

## **Help your park. Insist on a Resource Management Plan!**

When the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) were combined into the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) the Massachusetts legislature enacted MGL Chapter 21, Section 2f which mandates the completion of a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for all DCR properties:

The commissioner of conservation and recreation shall submit management plans to the stewardship council for the council's adoption with respect to all reservations, parks, and forests under the management of the department, regardless of whether such reservations, parks, or forests lie within the urban parks district or outside the urban parks district. Said management plans shall include guidelines for the operation and land stewardship of the aforementioned reservations, parks and forests, shall provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and shall ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management.

To date, only seven RMP's, have been completed and accepted, by the Stewardship Council according to the list on the DCR website. Four were done in 2006, two in 2008 and one as of March 10, 2010. Only the Blue Hills Reservation is listed as having a RMP that is underway at the present time. DCR needs to focus resources to this effort to complete the mandate given them by the legislature. The legislature needs to provide dedicated funding to allow DCR to complete the task given to them.

### **Why do resource management plans matter?**

*Here are a few examples:*

Decisions are being made about changes in trail usage at the Middlesex Fells Reservation that should only be done after all the resources are inventoried, reviewed and incorporated into an accepted Resource Management Plan.

At Robinson State Park, forestry cuts were planned before the natural, ecological and cultural resources had been reviewed and included in an approved RMP. Parks like Upton State Forest, that are satellites of other parks and that have been transferred to different management several times, need RMP's so that there is consistency in identifying and protecting their valuable natural and historic resources, wildlife corridors and recreational assets. They need plans in place that will be carried forward when personnel changes or districts are reconfigured.

Throughout the Commonwealth, we are blessed with thousands of acres of forests, parks, beaches, wildlife management areas and watersheds. No two are alike and each deserves to have a plan for its management that identifies the valuable resources within it, making sure that its recreational and commercial use does not threaten and is compatible with these resources. A solid RMP can keep mistakes from happening. For example, on the Zimmer property in Chesterfield, forestry cuts were going forward even though a conservation restriction on the land should have prevented timber harvesting. A RMP would have highlighted the donors' wishes and prevented the forest from being commercially harvested.

Implementation of the Forest Futures Visioning Recommendations will entail the designation of 70,000 to 90,000 acres of parklands. DCR expects to complete this zoning in the next few months with public input—without ever having a sustained effort or even trying to meet mandated RMPs! We're alerting everyone to protect natural and cultural resources at the same time that we provide for recreation in our parkland properties. MGL Chapter 21, Section 2F requires a resource management plan for each park, reservation and forest so as to assure that these goals are integrated.

The recommendations stress that the provisions for recreational use must preserve ecologically significant areas and special places. Among their values, these places will provide refuges where people can experience a quiet setting and natural elements. It is expected that ecologically sensitive or culturally important resources in parklands will be designated as patch reserves to assure their protection. Designation of parkland properties is not intended to change current recreation uses or recreational decisions in the area.

Therefore, we urge DCR to complete the zoning and the necessary site-specific analysis for RMP's, subject to public review and Stewardship Council approval, before making any substantial changes to current recreational use areas.

Please let DCR officials and your legislators know that you understand the need for RMP's and are strongly opposed to going forward with decisions affecting any public forest or park until an approved RMP is completed. You can help make completion of RMP's a priority by writing to your state representatives ([MassAudbon](#) makes it easy to [find your representatives](#)) and to the DCR officials below:

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