



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

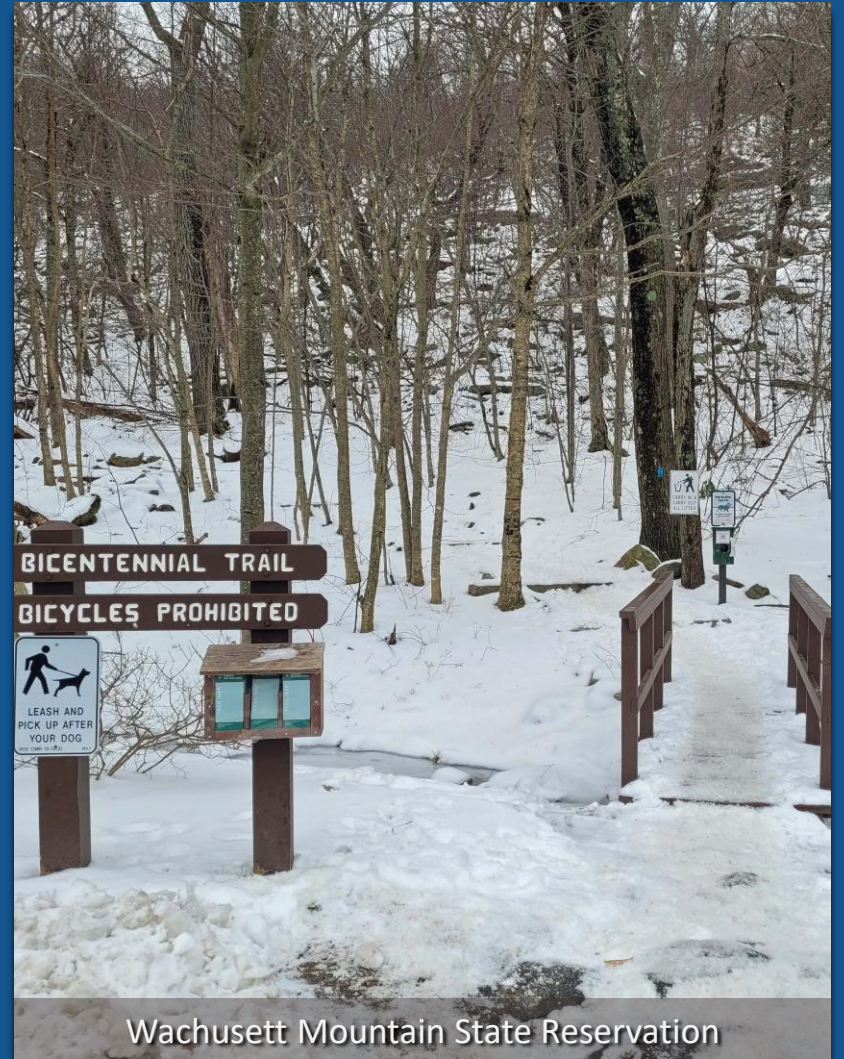
A wide-angle landscape photograph of the Wachusett Mountain area. The foreground and middle ground are covered in dense, dark green forest. In the distance, a large, rounded mountain peak (Wachusett Mountain) rises against a clear, light blue sky. A small body of water is visible in the lower-left foreground.

Wachusett Complex Resource Management Plans September 11, 2025

Photo by Nick Allen, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) via Wikimedia Commons

Today's Presentation

1. RMP Mandate
2. Central Highlands District
3. Wachusett Complex RMPs
 - Key Resources
 - Key Findings
4. Comments Received
5. Questions, Comments, & Conversation



