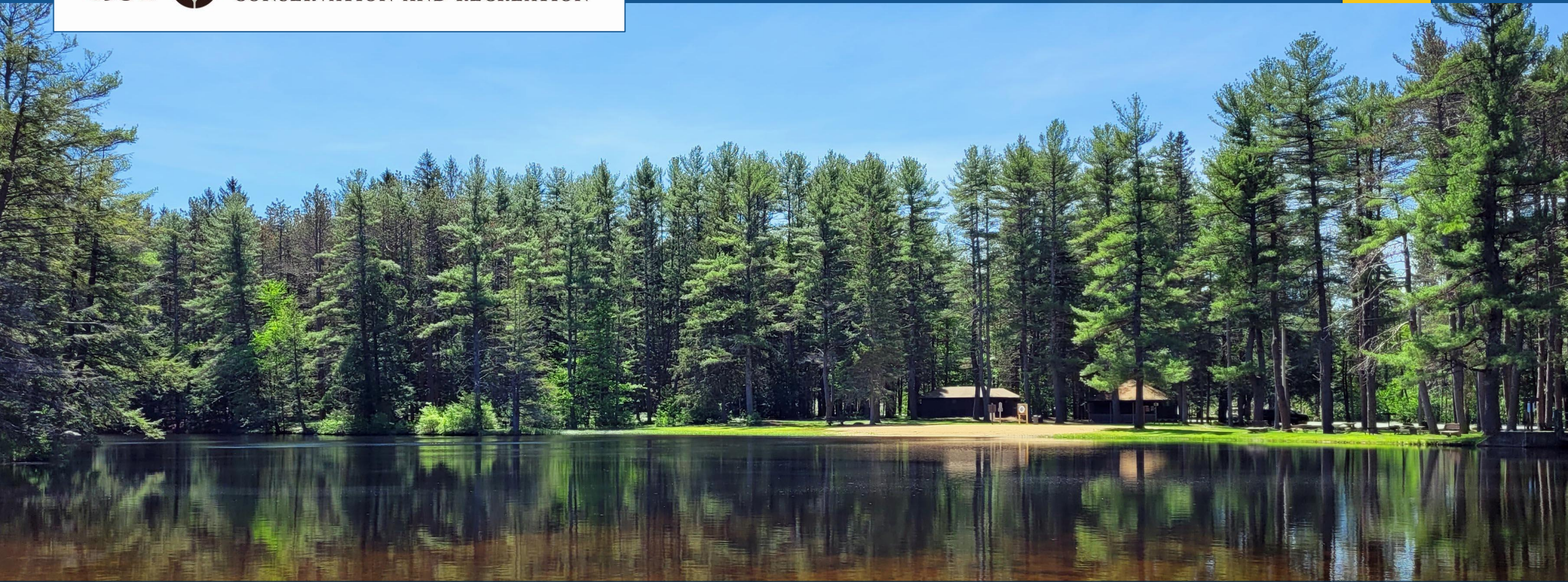




MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

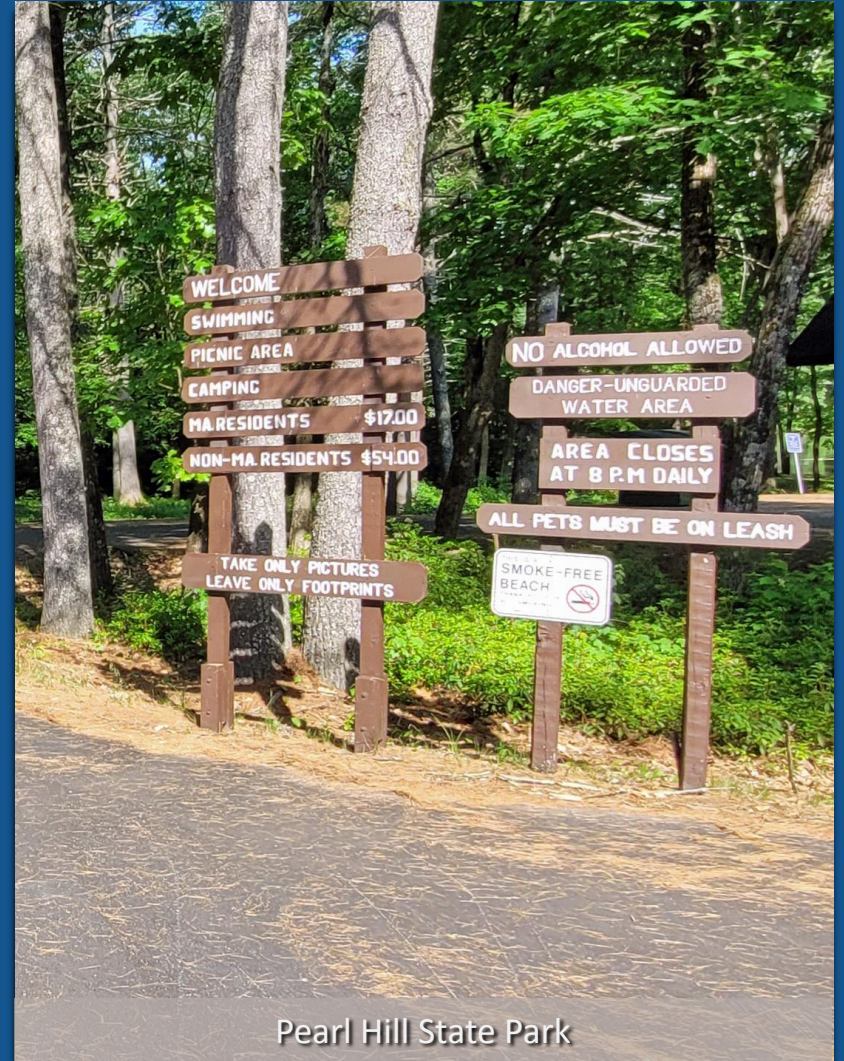


Otter River Complex Resource Management Plans (RMPs)

October 9, 2025

Today's Presentation

1. RMP Mandate
2. Otter River Complex RMPs
 - Key Resources
 - Key Findings
3. Comments Received
4. Questions, Comments, & Conversation



