



Myles Standish State Forest
Resource Management Plan Workshop
Infrastructure and Operations
February 12, 2011

Presenters

Jim Baecker, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Regional Planner; Ellen Walsh, DCR Administrative Assistant, MSSF; John C. Roberts, DCR Supervisor, MSSF; Mike Botieri, Plymouth Police Chief; Lt. Dean Belanger, Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP); Stg. James Cullen, MEP; Chris Williams, DCR Deputy Chief Ranger; Trooper Jeffrey Diotte, Massachusetts State Police; Peg Baker, Plymouth 400th Committee; Randy Parker, Simes House Foundation; Evelyn Strawn, Vice President, Friends of MSSF; Melissa Guimont, Board Member, Friends of MSSF; and Sharl Heller, President, Friends of MSSF

DCR Staff in Attendance

State Parks and Recreation Director/Assistant Commissioner Priscilla Geigis; Southeast Massachusetts Regional Director Brian Shanahan; Cape Cod District Director Don Matinzi; Regional Planner Stephen Brown; Regional Ranger Jeffrey Dumais; Stephen Cabral and Construction Foreman Paul Ferreira

Public Attendees

Thom Gifford, Laura Troll, Pam Crowell, M. Margaret Portier, Helga Stottmeier, Dianne Cosman, Rose Melino, Carolyn Gould, Bill Vickstrom, John Joseph, James W. Baker, Ted Bubbins, Lorraine Ramsey and Lauren Reagan

Operations Facility Tour

Southeast Regional Director Brian Shanahan, DCR Division of State Parks & Recreation

Workshop

Welcome

Sharl Heller, President, Friends of MSSF

Jim Baecker, DCR Office of Regional Planning–*The RMP Process*

Self-Introductions

MSSF Supervisor John C. Roberts and MSSF Administrative Assistant Ellen Walsh Interview of MSSF Staff – A Day in the Life of Myles Standish State Forest Staff (see attached Questions for DCR Staff)

During the summer season, DCR staff is on duty 24 hours a day. The midnight to 8:00 a.m. night shift consists of two persons who patrol the campground area, man the headquarters desk and respond to emergencies. At 7:30 a.m. the day supervisors, clerk and laborers arrive to prepare for camp registrations, clean the comfort stations and pick-up trash. The seasonal park ranger and summer workers arrive at 8:00 to staff the park office, sell fire wood and maintain the grounds. The Lifeguards arrive at 8:30 a.m. to open the day use area

at College Pond, pick up litter on the beach and perform lifeguard duties. From 8:00 p.m. until midnight two staff members close the College Pond day use area, check the comfort stations, man the park office desk and monitor the campgrounds.

Hiking trails are not monitored on a daily basis. Campfires not allowed during periods of fire danger. Fires are allowed in the fireboxes for cooking, breakfast to midnight. Cook fires are defined as being inside the fire pit. Wood cannot be brought into the Forest. Campers must purchase wood from park staff. Wood costs \$10 for 3 bundles or \$5/one bundle. We need extra staff just to handle the firewood. DCR sold \$13,000 in firewood last year. Must restrict wood from coming into the Forest because of the Asian long horned beetle.

There are 400 campsites in MSSF, with an additional 140 privately owned camps. There are private cottages on Fearing, Widgeon, Curlew, Rocky and College ponds. Private camp owners have a permit to come back every year, provided they pay their permit fees. Camp owners are self-sufficient; not much interaction between them and staff.

The primary law enforcement agencies in the Forest are the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP), State Police, Plymouth Police and the Carver Police. Support plan for all agencies to work together. In emergency call 911 and the appropriate agency will be notified.

Main focus of DCR staff, where we spend most of our time, is day use and maintenance. DCR has plans for more interpretive programs, especially camper based programs.

The College Pond day use area is open from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Approximately sixty percent of revenues from day use facilities are retained by DCR.

Fire control station is on site at MSSF. Two year-round staff and 6 to 8 seasonal staff man the fire towers.

