



Figure 1 View of Woodman Pond.

TRAIL SYSTEM MASTER PLAN | OCTOBER 2026

DCR Brimfield State Forest

Note: Additional changes to this plan may be required subject to review by MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.



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Figure 2. View of a typical forest road with a natural surface.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of the Brimfield State Forest Trail System Master Plan is to support trail network improvements including an updated trail system layout that enhances user experience and safety, reduces negative impacts to ecological and cultural resources, increases trail resiliency for its intended use, considers climate change impacts, and improves access. It is intended to be a working document, maintained and later updated by the Department of Conservation (DCR) staff. It will be used by the DCR for planning and budgetary purposes, assisting staff in setting priorities for maintenance and future projects, while allowing for planning for future goals and potential expansion. The plan can be used to engage collaborators and apply for funding. It highlights protection of wildlife, as well as natural and cultural resources.

The Trail System Master Plan includes a Trail Management Plan for the forest with prioritized recommendations for: changes to trail locations and alignments; prioritization of trail maintenance actions; public access and use guidelines; trail closures/restoration where necessary; and other DCR actions to improve trail maintenance, management, and public use. The Trail Management Plan also includes design guidelines for circulation and

restoration including trail directional and interpretive signage.

In a post-COVID world, there is increasing recognition of the importance of state parks and forests to the health and wellness of people across Massachusetts. Recreation users have increased and there are growing demands for additional trails and new park uses.

In service to DCR's mission and these increased needs, DCR has undertaken the trail planning process to address the following:

- Enhancing recreational experiences for approved uses;
- Protecting the priority natural and cultural resources in the state forest;
- Ensuring access for desired purposes, while limiting access for unauthorized purposes;
- Restoring and improving DCR facilities;
- Providing opportunities for public and stakeholder stewardship of these recreational, natural, and cultural resources; and
- Updating management systems and practices.

Trail. An established and designated linear path or route designed and

maintained for recreational activities.¹ More specifically, a **Forest Trail** is any path or way with a trail tread width 50 inches wide or less constructed or maintained for use by one or more of the following: pedestrians, wheelchairs, horses, bicycles, snow vehicles or recreation vehicles.²

1.2 Mission of the Department of Conservation and Recreation

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) oversees nearly half a million acres of land, making up one of the largest and most diverse state park systems in the country. The Department's work focuses on nurturing the vital connection between people and the environment by protecting, promoting, and enhancing our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all. DCR infrastructure connects people to and through the beautiful landscapes and accessible recreational facilities we care for – strengthening our communities and driving our economy. DCR staff strive to build a healthier, more resilient Massachusetts where all residents and visitors can relax, reflect and feel a sense of belonging in our open spaces and public lands.

The mission of the DCR is:

To protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all.

¹ 302 CMR 12.02 Definitions.
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/302-cmr-1200-parks-and-recreation-rules/download>

1.3 Trail System Planning

A Trail System Plan begins with assessing the function of the existing trails network and makes recommendations to guide the management of recreational trail assets within the context of the natural and cultural environments under the stewardship of the DCR.

Importance of Trails

Trails are more than paths through the woods or routes that connect one place to another. They create recreational experiences through a series of visual, physical, and emotional interactions with the landscape. Trails also provide an important way for visitors to experience, appreciate, and connect with the natural and cultural environment. When properly sited, designed, and maintained, trails can provide high-quality recreational opportunities while supporting conservation and resource protection goals.

Trail systems function as integrated networks. Successful trail systems work together to highlight scenic, natural, and cultural features; protect sensitive resources; provide meaningful connections; discourage unwanted behaviors; and offer a range of high-quality recreational experiences for diverse users.

Trail Impact on Wildlife

Recent research published by fish and wildlife groups in Vermont and New Hampshire suggest that trail systems like the one at Brimfield State Forest play a

² 302 CMR 12.02 Definitions.
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/302-cmr-1200-parks-and-recreation-rules/download>

crucial role in educating the public about surrounding habitat and wildlife populations, enhancing their protection. Human recreation activity is shown to impact the breeding, feeding, and other life cycles of nearby wildlife. This can have significant consequences on the quality of life, and reproductive rates of insects and animals. Studies, including *Trails for Wildlife and People*,³ recommend it is best to keep trails more consolidated and to provide wildlife corridors that allow for access to sensitive and isolated habitats.



