dcr
Massachusetts

Resource Management Plan
Watson Pond State Park

Adopted by the DCR Stewardship Council Month, 2023

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Conservation and Resource Stewardship
Office of Cultural Resources

Purpose

Resource Management Plans (RMPs) are foundational documents that identify a park, forest, or reservation's defining natural, cultural, and recreational resources and identify potential threats and opportunities to guide DCR's continued stewardship of the property and to inform future decisions about the property in a way that celebrates and preserves its identity.

RMPs are prepared for "all reservations, parks, and forests under the management of the department." (M.G.L. Chapter 21: Section 2F) These plans "shall include guidelines for the operation and land stewardship of the aforementioned reservations, parks and forests, shall provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and shall ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management." DCR finalizes RMPs following a public process and adoption by the DCR Stewardship Council.

Maura T. Healey, Governor
Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor
Rebecca L. Tepper, Secretary
Brian M. Arrigo, Commissioner

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, parkways, and over 100 National Register listed properties. The agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all.

DCR honors Indigenous communities for their care, throughout many generations, of the land that DCR now stewards on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth. DCR embraces this legacy of stewardship, fostering a sense of shared responsibility by all people for protection of the waters, lands and living things for the enjoyment and appreciation of all.

To learn more about the DCR, its facilities, and programs please visit us www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.

Watson Pond State Park

South Region | South Coast District | Fall River Heritage Complex

Park Overview

Date Established	1957
Location	Taunton
Landscape Designation (acres)	
Parkland	162.8
Reserve	0.0
Woodland	0.0
Park Size (acres)	162.8
Boundary Length (miles)	4.8
Annual Attendance (2020)	8,000
Regulatory Designations (acres)	
Area of Critical Environmental Concern – Canoe River Aquifer	162.2
Environmental Justice (acres)	0.0

Long-term Agreements

None Identified N/A

Concessions

None N/A

Partners & Friends

City of Taunton

Features of Interest

- Picnic facilities
- Playground
- Waterfront area
- Watson Pond

Activities

- Boating, sail
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Dog Walking, on leash
- Fishing, fin fish
- Hiking/Walking
- Picnicking
- Playground use
- Swimming/Sunbathing
- Wildlife viewing

Contact Info: 1644 Bay St., Taunton, MA 02780
https://www.mass.gov/locations/watson-pond-state-park

Natural Resources

Elevation (feet above sea-level)	61.6–103.9
Water Resources	
Watershed(s)	Taunton
Rivers and Streams (miles)	0.1
Open Water (acres)	2.3
Wetlands (acres)	60.7
Certified Vernal Pools (#)	0
Potential Vernal Pools (#)	4
Threatened & Endangered Species	
State-Listed (# Regulatory Species)	0
State-Listed (# Non-Regulatory Species)	0
Federally Listed (#)	0
Forest Cover (acres)	98.3
Known Invasive Plants (# species)	
Aquatic	1
Terrestrial	14

Climate Change (By 2070)

Increase in annual days over 90° F	>30
Change in annual maximum daily rainfall (inches)	>10
Massachusetts Coastal Flood Risk Model area of inundation (acres)	N/A

Natural Hazards (Acres)

Flood (1.0%–0.2%-chance)	25.6–60.8
Hurricane Inundation (Cat. 1–4)	N/A

Forest Management

N/A	0.0

Cultural Resources (#)

Archaeological	6
Historic (total #)	1
National Register Listed	0
National Historic Landmark	0

Recreation Resources

Headquarters/Comfort Station	1
Pavilion	1
Picnic area	1
Playground	1
Recreation field	1
Waterfront area	1

Roads & Trails

Roads (miles)	
Unpaved	0.0
Paved	0.3
Forest Roads (miles)	
Unpaved	1.4
Paved	0.1
Trails	
Unpaved (miles)	0.1
Paved (miles)	0.03
Unauthorized Trails (miles)	2.1
Trail Density (miles/acre)	0.02
Area of Impact (acres)	129.1

Parking

Lots (#)	2
Parking Spaces (#)	88
Accessible (HP)	4
Other	84

Interpretive Programming

(#Programs/#Contacts)

Formal Programming (2019)	
DCR	0/0

INTRODUCTION

Watson Pond State Park (Watson Pond or the Park) is located in Bristol County, in the City of Taunton. It is situated approximately 25 miles south of Boston and 17 miles northeast of Providence, Rhode Island, and easily accessible from nearby Route I-495. The Park is within the Bristol Lowlands/Narragansett Lowlands Ecoregion. Watson Pond is bordered to the north and west by the Myles Standish Industrial Park and on the east by Bay Street and residential parcels.