1. RMP Mandate



M.G.L. c. 21 § 2F



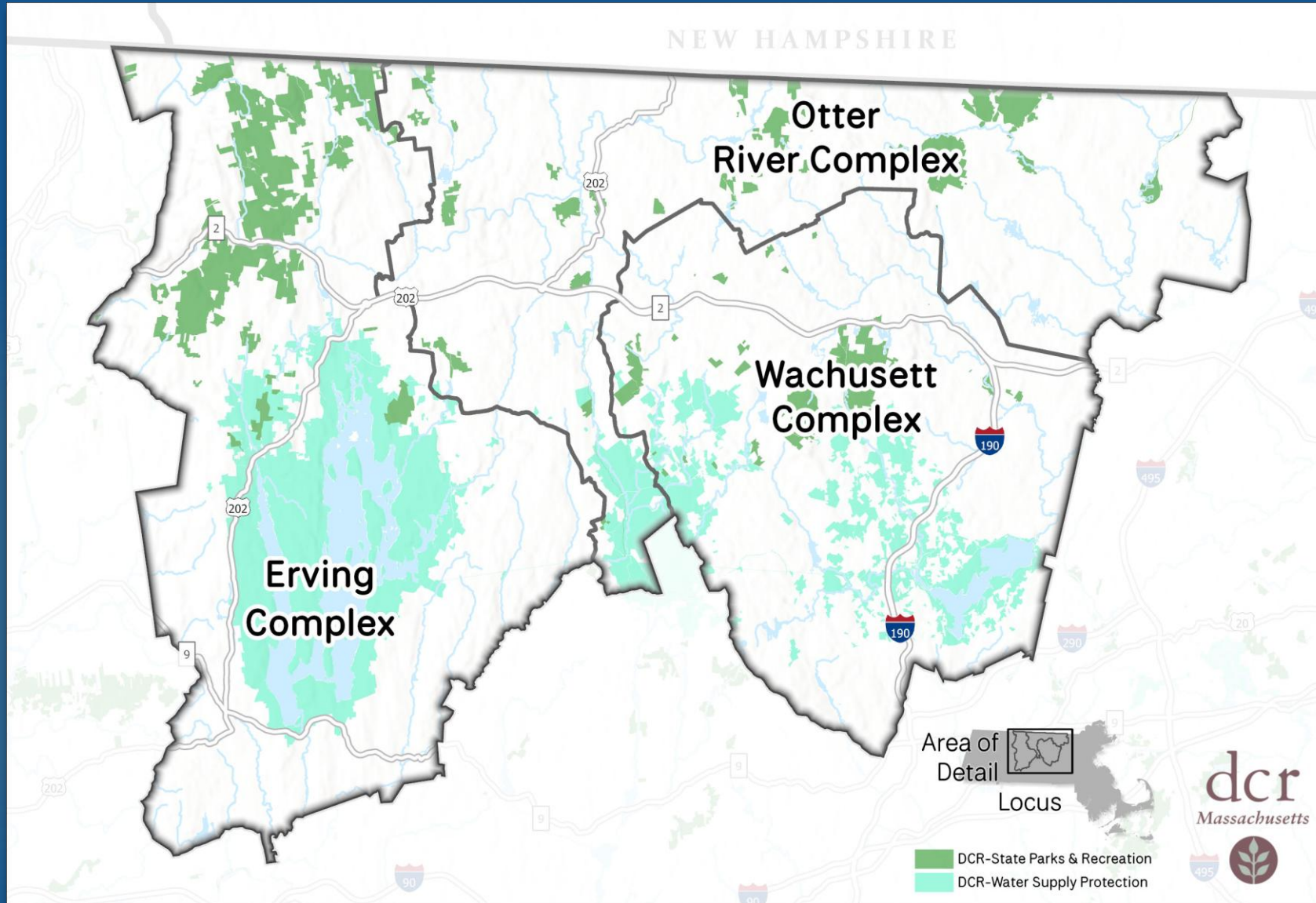
Accessible fishing platform, Dunn State Park

“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. Central Highlands District



Central Highlands District



Central Highlands RMPs - Process



- ▶ Internal meeting April 2021
- ▶ Internal Surveys 2021–2022
- ▶ Public meeting (31 RMPs) June 2022
- ▶ RMP Preparation 2022–2024
- ▶ Internal Reviews 2024
- ▶ Approval to release RMPs May 2025

- ▶ Public Meetings
 - ▶ Wachusett Complex (7) July 16
 - ▶ Otter River Complex (13) August 21
 - ▶ Erving Complex (11) September 18

- ▶ Stewardship Council
 - ▶ **Wachusett Complex** September 11
 - ▶ Otter River Complex October 9
 - ▶ Erving Complex November 13

