The landscape of Myles Standish State Forest has been shaped over time by the forces of glaciers, climate, fire, and human activity. About 20,000 years ago, the area was covered by a massive glacier. As the ice retreated, billions of tons of sand and stones were deposited in this area of southeastern Massachusetts. Steep-duned beaches of sand occasionally helped to freeze deposits creating deep ponds. Today, we have a huge variety of wildlife, resulting in today’s forest’s pockets and kettle holes.

Frost pockets are depressions that accumulate cooler air, allowing frost to occur in an area—sometimes even in summer. A few degrees of frost help control soil temperatures in frost pockets, reducing the amount of low temperatures in the area. Frost pockets are not a danger to you or your pets. Frost pockets are the result of cold-air drainage and the formation of a local wind system.

Frost pockets are a unique geological feature, and many species of plants and animals, including the Pine Barrens, have adapted to them. The area was covered in glaciers many times, forming large ice sheets and glacial lakes. As the ice sheets melted, they deposited large amounts of sand and gravel, creating what we now call the Pine Barrens.

The Pine Barrens is a globally rare Pine Barrens ecosystem, sensitive frost pocket habitats, and sensitive plant communities. They are home to many rare habitats and species, including the Blueberry, Huckleberry, and Crowberry. MSSF is home to the third-largest Pine Barrens in the world.

Landscape Conservation

The Pine Barrens Path is a unique side of the forest that is a nice hike for those who wish to experience this unusual landscape. The Pine Barrens Path is a trail that winds through a variety of ecosystems, including the Pine Barrens, Bogs, and Wetlands. It is a perfect hike for those who wish to experience the variety of ecosystems found in the MSSF.

What to do at Myles Standish

A FOUR SEASON FOREST

MSSF is your year-round outdoor destination. Camping, fishing, hiking, biking, and hiking are popular in the summer, hunting and hiking in the fall, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing in the winter. Hiking, star-gazing, and bird-watching in the spring. Throughout the year we have special events such as guided hikes, cranberry bog tours, and a popular fishing derby. This magnificent forest has much to offer for visitors in any season.

Fishing and Hunting

Fishing is popular at MSSF. There are dozens of ponds, tucked into the forest, perfect for a quiet fishing trip.

BICYCLING THE ROCKY POND PATH

This trail is a nice introduction to the forest. Starting from Headquarters, it is a recreational trail that is off-road and suitable for all ages and abilities. It is a nice, quiet ride that is perfect for a family outing.

EAST END LOOP/HEALTHY HEART TRAIL

This trail is a nice loop that winds through the pine, spruce, and tamarack forests and is ideal for those looking for a short hike in the forest.

CAMPING AND DAY USE AREAS

MSSF offers four camping areas, tucked into the forest or set along the edges of some of the larger ponds. One loop is set aside specifically for hikers and another is set aside for group camping.

Camping reservations can be made through www.reservation.com. One year in advance at Headquarters. Call 1-866-PK-WATCH for reservations and wait for the rider’s instructions. For one-day stays at Bennett Pond, call 508-836-2771. For one-day stays at College Pond, call 508-836-2771. For one-day stays at Rocky Pond, call 508-836-2771.

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Software-guided trail brochures, updated trail information, and a paved bike path can be picked up at Headquarters.

BICYCLE THE CAMPING POND LAKES

6.25 miles round trip. Easy.

These scenic bike loops are perfect for families and people looking for a relaxing ride to Fishing Pond and Charge Pond. Begin at Headquarters where you will find public restrooms and a water station.

BICYCLE THE ROCKY POND PATH

5.8 miles round trip. Moderate.

This trail is a nice hike in the forest, perfect for a family outing.

EAST END LOOP/HEALTHY HEART TRAIL

2.6 miles round trip. Easy.

This trail is a nice loop that winds through the pine, spruce, and tamarack forests and is ideal for those looking for a short hike in the forest.

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Accessing the Forest

PARKING LOTS

1.5 miles. Blue. Moderate.

This trail connects the campground near Second Pond. Easy trail that winds through the forest or suitable for a quiet walk along the beach.

The Pine Barrens Path is a unique side of the forest that is a nice hike for those who wish to experience this unusual landscape.

BENTLEY LOOP TRAIL

3.5 miles. Blue. Moderate.

The Bentley Loop starts from the parking lot off Upper College Pond Road. It passes some lovely ponds and meadows. This is the perfect loop for those looking to enjoy the Pine Barrens.

CHARGE POND LOOP TRAIL

2.8 miles. Blue. Moderate.

This trail is a nice loop that winds through the pine, spruce, and tamarack forests and is ideal for those looking for a short hike in the forest.

PINE BARRENS TRAIL

5.3 miles. Blue. Moderate.

This trail connects the campground near Second Pond. Easy trail that winds through the forest or suitable for a quiet walk along the beach.

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BENTLEY LOOP TRAIL

3.5 miles. Blue. Moderate.

The Bentley Loop starts from the parking lot off Upper College Pond Road. It passes some lovely ponds and meadows. This is the perfect loop for those looking to enjoy the Pine Barrens.

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who do I call?

For emergency situations or crimes needing immediate police response, dial 911.

DCR administers a program called ParkWatch that allows park users to report their concerns over rules violations, vandalism, unusual conditions, and suspicious activity. To report rules violations, vandalism, or unusual conditions, call 1-866-PK-WATCH (759-2826) and indicate that this is a “ParkWatch” call.

Trail Use Guidelines

• Trails are open dawn to dusk.
• Stay on designated roads and trails.
• Do not use motorized vehicles (except snowmobiles) on all unpaved roads and trails that are open to motorized vehicles.
• Tread lightly and respect all other trail users.
• Carry a clear signal before leaving.
• When encountering hikers, stop and announce your presence.
• Be aware of hunting season and wear blaze orange when appropriate.