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## Management of State Natural Area Preserves

### Sec. 23-5c-1. Regulations for the management of state natural area preserves and procedures for the adoption of a management plan for each preserve

#### (a) General Provisions

##### (1) Definitions

As used in these regulations, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated below, except where the context requires otherwise:

(A) “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Environmental Protection.

(B) “Site manager” means the individual, agency, or organization designated by the Commissioner who has primary supervisory responsibility for a Natural Area Preserve and is responsible for the protection and care of that preserve in accordance with these rules and the Management Plan.

(C) “Management Plan” means a plan which sets forth in specific detail the purpose, character, protected resources, management, and other considerations for the protection and use of an individual Natural Area Preserve as described in subsection (b) of Section 23-5c-1.

(D) “Natural Area Preserve” or “preserve” is an area designated by the Governor of Connecticut pursuant to Section 23-5a to Section 23-5i of the Connecticut General Statutes.

(E) “Person” means “person” as defined by Section 22a-2(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes.

(F) “Protected resources” means “protected resources” as defined by Section 23-5(b)4 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

##### (2) Applicability of Regulations

These regulations shall apply to each Natural Area Preserve. There shall be a Management Plan for each Natural Area Preserve, such plan to be adopted according to provisions of subsection (b) of Section 23-5c-1.

##### (3) Appointment of Site Manager

The Commissioner shall appoint a site manager for each Natural Area Preserve who shall serve at the pleasure of the Commissioner. The site manager shall administer, manage, and protect the area in accordance with these regulations and the Management Plan for that Natural Area Preserve.

##### (4) Reports

The site manager for each Natural Area Preserve shall submit to the Commissioner an annual report for such preserve, and such other periodic reports in such form and at such time as the Commissioner may request. The annual report shall include a record of management activities, visitor uses and activities, natural catastrophes, and other influences affecting conditions within the Natural Area Preserve.

##### (5) Encroachments

No person shall construct, place, or continue any encroachments, including structures, easements, rights of way, or land uses in a Natural Area Preserve unless such encroachment is permitted by these regulations or the Management Plan for such preserve.

##### (6) Publicity

The Commissioner shall prepare information about Connecticut’s Natural Area Preserves, which shall be made available to all interested persons. Such information should not promote the Natural Area Preserves in a manner that would attract more visitors than is compatible with the use of an area.

##### (7) Existing Activities

Until such time as a Management Plan is adopted, existing activities within a preserve shall continue unless the Commissioner finds, in writing, that an activity is adversely affecting protected resources.

(b) **Management Plans**

(1) General

The Commissioner shall prepare a Management Plan for each Natural Area Preserve.

(2) Public Notice

(A) The Commissioner shall prepare a public notice of (1) his or her intent to issue, renew, or revoke a Management Plan; (2) a public comment period of 20 days or more; (3) the time and place of a public hearing on the intent to issue, renew, or revoke a Management Plan; and (4) the availability of the Management Plan for public review.

(B) The Commissioner shall cause the public notice to be published in a newspaper or newspapers having a substantial circulation in the area where the preserve is located.

(C) The public notice for designating a Natural Area Preserve under Section 23-5d(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes shall be sufficient public notice for the Management Plan if the Management Plan is offered for review during that process.

(D) The Commissioner shall prepare and publish a public notice for modification of a Management Plan in accordance with subparagraphs (b)(2)(A) and (B), except that a public hearing may be held at the discretion of the Commissioner, unless any person requests such hearing within 14 days from the date of publication of the notice in the newspaper.

(3) Effective Date

A Management Plan, or a renewal, revocation or modification of a Management Plan, shall become effective upon approval by the Commissioner.

(4) A Management Plan shall consist of text and maps and shall contain information on the following:

(A) Basic information on the preserve, including location, name, size, access, jurisdiction, and designation date.

(B) Purpose of the preserve, including general and specific goals.

(C) Protected resources, including special geological features, vegetation, and fauna.

(D) Management of visitors and use

(1) Zones of Allowable Use

The Commissioner may divide a Natural Area Preserve into zones of allowable uses. Use of Natural Area Preserves shall be allowed only to such extent and in such manner as will not permanently degrade the protected resources of the preserve. Zones shall be established giving consideration to the protected resources of the Natural Area Preserve as stated in the Management Plan and to the characteristics of the area such as use tolerance, natural attractions, and the presence of endangered or threatened species, species of special concern, or easily disturbed species or features. Location markers identifying the zones may be installed in the preserve.

(2) Character of Visitor Activity

(A) Visitor activities and uses shall be set forth in the Management Plan and shall be consistent with Section 23-5c of the Connecticut General Statutes.

(B) Visitors may be restricted to trails and may otherwise be restricted in movement or conduct as provided in a Management Plan.

(C) Visitor presence and degree of development of trails and visitor-handling facilities shall be regulated to prevent disturbance of an area beyond what it can tolerate without significant harm.

(E) Special management problems and concerns

(F) Administration of the preserve, including identification of the site manager and any special advisory committees, and enforcement bodies.

(G) Uses of the preserve, including trail construction and maintenance.