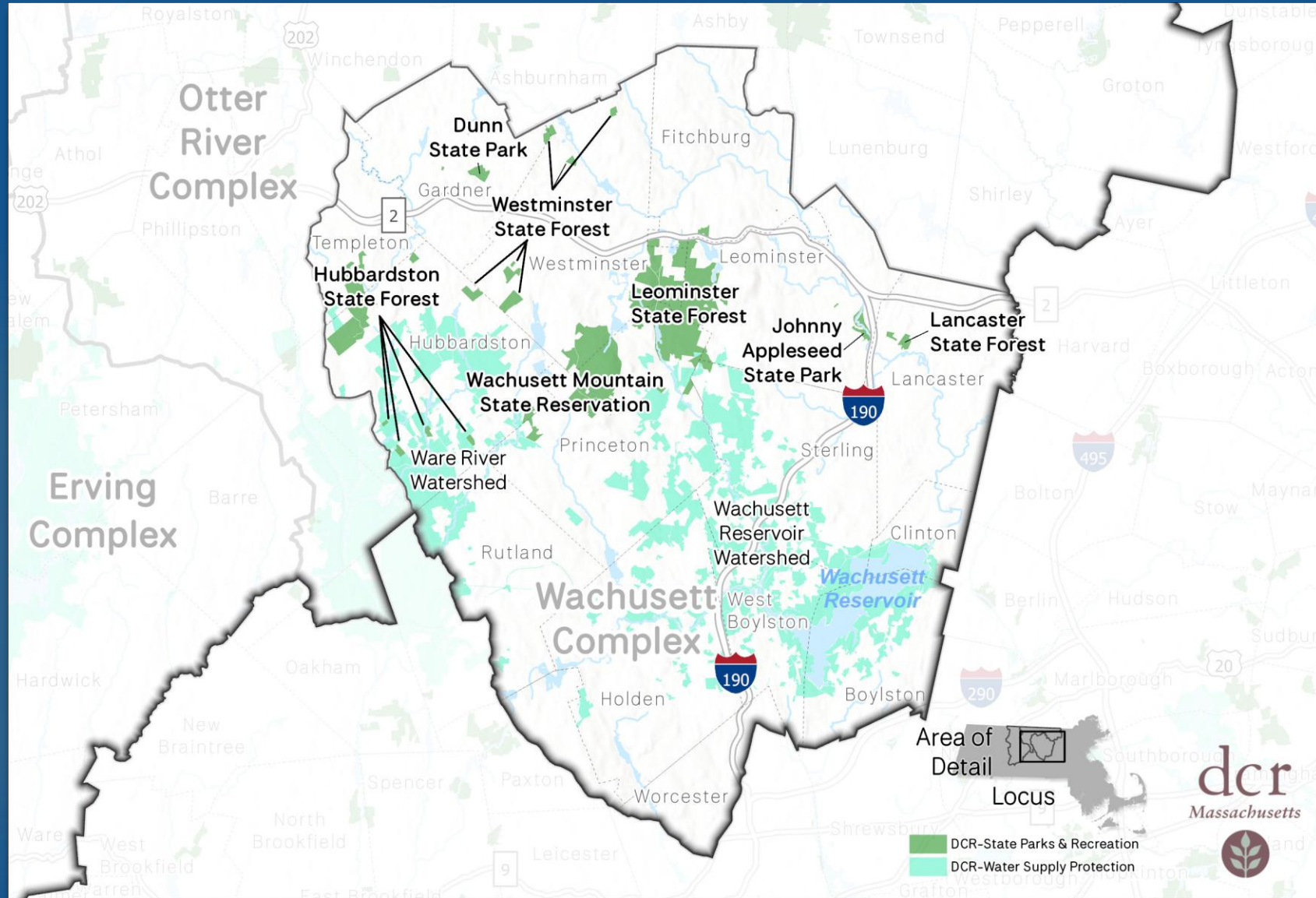
3. Wachusett Complex RMPs



Wachusett Mountain State Reservation

Photo by Kyle Marshall; Courtesy Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism; used under License CC BY-ND 2.0

Wachusett Complex Properties



Dunn State Park: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	131.8
Landscape Designation	Parkland (131.8 acres)
Rare Species	0 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Boating (non-motorized) Canoeing/kayaking Dog walking on leash Educational programs Fishing Hiking/walking Picnicking Playground use Running, races Scenic vista viewing Swimming/Sunbathing Wildlife viewing