The Park is on land shaped by generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants. Past and present Indigenous residents embody fluid, relational connections to the places and spaces now known as Watson Pond State Park. Indigenous groups and individuals, including peoples known as the Massachusetts, Pokanoket, and Wampanoag are recorded in available documentation as having relationships to this place over seasons and generations (Native Land Digital 2023). The Taunton area was capable of sustaining a moderate to large Native American population due to the presence of freshwater ponds, several rivers and streams, and direct access to the coast (Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) 1981). Bay Street, the road from which the Park is accessed, is believed to follow the course of the Massachusetts Bay Path, a major Native American route (MHC 1981). The Town of Taunton "dates from 1638 when settlers from Plymouth purchased land from Native Americans in today's East Taunton" (Stantec 2018); it was incorporated as a city in 1864. In 1955, the Commonwealth acquired approximately 10 acres of land at Watson Pond "for construction… of a swimming area and recreation center, including fishing" (Massachusetts General Court (MGC) 1955). The Park was established in 1957 with a bathhouse, picnic pavilion, and interpretive center. Since its inception, Watson Pond has provided recreational opportunities to residents of Southeastern Massachusetts. The Park underwent a major expansion in the early 2000s, with the acquisition of parcels from the former Paul A. Dever State School. It now consists of approximately 163 acres and includes the entire shoreline of Watson Pond, adjacent wetlands, and forested uplands. Municipal water supply wells and an associated water tower are sited in the Park. Watson Pond Dam (NID# MA03258) at Bay Street controls water levels in the pond, whose outflows enter the larger Lake Sabbatia east of Bay Street.

Watson Pond is a day-use park that is open seasonally from approximately Memorial Day through Labor Day; there is a daily parking fee. The swimming area and recreation center envisioned in 1955 remain popular spots for families and are used for swimming, fishing, picnicking, and playground use. Even after the Park's expansion, the original 10-acre acquisition remains the "recreation center" envisioned in the enabling legislation.

PARK IDENTITY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Watson Pond State Park offers recreational opportunities on the tree-lined shore of a beautiful pond. Visitors come to enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking, and playing on the playground and in the field area. Future uses and development of Watson Pond should be consistent with its identity as seasonal day-use facility with an emphasis on water-dependent recreation (e.g., swimming and fishing).

Watson Pond State Park is significant for the following reasons:

- It is one of only a few public freshwater swimming areas in Southeastern Massachusetts.
- It is a popular spot for family and group outings but can also be a place for solitude and relaxation.
- Watson Pond is within the Canoe River Aquifer Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

DEFINING RESOURCES AND VALUES

Resources that define the Park are related to Watson Pond. They include:

- Watson Pond, which provides opportunities for fishing, boating, and swimming.
- A designated waterfront with roped off swimming area.
- A picnic pavilion, picnic tables, and grills offer amenities for families and friends to gather by the pond shore and among the trees.

- A high-yield aquifer that supplies drinking water for City of Taunton and for the Park. Watson Pond State Park helps protect this aquifer and drinking water source in a largely developed landscape.
- A mixture of upland forests, open water, and wetlands including the "Imperiled" Inland Atlantic White Cedar Swamp natural community type, bogs, and a fen.

INTERPRETIVE THEME

Watson Pond State Park provides an opportunity for visitors to experience and appreciate a respite from summer's heat with swimming and picnicking along the shores of Watson Pond.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Watson Pond State Park provides a variety of visitor experiences, including the following:

- **Virtual Visitor Experience.** Potential visitors will find detailed information about Watson Pond State Park on DCR's web site. The Park has its own web page that provides potential visitors information needed to plan a visit. (https://www.mass.gov/locations/watson-pond-state-park)
- **Entering the Park.** The Park's gateway is its main entrance on Bay Street. Visitors enter the park through the main gate and park their vehicle. During peak periods of use, visitors may queue up along Bay Street while waiting for parking to become available in the Park. Some visitors park along the shoulder of Bay Street and walk into the Park.
- **Day-use Area.** The Park's recreational facilities are concentrated between Bay Street and the eastern shore of the pond and includes the following:
  - **Waterfront.** Visitors of all ages often spend the day at the waterfront area swimming, sunbathing, and playing in the water.
  - **Picnic Facilities.** Tables, grills, and a pavilion are provided along the pond shore and the adjacent pine forest for visitors looking to gather with friends and family or take a break from activities.
  - **Playground.** A playground is available for families with younger children. Adjacent to the playground is a grass field that is used for recreation activities such as impromptu ball games and field day activities.
- **Fishing.** Since its establishment in 1955, Watson Pond has attracted anglers to its shores. Most visitors find spots along the pond shore to fish, while other visitors fish from boats and kayaks.
- **Non-motorized Boating.** Some visitors bring their own car-top boats, carrying them from the parking lot to the shore, to launch them in Watson Pond.

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following information identifies potential threats to the Park's natural and cultural resources and identifies opportunities to enhance their protection and stewardship. Although not considered a resource under statute (M.G.L. Part I, Title II, Chapter 21, Sections 2F), recreation is also included below because it is an important part of the park-going experience, helps define a park's values, and is a key part assessing the consistency of activities taking place in the Commonwealth's forests, parks, and reservations.

Threats and opportunities identified below are used to inform the development of management recommendations. Potential recommendations must meet prioritization criteria to be included in the Priority Recommendations table, page 16.