1. RMP Mandate



M.G.L. c. 21 § 2F

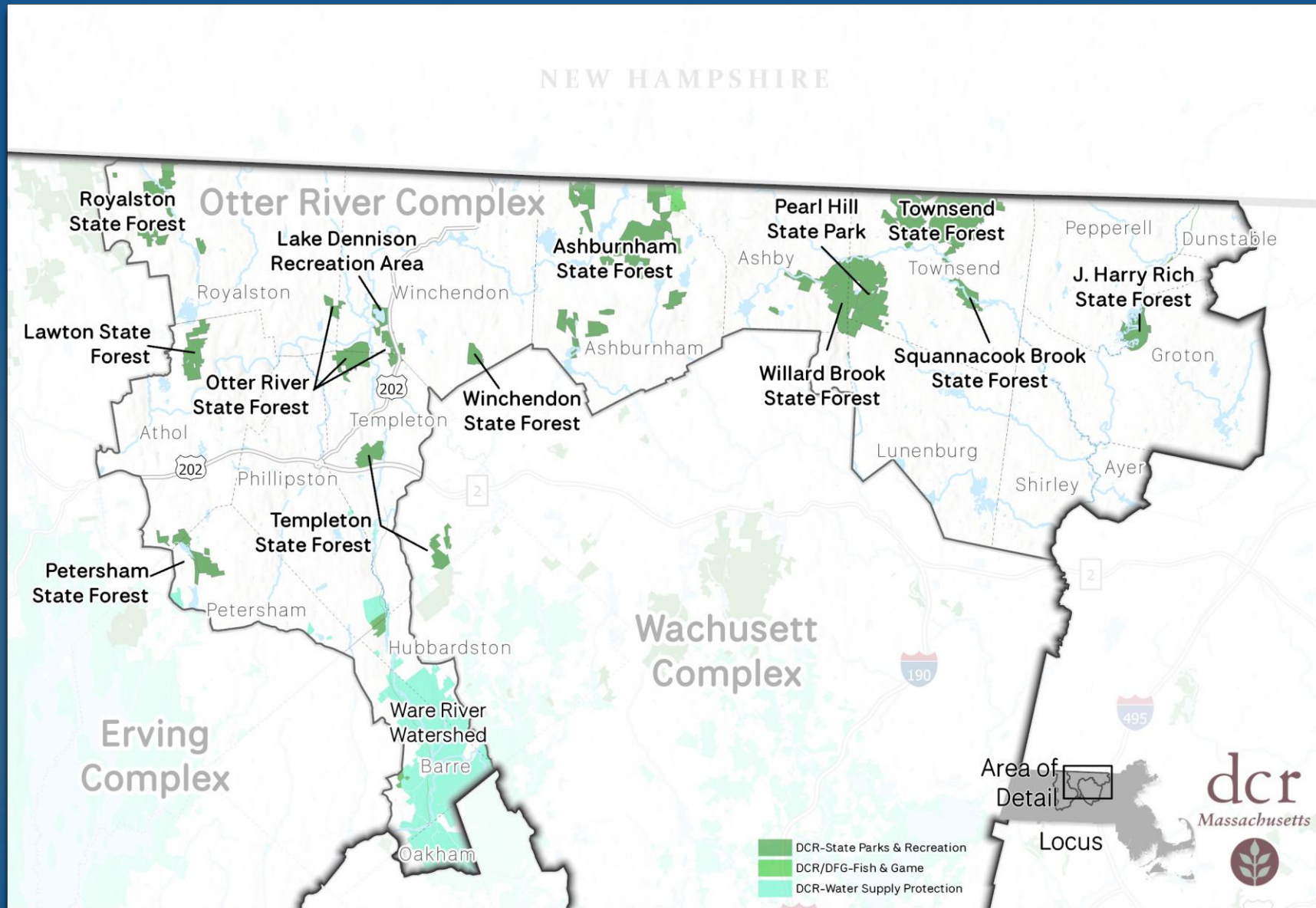


“The Commissioner of Conservation and Recreation shall submit management plans to the Stewardship Council with respect to all reservations, parks, and forests under the management of the department...”

2. Otter River Complex RMPs

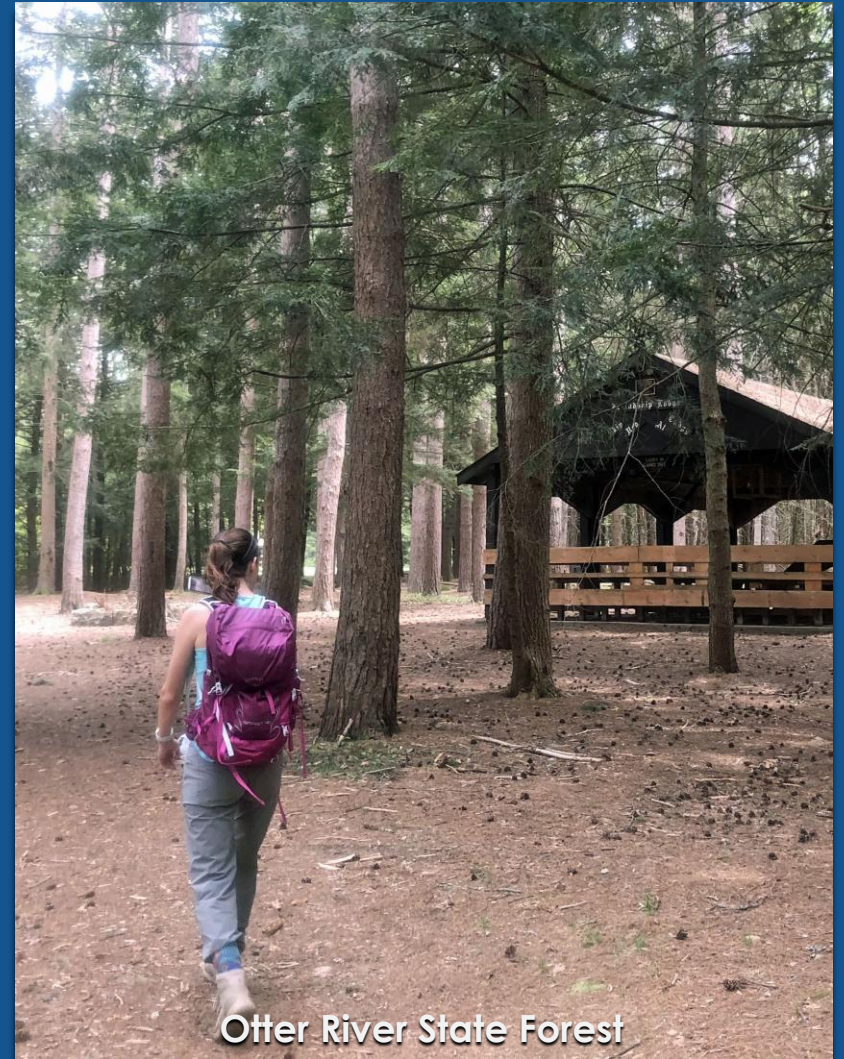


Otter River Complex Properties



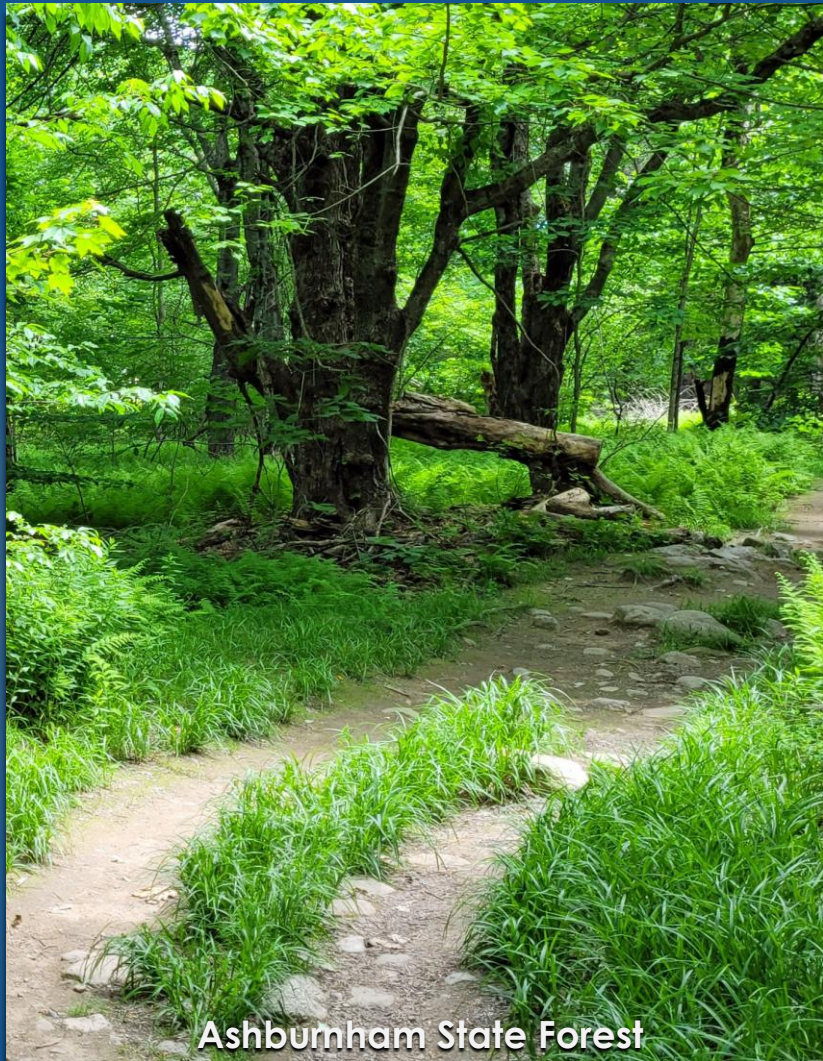
Otter River Complex RMPs - Process

- ▶ Public meeting - June 2022
(Central Highlands District)
- ▶ Drafting plans - 2022–2024
- ▶ Release of draft RMPs - August 11th
- ▶ Public meeting - August 21st
- ▶ Public Comment Period - through
September 20th
- ▶ Presentation to Stewardship Council -
October 9th
- ▶ Stewardship Council Vote -
November 13th