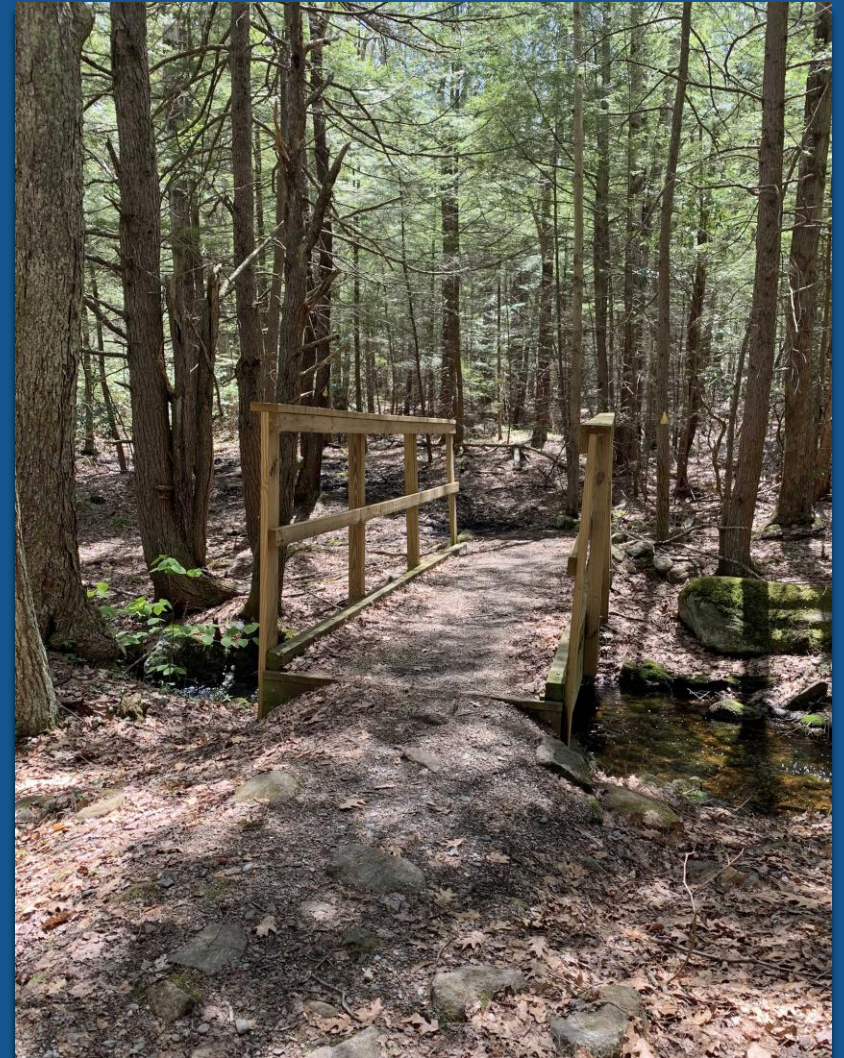
Dunn State Park: Key Findings



- ▶ Emphasis on universally accessible recreation.
- ▶ Water quality issues; 6 exceedances (2018–2021).
- ▶ High visitation levels resulting in compacted soils in picnic areas, and degradation of trails and infrastructure.
- ▶ Entire Park is within an Environmental Justice Tract - opportunity exists to increase environmental justice and equity.
- ▶ 13 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Prioritize and implement recommendations from 2016 accessibility assessment.
 - ▶ Develop a Master Plan with emphasis on maximizing accessible recreation facilities and activities such that Dunn may serve as a model of universal access throughout the DCR system.

Hubbardston State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	1,240.0
Landscape Designation	Woodland (1,161.1 acres) No Designation (77.9 acres)
Rare Species	3 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Bicycling, mountain Dog walking on leash Hiking/walking Horseback Riding Hunting Nature study/photography Picnicking Running/jogging Skiing, cross-country Snowmobiling Wildlife viewing



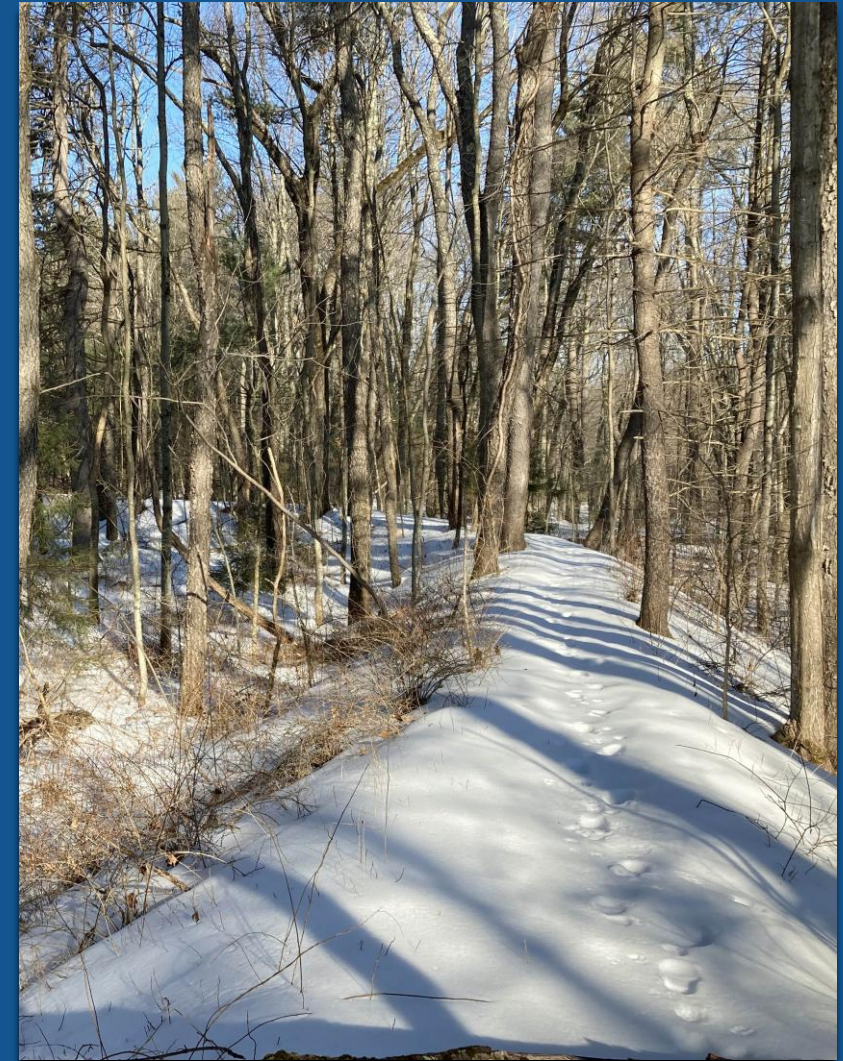
Hubbardston State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Trails impacted by high visitor usage, unauthorized Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use, and insufficient maintenance resources.
- ▶ 14 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Provide basic visitor amenities (web page, small parking area, Identification Sign, welcome wayside, kiosk, trail map, and interpretive panel).
 - ▶ Multiple recommendations associated with trails and aquatic resources.
 - ▶ Conduct an archaeological reconnaissance survey for the Forest in cooperation with Tribal, municipal, and regional partners.