Natural Resources

Threats

- Invasive plants, including Japanese knotweed, multiflora rose, and Asiatic bittersweet grow near the park entrance and may spread throughout the day-use area if not controlled.

- Purple loosestrife, an invasive plant associated with wet soils, has been reported from the Park's wetlands (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) 2021).
- Carolina Fanwort, a rooted aquatic invasive plant, is present in Watson Pond (DEP 2021). This plant can limit human use of waterbodies by restricting "aquatic activities such as fishing, swimming, and boating" (ENSR International 2005).
- Stormwater from the overflow parking lot flows across the beach, causing minor erosion.
- Identified impairments to Watson Pond's include Algae, low Dissolved Oxygen, *Enterococcus*, Carolina Fanwort, Nutrient/Eutrophication Biological Indicators, high Total Phosphorous, and low Transparency/Clarity (DEP 2021). The pond's waters do not support Aquatic Life Use (DEP 2021).
- Reoccurring annual exceedances of Enterococci in water samples indicate the potential issue of pollution in the pond. This is exacerbated by the presence of a large population of Canada geese in the Park. Their droppings in the waterfront area wash into the pond and accumulate in the sand and sediments. Over time this build-up can result in water quality issues. In the past, this has required the removal of nutrient rich sediments from just off the beach.
- User-created trails established between the parking lot and the pond have damaged vegetation and created the potential for future erosion. There is exposed and compacted soil throughout the day-use area.
- Park users have created a trail from the Waterfront Area northward along the pond shore to multiple points where they have accessed the water for fishing and to launch boats. They have cut vegetation to create unauthorized trails and have worn away the vegetation creating patches of eroded soils.
- Depreciative behaviors in the west side of the Park include the unauthorized use of off-road vehicles, fires, damage to trees, and the dumping of trash in the woods and in the water.

Opportunities

- Invasive plants near the park entrance are isolated populations and could be easily managed by implementing recommendations in the regional *Invasive Plant Management Plan* (BSC Group 2017) before they spread throughout the day-use area.
- Having a lake consultant conduct a study on the pond and its impairments would provide a clearer picture of the threats facing the pond and identify potential steps for mitigation.
- Managing stormwater runoff from the overflow parking lot into the pond would reduce erosion and improve water quality.
- Establishing a formal, hardened, and accessible car-top boat launch, and restoring the bank of the pond, would decrease damage to the pond shore and limit user-created trails from the parking lot and along the bank.
- Minimizing vehicle entry points on north and west sides of the Park could help prevent unauthorized access and reduce vandalism and illegal dumping, thereby protecting resources.
- Establishing a trail system around the pond would allow designated access for visitors to see the pond and explore other parts of the Park. This could help decrease vegetation and soil damage caused by users creating their own trails to the pond.
- Some of the four potential vernal pools may provide additional breeding habitat for the Park's amphibians. Surveying these pools and certifying them, as appropriate, may help better protect these animals.
- Surveying the Atlantic White Cedar Swamp to identify potential rare species would help identify, manage, and conserve this resource.
- There is an opportunity for geocachers to work with park staff to place geocaches in appropriate and approved locations, away from sensitive natural and cultural resources.

Cultural Resources

Threats

- Undeveloped areas around Watson Pond are considered highly sensitive for archaeological resources; any below ground activity could impact these resources.
- Vandalism of abandoned camp facilities in the southwest part of the property threatens these potentially historic resources.

Opportunities

- A plaque on a boulder in the day-use area indicates that the farm of John Gilbert, a colonist who helped settle Taunton, was located on Watson Pond and that he was buried in 1657 near the site of the plaque. Assessing and locating the possible burial site would tell us more about the history of Watson Pond and protect it from inadvertent disturbance.
- Assessing the Kay Furcolo Memorial Camp pavilion and the vacant "pool shelter" building from former Paul A. Dever State School in southwest part of property would help determine the potential historical significance of these buildings, if any.
- There are no interpretive materials on the history of the land that became Watson Pond State Park. Developing such materials would help visitors learn about and appreciate the Park's cultural history.

Recreation

Threats

- Much of the Park's wetlands and pond shore are subject to flooding. Approximately 16% of the Park is exposed to 1.0%-chance flood events. This is primarily wetland areas, although the pavilion, nearly all of the beach, and limited sections of the picnic area are also exposed. A 0.2%-chance flood event exposes an additional 20% of the Park to flooding. This includes additional wetlands and limited uplands. No additional recreation infrastructure is exposed by 0.2%-chance flood events.
- There is occasional reoccurring vandalism of the headquarters/comfort station building and the cutting of locks to gain access to the building.
- Beach goers often use the bathhouse sink to rinse off, resulting in sand in the plumbing, which leads to an increased incidence of plumbing maintenance and repair.
- There are no accessible recreation opportunities currently offered and some of the Park's recreation infrastructure, such as the playground, is currently not accessible. In addition, the route to the comfort station is too steep to meet accessibility standards.
- There were 28 "single sample exceedances" of Enterococci from 2012–2021, with most occurring in 2015 or earlier. Each exceedance resulted in beach closure. Because of potential illness-causing pathogens, visitors are unable to participate in water-based recreation activities for the time that the beach is posted and closed (Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) 2020).
- Water quality impairments identified by DEP (2021) as occurring at Watson Pond present a potential threat to recreational fishing, paddling, and swimming at the Pond.
- Pavement damage in both parking lots is a threat to universal access.
- The parking lot fills to capacity on most summer weekends leading to visitors parking on Bay Street and walking in. This presents a threat to public safety as Bay Street is a busy road.
- Because the Park's western and northern boundaries do not contact publicly accessible roads, there are no opportunities to create public parking to access this section of the Park.
- The Park has an identification sign but lacks a Welcome Wayside. Visitors to the Park are provided no information on its resources or recreation opportunities.