Otter River State Forest

Otter River Complex RMPs – Common Recommendations (Part 1)



- ▶ As funding allows, prioritize and implement recommendations from energy audit report
- ▶ Apply Landscape Designations to those portions of the Forest currently lacking such designations
- ▶ Clear vegetation from cellar holes IAW DCR BMPs
- ▶ Conduct an archaeological reconnaissance survey
- ▶ Create a trail map
- ▶ Establish a DCR web page
- ▶ Establish a formal agreement to allow DCR and public access across private property to access...
- ▶ Establish gateway area with parking, Identification Sign, Welcome Wayside, and kiosk
- ▶ Fill or cap the open well adjacent to...
- ▶ Following appropriate review and approval, implement recommendations from regional Invasive Plant Mgt. Plan
- ▶ Implement key recs. from Program Accessibility Assessment

Otter River Complex RMPs – Common Recommendations (Part 2)



J. Harry Rich State Forest

- ▶ Implement measures to curb unauthorized OHV use
- ▶ Increase the presence of EPOs, DCR Rangers, and operations staff, as appropriate and available, in areas with high unauthorized OHV use
- ▶ Post DPH Fish Consumption Advisory posters
- ▶ Resolve potential encroachments IAW Agency-wide guidance and BMPs
- ▶ Resolve trail-related threats and opportunities IAW Trails Guidelines and Best Practices
- ▶ Review and implement MassDEP Wellhead Protection Tips and Guidance within Zone I WPA
- ▶ Survey, document, and submit documentation to certify potential vernal pools
- ▶ Work with geocaching community to ensure that caches located in sensitive natural and cultural resources are relocated
- ▶ Work with Indigenous partners to inventory, document, conserve, and interpret Indigenous resources and Indigenous history within the Forest

Ashburnham State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	2,895.3
Landscape Designation	Woodland (2,210.6 acres) No Designation (796.5 acres)
Rare Species	16 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Boating (non-motorized) Canoeing/Kayaking Dog walking, on leash Fishing Hiking/Walking Nature Study/Photography Picnicking Running/Jogging Skiing, cross-country Wildlife viewing



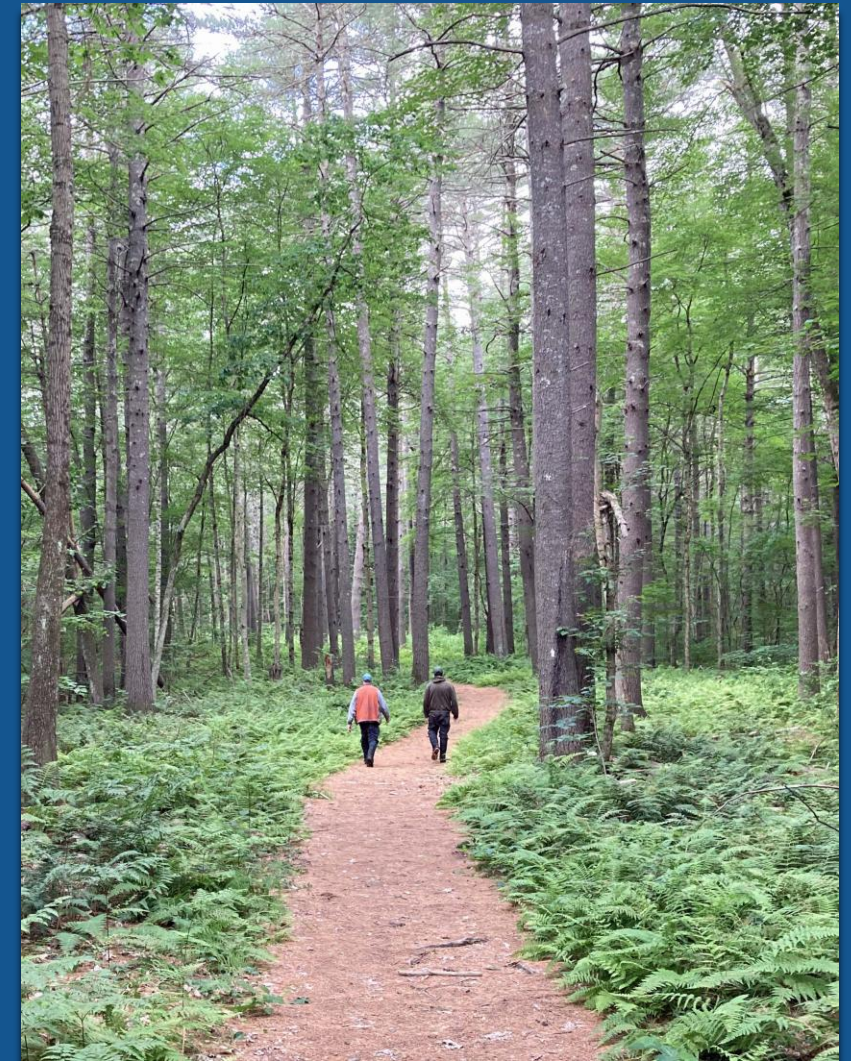
Ashburnham State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Gateway to Mount Watatic Reservation
- ▶ Biodiversity hot spot – 16 rare species & 4 Priority Natural Communities
- ▶ Two long-distance trails: the Midstate and Wapack trails
- ▶ 17 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Improve forest roads for emergency vehicle access
 - ▶ Maintain Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) water holes in accordance with DCR Best Management Practices
 - ▶ Coordinate with the Ashburnham DPW and MassDOT, as appropriate, to install trail crossing signs where the Midstate Trail crosses Rindge State Road (Route 119) and at other trail crossings

J. Harry Rich State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	464.3
Landscape Designation	Woodland (464.3 acres)
Rare Species	3 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	1 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Bicycling, mountain Boating, motor Canoeing/Kayaking Dog walking, on leash Fishing Hiking/Walking Horseback riding Hunting Picnicking Skiing, cross-country Snowmobiling Wildlife viewing



J. Harry Rich State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Located at the intersection of the Nashua River (a Wild & Scenic River) and DCR's Nashua River Rail Trail
- ▶ 19 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Clarify the extent of DCR land ownership and boundaries in the Boutwell Island area of the Forest
 - ▶ Prepare a Forest Resource Management Plan
 - ▶ Document the presence of the Hemlock Swamp by completing a Natural Community Field Form and submitting it to NHESP
 - ▶ Explore feasibility of preparation and implementation of an Interpretive Plan
 - ▶ Locate all unsanctioned small craft landings in the Forest and determine their appropriateness (based on potential threats to natural and cultural resources) for continued recreational use

Lake Dennison Recreation Area: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	225.7
Landscape Designation	Parkland (121.3 acres) No Designation (104.7 acres)
Rare Species	2 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	9 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Boating, sail Camping Canoeing/Kayaking Dog walking, on leash Fishing Hiking/Walking Hunting Picnicking Skiing, cross-country Swimming/Sunbathing Snowmobiling



Lake Dennison Recreation Area: Key Findings



- ▶ Owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); leased to DCR for recreation and fish and wildlife purposes
- ▶ Plays crucial role in USACE flood management
- ▶ 9 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Initiate discussions of a new lease agreement with USACE. Ensure the lease renewal process includes the development of detailed spatial information on the boundaries of DCR lease area
 - ▶ Following development of detailed information on lease area boundaries, redo Land Stewardship Zoning
 - ▶ Conduct an assessment of the existing contact station to determine whether it meets all operational needs
 - ▶ Rehabilitate or replace three comfort stations with accessible facilities

Lawton State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	650.3
Landscape Designation	Woodland (394.7 acres) No Designation (255.6 acres)
Rare Species	0 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Bicycling, mountain Dog walking on leash Hiking/Walking



