

dcr
Massachusetts



department of conservation and recreation



Myles Standish State Forest RMP Status Report

Presentation to the
DCR Stewardship Council
November 1, 2013



Governor Deval L. Patrick
*Commonwealth
of Massachusetts*

Secretary Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.
*Executive Office of Energy
& Environmental Affairs*

Commissioner John P. Murray
*Department of
Conservation & Recreation*



Presentation Objectives

- Provide an update on progress implementing the MSSF RMP – particularly priority recommendations
- Provide an overview of new issues, problems, and new opportunities since RMP adoption
- Discuss the usefulness of the RMP to park operations thus far





Myles Standish RMP Overview

- Adopted – December 2011
- Management Principle:

Through the creative use of limited state management resources and partnerships, achieve a sustainable balance between the conservation of important natural and cultural resources and the provision of quality outdoor recreational opportunities.





Myles Standish RMP Overview

- Management Goals:
 - *Maintain and enhance habitats for rare species, native plants and wildlife*
 - *Protect and enhance the quality of water resources within the forest*
 - *Preserve the distinct scenic and cultural qualities of the forest*





Myles Standish RMP Overview

- Management Goals:
 - *Provide diverse opportunities for sustainable outdoor recreation*
 - *Expand interpretive and environmental education programs*
 - *Involve partners in the achievement of the management goals*





Myles Standish RMP Overview

- The RMP identified 86 management recommendations to achieve the six management goals
- Of these recommendations, 26 were identified as “priority recommendations”
- Implementation of priority recommendations ranges from:
 - *Significant Progress/Completed*
 - *Ongoing*
 - *Outstanding*



Priority Recommendations

- **Significant progress** has been made in the following areas:
 - Development of a plan by Forestry Bureau (with input from FRSAC) to remove non-native tree plantations to reduce fire danger and improve Pine Barrens habitat
 - DCR's Archaeologist and Ecologist have conducted both natural and cultural resource surveys in areas scheduled for fuel reduction, controlled burns, and non-native plantation removal





Priority Recommendations

- **Significant progress** has been made in the following areas:
 - Working with MassWildlife to provide and maintain early successional habitat in two Wildlife Management Areas
 - Drafting of an MOA between DCR and MassWildlife and preparation of a management plan for Wildlife Management Areas (in consultation with NHESP)





Priority Recommendations

- **Significant progress** has been made in the following areas:
 - Posted invasive species warning signs at the East Head Reservoir, Rocky, Curlew, and Charge Pond fisherman landings
 - Ongoing work with the Friends of MSSF around invasive plant species control:
 - DCR prepared and obtained permits for Friends Spotted Knapweed biological control project.
 - Friends have released Knapweed flower and root weevils at two large infestation sites and are mechanically removing smaller infestations





Priority Recommendations

- **Significant progress** has been made in the following areas:
 - Creation of native plant garden in front of the Headquarters with the Friends of MSSF
 - DCR and the Friends have jointly developed and led Pine Barrens interpretive programming and tours.
 - Pine Barrens interpretive panels installed at East Entrance, Parking Lot #2, and Headquarters Parking area. Signs designed and fabricated in partnership with the Nature Conservancy.





Priority Recommendations

- **Significant progress** has been made in the following areas:
 - DCR's Lakes & Ponds Program will be performing site restoration work at Charge and Curley Ponds to be completed by May 2014.
 - Restoration of compacted and eroded areas at Fearing Pond – H has been completed





Priority Recommendations

- **Significant progress** has been made in the following areas:
 - Central Curlew Pond Comfort Station was completed in early 2013 and used by the public during the entire 2013 camping season
 - Repairs and interior renovations completed on two comfort stations at Barrett Pond camping area
 - Dish washing sinks have been installed at all campground comfort stations
 - Additional exterior repairs to comfort stations (such as painting and shingling) are ongoing





Priority Recommendations

- **Significant progress** has been made in the following areas:
 - Using a new Kubota (with brush and mower attachments) purchased with mitigation funds from NSTAR, park staff has been able to perform pine needle removal and vegetation pruning along paved bike path





Priority Recommendations

- **Ongoing** work continues in the following areas:
 - Mechanical fuels reduction and prescribed fire to improve and maintain habitat quality for rare Pine Barrens species
 - Mechanical Fuels Reduction completed on 264 acres along Mast Road and the northeast corner of the forest in 2011 and 2012
 - Controlled burns conducted on approximately 400 acres in 2011 and 2012.