Deputy Chief Ranger Chris Williams, DCR Bureau of Ranger Services – *DCR Rangers in MSSF*

Rangers have been in parks since 1998. Under the former Department of Environmental Management, there were five rangers, one for each District. Our authority is under Mass Law 304 CMR 12. Ranger duties include public safety, 1st Aid, search and rescue, visitor services and coordinating the Park Watch Program.

DCR policy enforcement focus is on education. 99% of the time, education does the trick. We go step by step to make sure visitors have information on regulations and how to comply. Rangers use encounters as "educational moments". Through fielding calls, Rangers circumvent frivolous calls and take care of the little stuff freeing other law enforcement agencies for the big stuff. Ranger activities include coordinating joint exercises for off-road vehicle enforcement. We are the DCR's enforcement folks and liaison with other law enforcement agencies. Rangers are involved in the "Three E's" to handle park problems: education, enforcement, and engineering.

C: The park office number should be posted in more locations. Signs should say, "Call Park Watch, Call 911 in emergency."

Trooper Jeffrey Diotte, Massachusetts State Police – *The Role of State Police in MSSF*

State Police react to calls from the Forest Supervisor. We respond to intoxication, evictions, car crashes, search and rescue, and domestic violence. The midnight shift has two officers and covers a large area. It may take 40 minutes for us to respond. The Bourn office covers both Canal bridges and both sides to Exit 5 in Plymouth, over to 495 to Middleboro. The other agencies handle more of the problems. State Troopers do not patrol in the forest.

C: The Massachusetts Correctional Facility is in the Forest. Is there any risk to people?

Trooper Diotte: No. All calls to the Correctional Facility have been internal disturbances.

Plymouth Police Chief Michael Botieri – *The Role of Plymouth Police in MSSF*

In an emergency we [the Plymouth police] respond to anything ongoing; notifying other agencies with jurisdiction. Call 911 in emergencies. Calling Police Headquarters is the most direct non-emergency contact: 508-746-1212. People can call the Headquarters for first aid and law enforcement, and the dispatcher will contact the appropriate authority in the network. There are no response issues. State police and Plymouth police are in regular contact. Plymouth Police do not patrol the State Forest, but will respond to calls in the Forest, as will the Carver Police. The Plymouth Police will respond in Carver if Carver Police request it.

C: How do you find people in the Forest if the trails are not marked? There are only two marked trails and miles of hikeable areas.

A: Supervisor John Roberts: MSSF is in the process of getting new signs.

A: Trooper Diotte: We can ping the call from cell phones. The gates are numbered. There are no maps in the middle of the Forest.

C: The Forest is well marked at the intersections. If any one is lost they should keep going until they come to an intersection.

C: People think they are coming to an urban park, but in MSSF they are coming into an undeveloped area. It is incumbent on people to know how to function in a wilderness setting. Urbanites assume it will be signed, like in a small city. Having access to maps will help.

C: You can go by the Headquarters if you come in from the Carver side, but from Plymouth it is a long way before there is an official presence. DCR should plan for contact at the Plymouth entrance.

MSSF Supervisor John Roberts: There are more signs going up, but we want to maintain a balance of safety and maintaining the sense that people “went to the woods”.

Lt. Dean Belanger and Sgt. James Cullen, Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP), South Coastal Division – *The Role of MEP in MSSF*

Introduced Sgt. James Cullen. Sgt. Cullen is the MEP liaison. I’m sad to say many people don’t know who MEPs are. As a group we are dedicated, and educated with degrees from the municipal Academy. EOEEA Natural Resource Law Enforcement. Enforce all Mass General Laws and Motor Vehicle Laws. MEPs are deputized by the USFWS and NMFS (federal agencies) for Federal Law enforcement of hunting, fishing, fresh water, boating,

nuisance animals, off-highway vehicles, bear encounters, search and rescue, hunting and boating safety. Before we had 124 officers. We are now down to approximately 70 officers in the field. There are 7 officers (including myself) in my Region, which is Plymouth to RI border. In New Bedford there is a dedicated officer to fisheries enforcement. Plymouth also has a dedicated officer (EPO Costello).

