

Middlesex Fells Reservation Headquarters
The Botume House Visitor Center
4 Woodland Road
Stoneham, MA 02180
(617) 727-5380
2018

The DCR Middlesex Fells Reservation:

The Middlesex Fells Reservation's 2,575 acres offer a welcome retreat for city dwellers and a suitable terrain for hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers and picnickers, as well as, natural and cultural history enthusiasts. The "Fells" takes its name from the Saxon word for rocky, hilly tracts of land - an apt name for this scenic area. The area was first explored by Governor Winthrop and his men in the winter of 1632: " ...they came to a very great pond, having in the midst an island



of about one acre and very thick with trees of pine and beech and the pond had divers small rocks standing up here and there in it, which therefore called Spot Pond" (quote from Gov. Winthrop's private papers). Later the land was favored for its timber, granite quarrying, ice industry, and water power for many mills. By the 1890's preserving open space for public use was gaining interest, the Middlesex Fells Reservation became one of the first preserved public parks and a prototype for urban park systems across the country. Today it's legacy remains as a green respite six miles north of Boston and among the most mature woodlands in eastern Massachusetts.



Special features at the Fells include the Sheepfold meadow, Bellevue Pond, Wright's Tower, Virginia Wood, Lawrence Woods, Spot Pond, and over 100 miles of trails. The Sheepfold is a 10-acre open field used by dog walkers and as one of the primary entryways to the trails located in the western half of the Fells. Bellevue Pond is a seasonal pond surrounded by trails and wide fire roads, including those leading up to Wright's Tower, which looks out over the Boston Basin. Virginia Wood, the site of a vanished mill village called "Haywardville", is now a hemlock enclave featuring a self-guided interpretive history trail. Lawrence Woods is an area of the Fells south of South Border Road with many wide "fire roads", views and vernal pools. Long Pond parking area offers access from Winchester to a nature trail and scenic areas.



TRAIL USE GUIDELINES:

The following rules and regulations were established in the interest of public safety, protection of natural and cultural resources, and to ensure an enjoyable experience for all visitors:

- The DCR Middlesex Reservation is open only from dawn to dusk.
- Dogs must be on leash (except inside the designated off-leash area at the Sheepfold field). Dogs at the Sheepfold must be under voice control of their handler.
- There is a limit of four dogs per handler in the reservation.
- All dog waste must be properly picked up and disposed of. Do not leave bags along trail.
- All off-trail uses, including nature study and geo-caching, are prohibited without a permit.
- No trespassing on posted Winchester Reservoir property. Do not hike, walk, or ride on trails or roads posted as no public access by the Town of Winchester.
- Mountain biking is allowed on designated trails only, and not in Virginia Woods or the Long Pond areas.
- Mountain biking is not allowed on unpaved trails from March 1 - 31 or as posted.
- No person shall engage in any business without written permit from the DCR.
- Injuring or otherwise disturbing animals or birds or their habitat is prohibited.
- Dumping and littering are prohibited.
- Breach of peace, profanity, disorderly or offensive conduct, and possession of alcohol are forbidden.
- Users must obey all posted signs.

USER ETIQUETTE:

- Be friendly and courteous.
- Share the trails. Ride, walk, or run on the right, pass on the left.
- Stay on the official trails. Going off trail or on user-created trails creates erosion, damages habitat, and causes new trails which can't be maintained.
- Bicyclists should yield to equestrians, runners, and hikers. Keep your bike under control; ride at a safe speed and within your ability at all times.
- Warn people when you are planning to pass.
- All trail users should avoid unpaved trails when they are muddy or wet.
- When a horse approaches, move off the trail. Don't use bells or horns, which may frighten horses.
- Anticipate other trail users around corners and blind spots.
- Leave no trace. Pack out your litter. Respect wildlife.
- Dogs should be kept on leashes and under control on all trails.
- Respect private property.



Open – weather permitting

TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS:

The trails at the Middlesex Fells Reservation include both wider forest road - trails (fire roads) and narrower single track trails. Approved trails are marked on the trail map, and generally signed or blazed. There are also many illegal, user-created trails within the reservation. DCR is working to close many of these trails. Please avoid user-created trails, and respect trail closures.