- Geocaches not approved by the property manager are in parts of the Park away from the developed recreation area, and not along official trails. Unapproved geocaches could encourage geocachers to create their own trails in areas with sensitive resources.

Opportunities

- Ongoing repair and maintenance of the headquarters/comfort station building would improve recreational experience for visitors and conditions for staff.
- Installing outdoor showers for visitors would reduce the number of plumbing and maintenance issues caused by sand in the sink's drainpipe.
- A study of the pond's aquatic impairments would provide a clearer picture of the threats facing the pond's resources and identify potential steps for mitigation.
- Constructing nature trails and/or passive recreation amenities for the general public that are accessible for individuals with disabilities and creating a universally accessible water access/fishing location would make Watson Pond a more inviting destination for people of all abilities.
- Establishing a formal, hardened, and accessible car-top boat launch, and restoring the bank of the pond would decrease damage to the pond shore, limit user-created trails, and improve the visitor experience.
- Additional recreational resources, such as a volleyball net or athletic court, could provide expanded recreation options for visitors.
- Replacing old and broken grills and picnic tables would improve the recreation experience for visitors.
- There is an opportunity to create a positive human presence in the west and north sections of the Park through the introduction of authorized recreation activities. In accordance with Chapter 395 of the Acts of 2002 (MGC 2002), "all trails constructed shall be constructed in such a manner that would allow the participation of individuals with disabilities to the extent possible."
- There is an opportunity for geocachers to work with park staff to place geocaches in approved locations away from sensitive natural and cultural resources.
- Working with City of Taunton Police to enforce a "No Parking" on Bay Street could help reduce the number of people parking along the road shoulder.

Climate Change

Climate change impacts nearly every aspect of DCR's properties, from ecosystem health, to infrastructure, to recreation. The Department is actively working to mitigate and adapt to current and future impacts through such actions as forest management, decarbonizing DCR's buildings and vehicles, protecting wetlands, and using nature-based solutions to minimize stormwater impacts. Information on these, and other, efforts is incorporated into RMPs as available and appropriate.

DCR manages its forests to provide a range of ecosystem services such as recreation, clean water, wood commodities, and wildlife habitat (DCR 2020). For ecosystems under its management, DCR carefully considers both their vulnerability to climate change and their ability to mitigate the effects of climate change by storing carbon in ecosystems and harvested wood products. Several approaches are used to monitor DCR forests and to design forest management strategies to adapt to climate change and provide ecosystem services. (See Swanston et al. (2016) for information on adaptation strategies and approaches associated with DCR's forest management.) Established in 1957, DCR's Continuous Forest Inventory System (CFI) uses a network of more than 2,000 permanent plots on which repeated measurements are taken on an ongoing basis. The CFI measures the status, size, and health of over 100,000 trees; other vegetation; down woody material; and the forest floor. (See DCR 2014 for additional information on the CFI System.) This information helps DCR understand at a strategic scale the current character, condition, and trends of forest ecosystems under its care. DCR also uses operational inventory to help plan specific treatments and evaluate their outcomes. Using these different scales of information, remotely sensed data, and local and regional external expertise, DCR plans projects that help its stands, forests, and other lands adapt to climate change and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. For additional

information on the relationship between DCR's forest management practices and climate change, please see pages 77–85 in *Massachusetts Forest Action Plan 2020* (DCR 2020) and Managing Our Forests…For Carbon Benefits (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/managing-our-forests-for-carbon-benefits).

The Department is actively assessing the vulnerability of its properties and facilities to the anticipated impacts of climate change. A Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) will be used by DCR to enhance park operations and maintenance, inform resilient investment, and provide a framework for hazard mitigation and climate adaptation for natural resources, cultural resources, buildings, facilities, and other infrastructure. Property-specific climate change information derived from the CCVA is included in the RMP dashboard (see Climate Change (by 2070)).

Climate Exposure

During the preparation of Resource Management Plans some resources may be identified as having particularly high exposure to the anticipated impacts of climate change. When this occurs, these resources are described in the RMP.

The Park's Inland Atlantic White Cedar Swamp (S2-Imperiled) is sensitive to hydrologic changes. Atlantic White Cedar Swamps require a natural cycle of wet and dry period for their survival and reproduction; any alteration to the natural hydroperiod threatens their persistence (Swain 2020). Changes in precipitation, or the regulation of water over the Watson Pond Dam, have the potential to impact this community type.