Johnny Appleseed State Park: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	150.2
Landscape Designation	Parkland (122.4 acres) No Designation (27.9 acres)
Rare Species	1 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Dog walking on leash Fishing Hiking/walking Hunting Running/jogging Snowshoeing



Johnny Appleseed State Park:

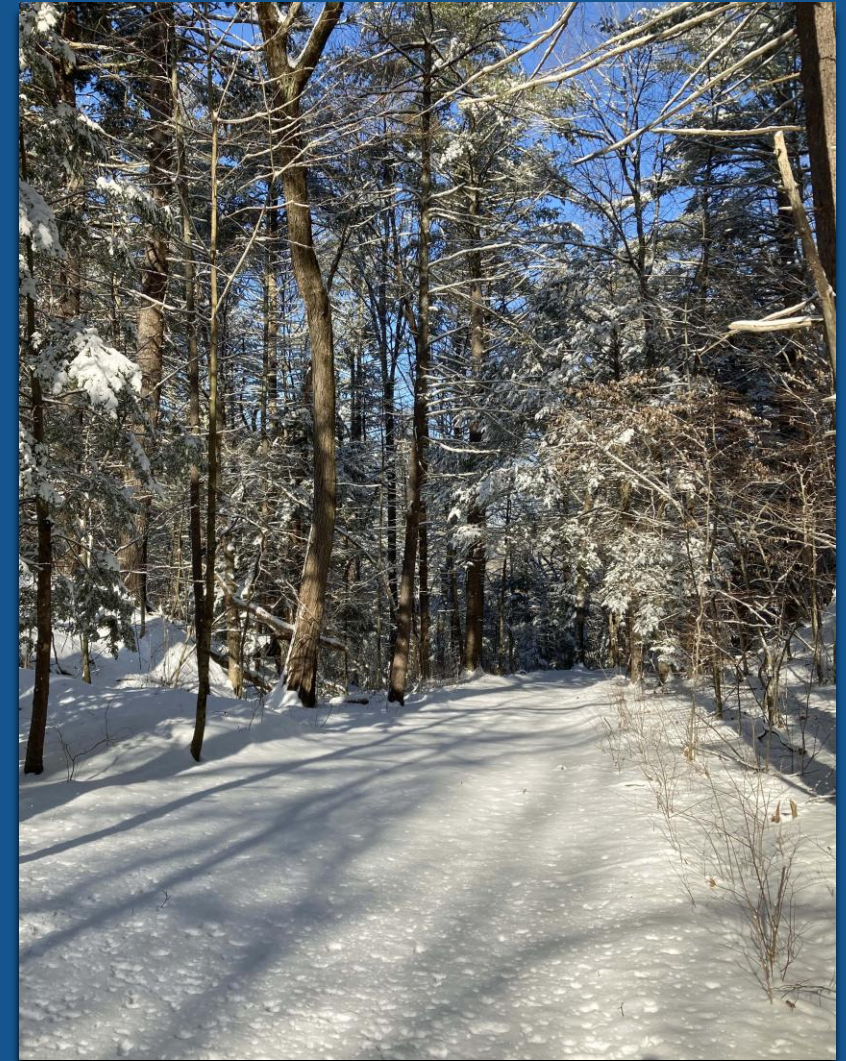
Key Findings



- ▶ Strongly associated with the North Nashua River.
- ▶ 94% of park is within 1.0%-chance flood zone.
- ▶ Provides river access and limited recreation.
- ▶ Park is largely landlocked, impeding public access.
- ▶ Boundaries not marked; potential encroachment.
- ▶ Invasive plants abundant and diverse.
- ▶ Unauthorized OHV and snowmobile use.
- ▶ 12 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Pursue establishing trailheads;
 - ▶ Assess potential for connecting existing trails; and
 - ▶ Resolve potential encroachments

Lancaster State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	90.7
Landscape Designation	Woodland (90.7 acres) No Designation (18.1 acres)
Rare Species	0 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Bicycling, mountain Dog walking on leash Hiking/walking Hunting Snowshoeing



Lancaster State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Small property, near the North Nashua River, accessible only through municipal land (Cook Conservation Area) or over private land.
- ▶ 10 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Establish agreements to allow DCR and public access to the two Forest tracts.
 - ▶ Continue monitoring proposed development of adjacent parcels and their potential impacts to the Forest
 - ▶ Design and implement forest management project to address dying red pine plantation.
 - ▶ Work with Town to add DCR information, including Welcome Wayside, at Town's trailhead.

Leominster State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	4,566.3
Landscape Designation	Parkland (188.8 acres) Woodland (4,053.1 acres) No Designation (324.6 acres)
Rare Species	2 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	8 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Canoeing/kayaking Fishing Hiking/walking Hunting Picnicking Rock climbing/bouldering Running, races Scenic vista viewing Swimming/sunbathing Wildlife viewing



Leominster State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Multiple unauthorized trails (4 miles).
- ▶ Water quality issues; 11 exceedances (2018–2021).
- ▶ 15 Priority Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Work with Indigenous partners to inventory, document, conserve, and interpret Indigenous resources and Indigenous history within the Forest.
 - ▶ Resolve trail-related threats and opportunities identified in this RMP, in accordance with Trails Guidelines and Best Practices.
 - ▶ Develop a site plan to address issues within the Day Use Area, including the beach, accessibility, infrastructure improvements, and modifying the parking area to comply with well-head protection.