MEPs are the primary police enforcement agency for DCR parks, but manpower requires we rely on the State police and local police. We are lucky to have, and want to publicly thank, the cooperation of all police—State Police, and Carver and Plymouth police, who assist in covering MSSF, Freetown-Fall River, Horseneck Beach and Ellisville State Park. How the Friends can help: Call when there is a problem. What doesn't get reported doesn't help anyone. You call the MEP 24 hours, 7 days a week at: 1-800-632-8075. In an emergency call 911. You can help by advocating for us. Budget issues have cut back MEP.

C: I've seen people hunting in the park. Is hunting allowed and what about illegal dumping?

A: Lt. Belanger: Hunting is allowed during hunting season. MSSF is stocked with quail and pheasant. Unauthorized dumping is prosecuted by MEP.

C: What about the new OHV legislation.

A: Lt. Belanger: We try to address the illegal OHV use through education. The issue is of concern everywhere. We receive multiple calls daily. They are hard to catch, and we don't want to chase them. Most are young adults. We show up to calls, but to be honest, we need to be proactive not reactive. More teeth in the recently enacted OHV laws should help.

C: People get scared when they see off-roaders tearing up vast tracks of land. There are five to eight miles of new trails each year where nobody should be going. It's terrible. Can't DCR's rangers be deputized to stop them?

A: Lt. Belanger: Five or six DCR Rangers have been deputized. These are frustrating issues. We cite someone, they go to court and everything gets dismissed. The courts don't take illegal OHV riding seriously.

BREAK

Peggy Baker, Director Emerita Pilgrim Society – Plymouth 400th Committee and MSSF Historic Interpretation and Planning for Tourism

The Plymouth 400 committee is planning major special events and youth educational programs to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrim landing from November 2019 through November 2020.

In 2020 the Plymouth's Quadricentennial Celebration will cause the area to be inundated with tourists. Plymouth must do a lot of planning. Plymouth has a parking problem. The Committee is working with GATRA to develop a regional transportation plan to overcome the parking shortage in downtown Plymouth. 2020 starts now with specific plans and laying the groundwork. Committees already formed include education, marketing, fund raising, and marketing. The "Education Plan" starts with the third graders now who will graduate in 2020. Schools will add a program to the curriculum every year focusing on 2020 to incorporate younger people.

The 400 Committee is promoting the sale of a license plate to raise visibility and aid fundraising. One thousand people must sign up for the license plate. The celebration will be a year long, taking advantage of the Thanksgiving holiday to kick off the events, beginning in November 2019 and ending November 2020. The Sunday before Thanksgiving 2019, the day's events will acknowledge why the Pilgrims came to Plymouth, and highlight the importance of religion. On August 1, 2020 there will be a celebration for the Embarkation of the Pilgrims. The Committee will contact the British Consul and ask to have the Plymouth events placed the Palace Calendar. We are contacting the both the Dutch and British Royal Households. On the weekend before Thanksgiving 2020, the final event will commemorate the 400th anniversary of the signing of the Mayflower Compact. The Committee is making plans for an event that will link Provincetown and Plymouth and engage the communities on Cape Cod.

We hope DCR will become involved early, as the MSSF provides inexpensive camping accommodations for event participants and visitors. We hope to have activities scheduled in the Forest and we want to encourage people to stay in the area. MSSF could be an important part of broadening experiences of visitors.

Randy Parker, President Simes House Foundation – *Renovating and Restoring Historic Buildings for Public Use* (see Fearing Pond Log Bathhouse handout)

Preserving a historically significant structure requires an evaluation of the property. What we know about the Fearing Pond Bathhouse indicates it is worth doing. We keep tearing things down, if it's the last of it's kind, you've got to save it.