Applied Land Stewardship Zoning

DCR assesses the appropriate uses and stewardship of its properties at two spatial scales: the landscape level and the property level.

Landscape Designation

In 2012, DCR engaged in a comprehensive system-wide assessment of lands managed by its Division of State Parks and Recreation, designating them as Reserve, Woodland, or Parkland. (See Landscape Designations for DCR Parks & Forests: Selection Criteria and Management Guidelines (DCR 2012) for details.) Multiple Landscape Designations may apply to parks with diverse resources and levels of development. All of Watson Pond State Park was designated Parkland. Identification of Land Stewardship Zones within Watson Pond was performed in the context of the Parkland Landscape Designation.

The following Land Stewardship Zoning is recommended to guide management and any future development. (See Land Stewardship Zoning map, page 13.)

Zone 1

Zone 1 areas have highly sensitive ecological and/or cultural resources that require additional management approaches and practices to protect and preserve these special features and their values (DCR 2012). The following areas of Watson Pond State Park have been designated Zone 1.

- No areas of the Park have been designated as Zone 1.

Zone 2

Zone 2 areas provide for a balance between resource stewardship and recreational opportunities that can be appropriately sustained. They include stable yet important cultural and natural resources. These areas provide a buffer for sensitive resources, recharge areas for surface and groundwaters, and large areas where existing public recreation activities can be managed at sustainable levels (DCR 2012). The following areas of Watson Pond State Park have been designated Zone 2.

- All areas of the Park not designated as Zone 3.

Zone 3

Zone 3 areas include altered landscapes in active use and areas suitable for future administrative, maintenance, and recreation areas (DCR 2012). The following areas of Watson Pond State Park are currently developed, appropriate for potential future development, or intensively used for recreation. They have been designated Zone 3.

- Watson Pond Dam (NID ID# MA 03258).
- The original, approximately 10-acre recreation area. Extending from the Watson Pond Dam northward along Bay Road, to the northern property boundary, and westward to the pond. This encompasses picnic areas, the picnic pavilion, the headquarters/comfort station, playground, waterfront area, and both parking lots.
- Developed areas associated with the City of Taunton's water supply facilities in the Park, including but not limited to the water tower, well houses, parking areas, and access areas.

Significant Feature Overlay

Significant Feature Overlays provide precise management guidance in order to maintain or preserve recognized resources features regardless of the Land Stewardship Zone in which they occur. The following Significant Feature Overlays were developed for Watson Pond State Park:

- **Area of Critical Environmental Concern Overlay**. This overlay includes the 162.2 acres of the Canoe River Aquifer ACEC within the Park (i.e., the entire park). Projects and activities within ACECs must minimize adverse effects on sensitive resources and are guided by a variety of regulations and programs that are summarized in the *ACEC Guide to State Regulations and Programs* (DCR 2017).
- **Wellhead Protection Overlay.** This overlay includes two Zone I Wellhead Protection Areas in the northwest corner of the Park. Within this overlay, activities must be consistent with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Guidance (DEP 2011) and should be consistent with Wellhead Protection Tips (DEP 1995).

DCR Stewardship Map Tool

This RMP should be viewed in conjunction with DCR's Stewardship Map, a GIS-based tool that allows users to view a property's natural, cultural, and recreational resources. The Stewardship Map tool is dynamic, and information continues to be updated after adoption of an RMP. Guidance for using the tool, as well as Best Management Practices for resource stewardship, are located on the Stewardship Map site: https://dcrsgis-mass-eoeea.hub.arcgis.com/.

Consistency Review

Resource Management Plans "shall ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management" (M.G.L. Part 1, Title II, Chapter 21, Section 2F). For planning purposes, an activity is considered consistent with resource protection if it has no significant, long-term, adverse impact on resources. To this end, a series of indicators were developed to evaluate the impacts of recreation and forest management on natural and cultural resources.

Many activities with the potential to negatively affect resources are already subject to agency and/or regulatory review (e.g., forest management activities, projects within Priority Habitat). For these activities, compliance with state regulations, regulatory authority guidance, DCR policies and processes, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) is considered an indicator of consistency between park use and resource protection. New indicators were generated for activities not subject to agency or regulatory review, and are based on available data, information readily identifiable via aerial imagery or site visits, assessments by DCR subject matter experts, or the property manager's knowledge of park conditions and use. (See Consistency Assessment, page 14.)

Indicators are applied during the RMP planning process in order to ensure a standardized assessment of consistency across all properties in the DCR system. Inconsistencies identified via the application of indicators are used to inform the development of management recommendations.

The status of indicators (Yes, No, and N/A) were accurate at the time this RMP was prepared and were used for planning purposes. ***However, they represent a snapshot in time and may not reflect future conditions.*** In addition, the status of indicators will change as recommendations get implemented.

