



Advocacy Department

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December 8, 2010

Jim Baecker
Office of Regional Planning
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Via email: jim.baecker@state.ma.us

Re: **Myles Standish State Forest RMP**

Dear Mr. Baecker:

On behalf of Mass Audubon I am writing in support of the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) preparation of a comprehensive Resource Management Plan (RMP) for Myles Standish State Forest (MSSF). MSSF is a natural and cultural public resource of great significance, and is also utilized for many forms of recreation. The many management needs required to protect the full range of the property's value makes this site a high priority for preparation of an RMP. Mass Audubon thanks DCR for making an RMP for this site a high priority, and for making this process both extensive and inclusive. The public workshop series currently being offered on topics including Pineland, Plantations and Wildlife Management; Vernal Pools and Ponds Management; Cultural Resources and Interpretive Services; Recreational Resources; and Infrastructure and Operations not only contribute to the substance of the RMP but also promote public involvement and an appreciation of the resources and management challenges at MSSF.

MSSF is one of the largest and most ecologically significant properties in DCR's portfolio, encompassing some 12,400 acres. Indeed, the land in and around MSSF represents the second-largest remaining example of a Pitch Pine-Scrub Oak natural community in the world. Within this 15,000 acre globally significant landscape are embedded several other rare habitats such as frost bottoms and coastal plain ponds. Collectively, the undeveloped lands in and bordering MSSF provide habitat for dozens of state listed rare species. Mass Audubon supported DCR's designation of MSSF as a large Forest Reserve in 2006, and continues to support that status in the land designations now being formulated statewide through the DCR Forest Futures Vision Process. The forest also overlays and protects the Plymouth-Carver Aquifer, the second largest aquifer in the state. Due to its significant concentration of several bird species of high regional conservation priority (e.g., Whip-poor-will, Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Towhee, and Field Sparrow) MSSF is designated by Mass Audubon as a Massachusetts Important Bird Area (IBA). For more information see: http://www.massaudubon.org/Birds_and_Birding/IBAs/site_summary.php?getsite=75. The Friends of Myles Standish State Forest have formed a Pine Barrens Community Initiative (PBCI) to promote public understanding and sound management of the pine barrens in and around MSSF.

Management challenges at MSSF include balancing recreational and natural resource interests, controlling invasive species, restoring degraded habitats such as red pine plantations, and providing for active management of fire-dependent habitats. In addition, adjoining lands including land in private ownership contribute to the overall ecological value and integrity of this landscape. The area is one of the

largest Core Habitats identified in MassWildlife's recently released BioMap 2 report. Mass Audubon strongly recommends that DCR include priorities for additional land acquisition and cooperative land management with owners of adjoining properties in the RMP.

Mass Audubon continues to applaud the efforts of DCR to prepare a comprehensive RMP for MSSF in consultation with all interested parties. We particularly look forward to reviewing the draft RMP in 2011.

Sincerely,



John J. Clarke
Director of Public Policy and Government Relations

cc: Sharl Heller, Friends of MSSF

Mass Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Together with more than 100,000 members, we care for 34,000 acres of conservation land, provide educational programs for 225,000 children and adults annually, and advocate for sound environmental policies at local, state, and federal levels. Mass Audubon's mission and actions have expanded since our beginning in 1896 when our founders set out to stop the slaughter of birds for use on women's fashions. Today we are the largest conservation organization in New England. Our statewide network of wildlife sanctuaries, in 90 Massachusetts communities, welcomes visitors of all

ages and serves as the base for our work. To support these important efforts, call 800-AUDUBON (283-8266) or visit www.massaudubon.org.

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