Many single track trails have steep, rough and rocky sections and may be slippery or muddy at any time of the year. All users should use caution.

West of Route 93:

- **Skyline Trail.** *White blazes. 6.9 miles. Average hiking time: 5 hours.* The trail follows the outer perimeter of the western Fells. There are spectacular views of Boston and the surrounding area. Most of the Skyline Trail is in wooded landscape, with several steep ascents to rocky outcrops. This trail is open to pedestrians only. A difficult hike.



- **Reservoir Trail.** *Orange blazes. 5.2 miles. Average hiking time: 3.5 hours.* This multi-use trail encircles the north, middle, and south reservoirs and the open water can be seen from many sites (the reservoirs are for drinking water, so access to them is prohibited). A moderate to difficult hike.
- **Long Pond Nature Trail.** *Yellow blazes 0.9 miles. Average hiking time: 1 hour.* The nature trail was developed by Winchester Trails (sponsored by the Winchester School Dept. and Conservation Commission). This organization has a nature pamphlet and a teacher's manual describing plants, animals, insects, and geology at 12 trail stations. This area is open for pedestrian use only. An easy hike.



Spot Pond

- **Mountain Bike Loop.** *Green blazes. 6.4 miles. Average riding time: 1 hour.* This loop within the western Fells is mostly on fire roads with some short sections of single track trail. It provides an easy ride around the Winchester reservoirs traversing pine and mixed hardwood forests. Caution, this trail is used by a variety of users and shares segments with other blazed loops. Bikers should yield to other uses. An easy ride.

CONNECTING WEST AND EAST:

- **Cross Fells Trail.** *Blue blazes. 4.5 miles. Average hiking time: 5 hours one way.* Beginning in the western Fells near the Medford High School, the Cross Fells Trail gives a good sampling of the features of the park, from wetlands at Whitmore Brook to open water at Quarter Mile Pond in the eastern Fells, to views at Cairn Hill. Use caution crossing South Border Road, Route 28, Woodland Road, and Fellsway East. A difficult hike.

EAST OF ROUTE 93:

- **Crystal Spring Trail.** *Red blazes. 2.1 miles. Average hiking time: 2.5 hours.* Skirting the edge of a wetland, the trail ascends Saddleback and Whip Hills and passes close to Crystal Spring. The trail crosses through Virginia Wood (open to pedestrians only) and ultimately connects to the Rock Circuit Trail to the south of Pond Street. (Use caution crossing Pond Street and Ravine Road.) A moderate hike.



- **Spot Pond Archaeological District Self Guided Trail.** *Yellow blazes. 0.8 miles. Average hiking time: 1 hour.* The trail is marked one way (beginning at the Virginia Wood parking area at 1 Woodland Road), for use with the self-guided trail brochure, describing 150 years of water powered industry. An easy hike. Brochures are available at the 'Botume House' Reservation Headquarters, 4 Woodland Road, Stoneham.

- **Rock Circuit Trail.** *White blazes. 3.7 miles. Average hiking time: 4.5 hours.* Much of the trail traverses rocky outcrops in this corner of the park, providing a variety of scenic views. A difficult hike.
- **Rock Circuit Connector.** *Orange blazes. 0.6 miles.* Allows hikers to cut the Rock Circuit Trail in half. It runs between gate #51 on Fellsway East and Rock Circuit Trail north of Boojum Rock. A moderate hike.
- **Forest Road - Trails in the Eastern Fells and Lawrence Woods.** *Various loops and distances.* A variety of wider forest road – trails in the Eastern Fells and Lawrence Woods provide multi-use trail loops and opportunities for walkers, mountain bikers and cross-country skiers. Many of these pass vernal pools, traverse diverse habitats and provide scenic views of the reservation.

