are declining in Massachusetts.