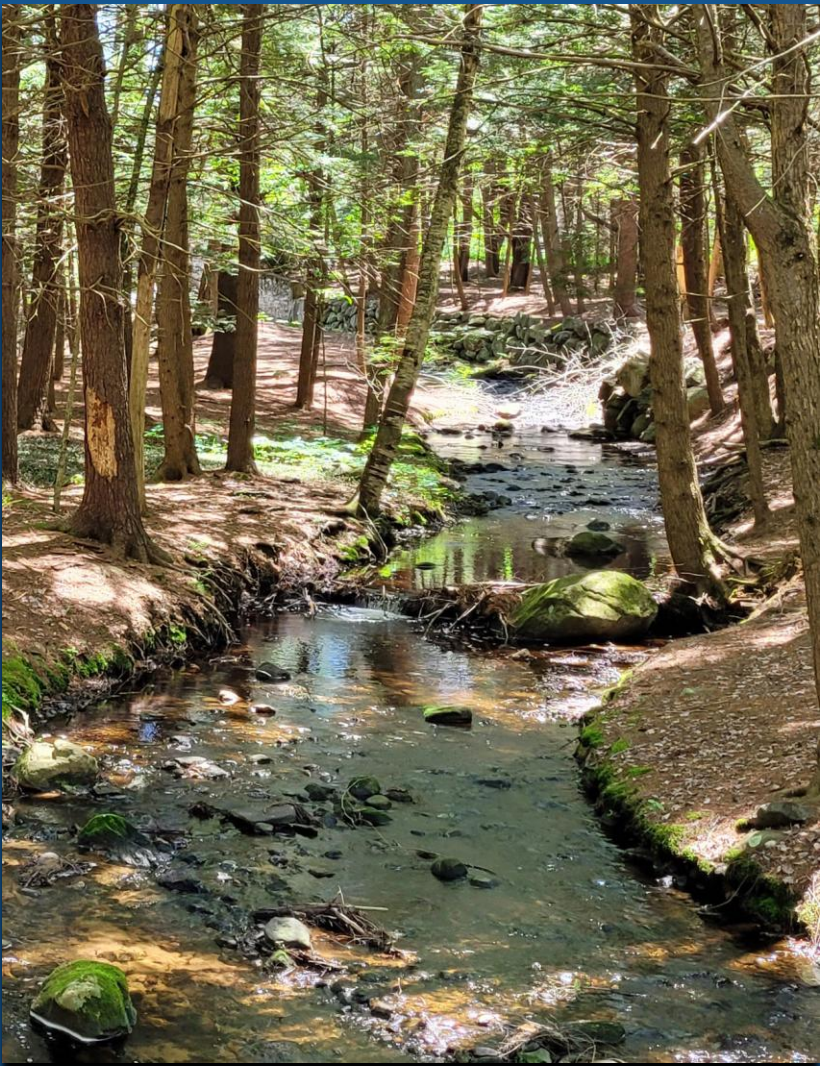
Lawton State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ First tree farm in New England
- ▶ Environmental Justice populations in Athol within 0.5 miles of Forest
- ▶ 19 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Complete forest management project in SW corner of Forest to enhance forest resiliency and protect Coldwater Fisheries Resource in this location
 - ▶ Investigate acquiring land or easements to enhance recreational trail connectivity
 - ▶ In partnership with NHESP, survey recently acquired 186-acre northern parcel of rare species, priority natural communities, and potential vernal pools
 - ▶ Conduct a historical landscape survey of the former Hill-Lawton Farmstead
 - ▶ Reroute trail or acquire trail easement where the existing trail leading to the northerly parcel crosses private property

Otter River State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	1,102.7
Landscape Designation	Parkland (293.0 acres) Woodland (728.8 acres) No Designation (150.4 acres)
Rare Species	2 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	8 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Camping Canoeing/Kayaking Educational programs Fishing Hiking/Walking Hunting Picnicking Swimming/Sunbathing



Otter River State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Massachusetts' first State Forest (1917)
- ▶ Partially owned by the Commonwealth and partially owned by the USACE
- ▶ Closely associated with Lake Dennison Recreation Area
- ▶ 13 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Initiate discussions of a new lease agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Ensure the lease renewal process includes the development of detailed spatial information on the boundaries of DCR lease area
 - ▶ Following development of detailed information on lease area boundaries, redo Land Stewardship Zoning
 - ▶ Create a Master Plan for the Otter River Campground

Pearl Hill State Park: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	182.8
Landscape Designation	Parkland (182.8 acres)
Rare Species	1 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Camping Dog walking, on leash Fishing Hiking/Walking Hunting Nature study/Photography Running/Jogging Skiing, cross country Snowmobiling Swimming/Sunbathing



Pearl Hill State Park: Key Findings



- ▶ Park is organized around the Pearl Hill Brook corridor, associated wetlands, and white pine forests
- ▶ 16 Priority Management Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Remediate wetland and stream crossings where erosion is occurring
 - ▶ Implement steps necessary to protect rare species habitat
 - ▶ Remediate native vegetation loss and soil erosion in the campground and picnic areas
 - ▶ Conduct requisite studies and permitting for, and implement projects to:
 - ▶ Improve the waterfront area by replenishing beach sand and removing aquatic vegetation and impounded sediments
 - ▶ If possible, abate bacterial loads for the purposes of increasing safety and swimming access and improving waterbody health

Petersham State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	644.4
Landscape Designation	Woodland (643.8 acres) No Designation (0.9 acres)
Rare Species	9 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	3 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Dog walking, on leash Hiking/Walking Hunting Nature study/Photography



Petersham State Forest:

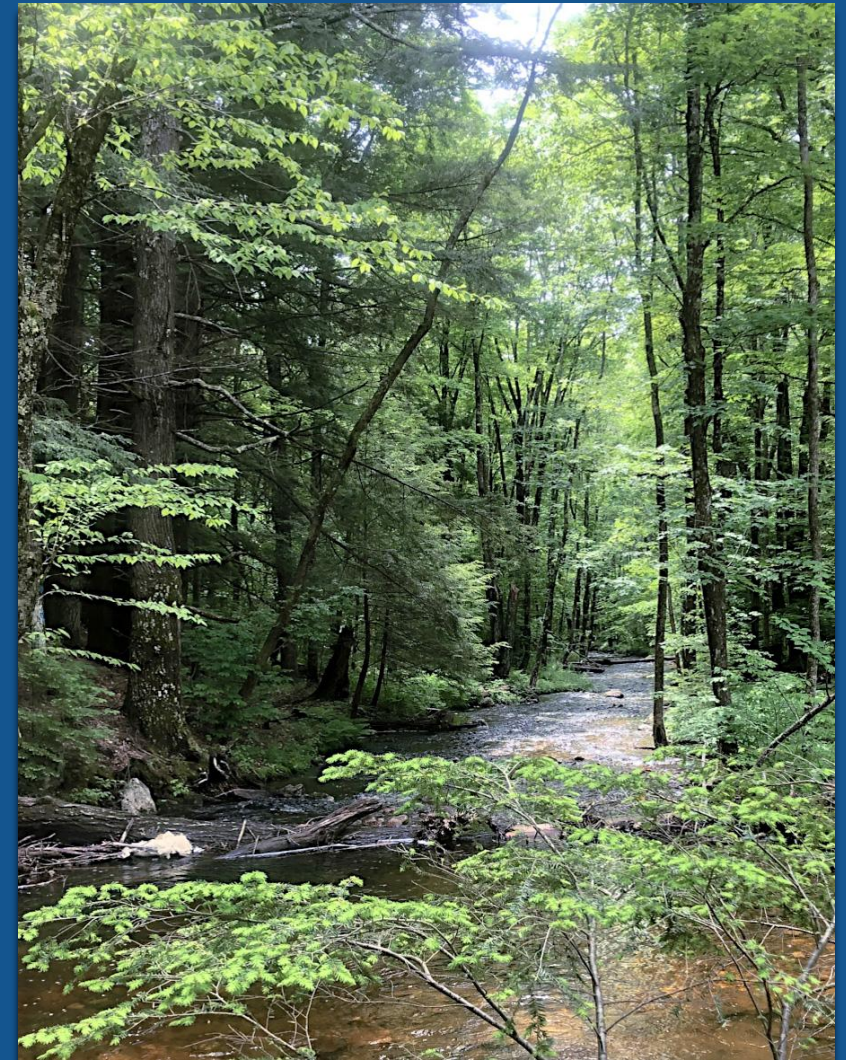
Key Findings



- ▶ Due to a near absence of recreation infrastructure and low levels of visitation, the Forest's natural and cultural resources are believed to remain relatively undisturbed
- ▶ 12 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Implement recommendations in Phase I Inspection/Evaluation Report of Riceville Pond Dam
 - ▶ Following completion of natural and cultural resources surveys, revisit the Land Stewardship Zoning and adjust as needed to reflect new information on the Forest's resources

