



Town Forest Committee Town Meeting Warrant Items

Reading Select Board
September 10, 2024

Town Forest Committee Update on Status and Next Steps; and Town Meeting Warrant Items



- ▶ Report on dead pine tree removal
- ▶ Report on invasive plant control
- ▶ Town Meeting request for funding to continue removal of dead pine trees and control of invasive plants
- ▶ Town Meeting request to modify the General Bylaw to address public safety concerns regarding the number of off-leash dogs per handler in the the Town Forest

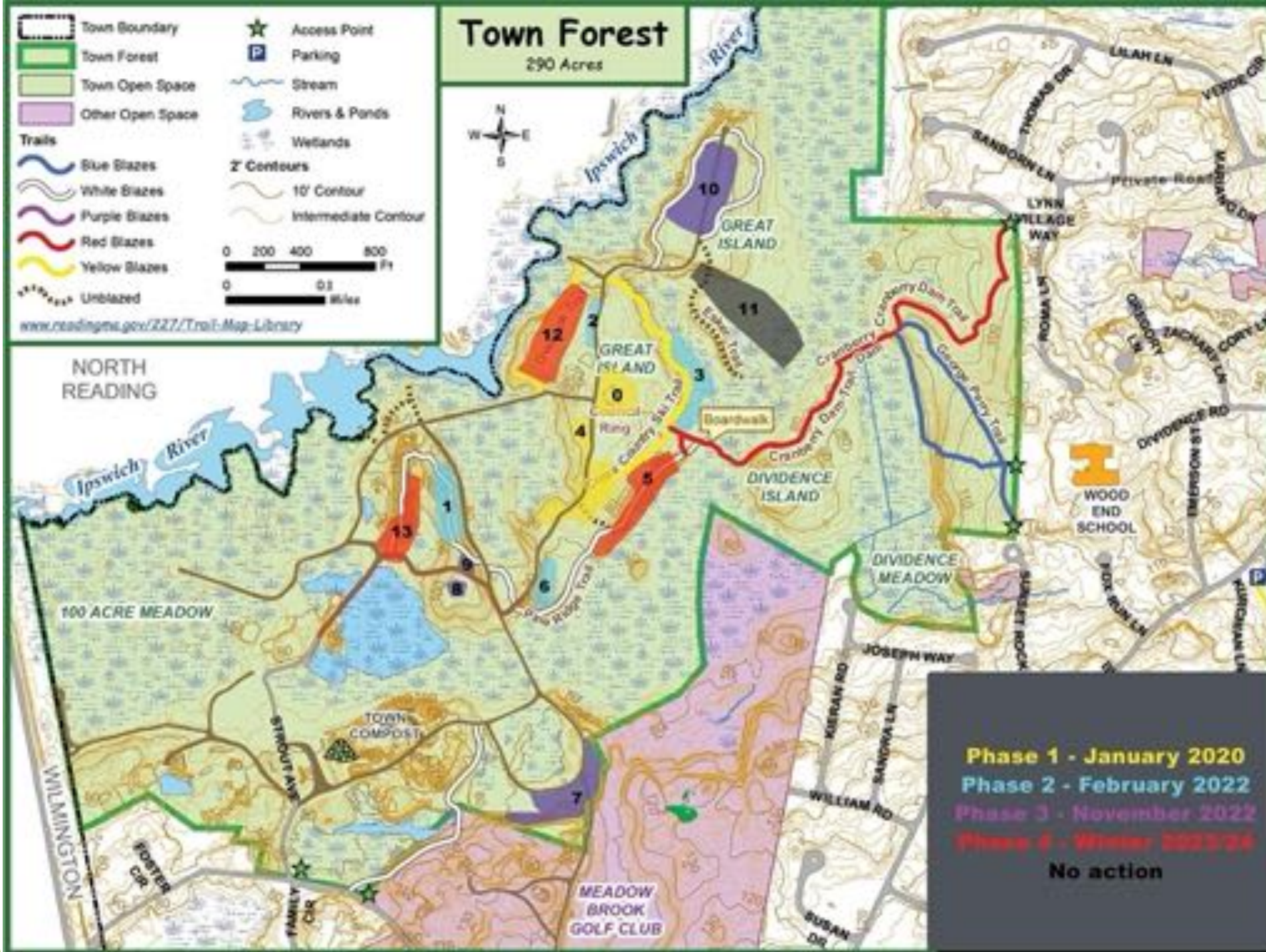
Red pine trees in the Town Forest are dying due to climate change, and invasive plants are widespread