Wachusett Mountain State Reservation:

Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	2,391.9
Landscape Designation	Parkland (2,256.0 acres) No Designation (135.9 acres)
Rare Species	9 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	45 total 1 on National Register
Recreation	Bicycling, mountain Bicycling, road Festivals Heritage tourism Hiking/walking Hunting Interpretive programming Picnicking Running/Jogging Scenic vista viewing Skiing, downhill Wildlife viewing



Wachusett Mountain State Reservation: Key Findings



- ▶ Reservation provides diverse and easily accessed four-season alpine recreation opportunities to visitors from across New England and beyond.
- ▶ Complicated regulatory history associated with 1990s ski area expansion continues to influence park operations.
- ▶ 8 invasive plant species that pose a threat to 6 MESA-listed plants.
- ▶ 5 MESA-listed plants whose habitat is intersected by trails and may be sensitive to trampling and trail maintenance work.
- ▶ Mount Wachusett has been recognized as a Traditional Cultural Place of significance to local Indigenous tribes, particularly the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band.

Wachusett Mountain State Reservation: Key Findings (continued)



- ▶ Diverse user types, all-season recreation activities, and geographic dispersion of visitors presents challenges to DCR staff for day-to-day operations, such as tracking visitation, managing visitor safety, and identifying and mitigating user impacts on natural and cultural resources.
- ▶ 41 Priority Management Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Consult with MEPA office regarding the status of the Certificate of Special Review Procedure (EOEA #11974)
 - ▶ Conduct review of long-term mitigation efforts required under DEM Section 61 findings for the ski area improvements.
 - ▶ In accordance with DCR Old Growth Policy, update Site-Specific Management Plan for Wachusett's Old Growth Forest.

Wachusett Mountain State Reservation: Key Findings (conclusion)



- ▶ Following appropriate review and permitting, implement the Invasive Plant Management Plan.
- ▶ Work with NHESP to develop and implement Habitat Management Plans for Reservation areas.
- ▶ Prepare a cultural resources management plan.
- ▶ Work with the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band and Nipmuc community stakeholders to build a reciprocal relationship that provides opportunities for the tribe to connect with traditional cultural resources, places, and practices, while also supporting DCR's mission through culturally responsive stewardship.

Westminster State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	424.5
Landscape Designation	Woodland (417.2 acres) No Designation (7.3 acres)
Rare Species	1 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	0 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Dog walking on leash Hiking/walking Hunting Nature study/photography Running/jogging Skiing, cross country Snowshoeing



Westminster State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Limited information available to the public about Westminster State Forest.
- ▶ Two Priority Natural Communities (Northern Atlantic White Cedar Swamp and Red Spruce Swamp) present in Forest.
- ▶ 11 Priority Management Recommendations, including:
 - ▶ Establish web page, Forest gateway, and sign plan for Forest.
 - ▶ Identify opportunities to harden or reroute trails in areas where trail use has resulted in erosion.

