



**Myles Standish State Forest
Resource Management Plan Workshop
Recreational Resources
January 6, 2011**

Meeting Minutes

Discussion Leaders:

Don Matinzi, Cape Cod District Manager, DCR Division of State Parks & Recreation; Andy Backman, Director of Regional Planning DCR; Gary Briere, Recreation Bureau Chief, DCR; Bill Boles, New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA); Ellen Williams, Bay State Trail Riders Association (BSTRA) member; Richard Wall Jr., sportsmen's interests; Dr. Malcolm MacGregor, former Planning Board member, Plymouth; Peter McLaughlin, Trails Chair, Friends of Myles Standish State Forest.

Attendees:

John Welsh, Laura Troll, Chris Burton, Bill Vickstrom, Trudy Sena, Susan Fugazzi, Sumner Meredith, Nancy Kitchen, Roland Cloutier, Al Amaral, Wendy Amaral, Mack Phinney, Karrie Dumais, DCR Forest Manager Paul Gregory, Brett Meridith

Welcome

Sharl Heller, President, Friends of Myles Standish State Forest

Don Matinzi, Cape Cod District Manager, Massachusetts Division of Parks & Recreation (DCR)

Jim Baecker, DCR Office of Regional Planning

Self-Introductions

Don Matinzi, Cape Cod District Manager, DCR Division of State Parks & Recreation – *Recreational Demand*

Thanked Friends of MSSF for being advocates of the Forest and for being “a voice for campers.” DCR contracts Reserve America for campsite reservations. There is a great demand for camping. Camping is the “natural habitat” for 18-year-olds from New Bedford. Campers bring their culture; impose their culture on the Forest. DCR tries to balance different recreational uses, and has focus groups trying to effect a balance with demand; balance use with infrastructure, with recreational use and expectations, and balance rules and regulations with cultural changes, what worked years ago, doesn't work now. Now we are facing environmental changes. Demand is increasing. As open space is getting smaller, recreational demand will get larger. When Massasoit closed, that created more demand here and at Wompatuck State Park. At MSSF, 75% campers at the five campgrounds come from within a 42 miles radius of MSSF, the “inner circle”; at Nickerson, 75% come from the outer circle. [Refer to 2009 Visitor Dot Map]

Andy Backman, Director of Regional Planning DCR – *2006 Forest Reserve Designation*

Green Certification (FSC) is a non-profit international company, which reviews forests to see if forest practices are sustainable. An FSC requirement caused a significant portion of MA state lands to be set-aside in reserve. MSSF and the Freetown Bio Reserve were set-aside in SE MA. Most of the Reserves are

in the Western part of the State. There are nine forest reserves that met the criteria for ecological diversity. There are some implications for recreation. The Forest Future Visioning Process will refine categories of parklands, woodlands, and reserves. The reserves will allow normal ecological processes to take place with minimum management. The reserve status of MSSF probably won't change, though areas such as campgrounds and day-use areas may change to parklands.

COMMENT: Why does DCR issue logging contracts in MSSF if it is a reserve?

Andy: MSSF is different. It is highly flammable and surrounded by communities. For fire management and to retain pine barrens cover type.

Paul: Silva practices at Three-cornered Pond were ecological to preserve endangered species. It was a commercial harvest but very little money was involved.

Gary Briere, Recreation Bureau Chief, DCR – Off Highway Vehicles, A Historic Review

We are seeing a rise in conflicts as space becomes limited. There is a steady increase in intolerance among recreational users. As their opportunities are limited public lands become more important for users. Off-highway vehicles (OHV) recreation is a big issue—where to offer and where to close. DCR determined priority landscape and habitats are inappropriate for OHV use. DCR identified MSSF was inappropriate. DCR had located nine properties. Ten years later they were reevaluated. MA has about 90,000 households owning OHVs but there are very few places to participate. Riders are upset because they pay money for registrations but there are limited opportunities to ride. DCR is looking at how to better manage OHV use and enforce regulations. DCR created legislation in 2008, which was passed and signed by the Governor last summer. The law provides stiffer penalties and creates a fund where registration fees go into a fund that requires 25% to be spent for trails. There is an OHV Advisory Committee. I see Chris Burden is here tonight. He and other organizations helped pass the legislation. DCR has an OHV Siting Policy, criteria developed by OHV clubs and the AMC with input from many users. We have new plans in place to help manage OHV use, but there has to be better opportunities for riding.