Royalston State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	857.2
Landscape Designation	Parkland (7.2 acres) Woodland (847.3 acres) No Designation (2.7 acres)
Rare Species	3 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	2 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Dog walking, on leash Hiking/Walking Horseback riding Snowshoeing



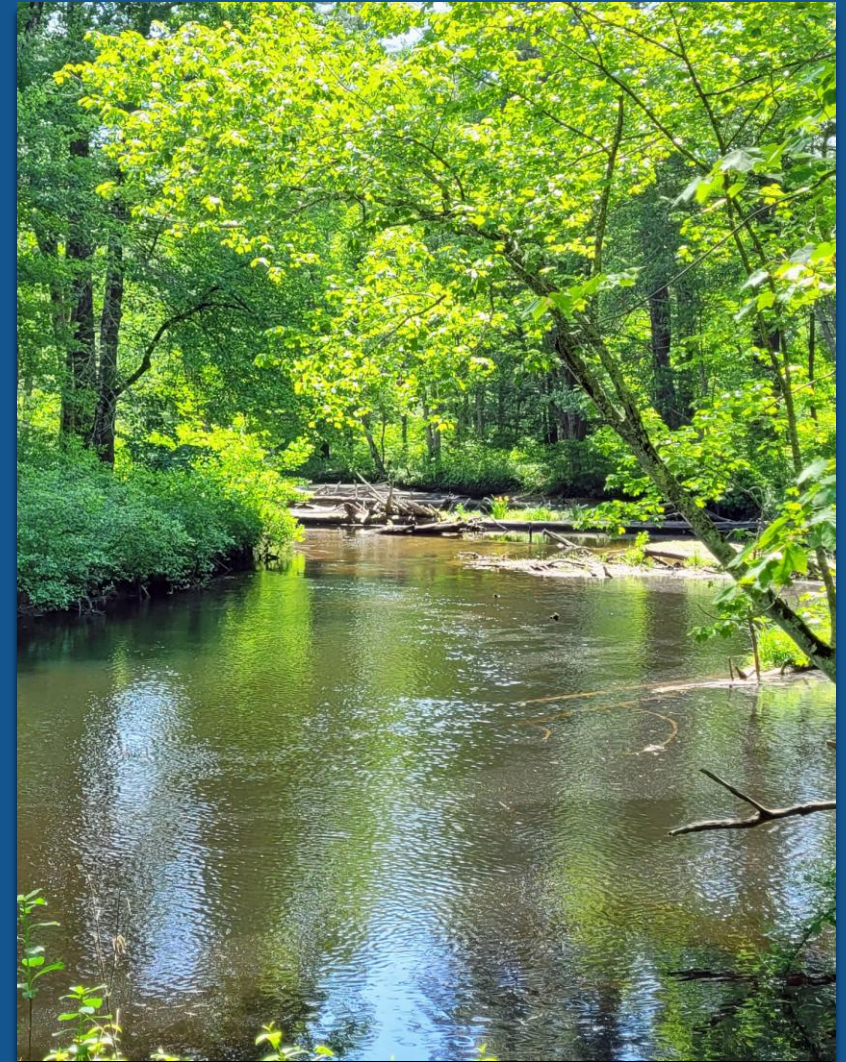
Royalston State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Most visitation is associated with the Tully Trail
- ▶ 21 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Partner with State of New Hampshire and/or regional land protection groups to conserve adjacent open space in New Hampshire
 - ▶ Continue MEPA review of New England Power Company's A1/B2 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project to identify and avoid, minimize, or mitigate negative impacts to natural and cultural resources
 - ▶ Partner with the Town of Royalston to repair/replace Falls Road culvert at Tully Brook; block OHV access into Forest adjacent to the culvert
 - ▶ Partner with Town, MassDOT, and USACE to create safe walking routes along the Tully Trail where it crosses and follows Route 68
 - ▶ Create formal partnership for maintenance of Tully Trail segments on DCR property

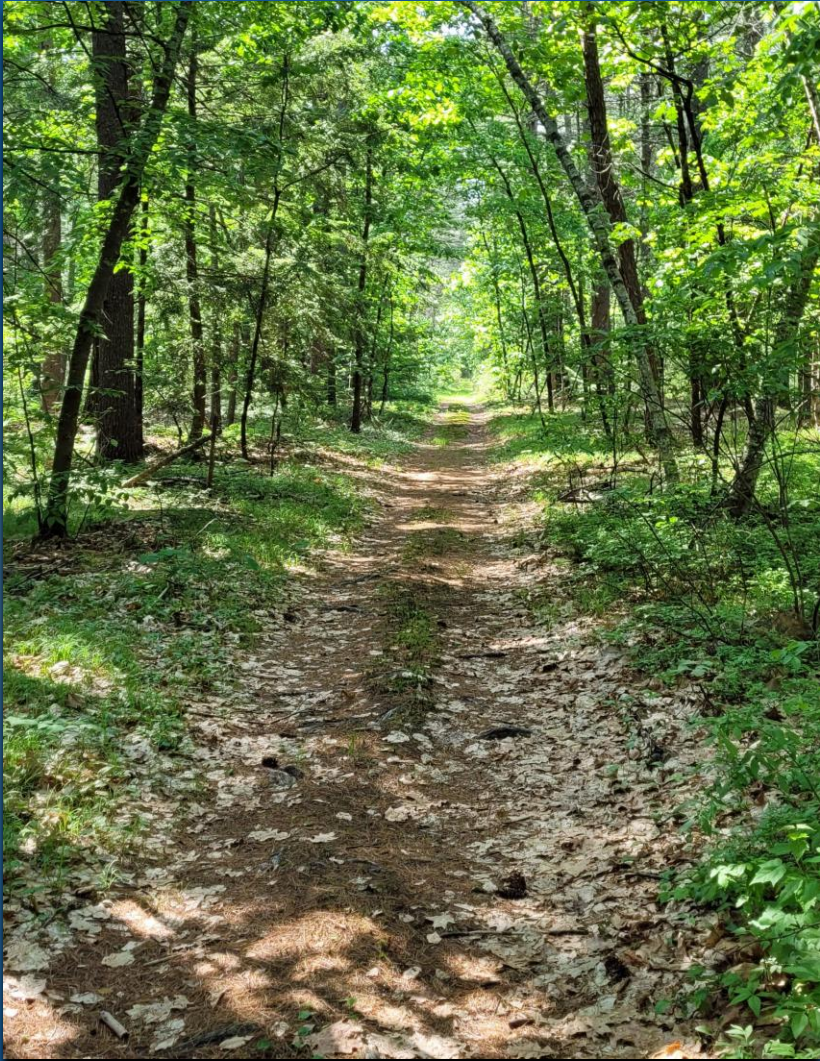
Squannacook Brook State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	319.8
Landscape Designation	Parkland (23.8 acres) Reserve (297.0 acres)
Rare Species	3 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Canoeing/Kayaking Dog walking, on leash Fishing Hiking/Walking Hunting Nature study/Photography Running/Jogging Skiing, cross-country Snowshoeing Wildlife viewing



Squannacook Brook State Forest:

