

Devens
Open Space and Recreation Plan
2008 – 2013

SUMMARY REPORT

January 23, 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. PURPOSE

The *Devens Open Space and Recreation Plan 2008-2013* has been prepared as a guide for the preservation of critical environmental resources and management of open space and recreational resources within the area of the former Fort Devens designated as the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone (Devens). It provides an overview of progress to date in light of the primary Goals and Objectives of the *ReUse Plan* (as they relate to open space and recreation planning), updates the inventory of environmental and recreational resources, and can be used as an additional guidance document for the continued redevelopment of the former Army Base.

B. SCOPE OF THE PLAN

This *Plan* updates and expands on the original *Devens Open Space and Recreation Plan of 1996* (“1996 Plan”). The 1996 Plan articulated guidelines and management approaches for land identified as Open Space and Recreation areas under the Devens ReUse Plan adopted by the host communities and MassDevelopment. The 2008 Plan expands the focus to all lands within the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone with the exception of areas administered by the Job Corps, the Federal prison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Massachusetts Army National Guard, and the U. S. Army.

The 2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan is the latest step in MassDevelopment’s ongoing open space and recreation land use planning. Preparation of the Plan incorporated the following objectives:

- Assess compatibility of land resources with planned uses;
- Assess existing passive and active recreation resources and provide recommendations related to needs and opportunities;
- Update the “Inventories of Environmental Resources” and “Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest”;
- Review and revise the Goals and Objectives of the 1996 Plan, and assess progress to date.

The report and mapping products are prepared in the framework of the Open Space Planners’ Handbook and meet the requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services.

C. SUMMARY OF KEY CONCLUSIONS

Based upon a review of development to date, on-going planning of recreation facilities and programs, public input and a general assessment of the natural resources at Devens, the 2008 Plan identifies the following five open space and recreation goals:

- Preserve and protect important land resources.
- Preserve and protect important water resources.
- Provide connections between open space areas within and beyond Devens to facilitate movement and access by humans and/or wildlife.
- Meet the diverse recreational needs of Devens and the region.
- Manage, maintain and operate active recreation facilities and open space districts.

Some of the key conclusions reached through the preparation of the 2008 Plan include:

- Two of the four areas identified in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) have been permanently protected through the recording of a Conservation Restriction¹. Additional work needs to take place to determine what issues need to be resolved in order to complete CR’s on the remaining two areas.
- The recreation resources at Devens have undergone significant changes over the past several years. Continued planning needs to take place to make most effective use of the resources and funding available to meet the recreation

¹ The one CR established to date as recommended by the 1996 Plan consists of two parcels: 1) a system of glacially-formed ridges called “eskers” located near Queenstown Road and including the Patton Road wetlands, and 2) the Mirror Lake area including a black spruce bog. These are 39 acres (+/-) and 146 acres (+/-) respectively. The CR has been conveyed to The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR).

needs of Devens and the region to the greatest extent possible.

- Additional environmental resources have been identified in the North Post area, which needs to be further evaluated to determine the impact of / on potential development and the possible need for additional levels of protection.
- In general, MassDevelopment and the Devens Enterprise Commission have been diligent in the protection of groundwater and surface water resources within Devens. Continued efforts are still needed to address areas of untreated storm water and possible non-point source pollution both on MassDevelopment lands and especially Army lands.

One of the major accomplishments realized during preparation of the 2008 plan was development of consensus regarding specific areas of Devens which will be provided permanent protection. Each of the resource areas identified in the 1996 Plan was reviewed to identify current levels of protection and consensus was reached on additional protections that will be pursued for each area. Several areas not included in the 1996 inventory were also added to the matrix (Refer to Table 4-1 and figures 4-1 & Appendix A. "Devens Open Space Protection Plan Map"). One such area is the Environmental Business Zone. While not included in the original resource inventory, this area has long been projected to contain a diversity of environmental resources. On going studies will help determine the appropriate balance of development and preservation in this area.

D. AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR PERMANENT PROTECTION

In the years following the adoption of the re-use plan there was significant disagreement surrounding the level of protection that would be placed on various areas which had either been zoned as open space or had been identified as having significant resource value. After much discussion it was agreed that, as part of the current Open Space Plan update, MassDevelopment and the DOSRAC would come to consensus on specific parcels of land at Devens that would be placed under permanent protection. Table 4-1 lists all of the parcels reviewed and the recommended additional levels of protection to be pursued. Figure 4-2 shows the relation of the parcels recommended for additional protection versus the preservation & conservation areas identified in the 1996 Open Space Plan.

The most appropriate mechanism for each area will be determined on a case by case basis. The timetable for protection is dependent upon ability to find suitable mechanism/willing CR holder and availability of any necessary funds. In the meantime, MassDevelopment does not intend to develop any of these parcels and will manage the parcels in a manner consistent with their resource value and recommended protection levels. MassDevelopment will consult with the DOSRAC before implementing any significant adjustment of the parcels or revisions to the plan.