Item 1: Dead Red Pine Trees

- ▶ Red pine trees were planted starting in the 1930s as a resource to be periodically harvested
- ▶ Red pines are suited for more northern latitudes
- ▶ Climate change has stressed the red pines
- ▶ This stress makes the red pines vulnerable to fungus and insects such as pine scale
- ▶ Need to remove the dead trees before they fall and potentially injure users of the Town Forest or catch on fire





Reading
Town
Forest
Dead Tree
Removal
Program
by Phase

Work to Date:

- ▶ Phase 1 removed dead trees on 4.5 acres in January 2020 at a cost of \$28,400 (Town funds)
- ▶ Phase 2 another 4.5 acres at a cost of \$22,900 January 2022 (Town funds with a \$10,000 grant from DCR)
- ▶ Phase 3 another 4.8 acres at a cost of \$36,493 November 2022 (ARPA funds with a \$10,000 grant from DCR)
- ▶ Projects were bid and managed by Reading DPW
- ▶ Scouts have replanted hundreds of trees
- ▶ Thank You Troop 702!



Item 2: Invasive Plants

- ▶ Invasive plants such as buckthorn, Japanese knotweed, tree of heaven and black swallow-wort have become firmly established in the Town Forest
- ▶ The adjacent Compost Center is a reservoir of invasives that will spread into the Town Forest
- ▶ If not controlled now, native plants will be crowded out and the Town Forest will be a tangle of invasive plants