Figure 3. An Eastern Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta picta*).

1.4 The Planning Process

In 2025, DCR retained BSC Group to gather existing trail information and develop a Trail Master Plan for Brimfield State Forest. The inventory process included field work to visually assess trails and other recreation resources within the park. Through this process approximately 59 miles of trails, including authorized and unauthorized, were recorded and assessed using submeter GPS/GIS. The Roads and Trails Inventory recorded trail locations, points of interest, and assessed trail conditions, including the condition of structures along the trail. It also recorded

trail widths and types of surfaces. BSC Group's team included Heritage Consultants, LLC who conducted a pedestrian level survey to update and add to DCR's cultural resource database of culturally significant features along the park trails. This inventory updated DCR's trail data, which dated back to 2008, and also allowed DCR to integrate critical natural and cultural resource information including priority habitat for rare and endangered species, vernal pools, priority natural communities, wetland resource areas, soils, and steep slopes.

The Brimfield State Forest Trail Master Plan follows DCR's Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual (revised in 2019). This includes the following steps:

- Get to Know the Trails
- Identify Scenic, Recreational, and Cultural Destinations, Features, and Experiences
- Identify Constraints, Issues, and Problem Areas
- Make Recommendations to Improve the Trail Network and User Experience

As part of this planning process, DCR staff engaged and consulted with key collaborators as described in Section 1.5. DCR also conducted ongoing pre-filing consultation with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) throughout development of the plan. DCR staff had multiple meetings with NHESP biologists to review proposed trail recommendations, discuss potential impacts to rare species and their habitats, and identify biological survey or other information needs necessary to inform trail planning and future permitting. This

³ New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. (n.d.). *Trails for People and Wildlife: A Guide to Planning Trails that allow People to Enjoy Nature and Wildlife to*

Thrive. <https://www.wildlife.nh.gov/get-outside/trails-people-and-wildlife>

coordination allowed natural resource considerations to be incorporated into the planning process as recommendations were developed and refined.

Draft Trail System Inventory Maps were prepared and distributed within DCR to Operations, Recreation, Planning, and Resource Protection staff. An internal meeting was held to discuss and verify the data and clarify the specific goals for the forest. The Trail System Inventory Maps were then revised and provided for public review and comment to help inform the final set of recommendations. A draft of the Trail Master Plan was also distributed to DCR Operations, Recreation, Planning, and Resource Protection staff for internal review prior to finalizing the plan and making it available on the DCR website.

Project Collaborators

As a public park that is accessible to the public and enjoyed for a variety of uses, there are many collaborators at Brimfield State Forest. The following list of collaborators is not considered exhaustive:

- State Representatives
- Hassanamisco Nipmuc
- New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Mass Wildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP)
- Massachusetts Off-Highway Vehicle Program (OHV)
- Brimfield, Wales and Monson Conservation Commissions, trail committees and other municipal representatives
- Various other user groups including horseback riding

Some of these collaborators provide information to their members or the public about Brimfield State Forest. For example, NEMBA publishes a recommended trail network for public use at Brimfield State forest via the TrailForks app.⁴

1.5 Public Participation in Developing this Trail System Plan

Notice of the DCR's intent to prepare a Trail System Master Plan for the Brimfield State Forest was made on DCR's website on March 13, 2025, with additional announcement to major collaborator groups via email.

Public comment was solicited through an online survey that was posted on DCR's website from May 12, 2025, to November 3, 2025, which was advertised with fliers around the park, sent to local conservation commissions, legislative liaisons, and other project partners. Over 50 survey responses were received.

A collaborators' briefing was held on November 3, 2025, to introduce the planning process and solicit feedback. Invitees to this meeting included the Hassanamisco Nipmuc, MassWildlife, Hamilton Rod and Gun Club, Mass Wildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, New England Mountain Bike Association, Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts, Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Wales Fish and Game Club, Brimfield Conservation Commission, Wales Conservation Commission, Monson Conservation Commission, and area legislators.