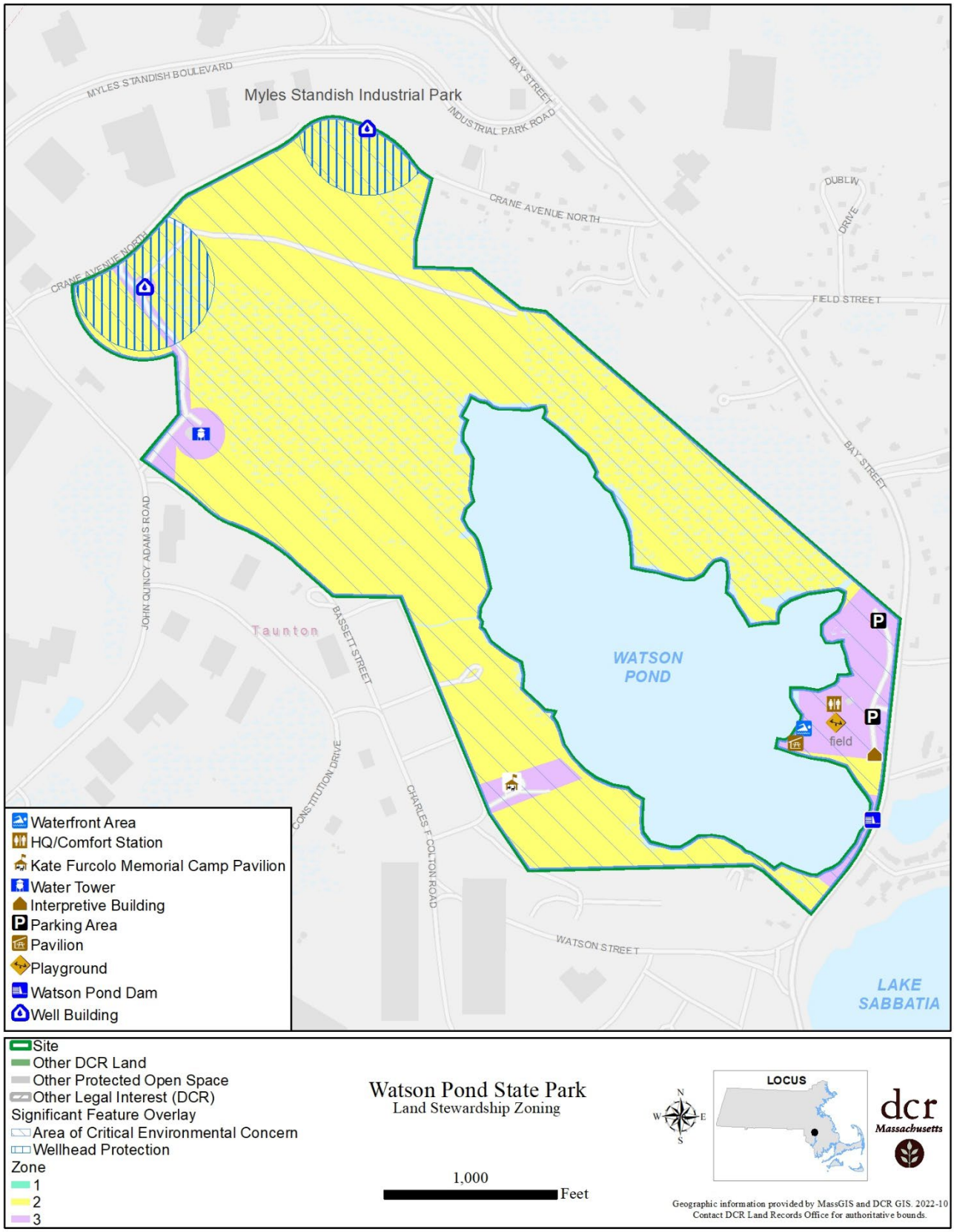
Management Recommendations

Eight priority management recommendations were developed for Watson Pond. They are presented in the table Priority Recommendations for Watson Pond State Park, page 16. All recommendations are of equal importance.

Priority management recommendations derive from Threats, Opportunities, and Consistency Assessment information presented in this RMP. For a recommendation to be considered a priority and listed in the table, it must meet one or more of the criteria listed below. Maintenance and management needs not meeting one or more of these criteria are not included in the table but are identified in the Threats and Opportunities sections.

The following types of recommendations are considered priority:

- Natural resource stewardship and restoration activities consistent with park identity and intended to improve ecological function and connectivity.
- Cultural resource management activities consistent with park identity and intended to prevent the loss of integrity of significant cultural resources.
- Improvements consistent with park identity that are needed to support intended park activities.
- Actions required for regulatory compliance or compliance with legal agreements.
- Activities that prevent or ameliorate threats to the health and safety of park visitors and employees.
- Activities that address inconsistencies among recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management, as identified through use of the Consistency Assessment checklist.


