

Working Group Session 2 Q&A | November 10, 2022

Question 1: Morgan Herman: My first question relates to the Trustees' mission as it is very difficult to find in published materials. If the current mission statement is: To preserve for public use and enjoyment, properties of exceptional scenic, historic and ecological value in Massachusetts please confirm that the proposed BMP will equally prioritize access and conservation.

Answer 1: The Trustees has the overall responsibility of balancing public access with conservation. Our mission includes property stewardship, protecting and caring for the scenic, historic, and ecological treasures of each reservation, while providing reasonable access for visitors. Preserving some of the state's most special and significant places, and public access to these places, is at the very heart of what we do across the Commonwealth and what we seek to do with this Beach Management Plan.

Question 2: Morgan Herman: My second question relates to donor intent and restrictions. What measures are you taking in developing the proposed BMP to ensure that both designations of cash gifts with restrictions are appropriately handled and past gifts of land with restrictions are honored.

Answer 2: Donor intent is very important at The Trustees. Our wide range of activities, programs, and properties means that every generous supporter has the opportunity to directly support the activities and the places they care about. Members and donors can support Martha's Vineyard by noting the restriction of the gift in note of the check, in an attached letter, or via email to development@thetrustees.org, or by joining the Martha's Vineyard [Founders Circle](#). Receipt of your gift and confirmation of its intent will be provided to you in the form of a tax receipt mailed to you within 30 days of your donation being received. Please note that Gifts under \$1,000 cannot be restricted, but you are welcome to request a restriction and that may be honored at the discretion of the Trustees. Gifts to a specific property (i.e. The Farm Institute) or a region (i.e. Martha's Vineyard) would be allocated to support ongoing and planned activities at that property or in that region, which may include but are not limited to: stewardship, maintenance, programming, summer camps, children's activities, farming, animal care, beach management, or shorebird care. Gifts to a more specified use (i.e. "repairing the fence at TFI," or "adding more bathrooms to Mytoi") will only be accepted if The Trustees plans to, or has the capacity and affinity to, do the specific work mentioned. If we receive a gift for a purpose which is not in the realm of our work, we will return it. If we receive a gift for a project which we cannot fulfill for any reason, including resourcing or fiscal year priorities, it is our policy to return it or contact the donor to discuss options for reallocating the gift. Upon request or as a condition of the gift, The Trustees will provide updates on the work planned or achieved with the donor's gift.

For more than 130 years, The Trustees has been a trusted steward of more than 120 special places across the state and the landscapes, gardens, and historic homes within them. It's only with the support of our generous donors and of our loyal Members that we are able to do the work we do. Thank you for helping us achieve our mission, and know that every dollar you contribute to this organization will make an impact on the places you love.

Question 3: Morgan Herman: My third question relates to conservation practices. What process is followed, related to non-federally protected species, to determine whether or how predator species of prioritized species will be eliminated. Who decides, following what data, that certain species such as skunks, crows, owls, etc. may be killed to protect other species?

Answer 3: Selective predator control includes both predator deterrent and removal methods. The goal of selective predator management is to reduce impacts from specific individual predators that are actively seeking out shorebird nests and chicks. This can be accomplished through a variety of means including exclusionary fencing, deterrent techniques like exclosures and, in some cases, live trapping and relocation or euthanasia.

These options improve breeding success for plovers and terns to sustain and grow their populations. Predators cause the greatest cause of chick loss and population impact to shorebirds on Trustees beaches. In summer 2022, 39% of shorebird nests on Trustees MV beaches experienced predation. Our monitoring data indicates that crows and skunks are the most substantial predators of shorebirds on our Martha's Vineyard beaches and the primary reason why most species we protect are not reproducing at a high enough level to sustain their populations. Numbers of predators have increased in recent times, likely due to human activity and food / trash that subsidizes their populations. This is one reason why we do not provide trash barrels and ask visitors to "carry in and carry out."

The decision to apply predator control methods is based observations of specific individual predators which are habitually preying on shorebird eggs and chicks. Non-lethal protection measures are assessed and implemented if possible (including trapping and removal—which has proven particularly effective especially where skunk populations are high). When necessary, lethal control measures are implemented, frequently in conjunction with USDA APHS Wildlife Services (a program providing Federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts to allow people and wildlife to coexist) and MassWildlife. The Trustees secure all required state and federal permits. Our staff are also trained in removal techniques. Any euthanasia follows the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines and permits from MassWildlife and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Question 4: Erin Michaud: Can we ask if there are any guidelines in these doc surrounding numbers/volume of OSV use?

Answer 4: To The Trustees knowledge, regulations pertinent to managing beaches in the wetland such as the wetlands protection act, [Edgartown Wetlands Protection Bylaw](#), and [the 1994 Guidelines for Managing Barrier Beaches in Massachusetts](#) do not specifically address OSV numbers, volume, or capacity specifically. These regulations focus on impacts to wetland regulated areas, including dunes and beaches and avoiding unwanted impacts to regulated wetland resources. The [Cape Poge District of Critical Planning Concern](#) which covers Norton Point Beach to the Gut at Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge provides recommendations around vehicles in the subject area. Section III.1.c-e recommends prohibiting vehicles on beaches adjacent to Cape Pogue Bay and Poucha Pond, limiting the number of parallel tracks (two-way OSV trails) and consideration of a limit on the number of vehicles per day.