The log bathhouse located at Fearing Pond was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This makes renovation of the bathhouse eligible for Community Preservation funding. DCR needs to stabilize this last remaining CCC building until it can be renovated. The Bathhouse is unique, rare, historical, and has a practical function. Let's do what we can to sustain it until we can restore and rehabilitate it. Suggested forming a sub committee for restoring the Bathhouse and reusing the Pond again. [Contact Randy. Randy has an engineering and surveying company and offered to work with DCR and the Friends to establish a vision for reuse the CCC log bathhouse. He offered to survey the land and identify wetlands.]

Evelyn Strawn, Vice President, Friends of MSSF – *Friends' Priorities*
(see FMSSF Priorities handout)

The Friends of MSSF includes people of diverse interests and backgrounds, but people have put aside their interests for the good of the Forest. The Friends of MSSF is organized to include representatives from all Forest user groups. We have a good partnership with DCR and work together on our priorities. The Friends are currently working on creation of a demonstration native plant garden in the Headquarters area, constructing a green house for propagation of native Pine Barrens plants, and organizing for Park Serve Day, continued trail maintenance, the annual fishing derby and the annual photo contest.

The Friends of MSSF Board of Directors met earlier in the month to generate the attached list of priorities for future Friends projects. The projects are listed in priority order.

C: Randy Parker offered to help design a new trails map.

C: The Fearing Pond Road crossing over the East Head Reservoir dam is a dangerous route for horse trailers.

Melissa Guimont, Board Member, Friends of MSSF- *Greening The Forest Facilities: Recycling and Renewable Resources* (see attached *Suggestions for Infrastructure Management*)

MSSF has been my second home for over 30 years. The Forest is a remarkable resource and needs to evolve. Evolution of the Forest provides good opportunities to “green up” the Forest.. Given DCR’s mission, operation of MSSF should be environmentally sustainable. Solar panels should be considered where feasible. The recycling program should be re-established at the day use and campground areas located in the Forest. It may be possible to compost food waste for use in the proposed green house. The CCC log bathhouse and Perry House should be reused.

C: Maintenance of Lower College Pond Road should be a priority.

C: The Host Camper Program should be expanded.

Sharl Heller, President, Friends of MSSF- *Infrastructure for Sustainable Operations* (see attached list of Infrastructure and Operations Issues and Recommendations)

- The Park Watch Program should be promoted to involve more volunteers in monitoring and reporting OHV use in the Forest.
- Remote camper check-in facilities should be developed to facilitate camper greeting, check-in and orientation. The greeters should explain camping rules.
- The camping season should be extended to accommodate hunters and equestrian users.
- A yurts village should be created to accommodate a more urban population. Businesses could be asked to donate yurts.
- When cottages revert to DCR, they should be rented through the Reserve America system.
- Cottage area beaches should be signed to inform visitors that they are for use by the public.
- An ADA accessible trail should be developed with suitable wheel chairs available at the park headquarters.
- The ponds have a recreational limit. Recreational uses should be limited to the capacity of each pond. For example, the parking capacity at College Pond exceeds the capacity of the day use area. The Fearing Pond day use area should be re-opened to reduce pressure on College Pond.
- Water quality should be monitored at Ponds with heavy recreational use and at MCI Plymouth to determine any impact on the sole source aquifer.
- DCR should work with NHESP to fence off sensitive coastal plain pond shore habitat areas.
- The Fearing Pond CCC log bathhouse needs to be stabilized and reused.
- The road crossing over the East Head Reservoir dam needs to be repaired. Ask A. D. Makepeace to cooperate with this effort.
- MSSF deserves to receive more capital funding from the state.

- A real Visitors Center with display areas, a separate large multi-purpose meeting room and MSSF park offices is needed. The Regional Offices should be housed in a separate facility.
- The Perry House should be considered for use as an MEP facility to provide greater police presence in MSSF.

C. The Friends could do more to support the Environmental Police. Interested parties could show up in court and argue for stiffer penalties.

C. DCR should set up contact stations with a large map of the Forest and information at the East Entrance.

Respectfully submitted by Sharl Heller April 4, 2011