Buckthorn



Tree of Heaven



Black Swallow-wort



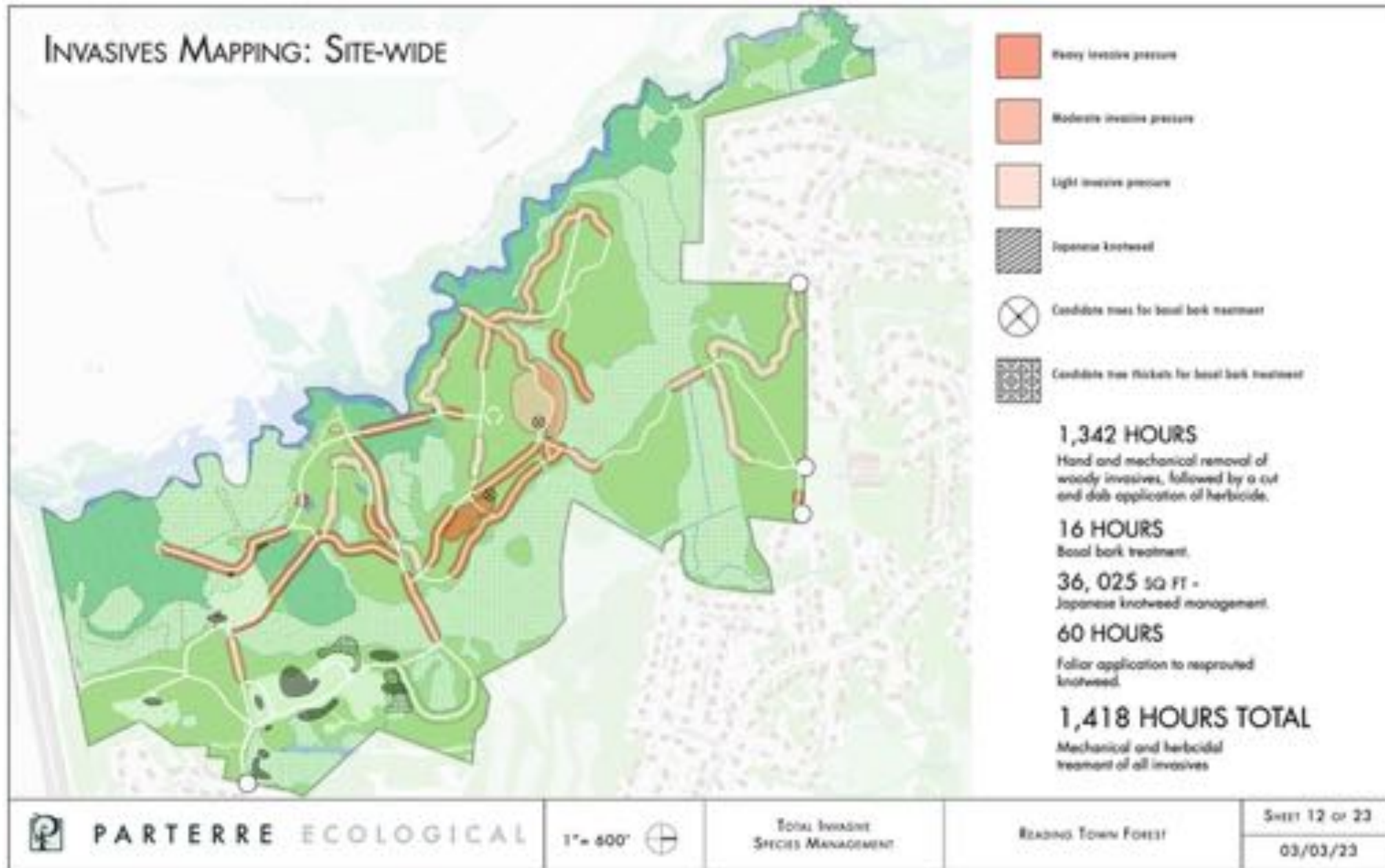
Japanese Knotweed

Invasive Plants Work to Date:

- ▶ Volunteer buckthorn pulling by Scouts, Town residents and others such as Amazon Robotics
- ▶ Phase 1 treatment June 2022 at a cost of \$9,545 (Town funds)
- ▶ Phase 2 treatment November 2023 at a cost of \$44,000 (ARPA funds)
- ▶ Phase 3 treatment May 2024 at a cost of \$9,240 (\$6,930 DCR grant and \$2,310 Town funds)
- ▶ Phase 4 treatment August 2024 at a cost of \$9,800 (ARPA funds)



Invasive Plant Inventory and Management Plan



Next Steps – Town Meeting Funding

- ▶ Phase 4 of the dead tree removal program for Areas 5, 12 and 13
 - ▶ Cost estimate is \$60,000
 - ▶ Should be the last major phase
 - ▶ DCR has approved a \$10,000 grant for this work leaving a need for \$50,000 in Town funds
- ▶ Phase 5 of the invasive plant control program
 - ▶ Cost estimate is \$100,000
 - ▶ Should be the last major phase (future maintenance will be required)
 - ▶ Grant funding will be sought
- ▶ Total November Town Meeting warrant request is \$150,000

Summary of Items 1 and 2 for Town Meeting Funding

	Dead Trees	Invasive Plants
Work to Date:	13.8 acres cleared at a cost of \$87,793 (\$41,300 in Town funds and \$46,493 in ARPA and DCR grants)	About 40% of the areas in the Invasive Plant Management Plan completed at a cost of \$72,585 (\$11,855 in Town funds and \$60,730 in ARPA and DCR grants)
Work for which Funding is Needed:	5.1 acres remaining, with limited access at an estimate cost of \$60,000 (\$50,000 in Town funds and a \$10,000 grant approved by DCR)	Remaining 60% of the areas in the Invasives Plan at an estimated cost of \$100,000 (grants will be sought) Future maintenance will be required

Item 3: Concern with Number of Dogs off-leash per handler

- ▶ Continuing complaints about conflicts between commercial dog walkers with multiple off-leash dogs and the public
- ▶ Current Bylaw allows dogs to be off-leash when under voice control
- ▶ A Facebook post by one commercial dog walker said that:

“I’m a dog walker there [Town Forest] and I bring in 8 off leash and they are all under voice control. There are a lot of people on the trail who are very mean and will treat you this way. I deal with it everyday – just do your own thing and ignore them!”
- ▶ Residents’ safety concerns should not be ignored
- ▶ Some members of the public feel threatened by large groups of unleashed dogs
- ▶ The Town Forest is not a dog park
- ▶ The Town Forest Committee investigated policies in other towns

What do our Neighboring Towns Do?

City/Town	Policy
Andover	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place except in a designated dog park.
Billerica	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place.
Burlington	Dogs must be leashed or obedient to command when in a public place.
Lexington	Dogs must be under control by means of a leash or by effective command. A person may not be responsible for more than 2 dogs.
Lynnfield	Dogs must be leashed or obedient to command when in a public place.
Melrose	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place.
Middleton	No town leash law. ACO authorized to require owners to leash dogs
North Andover	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place.
North Reading	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place.
Reading	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place. However, it may be under effective voice control when within the Town Forest or on conservation lands
Saugus	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place except in a designated dog park.
Stoneham	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place.
Tewksbury	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place.
Wakefield	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place except in a designated dog park.
Wilmington	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place except in a designated dog park.
Woburn	Dogs must be leashed when in a public place.