Priority Recommendations

- **Ongoing** work continues in the following areas:
 - Additional controlled burns are proposed to occur following Red Pine plantation removal project
 - DCR's Bureau of Forestry & Fire Control is submitting a grant request to the US Forest Service Hazard Mitigation Program that includes funding for preparation of a comprehensive fire management plan.





Priority Recommendations

- **Ongoing** work continues in the following areas:
 - DCR Rangers and Environmental Police have conducted joint patrols and educate OHV users on DCR regulations.
 - EPOs also report performing proactive/targeted patrols independently.
 - EPOs also issue citations for OHV violations. Additional limited enforcement also performed by state and local police.





Priority Recommendations

- **Ongoing** work continues in the following areas:
 - Private Cottage Permit Program
 - DCR has continued the current management policy toward eventually ending the program through the gradual retirement of existing permits
 - In early 2012, there were 133 active cottage permits at MSSF
 - Between 2012 and 2013, four (4) cottages were relinquished by the owner
 - Between 2012 and 2013, DCR revoked an additional 10 permits for nonpayment/noncompliance





Priority Recommendations

- **Ongoing** work continues in the following areas:
 - Plans and specifications have been prepared for repairs to the paved bike trail. DCR exploring possibility of performing repairs using a combination of DCR staff and Department of Corrections crews.





Priority Recommendations

- **Ongoing** work continues in the following areas:
 - DCR is exploring a partnership to have new interpretive kiosks for the Charge Pond Road Parking Lot #5 and Fire Tower Parking Lot #6 built by the Department of Corrections labor using materials and specifications supplied by DCR.
 - DCR's Regional Interpretive Coordinator is developing trail maps and park information to post on existing kiosks.





Priority Recommendations

- **Ongoing** work continues in the following areas:
 - Fearing Pond CCC Bathhouse
 - DCR recently contracted with Stephen Kelliher Architects to conduct an assessment of the building.
 - DCR is in the process of reviewing the results of this assessment and proposed options for stabilization.
 - Additional capital or deferred maintenance funding would be required to complete a stabilization project.





Priority Recommendations

- **Outstanding** action items include:
 - Finding suitable use for the Perry House
 - Some concepts have been explored involving interpretive uses or space for a camp store – these concepts are not definitive, though, and require further review/consideration
 - Preparing site plans for each cottage pond
 - Additional resources would be needed to fully begin this process.





Priority Recommendations

- **Outstanding** action items include:
 - Resolve right-of-way legal issues and repair road over East Head Reservoir dam
 - Initial assessment conducted by DCR Lands Committee and Dam Safety Engineers
 - Private ownership of dam poses a legal challenge
 - Dam and road repair work estimated at about \$1 million





Priority Recommendations

- **Outstanding** action items include:
 - Re-opening Fearing Pond picnic/beach area on weekends
 - The nearby parking area was recently restored by Warner Brothers during a film production
 - Additional summer seasonal staff is needed and will be included in the staffing request for summer 2014.





Priority Recommendations

- **Outstanding** action items include:
 - Expanding the College Pond day use area swimming beach
 - Additional lifeguard staff is necessary and will be included in the staffing request for summer 2014.
 - Increase frequency of comfort station cleaning during peak summer weekends
 - Additional seasonal staff, vehicle, and equipment needed





New Issues & Opportunities

- Since the RMP was developed and approved, staff and stakeholders have identified the need for a trails assessment and trail use/maintenance plan
 - Comprehensive assessment requires support and input from partners at DFW, NHESP, the Friends of MSSF, and other stakeholders
 - Early stages of organizing this work is underway by staff in Recreational Facilities Planning program