⁴ <https://www.trailforks.com/region/brimfield-state-forest/map/>

A virtual briefing with legislative and municipal staff was held November 5th, 2025.

A public listening session was held November 17, 2025, to solicit additional public and user input. This meeting was advertised via a press announcement to news outlets covering the Brimfield, Monson, Wales, Holland, and Sturbridge markets, and via emails announcements to key collaborator groups. The public listening session presentation, which also summarizes survey responses, is available at:

<https://www.mass.gov/event/brimfield-sf-trail-master-plan-public-listening-session-11172025-11-17-2025>.

A final collaborator meeting was held on September 15, 2026 and the draft plan was submitted for NHESP review on [DATE TBD].

The final draft plan was presented to the public on October 7, 2026.



Figure 4. A red eft, the juvenile stage of the eastern newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens*).

2. Existing Conditions

2.1 Natural Resources

Brimfield State Forest contains a diverse array of ecological resources that contribute to the forest's regional conservation significance and recreational value. Many of these resources may be sensitive to trail-based recreation, unauthorized trail creation, and trail maintenance and management activities.

Of particular concern to DCR with respect to trails and trail-based recreation in Brimfield State Forest are areas where existing trails, unauthorized trails, and off-trail uses intersect with natural and cultural resources, including:

- Rare and endangered species habitats;
- Wetland resource areas;
- Vernal pools and associated upland habitat;
- Coldwater fisheries resources;
- Priority natural communities and exemplary ecological landscapes;
- Large, intact forest blocks and wildlife habitat corridors; and
- Cultural sites.

Some of the primary natural resource conditions at Brimfield State Forest that deserve special attention and protection include:

- Extensive networks of certified and potential vernal pools and associated upland habitat;
- Large, relatively unfragmented forest blocks that support wildlife movement, biodiversity, and ecological resilience;
- Rare species habitats protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA);
- Coldwater fisheries resources and associated stream corridors;
- High-quality wetland systems and aquatic habitats; and
- Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape areas identified through BioMap 3.

Secondary resource values include scenic forest landscapes, streams and ponds, opportunities for wildlife observation, and the ecological, educational, and recreational benefits associated with large protected open-space systems.

At Brimfield State Forest, the primary resource values include:

- Vernal pool ecosystems and associated amphibian and reptile habitat;
- Rare species habitat protected through NHESP Priority and Estimated Habitat mapping;

- Large forest blocks and forest interior habitat identified as Forest Core by BioMap 3;
- Coldwater fisheries resources and associated riparian corridors;
- Aquatic, wetland, and vernal pool core habitats;
- Ecological connectivity between wetlands, forests, streams, and adjacent conservation lands; and
- Cultural resources and historic landscape features.

Secondary resource values include forest soils, wildlife habitat, water resources, scenic landscapes, opportunities for environmental education, and passive outdoor recreation.

Brimfield State Forest contains some of the most intact and interconnected natural landscapes in the region. Approximately 91 percent of the forest is mapped as Critical Natural Landscape and approximately 73 percent is mapped as Core Habitat under BioMap 3, reflecting the property's importance for biodiversity conservation, habitat connectivity, and climate resilience. In addition, roughly half of the forest is mapped as NHESP Priority Habitat, indicating the presence of significant habitat for state-listed rare species. These overlapping conservation values make resource protection a central consideration in future trail planning, management, and stewardship activities.

Wetlands and Watercourses

Brimfield State Forest contains an extensive network of wetlands, streams, ponds, and associated wetland resource areas that contribute significantly to the forest's ecological integrity, biodiversity, water quality, and recreational character. Wetland resource areas within the forest are protected under the Federal Clean

Water Act and the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and include Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVW), Isolated Vegetated Wetlands (IVW), Bank to streams and ponds, Land Under Waterways and Waterbodies (LUWW), Bordering Land Subject to Flooding (BLSF), Inland Banks, Riverfront Area, and Potential and Certified Vernal Pools (PVPs/CVPs).