COMMENT: Damage done is much worse in MSSF since 1995 when riding was legal. Agree that it is good to provide riding opportunities but not in MSSF. The Forest would not pass the Course Filter criteria.

COMMENT: Provide riding opportunities but enforce the regulations. If you can't find an area for riding in all this land, it is not open to the public.

Bill Boles, New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA) – Mountain Biking and Hiking in MSSF

Trails are the heart of a park system, the lifeblood; the nexus between conservation and recreation. Refer to the DCR Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual for trail maintenance and management.

COMMENT: MSSF needs more and better-marked trails, with real signs.

COMMENT: There is a need for more marked trails. The campgrounds need to be linked. Working on it. Many more potential trails. Many people get lost. Marking trails well is critical.

COMMENT: There is an issue with parking. Charge Pond is closed in winter. No parking for x-country skiers.

COMMENT: The paved trails are hazardous. Many accidents discourage users.

COMMENT: People can hike on service roads, which are marked on the map.

COMMENT: There are enough trails in MSSF. Do not fragment the Forest.

COMMENT: We should utilize what is already here for trails, but do it selectively, with care for erosion, etc. Don't create new trails.

COMMENT: Link areas.

Ellen Williams, Bay State Trail Riders Association (BSTRA) member, *Equestrian Interests*

Our thanks go to Thom Gifford for his work on trails. Knocking down the mottled hills created by illegal off-road vehicles has benefited equestrians. The Forest is widely used by clubs who do fundraising for local charities. We ask DCR to let horse camping continue. Many states have horse camping. We hope MSSF will fill the bill for Massachusetts. We need more water spigots at the campground, one for every other campsite.

Our 30 miles of trails are marked well. Trail marking is important, as the forest looks the same. The Club would like improvements in parking in winter. We would like to park at the headquarters in winter, when other areas are closed.

COMMENT: DCR might consider education programs regarding the Forest and riding.

COMMENT: We do have a program for safety and what the park has to offer. We ask riders to stay on trails and talk about the sensitive nature of pine barrens. We don't want to duplicate other parks. Keep it natural. We will try to provide ramps for people who need assistance and kids. We do need spigots. We have two areas where horses walk in water.

COMMENT: What about interpretive trail rides?

COMMENT: We do interpretive trail rides. We take our 15 people at a time. There are marked trails, but more like 300 miles of trails, when you take a deer trail and follow it. We see great wildlife. No need for watering troughs unless we are restricted from ponds. We don't have as many marked trails as we could have. We don't know what DCR uses as markers. There is one main trail leading from the camping area. We've ridden up to 70 miles in a day.

Richard Wall Jr. –*Sportsmen's Interests*

I've been a hunter my whole life. We lost the right to drive on the dirt roads. We used to drive older guys and chase deer towards them so they could hunt. Now they've had to stop hunting. One warden allowed him to drive people in. This year we were asked to leave, but as we were leaving we were passed by several off-roaders. We'd like permission to drive on fire roads for the 2 weeks during shotgun season. Where we can drive, by the fire tower, is too close to trails. If we could drive down the road, we'd be further away from the public, which would lessen the likelihood of an accident. Parking is a problem. A brush hog clears the sides of the roads but we can't park our vehicles there. I'd be interested in joining the FMSSF board and help resolve these problems. We'd like to drive further in and begin hunting inside the Forest. It used to be that trails were closed on Saturdays and holidays, but that has changed, trails are open.

COMMENT: The trails have to remain open. It's the law.

Dr. Malcolm MacGregor, former Planning Board member, Plymouth – *Regional Trail System*

In 1990 the Plymouth Planning Board adopted subdivision regulations that allowed for identifying pieces of land in each with an eye to connecting trails. We also adopted the CPA (Community Preservation Act), which allows the committee to purchase land, with the goal of developing trails. We have trails for dog walking, trails you can walk in one hour, morning walks, and daylong walks. But for a regional trail system, we need the Forest. You can't get out of Plymouth without going through MSSF. We'd like to see trails into the forest that go into other towns. We need MSSF as a hub. The Eel River project produced a trail onto National Wildlife land.