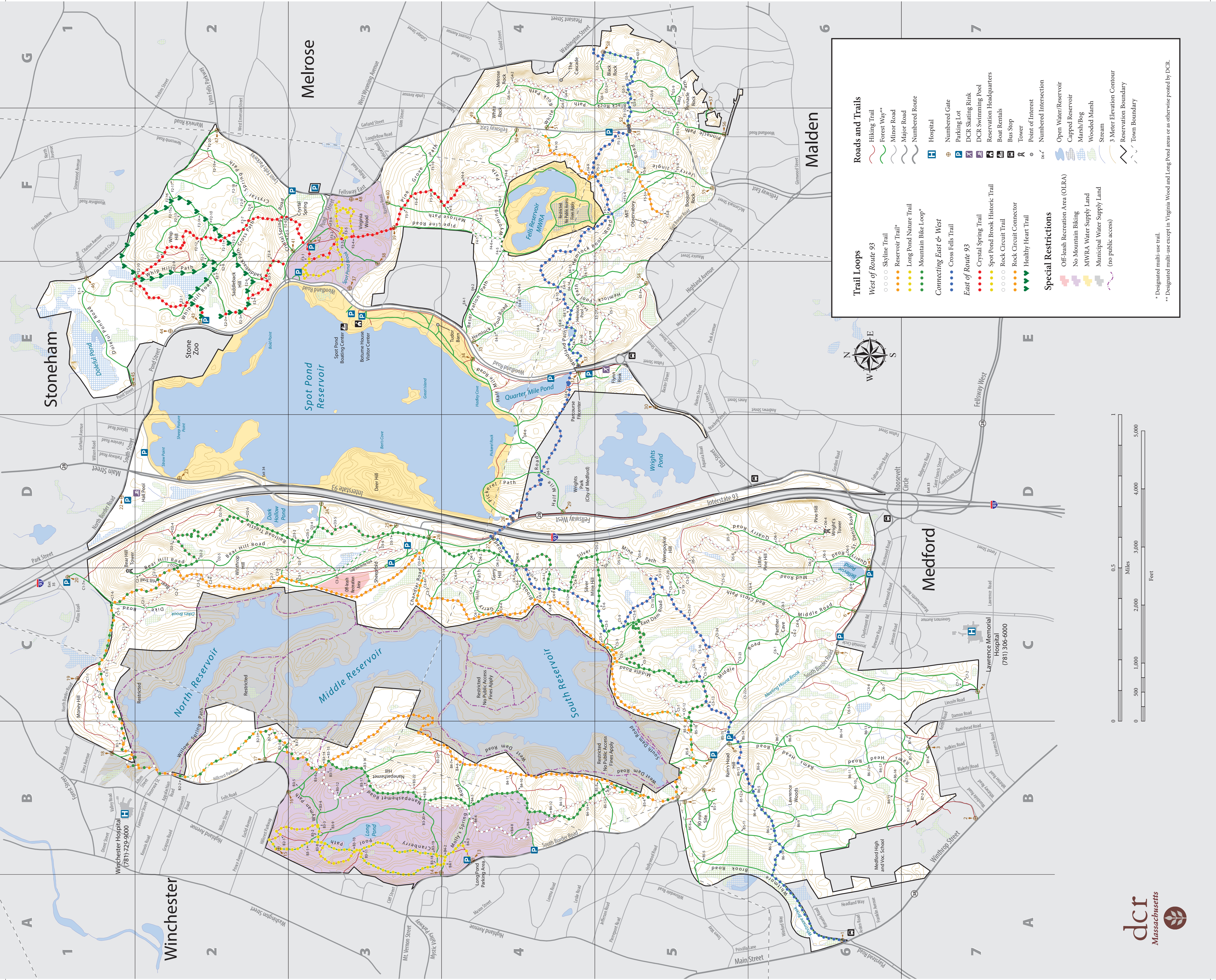


About DCR:

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is steward to over 450,000 acres of forests, parks, greenways, trails, historic sites and landscapes, seashores, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and watersheds. The DCR serves to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well being of all; and to cooperate and partner with those who share this common purpose. To learn about DCR and discover more about the parks, programs and recreational opportunities within the Massachusetts state parks, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr or contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.

Sponsored by:





* Designated multi-use trail.
** Designated multi-use except in Virginia Wood and Long Pond areas or as otherwise posted by DCR.