Brimfield State Forest is situated within the Quinebaug River watershed and contains numerous perennial and intermittent streams, forested wetlands, shrub swamps, emergent marshes, vernal pools, and seasonally saturated depressions. These wetland systems provide important wildlife habitat, support water quality functions, moderate flood flows, and contribute to the overall ecological resilience of the landscape.

Major waterbodies and aquatic resources within or adjacent to the forest include:

- Dean Pond;
- Dearth Hill Pond;
- Woodman Pond;
- Numerous unnamed perennial and intermittent streams;
- Certified and Potential Vernal Pools; and
- Extensive forested and scrub-shrub wetland systems.



Figure 5. View of the picnic area and interpretive sign overlooking Dearth Hill Pond.

Many of the wetlands and watercourses within Brimfield State Forest are hydrologically connected, creating an interconnected network of aquatic habitats that support amphibians, reptiles, fish, invertebrates, and other wildlife species. The forest contains a high concentration of vernal pools and associated upland habitat, which are particularly important for amphibian breeding and are a significant ecological resource within the forest.

Trail Impacts on Wetland Resource Areas

Trails can adversely affect wetland resource areas when they are poorly located, inadequately drained, or directly traverse wetlands and streams without appropriate design and infrastructure. Potential impacts include soil erosion, sedimentation, vegetation disturbance, soil compaction, alteration of drainage patterns, degradation of wildlife habitat, and the introduction or spread of invasive species. Unauthorized trails and trail widening around wet areas can further increase impacts by fragmenting habitat and disturbing sensitive wetland vegetation.

Within Brimfield State Forest, many unauthorized trails have developed in areas

that were not evaluated for environmental constraints, increasing the potential for impacts to wetlands, streams, vernal pools, and associated upland habitat. In some locations, trail users have created bypass routes around wet or muddy trail segments, resulting in trail braiding, vegetation trampling, and localized wetland encroachment.

In accordance with DCR's Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual, trail maintenance, relocation, or construction activities that have the potential to fill, remove, dredge, alter, or otherwise affect wetland resource areas should be reviewed and permitted through the appropriate regulatory process. Particular care should be taken when trail activities occur within NHESP Priority Habitat, Core Habitat, vernal pool habitat, or other ecologically sensitive areas that are prevalent throughout the forest.

Trail improvements that reduce erosion, sediment transport, and direct impacts to wetland resources should be prioritized. Existing trails that repeatedly contribute sediment to streams, traverse wetlands without sustainable crossings, or create ongoing maintenance and resource concerns should be evaluated for relocation, redesign, seasonal management, or closure. It is important to recognize that not all wet or muddy trail segments constitute jurisdictional wetland resource areas. However, repeated use of these areas can result in trail widening, soil disturbance, and vegetation loss as users seek to avoid wet conditions, creating localized resource impacts and increasing long-term maintenance needs.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) Priority Habitat

Approximately half (50%) of Brimfield State Forest is mapped as Priority Habitat and Estimated Habitat of Rare Wildlife under the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). These mapped areas occur throughout much of the forest and overlap with existing roads, authorized trails, unauthorized trails, and popular recreation areas. As a result, trail planning and management activities within Brimfield State Forest must carefully balance recreational access with the protection of rare species and their habitats.

Priority Habitat and Estimated Habitat are regulated under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) to protect habitat that is necessary to support state-listed rare and endangered plants and animals. The extensive presence of NHESP habitat within Brimfield State Forest reflects the ecological significance of the property and contributes to its designation as an important regional conservation landscape.

Many of the unauthorized trails within Brimfield State Forest occur within mapped NHESP habitat. These trails are generally narrow, serpentine, single-track routes that were developed without formal planning, environmental review, or sustainable trail design considerations. While many are actively used by hikers and mountain bikers, their location within sensitive habitats raises concerns regarding habitat fragmentation, vegetation disturbance, soil compaction, erosion, and potential impacts to rare species and their associated habitat features.