Myles Standish Industrial Park
MYLES STANDISH BOULEVARD
BAY STREET
INDUSTRIAL PARK ROAD
CRANE AVENUE NORTH
DUBLIN DRIVE
FIELD STREET
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS ROAD
Taunton
BASSETT STREET
CONSTITUTION DRIVE
CHARLES F COLTON ROAD
WATSON STREET
WATSON POND
field
LAKE SABBATIA
Waterfront Area
HQ/Comfort Station
Kate Furcolo Memorial Camp Pavilion
Water Tower
Interpretive Building
Parking Area
Pavilion
Playground
Watson Pond Dam
Well Building
Site
Other DCR Land
Other Protected Open Space
Other Legal Interest (DCR)
Significant Feature Overlay
Area of Critical Environmental Concern
Wellhead Protection
Zone
1
2
3
Watson Pond State Park
Land Stewardship Zoning
1,000
Feet
N
W
E
S
LOCUS
dcr
Massachusetts
Geographic information provided by MassGIS and DCR GIS. 2022-10
Contact DCR Land Records Office for authoritative bounds.

CONSISTENCY ASSESSMENT *This assessment represents a snapshot in time and may not reflect future conditions.*	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**
Landscape Designation			
G.1. All development and uses of the park since 2012, or currently planned for the park, are consistent with its Landscape Designation(s).	X		
Natural Resources			
N1. All projects (normal maintenance activities, special projects, volunteer projects) conducted within Priority Habitat were reviewed and approved through DCR's internal review process and by NHESP for potential impacts to rare species and their habitats.			X
N2. All projects conducted within areas subject to state and/or federal wetlands or waterways regulations were reviewed and approved through DCR's internal review process; reviewed and approved through the appropriate, local, state, and/or federal review process; and were carried out in accordance with the terms of a valid permit.		X	
N3. Sensitive resource areas, such as steep slopes, riverbanks, streambanks, pond and lakeshores, wetlands, and dunes are free of desire paths and other user-created trails.		X	
N4. Aquatic areas adjacent to beaches, boat ramps and launches, roads, and hiking trails are free of eroded sediments.		X	
N5. The extent of exposed soil in campground and/or picnic sites is stable or decreasing.*	X		
N6. The extent of native vegetation in campground and/or picnic sites is stable or increasing.*	X		
N7. Area of trail impacts in Reserves is less than 50% of total park area. (See Naughton (2021) for information on primary area of trail impacts.)			X
N8. Congregations of breeding, migratory, or wintering wildlife are protected from disturbance by temporary (e.g., seasonal) restrictions on recreational access.			X
N9. Geocaches, letterboxes, orienteering control locations, and other discovery destinations are located outside sensitive natural resource areas and their locations have been reviewed and approved by park personnel.*		X	
N10. Zone I wellhead protection areas are free of vehicle parking, chemical storage, or concentrated recreation.			X
N11. All boat ramps and launches have cleaning stations and/or educational signs and materials on preventing the spread of aquatic invasive organisms.*			X
N12. For each barrier beach there is a current, approved Barrier Beach Management Plan and all beach-related activities are conducted in accordance with this plan.			X
Cultural Resources			
C1. All maintenance activities and projects with the potential to cause sub-surface disturbance are being reviewed by the DCR archaeologist for potential impacts to archaeological resources.	X		
C2. All maintenance activities and projects affecting historic properties (buildings, structures, and landscapes over 50-years-old) are being reviewed by the Office of Cultural Resources to avoid adverse impacts.	X		
C3. Historic buildings, structures, and landscapes are being used, maintained, and repaired in a manner that preserves their cultural integrity and conveys their historic significance to park visitors.	X		
C4. Recreational activities such as hiking, biking, and boating are not eroding cultural properties such as archaeological sites or historic landscapes through creation of desire lines, rutting in the landscape, damage to historic built features, or excessive scouring (erosion) of coastal and shoreline areas.	X		
C5. Geocaches, letterboxes, and other discovery destinations are located away from sensitive cultural resources, and their locations have been reviewed and approved by park personnel.		X	
C6. Historic buildings, structures, landscapes, archaeological sites, and concentrations of historic resources are located outside of areas predicted to be subject to flooding, storm surge, or sea-level rise.		X	

Consistency Assessment continues on next page.

CONSISTENCY ASSESSMENT *This assessment represents a snapshot in time and may not reflect future conditions.*	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**
Recreation			
R1. Types of recreation, levels of recreational use, and types and extent of recreation infrastructure are consistent with the park's identity statement.		X	
R2. Trail density is consistent with the park's Landscape Designation(s). (See *Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual* (DCR 2019) for density thresholds.)		X	
R3. All authorized trail construction was performed in accordance with an approved Trail Proposal Form.			X
R4. Over 90% of the park's official trails network is classified as being in Fair or better condition.	X		
R5. Recurring use by OHVs is restricted to authorized trails.*		X	
R6. There is a high level of compliance with dog leash regulations and policies.*	X		
R7. Athletic fields are free of recreation-caused impacts (e.g., bare spots) to turf.*	X		
R8. Water-based recreation is consistent with: "Uses Attained" designation as identified by Mass DEP in its most current list of integrated waters (e.g., DEP 2021); DPH fish consumption advisories; and/or water quality testing at waterfront areas.	X		
R9. Recreation facilities are located outside of areas subject to flooding, storm surge, or sea-level rise.		X	
Sustainable Forest Management			
F1. Forestry activities are consistent with Landscape Designation and associated forestry guidelines.	X		
F2. Forestry activities are consistent with current Forest Resource Management Plan.			X
F3. Tree cutting is performed in accordance with an approved cutting plan, if required under the Massachusetts Forest Cutting Practices Act (M.G.L. Ch. 132, Sections 40–46).			X

***** *As assessed by property manager.*

Priority recommendations for Watson Pond State Park. All recommendations are of equal importance.

