



# BRIDLE PATH *Conservancy*

Response to: Draft Plan of the  
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection  
Cockaponset State Forest  
Cedar Swamp & Winthrop Block Management Plan  
2006 – 2015  
Dated: October 31, 2005.

## Background

The Bridle Path Conservancy is a non-profit group of individuals that encourages interest and support for the preservation, enhancement, and acquisition of multi-purpose, passive-use, recreation trails – including use by equestrians, on public and private land across southern New England.

By managing, educating and cooperating with other groups to create opportunities to facilitate and preserve equestrian activities that compliment the environment, the Conservancy strives to keep recreational land available for present and future generations to enjoy.

The Conservancy has used a State Grant to perform substantial work efforts over the past year supporting and sustaining the trails in the Cockaponset trail system primarily in the Winthrop Block. The Conservancy was presented a General Assembly Citation by Representative Bryan O'Connor in June 2006 and DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy toured the Conservancy's efforts in Weber Woods section of the Block in July 2006.

This document is submitted as the foundation of further discussions on the referenced Management Plan.

Cover Letter: Letter references "*DEP guidelines*". Can a copy of the guidelines or a website containing the guidelines be provided?

Letter solicits comments from the local Conservation Commissions. The Bridle Path Conservancy is requesting that it be copied on all future drafts, comments and final documents.

Cover Page: Is the "*Management Plan*" a comprehensive multi-department effort including recreation, wildlife and fishery or is this draft document's focus primarily on forestry?

Page 2, Section A. History: The included history is lacking recent entries referencing the Weber family and their contribution, parcel use and cultural aspects of the Weber Woods section.

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Page 3, Section B. Acres & Access: Further clarification is needed on operational specifics and locations of logging efforts, staging areas and skid trails required to support internal forest harvesting efforts.

Page 5, Section C. Special Use Areas: While the areas are identified, further clarification is needed on the impact that harvesting efforts will have on said Special Use Areas.

Page 6, Section D. Extensive Areas of Concern – Trails & Signs: The Conservancy has done substantial work, with the aid of a State Grant, on the recreational trails in the southern and central part of the Winthrop Block that appear to have been missed or under reported in the Draft. “Old logging roads” in the Weber Wood section were original trails and access roads built and maintained by Dr. Weber and are part of an “Official” trail system used for recreational purposes in this part of the Forest.

Page 11, Section I. Ten Year Goals: The goals appear to be focused exclusively on foresting objectives and seem to ignore the broader recreational use of the forest. Where will such broader use issues be addressed in the overall forest management plan?

Page 15, Section I. Ten Year Goals – Retain Existing Trail System. Draft addresses current trails and public use of said trail and further describes the necessity to potentially close trails during harvesting operations. The Conservancy’s concern is the statement, “trails will be left open unless environmental degradation will ensue if not closed.” What will be done by and required of the logging operators to ensure that their efforts are not the cause of the degradation and thus remove trails from the system because of improper or inadequate logging policies or procedures? The Conservancy believes that any agreement with logging firms should include language requiring same or better condition of any trails after completion of logging operations.

Page 15, Section J. Work Plans – General: A section on “Work Notification” should be added outlining a notification process stating location, dates, high activity sites and other dissemination of other information pertinent to the existing forest user group.

Page 16, Section J. Work Plans – Cultural Site Maintenance: Draft states that, “reasonable efforts to avoid damaging cultural sites will be made during operations.” Who is responsible for identifying said cultural sites, creating guidelines and setting a stewardship program and what restitution will be made if logging operators do not meet requirements or damage said sites?

Page 16, Section J. Work Plans – Recreational or Scenic Site Work: Draft states that, “Gillette Castle Vista will be maintained, if manpower is available ...” What happens if manpower is not available, will this automatically negate the need to maintain the Vista? Are all plans and commitments in the Draft subject to change based on budgets and any other manpower allocation process or potential whim of DEP management?

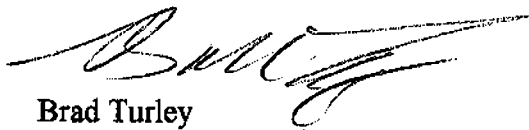
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Page 16, Section J. Work Plans – Trail Maintenance: Draft states that, “Trail maintenance on the Weber parcel will be arranged by the Park and Recreation Supervisor.” The Conservancy is appreciative of the State’s support and effort to date, but is trail maintenance only relevant to the Weber Woods section? What about other trails in the other sections and Blocks? Does the Supervisor also control direction of these trail efforts?

Page 20, Appendix B. Definitions: Can definitions of State “Parks”, “Forest”, “Wildlife Management Area” and “Recreation Areas” be added to the Appendix to provide a differentiation of use, requirements and management oversight of each type of property owned by the State?

Page 24, Appendix E. Distribution: Can the distribution list be increased beyond the town conservation commissions to include land trusts, local newspapers and requesting non-profit organizations including the Bridle Path Conservancy?

Submitted January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006 by



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