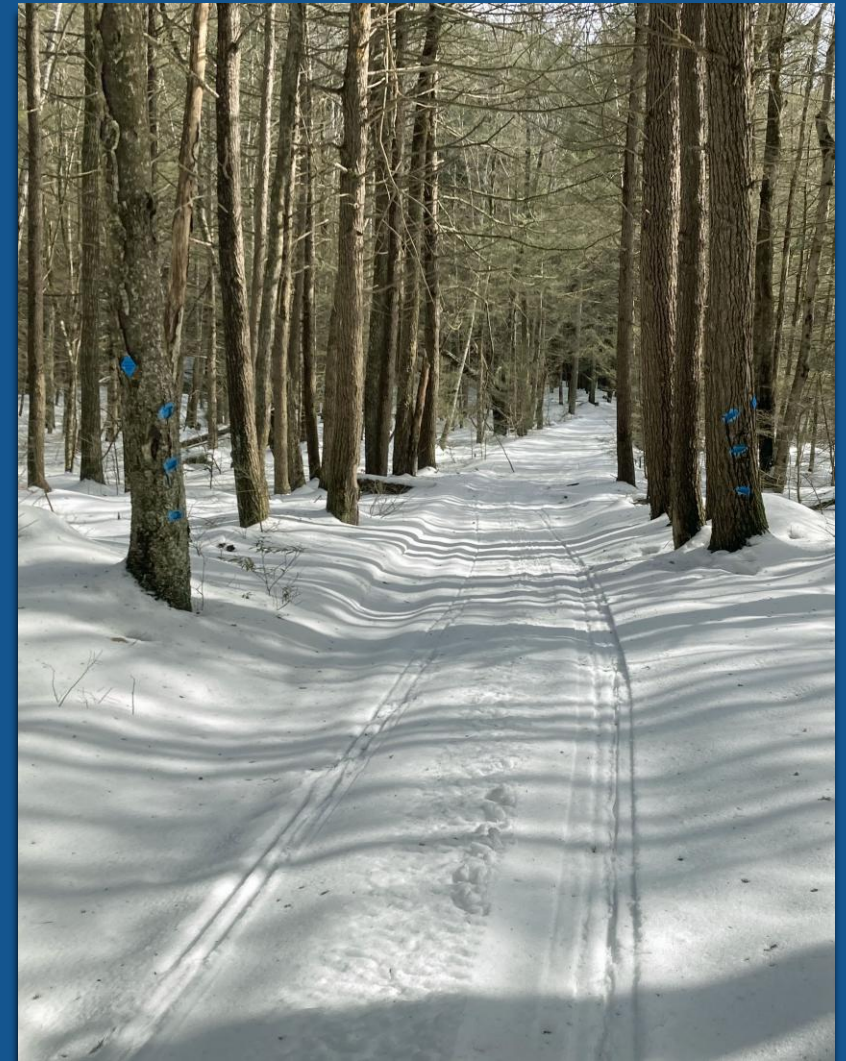
Key Findings



- ▶ Traditionally associated with the Squannacook River; increasingly associated with the Squannacook River Rail Trail
- ▶ 11 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Add accessible picnic tables, cantilevered identification sign, and kiosk along the boundary with the Squannacook River Rail Trail
 - ▶ Provide an authorized trail connection between the Squannacook River Rail Trail and the Squannacook River:
 - ▶ Maintain approximately 750 feet of existing trail
 - ▶ Install destination and wayfinding signs
 - ▶ Install kiosk and bike rack along the Forest's boundary with the rail trail

Templeton State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	718.1
Landscape Designation	Woodland (638.6 acres) No Designation (79.5 acres)
Rare Species	0 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Hiking/Walking Horseback riding Snowmobiling



Templeton State Forest:

Key Findings



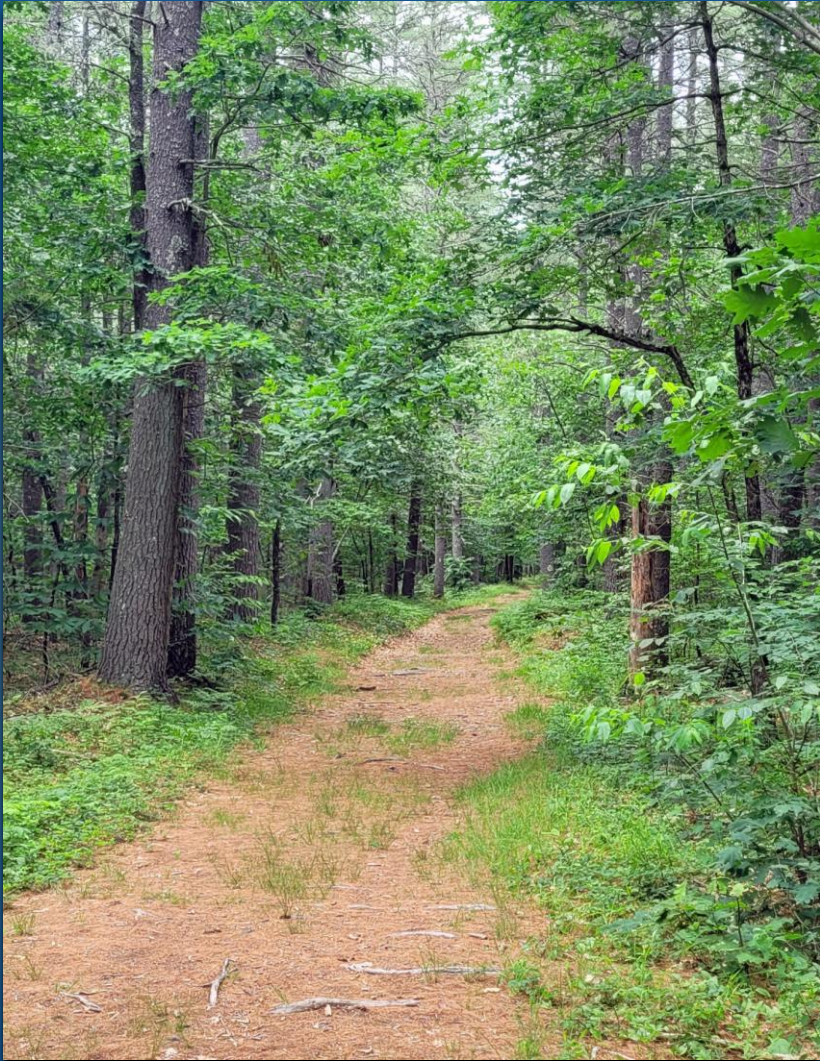
- ▶ Trails are the only recreational development in the Forest
- ▶ 16 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Partner with MassWildlife to erect a gate and to install identification and orientation signs at the forest road off King Philips Trail
 - ▶ Evaluate and implement options to remediate flooding on the Trout Brook Tract's forest road
 - ▶ Implement measures to curb unauthorized OHV use (Motocross)
 - ▶ Engage in education and collaboration initiatives, as appropriate and available, with EEA's Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Committee and the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts to curb unauthorized wheeled OHV use of authorized snowmobile trails

Townsend State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	3,163.4
Landscape Designation	Woodland (2,963.4 acres) No Designation (199.9 acres)
Rare Species	5 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Canoeing/Kayaking Hiking/Walking Horseback riding Nature study/Photography Picnicking Running/Jogging Skiing, cross-country Snowmobiling Wildlife viewing



Townsend State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Protects portions of the scenic Squannacook River and its watershed
- ▶ Fessenden WMA is an inholding within Forest
- ▶ 23 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Monitor for town initiatives to deaccession or otherwise sell open space parcels appropriate for Forest expansion
 - ▶ Take appropriate steps to evaluate cellar holes where unauthorized digging is occurring and to determine if any mitigative or preventative actions are necessary
 - ▶ Take appropriate steps to define the possible archaeological footprint of CCC Camp S-82 and thus determine whether OHV use is damaging the site
 - ▶ As appropriate, promote EOEA Environmental Justice Policy goals
 - ▶ Conduct a study to determine if expansion of the Old Turnpike Road parking area is warranted

Willard Brook State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	2,832.2
Landscape Designation	Parkland (2,719.2 acres) No Designation (113.1 acres)
Rare Species	2 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	5 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Bicycling, mountain Camping Dog walking, on leash Hiking/Walking Hunting Nature study/Photography Picnicking Skiing, cross-country Snowmobiling Swimming/Sunbathing Wildlife viewing



Willard Brook State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Recreation development is concentrated along the scenic Willard Brook corridor
- ▶ 29 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ If possible, improve waterbody health and ensure consistent swimming access by conducting requisite study/studies to identify and abate bacterial loads in Damon Pond and/or Willard Brook
 - ▶ Prepare a Master Plan for Damon Pond Campground to resolve issues of camp site spacing and privacy, accessibility compliance, bathroom improvements, and ageing forest stands
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive Trails Plan consistent with DCR Trails Guidelines and Best Practices