Some authorized trails within the forest also occur within mapped NHESP habitat and exhibit conditions that are not consistent with current sustainable trail design practices. Portions of these trails may follow steep slopes, poorly drained areas, or historic alignments that contribute to erosion, soil compaction, vegetation disturbance, and other resource impacts. As a result, both authorized and unauthorized trails should be evaluated for their sustainability and potential effects on sensitive habitat.

In some locations, trail erosion and washouts have resulted in trail widening as users travel along trail edges to avoid muddy or degraded conditions. This repeated use can compact soils, damage vegetation, and further destabilize slopes. In other areas, unauthorized bypass trails have been created around steep, eroded, or poorly drained trail segments, increasing the overall trail footprint and creating new areas of disturbance. Similar widening and resource impacts may also occur along authorized trails where existing trail conditions are unsustainable. Collectively, these conditions can reduce habitat quality and increase long-term management challenges.

The extensive network of unauthorized trails in portions of the forest also highlights the need to balance resource protection with recreational demand. As discussed elsewhere in this report, many unauthorized trails reflect a desire for longer-distance routes, loop opportunities, and more challenging trail experiences. Future trail planning efforts should evaluate opportunities to provide sustainable recreation experiences while reducing impacts to sensitive habitats and improving overall trail system management.

Trail Impacts on Rare and Endangered Species Habitats

The rare species known or presumed to occur within Brimfield State Forest, along with their habitat requirements, threats, and management recommendations, are described in NHESP resource information and other applicable management guidance. Potential trail-related impacts to rare species habitat include vegetation removal, soil disturbance, habitat fragmentation, introduction of invasive species, alteration of hydrologic conditions, wildlife disturbance, and increased human presence in sensitive areas.

In accordance with DCR's Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual, all trail construction, relocation, maintenance, closure, and restoration activities occurring within Priority Habitat must be reviewed and coordinated with NHESP in accordance with MESA, unless otherwise exempt. Early coordination with NHESP is particularly important in Brimfield State Forest given the extent of mapped rare species habitat and the prevalence of existing and proposed trail management activities within these areas.



Figure 6. Pink Lady's slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*).

Trail maintenance activities that reduce erosion, improve drainage, consolidate trail use, eliminate unauthorized trails, and minimize habitat fragmentation should be prioritized. Where feasible, trail planning should avoid sensitive habitat features, vernal pools, wetlands, and documented rare species locations while maintaining opportunities for sustainable recreation and public enjoyment of the forest.

Vernal Pools

NHESP data layers available through MassGIS identify 22 Certified Vernal Pools within Brimfield State Forest. The presence of such a large number of certified pools, coupled with extensive tracts of intact upland forest, indicates that Brimfield State Forest provides exceptionally high-quality vernal pool habitat and serves as an important landscape for amphibian, reptile, and invertebrate species that depend on these seasonal wetlands.

Vernal pool-dependent species require a combination of wetland and upland habitats to complete their life cycles. While breeding occurs within vernal pools during the spring, many species spend the majority of the year in surrounding upland forests where they forage, overwinter, and seek refuge. Successful populations therefore depend not only on the protection of individual pools, but also on the maintenance of connected upland habitats and wildlife movement corridors between pools and surrounding forests.

Brimfield State Forest contains large, relatively unfragmented forest blocks, abundant wetlands, cold-water streams, and high-quality aquatic resources that provide ideal conditions for vernal pool species. These intact forested landscapes help minimize habitat fragmentation and support seasonal movements between

breeding and upland habitats. Given the number of certified pools within the forest, it is likely that additional uncertified vernal pools and seasonal wetlands are also present and contribute to the ecological function of the broader vernal pool network.

The concentration of vernal pools within Brimfield State Forest represents one of the forest's most significant ecological resources and should be considered during trail planning, maintenance, and management activities. Continued inventory, mapping, and field verification of vernal pools and associated upland habitat can help inform future trail improvements and minimize impacts to these highly sensitive ecosystems.

Trail Impacts on Vernal Pools

Trail development and recreational use near vernal pools can affect both the pools themselves and the surrounding upland habitats that support vernal pool-dependent wildlife.

