

Mount Philo State Park - Draft Long-range Management Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did the Agency of Natural Resources create a management plan for Mt. Philo State Park? Who wrote the draft plan?

Long-range management plans are written by the District Stewardship Teams (DST) to provide guidance for the long-term management of state land. The DST is a group of Agency of Natural Resources staff from across all three departments (Forests, Parks & Recreation, Fish and Wildlife and Environmental Conservation) that is tasked with planning and implementation of all management activities in their respective districts. The team is made up of foresters, wildlife biologists, park regional manager, forestry district manager, recreation specialists, fisheries biologist and watershed planner.

How were decisions made in writing this draft plan?

ANR held several public meetings in 2013 and 2016 and distributed an online survey in 2014 to solicit feedback from the public. The DST took that information, along with natural resource assessments, deed restrictions, and local knowledge and created goals, strategies and a Land Management Classification for the state park that provides a framework for in specific parts of the state park.

What are the management goals of the state park?

Simply put, the goals for Mt. Philo State Park are protection and conservation of natural and cultural resources, and to provide for high quality, well-managed, hiking-focused recreational experiences that are ecologically and physically sustainable.

How does the plan propose to manage recreational use?

People love Mt. Philo. That message was clearly expressed throughout the public meetings. We heard that people place high value on natural resource protection and wildlife habitat many feeling that ecological values are of primary importance. And in that setting you enjoy hiking the trails and road, many of you bring your dogs and enjoy that activity in the company of friends. We also heard and share your concerns about the impacts of high use on the natural resource and quality of your recreational experience. You shared many great ideas.

Its difficult to balance especially with increasing visitation but we believe we've come up with a plan that includes some good first steps toward that balance.

- The plan proposes a continuation of trail improvement that has begun over the past several years - widening the trail, adding stairs and gravel, relocating segments of trail and protecting vegetation. This work is being done to improve trail conditions and protect the natural resource. We'll prioritize funding for important trail upgrades.
- The plan also proposes to expand the trail system by creating an alternate route to the summit on the northern part of the park.
- Dogs are important hiking companions to many and they will continue to be allowed. However, dogs will be required to be on leash at all times and pet owners will be reminded to pick up and properly dispose of waste.
- Large groups will be managed differently. The plan proposes to limit the frequency and size of group events and includes measures to reduce related parking and trail pressures.

- The DST feels that parking is adequate to optimize both high-quality recreational experiences and natural resource protection and that expanded parking would translate into visitation out of balance with visitor experience and environmental protection. For now the plan proposes to keep parking as is but fully utilize its capacity by limiting large groups and buses, moving the dumpster and portalets so that the full parking area is available for cars. And when the parking is at its full 100 sites, the park will be closed.
- Alternative hikes will be advertised. There are many great hiking opportunities in the area.
- The plan also proposes to conserve the forests, natural communities and wildlife habitat of Mt. Philo - that setting so many visitors love for their hiking adventure. We'll continue to manage invasive species and manage the meadow for native plants as habitat for songbirds and pollinators.
- The LRMP closes the cliff area to off-trail use including climbing and scrambling. The cliff communities are quite limited within the low elevations of the Champlain Valley and as such, the DST felt they warranted protection. While not very popular for climbing, these communities are in peril from increasing off-trail use. Officially closing them to off trail use would keep them from being disturbed.

What happens next?

The DST is seeking public comment on the draft version of the LRMP. We believe we have struck a balance between natural resource protection and recreational enjoyment of Mt Philo State Park. We'd like to hear what you think.

Please submit written comments at the public meeting, through the mail, or via email. Written comments should be sent to the Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, 271 North Main Street, Suite 215, Rutland, Vermont 05701. Or email us your comments at ANR.MountPhilo@Vermont.gov. Comments will be accepted until June 1, 2018.

After the public comment period has closed, the DST will formally respond to the comments with a responsiveness summary that describes any changes made to the LRMP as a result of comments received. Responses will be sent to those who signed in at the public meeting and those who provided comment (and included contact information). Every effort will be made to include suggestions which are compatible with the ANR and its department's missions; compatible with ANR lands management principles and goals; and which area fiscally realistic. Once this task has been completed, the DST will prepare a final draft of the plan and present it to the Commissioners of the Departments of FPR, F&W and DEC, and the Secretary of the ANR for their approval.

To view the draft LRMP, visit the following website:

http://fpr.vermont.gov/state_lands/management_planning/documents/district_pages/district_2/mt_philo