Exhibit: Map shows main trail from the nuclear power plant land. Need an easement from NSTAR. Ship Pond Road to Ellisville.

COMMENT: How long before you'll have the trails system?

Malcolm: We've done pretty well. Conservation easements are being negotiated, developing "Perpetual Easement" paperwork. The Open Space Committee talks to people. The Community Preservation Committee buys it. We spend two million a year.

Peter McLaughlin, Trails Chair, Friends of Myles Standish State Forest – *Trails Enhancement Program*

Friends of MSSF Trails Mission: encourage people to use them. The Group began 1st Sunday Hikes in January 2008. People find the hikes and events through Meetup.com. Laura Troll helps lead hikes and we encourage input in hikes and trail maintenance. Thom Gifford received the Volunteer of the Year Award for his work on trails.

The more I know about the Forest, the more I don't know. It's wonderful to have this much wilderness close to home. There are 15 miles of paved bike trails. I have no idea what it would cost if it were built today. The trails have lasted 40 years with no maintenance. We've applied for a grant for \$10,000, which can do significant repairs for smoother ride and to bring up to date. Friends do routine trimming. DCR enlarged the parking lot at the East Entrance. We developed the Friends Trail, which has nice views but no water view. We encourage people to enjoy the recreational opportunities and maintain what we have.

COMMENT: Suggest that DCR provided notification about hunting season. People come here from long distances to hike but don't know about hunting. Keep the trails open but you need to warn people.

Don: Hunting season is posted on the kiosks.

Open Discussion

COMMENT: Allow hunters deeper access. Between the existing trails and roads there is no need to make more but the trails we need signage.

COMMENT: The main road system is also recreational. Lots of events use the main roads.

COMMENT: Road bikes routinely use the Forest; the signs are left up. I suggest you don't ride bike trails if you want to go fast.

Don: DCR closed off Lower College Pond Road because of high water. Planning should consider how does the environment affect use.

COMMENT: Try to understand the people who come into the Forest. They come in two categories, Users and Guests. Users demand. They want to use according to their own rules. Guests come to enjoy nature. They obey the rules. Educate the public. Find the balance between ecological and human demand.

Don: Education outreach for MSSF is needed. Access is an issue. Here you have access from many areas. Other parks have one entrance, which enables park staff to reach the mass of users. It is hard to create educational outreach in a vast area.

COMMENT: Users may not want to be educated. They want to do what they want.

COMMENT: Volunteers hands can't be tied or we'll go someplace else. It is critical that we use power tools for efficiency and timesavings. There is a real need to balance the volunteer policy.

Gary Briere: There are requirements in the policy to allow volunteers to continue to use power tools. We've heard from many groups on this. We recognize and celebrate volunteer hours and work. We encourage volunteer work.

Bill Boles: Suggest MSSF adopt a program like the Blue Hills Trail Watch Program. Program volunteers: educate mountain bikers how to get along with everybody else; are the eyes-and-ears of park staff, report problems, and do trail maintenance. We are constantly finding people who are lost. You need identifying clothing to make people feel safe and assured. Because of Blue Hills Trail Watch they know they'll be observed. Get Park Watch going. It will be much better for everybody.

COMMENT: Trail Watch works great. Volunteers file reports.

Don: Malcolm, what kind of trails will be in the regional trails system?

Malcolm: Different trails, both well developed and woodlands.

Don: One of our goals is to connect through trails to all camping modules; Curlew to Charge to College. The hub probably exists but we need to identify and coordinate.

COMMENT: Connect trails in Carver with Curlew Pond.

Malcolm: You could go from Carver to the power plant in Plymouth now.

COMMENT: Most people respect signs. Find space for an off-road course and a small arms range.

COMMENT: In the Wareham Land Trust we closed the parking lot, but gave out special permits to hunters to use the parking lots. Responsible hunters could have permits.

Don: Fishermen need parking. Different users may require attention.

COMMENT: In the early 90's, when the park was open to OHVs, the trails were better marked.

Don: We are looking to develop a statewide trail system for marking trails. Here it is very confusing.

COMMENT: Birdshot is really attracted to signs. Blazes are far better than signs.

COMMENT: In the past few years trail marking is better.

Don: Yes. Thanks to volunteers.

Respectfully submitted by Sharl Heller