



**MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Office of Cultural Resources
Best Management Practices**

Water Holes

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Goal: Preserve resource to prevent loss; monitor for vandalism and illegal activity.

Guidelines

Largely built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s, the water holes within DCR facilities once served as a first line of defense against forest fires. For that reason, they are located in remote areas of the Commonwealth's parks along old forest roads. They are not maintained as part of the active infrastructure and can present hazards for park visitors if they are obscured by brush.

For the water holes that remain, they generally include a stone-lined basin (usually filled with water), and sometimes stone inlets and outlets, remnants of culverts or piping, ramps and access roads.

General

- Maintain the water holes as man-made cultural landscape features.
- Do not fill the basin with leaf litter or other debris.
- Clean basin every 3-5 years unless restricted by other regulations (e.g. certified vernal pool regs). Cleaning is recommended to prevent the accumulation of organic matter, eutrophication, and growth of aquatic plants which can compromise the structural stability of the pool.
- If water holes present a hazard to visitors, consult with OCR on possible remedies including signage, simple barriers or other reversible treatments. Filling the water holes should be avoided.

Stonework

- Reset toppled stones from walls (drylaid only).
- Remove limbs, branches and other debris from stone walls and channels seasonally each spring.
- Record major structural collapse, report to OCR.



Vegetation

- Prune back deciduous trees to minimize leaf fall.
- Remove vegetation along stone walls to create clear zone of 6-10 feet around the pool, cut vegetation to grade, do not pull roots or stump grind.
- Do not plant within 10 feet of water holes.

Drainage

- Keep inlets and outlets free of debris to allow proper flow.
- Inspect culverts and pipes for collapse or other breaches.
- Repair erosion around drainage features following repairs.

Monitoring

- Include inspection of water holes in seasonal work plan.
- Record areas of vandalism, erosion or collapse and report to OCR.