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15 Neighboring Towns:

11 require dogs to be leashed in public except in a dog park

4 allow for dogs to be off leash in a public place if obedient to command

Proposed Bylaw Amendment

Article ____: Expand and clarify the definition of Effective Voice Control of an animal

To see if the Town will vote to amend Section 8.8.1.3 Effective Voice Control as follows:

Effective Voice Control

An animal shall be deemed to be “under effective voice control” if it is (i) within the handler’s sight, (ii) refrains from aggressive behavior, (iii) comes immediately when called by its handler, and (iv) the handler is carrying a leash per dog. Aggressive behavior is any behavior that would cause a reasonable person to believe the dog poses an unjustified imminent threat of physical injury to a person or another dog, including but not limited to jumping on, repeatedly barking at, or approaching any person without their consent.

Article ____: Control of off-leash dogs in the Town Forest

To see if the Town will vote to amend Section 8.8.3.2 of the General Bylaws by (1) inserting a new Section 8.8.3.2.3, as follows:

Town Forest

The maximum number of off-leash dogs shall not exceed two per handler in the Town Forest. Any dog that does not remain under effective voice control, as defined in Section 8.8.1.3, must be placed on a leash or removed from the Town Forest immediately. Dog waste must be removed in accordance with Section 8.8.3.3. Dogs must be leashed when entering or exiting the Town Forest. Visitors who do not abide by these rules may be required to leave the Town Forest, in addition to any enforcement action provided for under G. L. c.40, §21D and Section 1.8 of these Bylaws.

Summary

- ▶ Dead trees have been removed from 13.8 acres to date
- ▶ **November Town Meeting** funding request for \$50,000 for Phase 4
- ▶ Reading Fire Department supports removal of the dead trees
- ▶ Invasive plant control on the Town Forest *trails* was substantially completed following the Invasive Plant Management Plan
- ▶ **November Town Meeting** funding request for \$100,000 for Phase 5 to address invasive plants on the Town Forest *access roads*
- ▶ **November Town Meeting** request to amend the General Bylaw on animal control to improve public safety and reduce negative interactions between dogs and residents
- ▶ The proposed change to the animal control Bylaw was reviewed by Town Counsel, was approved by the Bylaw Committee, and is supported by the Reading Public Health Department and Animal Control Officer



HEADQUARTERS
READING FIRE DEPARTMENT
READING, MASSACHUSETTS 01867

Chief Gregory J. Burns
Reading Fire Department
757 Main Street
Reading MA 01867

Tel: 781.944.3132
Fax: 781.942.9114
www.readingma.gov

William Sullivan
Reading Town Forest Committee
Town of Reading
16 Lowell Street
Reading, MA. 01667

Sir,

On July 10, 2024, I met with Mike Hannaford at the Town Forest and viewed sites that contained deceased red pines. These large areas contained trees that had already fallen or were in decay posing a significant fire hazard. The added fuel caused by these decaying and downed trees will accelerate a fire and potentially overwhelm our resources. Additionally, many of these areas encroached existing trails, increasing the safety risk to anyone using the trails.

We talked about the work that has been completed and the plan to do remedial removal of these remaining red pines in various areas within the Town Forest. For the reasons stated above, the Fire Department would be fully in favor of this work, to not only reduce the fire hazard but the potential safety hazard to the many residents that enjoy the Town Forest.

Thank you,

Richard Nelson
Assistant Fire Chief
Reading Fire Department
757 Main Street
Reading, MA 01867

Cc: Chris Cole, Public Works Director
Mike Hannaford, Parks, Forestry, Cemetery Supervisor
William Sullivan, Chair, Town Forest Committee
Chief Gregory J. Burns, Fire Chief

"We're Your Friends for Life"

Reading Town Forest Committee

- ▶ Bill Sullivan, Chair
- ▶ Nancy Docktor
- ▶ Bill Hughes
- ▶ Tim Kirwan
- ▶ Jeff Lamson
- ▶ Christine Lusk

