

September 27, 2010

Mr. Joe Orfant  
Director of Planning and Resource Protection  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
251 Causeway Street  
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Mr. Orfant:

Thank you for the presentation of the Draft Trail System Plan for the Middlesex Fells Reservation on Monday night, September 20th. This letter seeks clarification of several key differences between what was presented at the meeting and what is contained in the draft that became available on the 21<sup>st</sup>. We will be providing more detailed responses during the comment period, but we wanted to get clarification quickly to better understand the draft plan. We suggest that clarifications in response to this letter be posted on the DCR web site so the public too can benefit from a better understanding of what changes are proposed at the Fells and the implementation schedule.

We understand and appreciate that DCR has devoted resources and worked hard on this draft, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to improve it and to provide input on the full Resource Management Plan (RMP) slated to begin in November.

We ask that you please clarify in writing the following:

- Will any decisions in the draft Trail Plan or actions proposed therein be taken before the end of the comment period in November?
- Which actions do you anticipate will be implemented after the comment period has ended but before the full RMP is completed?
- How and why was it decided that some issues would be decided through the RMP process and others would be implemented prior to the completion of an RMP?

Specifically, we are confused about the timing indicated in the table that begins on page 46 of the draft and what participants in the public meeting heard on Monday night.

Our understanding based on the presentation was that the draft Trail Plan would be a component of a full RMP and that no significant changes in trail use would be made until that process was completed. However, in response to a question from an attendee at the presentation, Paul indicated that the proposed change to the Reservoir Trail might occur before the RMP is completed. The table in the draft also indicates that other important actions will occur before the planned RMP process is complete—not only for the Reservoir Trail, but for the Dark Hollow Pond route, for the winter closure policy for mountain biking, for areas designated as off-leash for dogs and establishment of a hiking-only area. We believe these are all significant management decisions that would best be decided in the context of the full RMP process along with the many other trail management options outlined in the draft plan's suggested

implementation schedule. For the RMP process to be meaningful and credible, these decisions should not be finalized and implemented outside of it.

We agree that implementation measures that would not significantly change the nature of a trail could take place before the RMP process is complete, including increased enforcement, improved signage, creation of trail maps, public education, and closing redundant trails.

Thank you for responding to our questions. We appreciate that DCR is dedicating the resources for an RMP for the Middlesex Fells Reservation to help inform decisions at the complex and highly used location. We know that a significant amount of new data on natural resources found in the Fells will be available shortly and should be considered in decisions for changing existing trails or uses.

Sincerely,

Heather Clish  
Deputy Director of Conservation  
Appalachian Mountain Club

Nancy Goodman  
Vice President for Policy  
Environmental League of Massachusetts

John J. Clarke  
Director of Public Policy and Government Relations  
Mass Audubon

James McCaffrey  
Director  
Sierra Club, Massachusetts Chapter

David A. Bryant  
Director of Government Relations  
The Trustees of Reservations

cc: Commissioner Rick Sullivan  
Paul Jahnige, DCR  
Conrad Crawford, DCR  
Stephanie Cooper, DCR