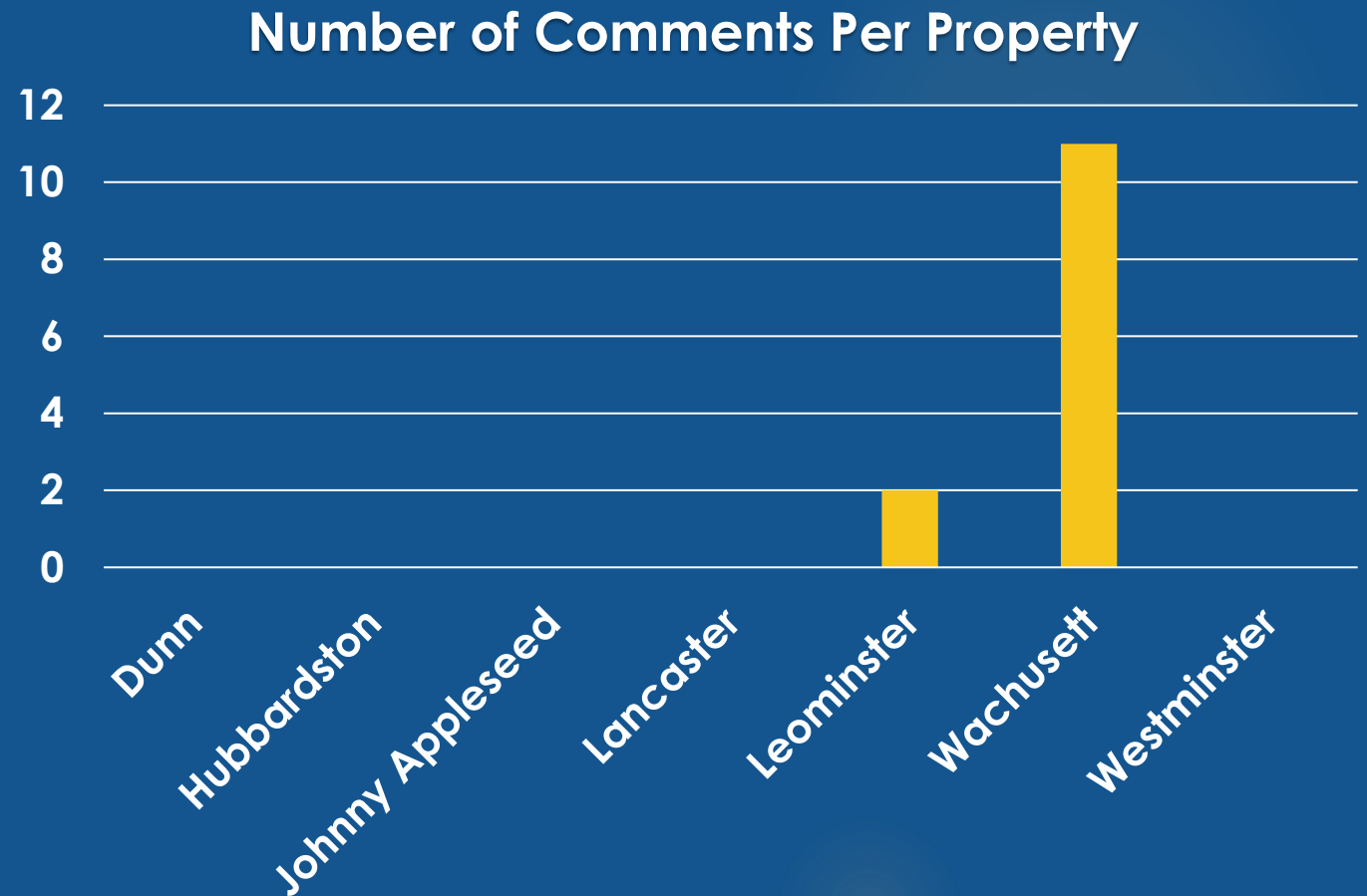
4. Comments Received

Johnny Appleseed State Park



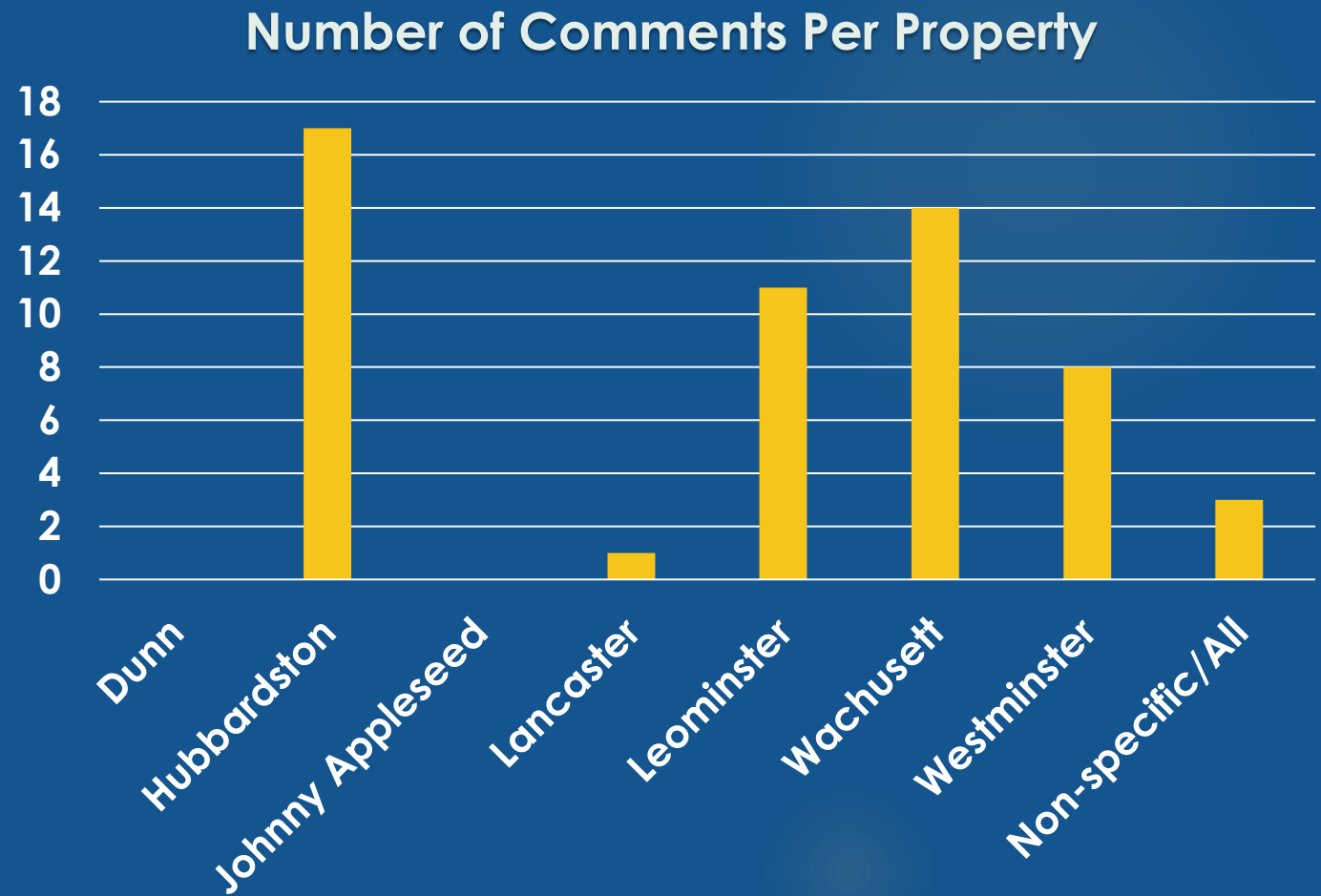
Public Meeting Comments

- ▶ # Registrants – 19
- ▶ # Attendees – 12
- ▶ # Attendees commenting – 6
- ▶ # Comments – 13