New Issues & Opportunities

- Completion of Forest Futures Visioning and Landscape Designation processes and lifting of moratorium presents opportunity to perform Red Pine removal.
- Refurbishment of Fearing Pond day use area parking lot by Warner Brothers
- Installation of 4 osprey poles and platforms by NStar and the Friends of MSSF





New Issues & Opportunities

- Acquisition of 32-acres of ecologically important Pine Barren forest, including Cattle Pond (off of Agawam Road)
- Formation of Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance (SMPBA) to promote awareness and preservation of Pine Barrens





Changes in Funding Availability

- Positive Developments & Opportunities
 - NStar installation of barriers and gates to discourage illegal OHV use
 - NStar has provided \$25,000 in mitigation funds for fabrication and installation of OHV-related signage and purchase of OHV detection equipment
 - DCR also used additional NStar mitigation funds to purchase a new Kubota with several attachments that has allowed certain work (such as bike trail clean up) to occur





Changes in Funding Availability

- Positive Developments & Opportunities
 - DCR is collaborating with MassDOT (pursuant to MGL Ch. 81, §13) to secure an ISA for funding that would allow major road improvements and repairs within the forest to take place
 - DCR Engineering and Parks Operations is completing a roadway assessment for submittal to MassDOT





Changes in Funding Availability

- Challenges
 - Operationally, limited budgets and staffing has not allowed us to expand upon recreational action items identified in the RMP, such as:
 - Re-opening the picnic and beach area at Fearing Pond
 - Expanding the College Pond swimming beach area
 - In terms of capital, while some project have been completed, limited funds and competing priorities (often related to public safety) have prevented many projects from moving ahead



Usefulness of RMP to Park Ops.

- RMP Documents existing conditions, needs, and current management practices/policies
- RMP has been helpful in orienting new management staff to property and resources
- RMP has provided an overall work plan to guide resource allocation (both operational and capital)
- RMP preserves institutional memory of current staff
- RMP documents opportunities for enhancing recreational and educational potential



Usefulness of RMP to Park Ops.

- RMP has promoted inter-disciplinary action by identifying ways in which other DCR divisions and bureaus can support parks operations and become further integrated into the work that happens at our facilities
- RMP has identified issues relevant to other agencies and has promoted inter-agency cooperation, namely with MassWildlife (as operator of two Wildlife Management Areas in the forest) and NHESP (with regulatory authority over state-listed rare species habitat)



Meeting Statutory Obligations

- Key statutory provisions include:
 - **MGL Ch. 21, §1:** *It shall be the duty of the department to:*
 - *Exercise general care and oversight of the natural resources of the Commonwealth and of its adjacent waters*
 - *Propose and carry out measures for the protection, conservation, control, use, increase, and development thereof*
 - *Be concerned with the development of public recreation as related to such natural resources*
 - *Co-operate with other state, local, and federal departments, boards, officials, institutions on matters under its supervision*



Meeting Statutory Obligations

- Key statutory provisions include:
 - **MGL Ch. 21, §2:** Sets forth RMP requirement to include:
 - *Guidelines for the operation and land stewardship of the agency's reservations, parks, and forests that provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management*



Meeting Statutory Obligations

- At a fundamental level, the identification and designation of resources has enhanced decision-making and helped to protect state-listed species and habitat
- In terms of resource protection, erosion control projects identified in the RMP has led to protection of ponds
- RMP will also be a valuable tool in development of trail plan by providing management guidelines to avoid impacts to state-listed species and sensitive habitats



Meeting Statutory Obligations

- RMP has opened the lines of communication with other state agencies (such as DFW and NHESP) on mutual resource- and management-related issues
 - For example, MOU with DFW for management of WMAs will promote habitat restoration
- In terms of resource conservation and sustainable forest management, RMP process also validated the need for Red Pine plantation removal and identified it as a priority.



Have Assumptions Changed?

- Overall, the assumptions upon which the RMP was developed have not changed
- A few notable developments/discoveries since the RMP was adopted include:
 - Acquisition of 32-acre Cattle Pond site
 - Discovery of rare plant along Bare Hill Road and need to adjust mowing protocols
 - Need for trails assessment/plan



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Questions??