

Date: January 18, 2010

To: Friends of Myles Standish State Forest

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Re: Discussion Summary - Myles Standish State Forest Resource Management Planning Workshop –
Interpretive Services and Cultural Resources, December 2, 2010

MYLES STANDISH STATE FOREST: ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- The Massachusetts Historical Commission's files reveal a high density of prehistoric archaeological sites in the Plymouth/Carver region, and indicate that this area was more or less continuously inhabited by Native Americans for over 10,000 years.
- The lower density of documented sites within MSSF as compared with the surrounding landscape does not indicate a lesser degree of occupation. To the contrary, the environmental setting and resources within the corporate boundaries of MSSF are virtually identical to those that exist around it. Native Americans knew no such boundaries, so there is every reason to speculate that similar site densities exist within the Forest as outside.
- The existing archaeological record suggests that in the Forest, protected from development and disturbances, the archaeological resources that exist there are likely to have survived intact below ground. Despite the many sites that are recorded regionally, precious little is really known about these sites, i.e. how large they were, when and how they were used, or what their significance was. Most of the sites were uncovered by avocational archaeologists and collected from disturbed contexts in an uncontrolled manner. Potentially undisturbed sites in MSSF would add immeasurably to our understanding of Native American adaptation, social organization and land-use of this important inland habitat.
- Inland sites in this area are concentrated around mid to large size ponds, but important sites are also found in other locations depending on the proximity to fresh water, degree of slope, and presence of well-drained soils.
- The current evaluation would place much of the land within MSSF in areas that are considered ***highly sensitive for prehistoric resources***.

Paleo 12,000-9,500 Period, subsistence strategies reflected the high species diversity and unstable post-glacial ecosystem. **Early Archaic Period 9,500-8,000**, mixed pine, patchy forest, wide variety of habitats, diagnostic bifurcate base points found scattered across landscape suggest settlement patterns based on many locations to exploit many different types of food. **Middle Archaic Period 8,000-6,000** Many more sites than before. Wide range of habitats, bogs, swamps, rivers, lakes and pond. Seasonal scheduling of subsistence well established by now. Anadromous fish re-established intensifying use of estuaries and streams connecting with interior spawning ponds. **Late Archaic Period 6,000-3,000** Found in widest range of habitats; long lasting dry periods reduced available open water, forcing intensive use of larger ponds (like Assowompsett as a base camp). Elaborate burials and rich ceremonial activity occurred in these core areas. **Early, Middle, Late Woodland Period 3,000-450** Sea-level and climate stabilize. Maritime/coastal resources explode; people settle the land and begin horticulture and making pottery. Live inland winter, coastal summer.

