

**Ponkapoag Pond Master Plan and Fisherman’s Cover Improvements**Comments submitted by the Friends of the Blue Hills
December 27, 2021

The Friends of the Blue Hills appreciated the opportunity to be part of the Ponkapoag Pond Master Plan working group and are grateful for all the work of the consultants and DCR staff on this project.

We particularly appreciate the improvements to Fisherman’s Cover parking lot and the efforts to make the lot and park recreation assets accessible.

We offer the following recommendations and comments on the draft plan.

**Ponkapoag Bog Boardwalk**

We agree that the boardwalk needs significant work to allow people to enjoy the views of this spectacular landscape. We also want to stress the importance of protecting the bog’s sensitive habitat.

**Protect sensitive habitat and endangered species:** The bog is within an Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and therefore recognized by the state because of the quality, uniqueness, and significance of its natural and cultural resources.  The bog is a unique ecosystem home to endangered species which live close to the boardwalk. Any work done in the bog should make sure to protect the endangered species during and after construction under close coordination with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species program.

**Protect white cedar pines:** Any improvements to the boardwalk should protect the white cedar pines that line the boardwalk and are important elements to the health of the ecosystem. Any work should avoid damaging existing white cedar pines.

**Require Robotics:** If soil borings are required, we request that you require robotics to perform the work so as to minimize ecosystem disturbance.

**Build boardwalk simultaneously to helical pilings to reduce impact on habitat:** We recommend that you require that the new boardwalk be built at the same time as the helical structure so that the new structure of the boardwalk can be used to support the helical piles construction and minimize damage to the sensitive habitat.

**Trail Connections**

We understand that the scope of this project was limited and the main focus was developing plans for Fisherman’s Cove and the AMC and YMCA camps. We would like to encourage the DCR to focus on other public resources in the park that improve access, including:

* Recommendations for trails that would allow public access from the Pond to Indian Line Farm, as well as access to the Bradley Estate and future potential trail routes, like the Warner Trail.
* Recommendations for increasing access from parts of the park north of Route 93 to allow people to explore the park from the rest of the park.
* Recommendations for allowing increased access from existing parking lots, like Donovan School, on Reed Street in Randolph and exploring existing private lots as possible access points.

Thank you again for the effort and commitment to improving Ponkapoag Pond for visitors while protecting sensitive habitat.