Winchendon State Forest:

Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	182.9
Landscape Designation	Woodland (160.5 acres) No Designation (22.4 acres)
Rare Species	0 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Hiking/Walking Hunting Wildlife viewing



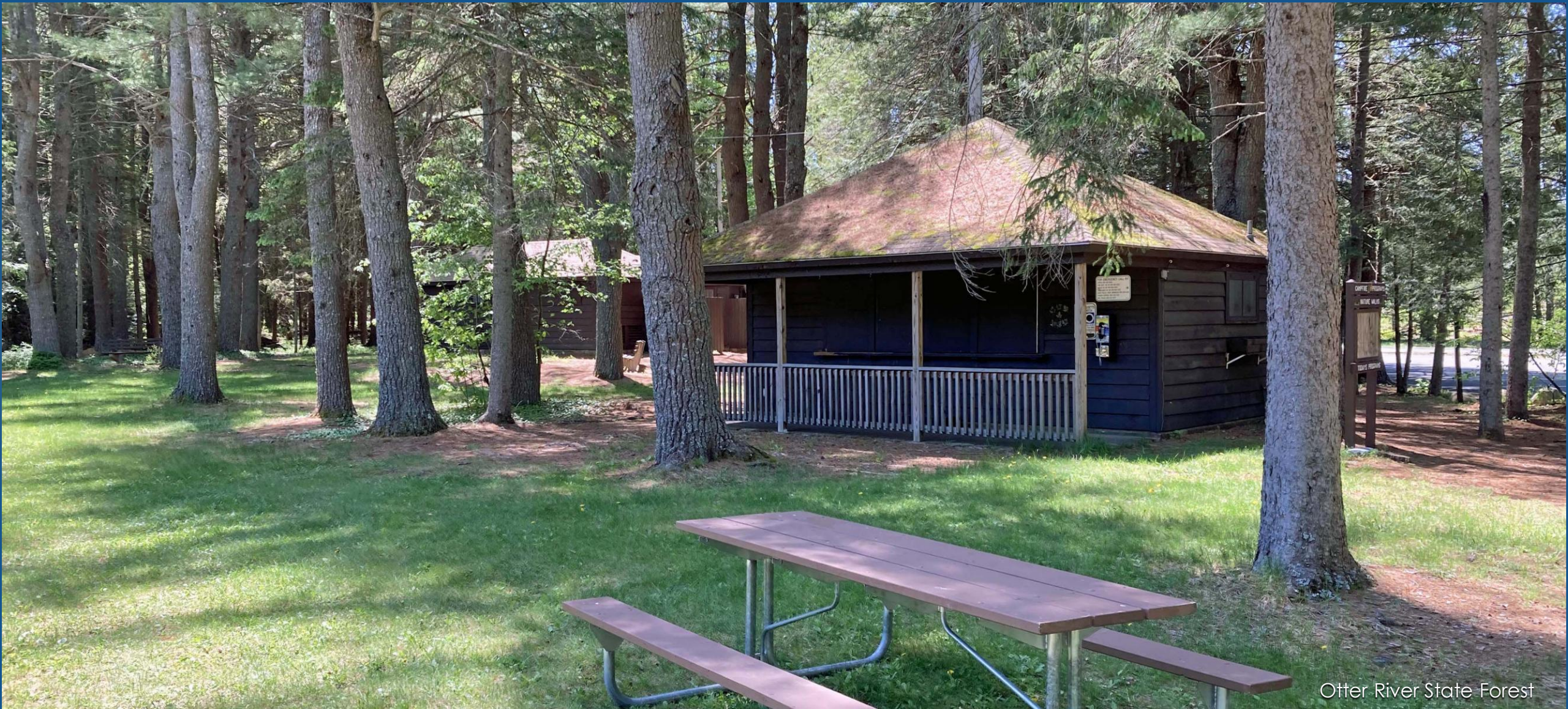
Winchendon State Forest:

Key Findings



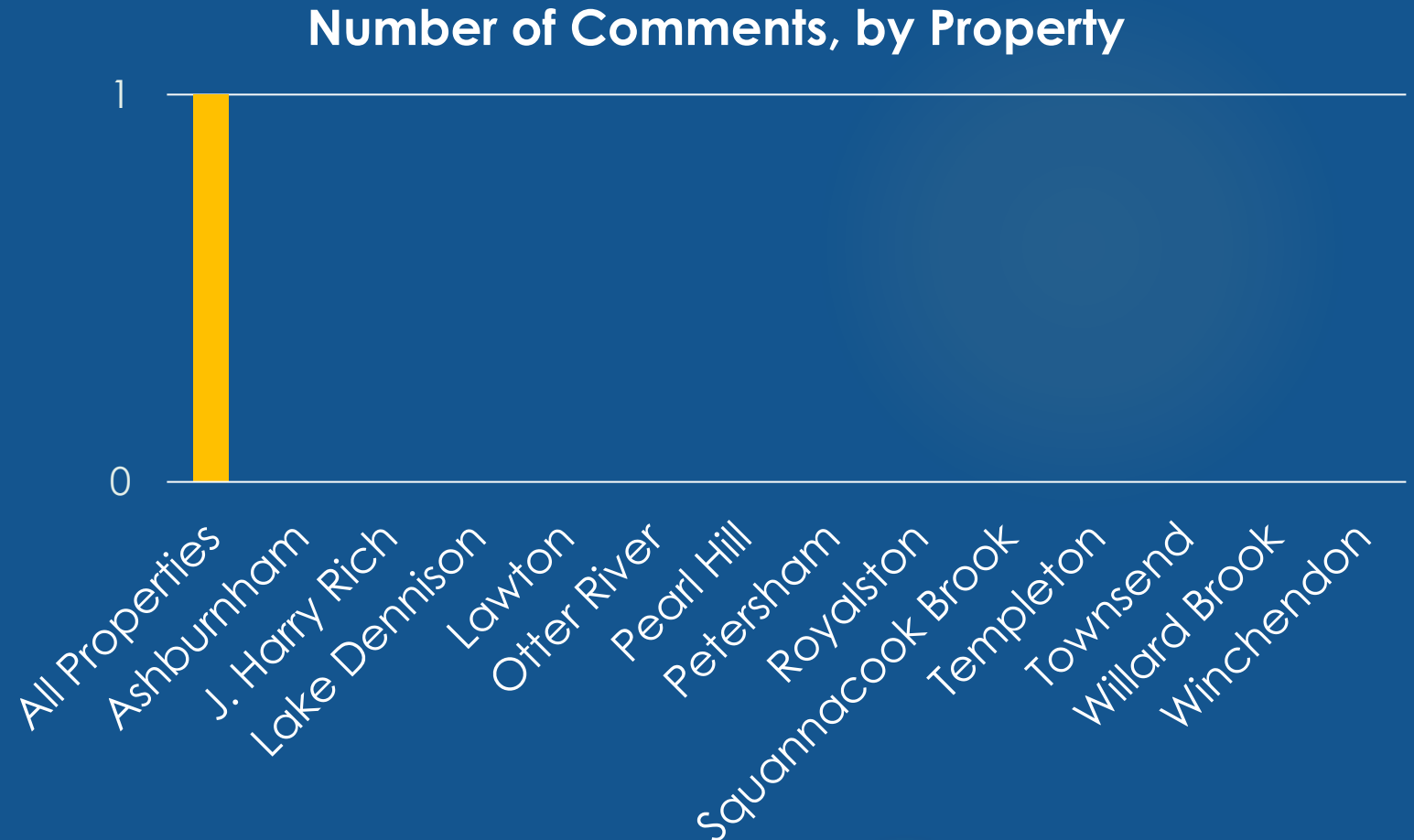
- ▶ Located adjacent to MassWildlife's Nineteenth Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA); access is from the WMA's parking lot
- ▶ Due to a near absence of recreation infrastructure and low levels of visitation, the Forest's natural and cultural resources are believed to remain relatively undisturbed
- ▶ 6 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Conduct natural resources surveys prior to creation, expansion, or improvement of any trails or other recreation infrastructure
 - ▶ Following completion of natural and cultural resources surveys, revisit Land Stewardship Zoning and adjust as needed to reflect new information on the Forest's resources