Final disposition of the North Post area is to be determined through a cooperative planning process between MassDevelopment and the underlying towns.

Table 4-1 Inventory of Resource Areas and Recommended Protection

Resource Area (GOALS ID from 1996 OSRP)	Use/Status at Present Zoning	Comment	Current Protection	Current Ownership (CR held by)	Recommended additional Protection Mechanism
Preservation Areas					
Lower Cold Spring Brook Wetlands (P1)	Open space /wetlands OSR	Partially transferred pending BCT review for decision to issue "No Further Action" status	Deed restriction*, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD/Army	Permanent protection** through either Article 97 and/or CR or equivalent***
Patch Road Wetlands (P2)	Open space /wetlands OSR		SW portion within Esker CR (recorded 7/30/04), Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD	NE portion: permanent protection through either Article 97, CR or equivalent***
Ammunitions Supply Point (ASP) & Wetlands (P3)	Open Space /wetlands OSR	Bordered by Golf course on 3 sides, Enclosed within Conservation Zone C9	Deed restriction*, Wetlands Protection Act	MD	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and/or CR or equivalent***
The Eskers (P4)	Open Space OSR/ITB	CR recorded 7/30/04	CR, Wetlands Protection Act	MD (TTOR)	None
Upper Cold Spring Brook Wetlands (P5)	Open Space /wetlands OSR	Remediation of former Army landfill resulted in increase of surface water & restoration of wetland areas. Adjacent to area of proposed roadway upgrades	Wetlands Protection Act, Aquifer Protection, Zoning and Regulations	MD/Army	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and/or CR or equivalent***
Mirror Lake (P6)	Open Space / active& passive recreation OSR	CR recorded 7/30/04, Master Plan completed	CR, Aquifer Protection, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD (TTOR)	None

Table 4-1 Inventory of Resource Areas and Recommended Protection

Black Spruce Bog (P7)	Open Space / passive recreation OSR	CR recorded 7/30/04	CR, Aquifer Protection, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD (TTOR)	None
Conservation Areas					
Shepley's Hill (C1)	Open Space / passive recreation OSR	Potential vernal pool certified 11/28/04	Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and consider CR or equivalent***
Shepley's Hill Landfill (C2)	Open Space OSR	Leased parcel. Landfill originally capped between 1986 & 1992. Pending additional environmental remediation	N.A.	Army	If and when remediation ever completed, should be protected and maintained for grassland habitat
Grove Pond Area (C3)	Open Space OSR	Over/adjacent to Ayer/Devens wells	Zone I and II areas, Aquifer Protection, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and/or CR or equivalent***
Cold Spring Brook System (C4)	Open Space OSR	Partially transferred pending BCT review for decision to issue "No Further Action" status. Consider joining this polygon with P5 (P1 is within existing DR/proposed CR area)	East of Railroad under deed restriction*, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations, partially in Zone II	MD/Army	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and/or CR or equivalent***
Buena Vista Area (C5) Buena Vista Area	Open Space / active & passive recreation	Possible active rec, open space buffer, consider redefining/realigning C5 polygon boundary and possible	Zoning and Regulations	MD	None

Table 4-1 Inventory of Resource Areas and Recommended Protection

(C5) cont'd		trade-offs with other lands. Majority of area was densely developed by Army. Some demo remaining			
Housing Buffer (C6)	Open Space OSR	100' wide Open Space buffer between residential and commercial zoning districts	Zoning and Regulations	MD	None
Robbins Pond (C7)	Open Space/ passive rec OSR	Limited passive rec/interactive trails.	Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and consider CR or equivalent***
Patch Road Hollow (C8)	Open Space/ passive rec OSR	SW portion with Esker CR, consider joining this polygon with P2 & C7	Portions in CR, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD (TTOR)	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and consider CR or equivalent***
Ammunition Supply Point Ridge (C9)	Open Space OSR	Deed restriction recorded 7/30/04	CR/Deed restriction**, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD	None
Mirror Lakes Slopes (C10)	Open Space/ passive rec OSR	CR recorded 7/30/04. Master Planning completed	CR, Aquifer Protection, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD	None
Mirror Lake Beach (C11)	Open Space / active & passive recreation OSR	CR recorded 7/30/04. Master Planning completed	CR, Aquifer Protection, Wetlands Protection Act, Zoning and Regulations	MD	None
Southeast Buffer (C12)	Open Space OSR	100' wide Open Space buffer & steep sloped area between Salerno Circle & RR tracks	Zoning and Regulations	MD	Consider slope regulations