(H) Management provisions

(I) Deviations from general management rules

(J) Trails

Location and form of any trails other than natural wildlife paths shall be specified in each Management Plan. Trails may be constructed to provide for allowable use of a Natural Area Preserve and to prevent deterioration of the area by uncontrolled traffic. Trail construction shall be kept to a minimum and designed to prevent soil erosion. Use of paving materials and elevated walks is permissible when necessary and provided for in a Management Plan. The trail plan shall conform to the goals of the Natural Area Preserve as stated in the Management Plan. Unless otherwise specified, trails shall be for pedestrian traffic only.

(K) Other structures and improvements

All other structures and improvements shall be provided for in each Management Plan. Interpretive signs and structures to enhance environmental education are encouraged.

(L) Rules governing the use, seasonal restrictions, and visitation of a Natural Area Preserve.

Rules shall be consistent with Section 23-5c-1 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies. Rules may apply to an entire preserve or to specified zones or subdivisions of a Preserve.

(5) A Management Plan may provide for the following:

(A) Boundary Markers, Fences, and Barriers

If necessary to protect resources of the preserve, construction of boundary markers, fences, or barriers may be allowed, if constructed in a manner that will not create a detrimental effect on movement of wildlife or on other natural conditions. A survey of the preserve boundaries shall be kept on file with the Commissioner and with the clerk of each town where the preserve is located.

(B) Access Lanes

Installation and maintenance of vehicular access lanes may be allowed within a preserve if deemed essential by the Commissioner for fire control or other management activities. Clearing for such lanes shall be of a minimum width and length. Lanes shall be closed to all vehicles except service and emergency vehicles.

(C) Fire Breaks

Construction of fire breaks may be allowed when deemed necessary by the Commissioner and shall be kept to a minimum.

(D) Landscape Management

Cutting of grass, brush, trees, or other vegetation, pruning of trees, removal of dead wood, opening of scenic vistas, or planting may be allowed, if necessary to preserve the protected resources of the preserve.

(E) Safety Precautions

Installation of guard rails, fences, steps, and other devices necessary for visitor safety may be allowed. Control of plants and animals may be allowed pursuant to Section 23-5i of the Connecticut General Statutes.

**(F) Water Control**

Installation, change or maintenance of man-made water control structures may be allowed if necessary for the protection, maintenance or restoration of natural conditions or protected resources.

**(G) Erosion Control**

Control of erosion and soil deposition affecting a Natural Area Preserve may be allowed if necessary to preserve the protected resources of the preserve.

**(H) Management of Vegetation and Wildlife**

(1) Control of vegetation and wildlife – Actions to control vegetation and controlled reduction of wildlife, may be allowed if necessary to preserve the protected resources of the preserve. Control measures shall be applied with caution and only to that part of the preserve where they are necessary. Control measures shall be undertaken only with adequate prior study of the preserve and with evidence of necessity.

(2) Control of native populations – Actions to increase or reduce populations of native plant or animals or to restrict movement of wildlife across boundaries of a Natural Area Preserve may be allowed, if necessary to preserve the protected resources of the preserve.

(3) Management of endangered or threatened species or species of special concern – Habitat manipulations to favor particular endangered or threatened species or species of special concern may be allowed if preservation of the species is designated in a Management Plan as a goal of the preserve.

(4) Introduction of plants or animals – The introduction of plants or animals into a Natural Area Preserve may be allowed only as provided in a Management Plan.

**(I) Access Control**

Ingress and egress may be restricted by a Management Plan to specified locations and conditions.

**(J) Recreational Activities**

Non-motorized recreational activities such as hunting, skiing, hiking, fishing, and canoeing may be allowed by a Management Plan. Such permitted activities shall be defined in the Management Plan and limited to appropriate times, places, and intensity.

**(c) Buffer Areas**

Buffer areas shall be established adjacent to Natural Area Preserves wherever possible, in order to minimize the adverse effects of external influences. Such areas may be managed for purposes which do not adversely affect the preserve. Buffer areas may be controlled by ownership, by dedication as part of the Natural Area Preserve or as a buffer to the preserve, by agreement, or by other appropriate means. Provision for buffer areas shall be included in the Management Plan where such areas are possible.

**(d) Research or Educational Activities**

A person wishing to engage in research or educational activities in a Natural Area Preserve shall obtain approval from the Commissioner. The Commissioner may approve research or educational activities with such conditions and restrictions as he or she deems necessary. A copy of the proposal for and results from any research conducted on a Natural Area Preserve shall be given to the Commissioner. A person authorized to engage in educational or research activities shall notify the site manager before commencing and upon completion of such activities.

**(e) Prohibited Activities**

(1) Removal of or Introduction of Objects.

There shall be no introduction to, removal from, or consumptive use of any material, product, object, plant, or animal in a Natural Area Preserve unless specifically designated in the Management Plan.

(2) Fire Control

No fires may be started in a preserve, except as specifically designated in the Management Plan. Every effort will be made to prevent fires from spreading into a preserve. All uncontrolled fires shall be brought under control as quickly as possible. Any special procedures and methods to be used for prevention and control of fire shall be included in a Management Plan.

(f) **Records**

The Commissioner and the site manager shall keep records in duplicate for each Natural Area Preserve. The records shall include the Management Plan, annual reports by the site manager, and other pertinent documentary material studies, reports, and descriptions of significant events and shall be open to the public at all reasonable times and places. Information exempted from the Freedom of Information Act may be withheld if the Commissioner deems such exemption necessary to protect the resources of the preserve.

(Effective May 5, 1987; amended January 10, 2001)