Category	Recommendation	Implementation[a]
Natural Resources	Conduct a study of the pond's aquatic impairments in order to provide a clearer picture of the threats facing the pond and to identify actionable steps for mitigation.	Consultant, **Lakes and Ponds Program**
Natural Resources	Survey the Inland Atlantic white cedar swamp for the presence of state-listed species.	Consultant, **Office of Natural Resources**
Natural Resources	Install additional gates and barricades along access roads and open areas in the north and west sections of the Park in order to block off entry points to prevent unauthorized OHV use, fires, and dumping.	**Park Operations**
Cultural Resources	Locate and assess the historic burial site of John Gilbert in the day-use area.	Contractor, **Office of Cultural Resources**
Cultural Resources	Assess the Kay Furcolo Memorial Camp pavilion and pool shelter from the former Dever School for historical significance and potential disposition.	**Office of Cultural Resources**
Recreation	Create a Master Plan for the Watson Pond day-use area to address many of the threats and opportunities identified in this document.	**Landscape Architecture Section**
Recreation	Assess the potential for a trails network on the north and west sides of the pond to "allow for the participation of individuals with disabilities to the extent possible" (MGC 2002). If warranted, design and construct the trails network.	Partner, **Trails and Greenways Section, Universal Access Program**
Recreation	Develop and install a Welcome Wayside.	**Interpretive Services, Park Operations**

a. The lead party responsible for implementation is identified in bold.

References

BSC Group, Inc. 2017. Invasive plant management plan: South Region. Produced in association with: DCR Ecology & ACEC Program, June 2017.

ENSR International. 2005. Rapid response plan for fanwort (*Cabomba carolina*) in Massachusetts. June 2005. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fanwort-1/download>

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). 2012. Landscape designations for DCR parks & forests: Selection criteria and management guidelines. March 2012. <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/200210>

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). 2014. Manual for continuous forest inventory field procedures. Bureau of Forestry, Division of State Parks and Recreation, February 2014. <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/624791/ocn971134326.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). 2017. ACEC Guide to State Regulations and Programs. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/acec-guide-to-regulations-programs/download>

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). 2019. Trails guidelines and best practices manual. Updated July 2019. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-trails-guidelines-and-best-practices-manual/download>

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). 2020. Massachusetts Forest Action Plan 2020. Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry. <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/840801/on1244178269.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). 1995. Wellhead protection tips for small public water supply systems. <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/op/welltips.pdf>

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). 2021. Final Massachusetts integrated list of waters for the Clean Water Act 2018/2020 Reporting Cycle. November 2021. Prepared by: Massachusetts Division of Watershed Management, Watershed Planning Program. <https://www.mass.gov/lists/integrated-lists-of-waters-related-reports>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). 2020. Massachusetts beach testing results: Annual report 2020. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-annual-beach-report-0/download>

Massachusetts General Court (MGC). 1955. Chapter 738 of the Acts of 1955. An act to provide for a special capital outlay program for the Commonwealth. <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/52496>

Massachusetts General Court (MGC). 2002. Chapter 395 of the Acts of 2002. An act authorizing the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance to convey a certain parcel of land to the Taunton Development Corporation. <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/121802>

Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). 1981. MHC Reconnaissance Survey town report: Taunton. Report Date: 1981. <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/SE-Mass/tau.pdf>

Native Land Digital. 2023. Native Land Digital. <https://native-land.ca/>

Naughton, M. 2021. Wildlife and recreation: Understanding and managing the effects of trail use on wildlife. Prepared for Vermont Fish and Wildlife and Vermont Forests, Parks, and Recreation. November 2021.

Stantec. 2018. Taunton tomorrow: City of Taunton Comprehensive Master Plan, 2019–2040. <https://www.taunton-ma.gov/Archive.aspx?ADID=64>

Swanston, C. W., M. K. Janowiak, L. A. Brandt, P. R. Butler, S. D. Handler, P. D. Shannon, A. Derby Lewis, K. Hall, R. T. Fahey, L. Scott, A. Kerber, J. W. Miesbauer, L. Darling, L. Parker, and M. St. Pierre. 2016. Forest adaptation resources: Climate change tools and approaches for land managers, 2nd ed. Gen. Tech. Rep. NRS-GTR-87-2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeast Research Station. Newtown Square, PA. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/nrs/pubs/gtr/gtr_nrs87-2.pdf>