3. Comments Received



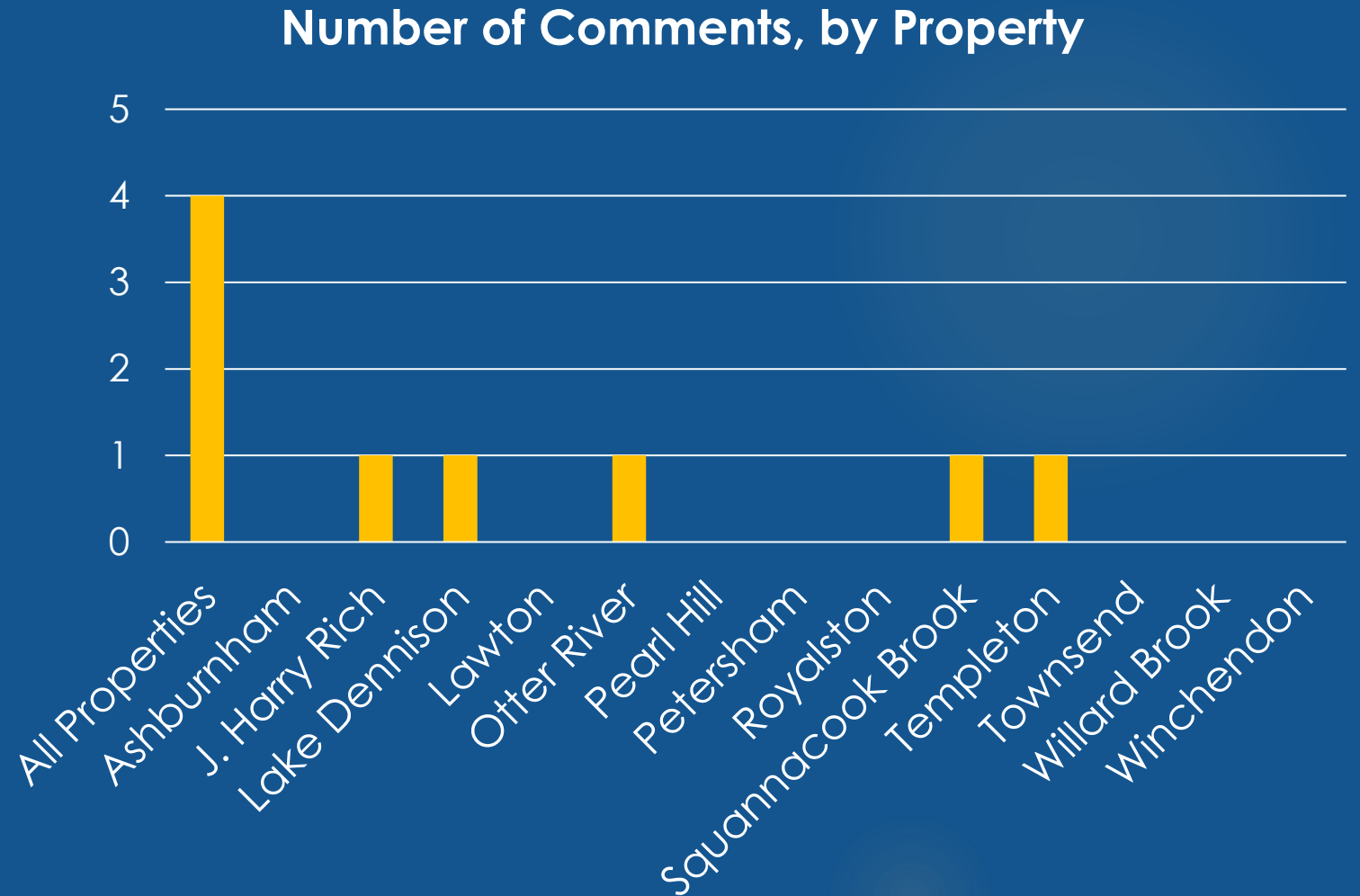
Public Meeting Comments

- ▶ # Registrants – 20
- ▶ # Attendees – 9
- ▶ # Attendees commenting – 1
- ▶ # Comments – 1



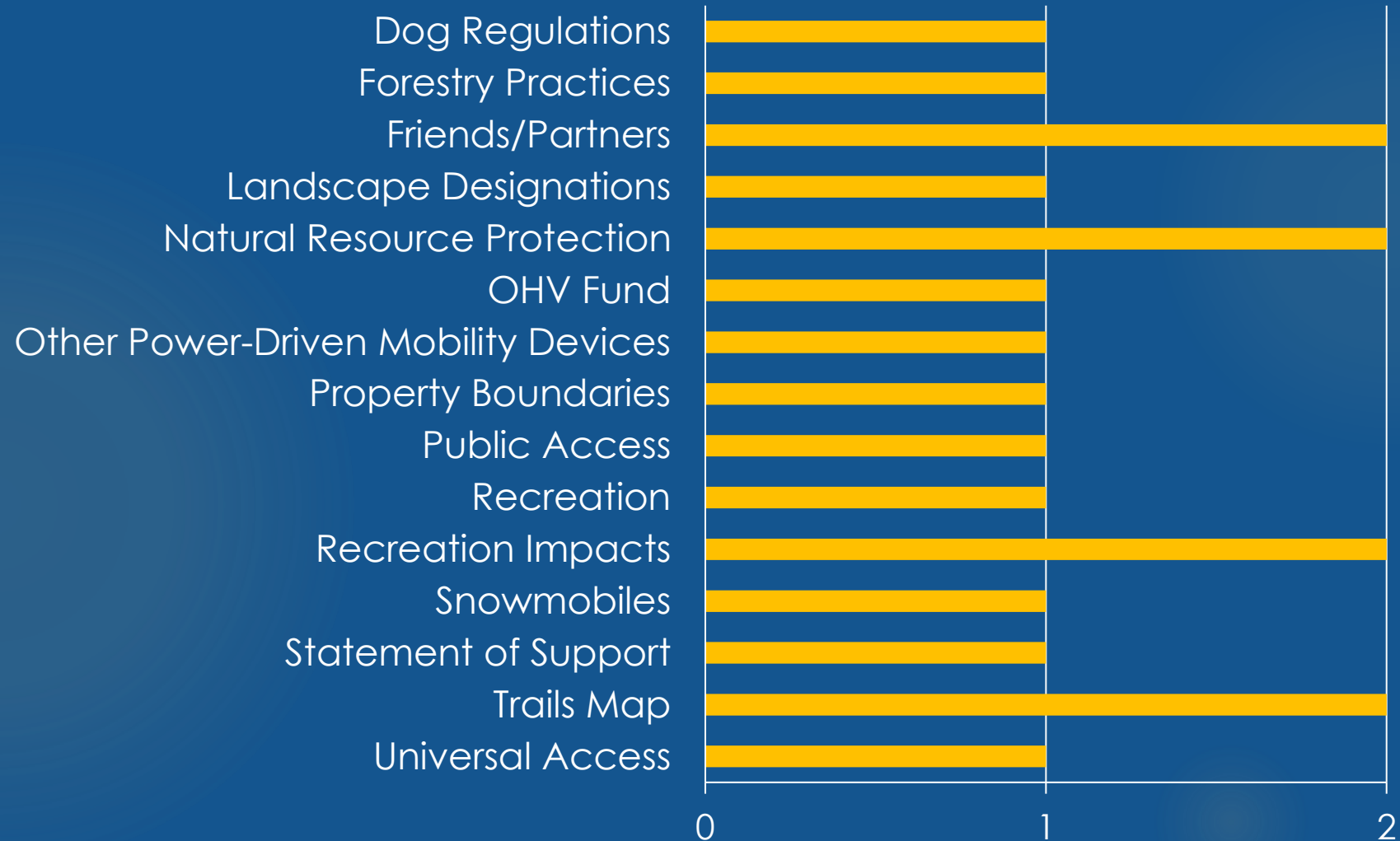
Written Comments

- ▶ # Individuals commenting – 6
- ▶ # Submittals – 8



Comments by Topic – All sources

Number of Comments, by Topic



4. Questions, Comments, & Conversation