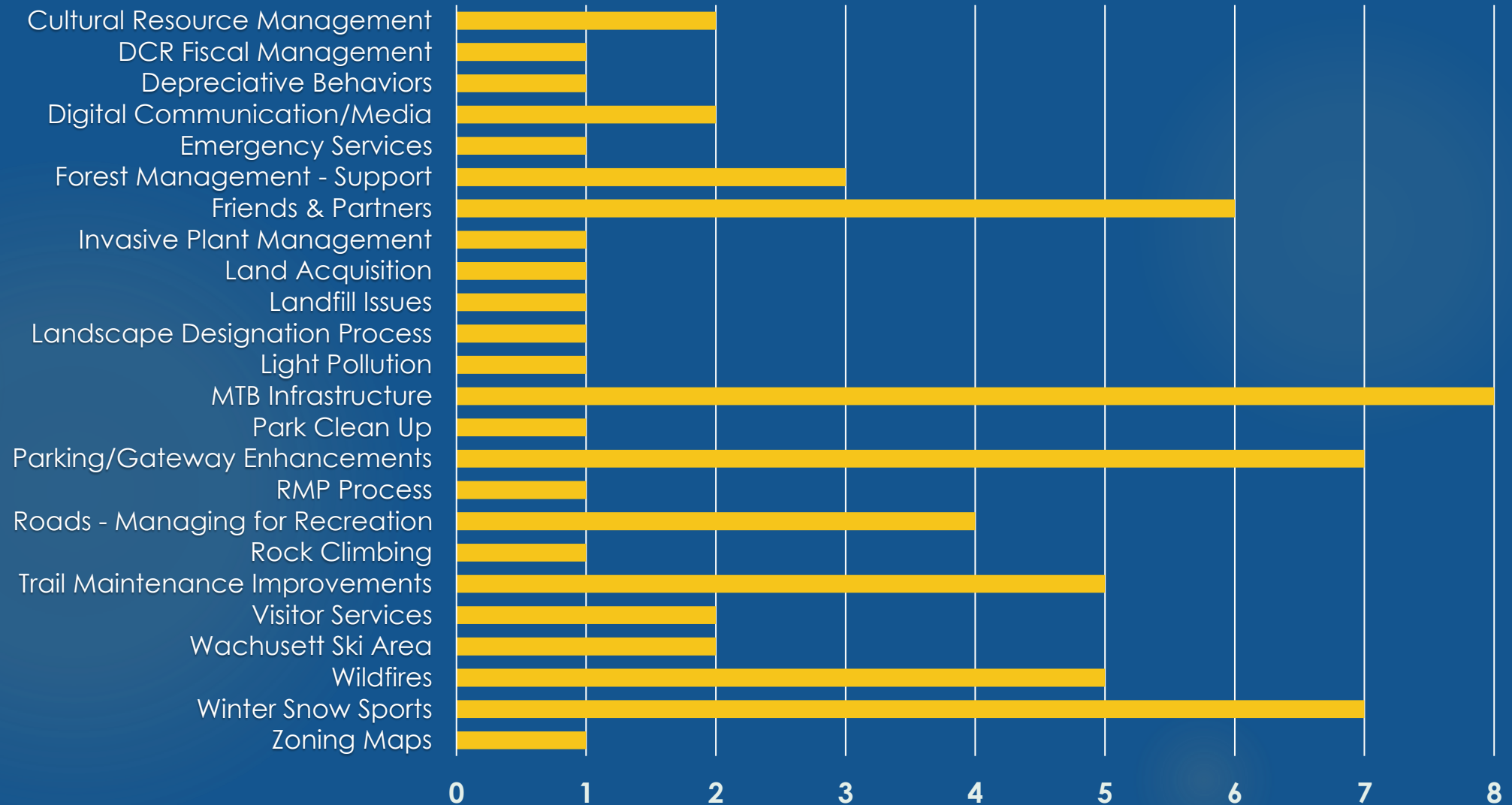
Written Comments

- ▶ # Individuals commenting – 16
- ▶ # Submittals – 17
- ▶ Comments – 54



Comments by Category – All sources

Number of Comments by Category



5. Questions, Comments, & Conversation