Table 4-1 Inventory of Resource Areas and Recommended Protection

Oak Hill Area (C13)	Open Space OSR	Additional review anticipated, buffer to USFWS refuge	Zoning and Regulations	MD	Consider slope regulations
North Post Buffer Area (C14)	Open Space OSR	100' wide Open Space buffer between Ayer/Shirley land & development areas. Pending future master planning	Zoning and Regulations	MD	TBD
EBZ (C15)	WWTP / Un-developed EBZ	Environmental review in progress (including VP & rare species impact). Pending future master planning	Zoning and Regulations	MD	Additional levels of protection to be recommended pending completion of environmental analysis
Grant Road Slopes (C16)	Open Space Residential	Steeply sloped areas along the northwest boundary of the Grant Housing Area have been identified as a significant resource area;	Zoning and Regulations	MD	Consider for additional levels of protection or restricted use
Road Corridors/ Buffer Areas (C17)	Open Space	Continued zoning as open space will create title issues for adjacent property owners	Zoning and Regulations	Various	Consider overlay district or some other type of protection
Willow Brook (C18)	Open Space	Wildlife corridor connecting Robbins Pond Area with Nonacoicus Brook Area/Recommend daylighting of culverted sections as possible.	Zoning and Regulations	MD	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and consider CR or equivalent***
Catacumaug Brook Slopes (C19)	Open Space	Steeply sloped areas along Hospital & Lovell Roads	Zoning and Regulations	MD	Permanent protection through either Article 97 and consider CR or equivalent***

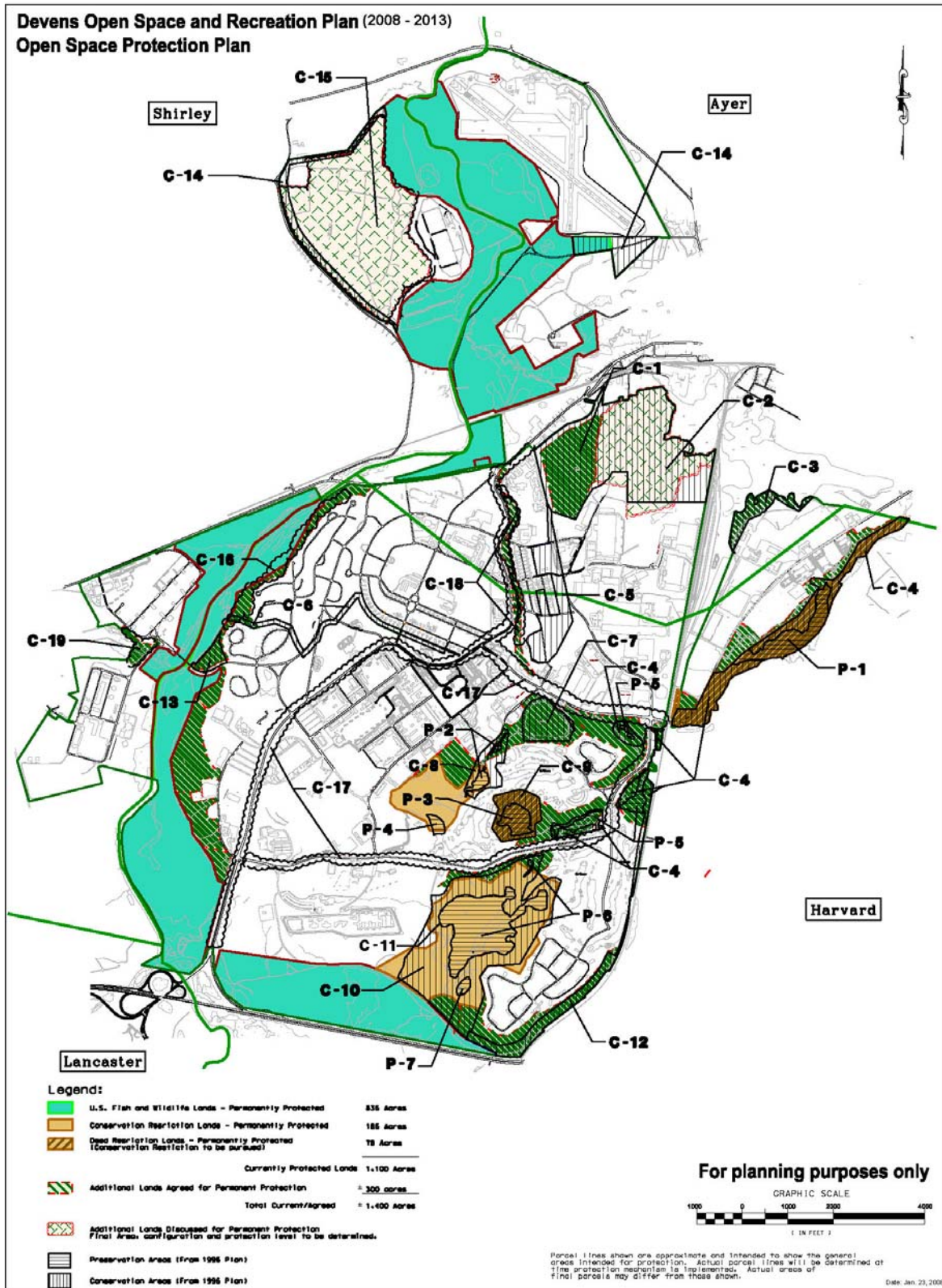


Figure 4-2 Recommended Areas for Additional Protection