Trail construction, maintenance activities, and long-term recreational use may alter local hydrology, compact soils, increase erosion, fragment habitat, and reduce vegetative cover adjacent to vernal pools. Trails located too close to pool basins can intercept surface runoff, alter drainage patterns, or contribute sedimentation to vernal pools, potentially affecting water quality and hydroperiod duration. Repeated use by hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, or unauthorized motorized vehicles may also compact soils within adjacent upland habitat, reducing infiltration and increasing runoff.

Increased human activity near vernal pools can disturb amphibians, reptiles, and other

wildlife during critical breeding, migration, and dispersal periods. Many species are particularly vulnerable to direct mortality, habitat fragmentation, and disturbance during seasonal movements between vernal pools and surrounding upland forest habitats. Unauthorized trails can further exacerbate these impacts by increasing habitat fragmentation, vegetation trampling, edge effects, and the overall footprint of recreational disturbance.

Appropriate trail planning and management practices can substantially reduce impacts to vernal pools and associated wildlife habitat. Maintaining protective buffers around vernal pools, avoiding direct trail placement within pool basins and adjacent breeding habitat, minimizing trail width, controlling erosion, and restoring unauthorized trails can help preserve ecological function while supporting recreational use. Additional measures such as seasonal management considerations, public education, and coordination with NHESP can further reduce impacts and help maintain the long-term health of Brimfield State Forest's vernal pool systems.

Unique and Noteworthy Natural Features and Habitats

Priority Natural Communities

Brimfield State Forest does not have any mapped Priority Natural Communities, however, UMass Designing Sustainable Landscapes' Index of Ecological Integrity identified Brimfield State Forest as hosting Ridgetops and Wetlands ranked in the top 10% within the State, Ecoregion, and Watershed.⁵ Therefore, while not hosting any globally rare or unique communities,

⁵ Modeled by UMASS Designing Sustainable Landscapes Index of Ecological Integrity and ecoAssess. Designing Sustainable

Landscapes is a project of the Landscape Ecology Lab at the University of Massachusetts ([Bradley Compton](#), Ethan

Brimfield State Forest does host some of the highest quality and intact communities in the state.

BioMaps 3

BioMap is a valuable tool developed by MassWildlife and the Massachusetts Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to guide strategic protection and stewardship of lands and waters that are most important for conserving biological diversity in Massachusetts.⁶

Brimfield State Forest contains Critical Natural Landscapes and Core Habitats identified by BioMaps 3. While these areas are not regulated, they are important to consider when planning and managing this property. Roughly 91% of Brimfield State Forest is mapped by BioMaps 3 as Critical Natural Landscape⁷ and 73% as Core Habitat.⁸

Critical Natural Habitats

The majority of Brimfield State Forest is mapped as a Critical Natural Landscape by BioMaps meaning it has been identified as a largely intact landscape with minimal impact from development and fragmentation, it provides a critical buffer to core habitats, sustains wildlife connectivity, and enhances ecosystem resilience.

Core Habitats

Brimfield State Forest features 2,673 acres of Core Habitat for Rare Species, Aquatic, Vernal Pools, Wetlands, and Forest identified by BioMaps. These areas are identified as areas of rare and exemplary habitats, with minimal fragmentation and the most structurally and functionally intact ecosystems in the state.

Approximately 656 acres of Brimfield State Forest is mapped as **Forest Core** by BioMaps meaning that it has been identified as one of the best and largest intact interior forest habitats in the state (top 14%). Forest interior habitats are forests least impacted by roads, residential and commercial development, and other fragmenting features. Core Forests maintain ecological conditions found only in unfragmented forests and are critically important for species sensitive to forest fragmentation. These places are increasingly scarce in highly populated regions of the country like Massachusetts.

Protecting **Rare Species Core**⁹ habitat will help to ensure that all living species will continue to thrive in Massachusetts. In turn, this supports clean air and water, natural beauty, and a high quality of life now and for future generations.

Plunkett, [Joanna Grand](#), William DeLuca, and [Scott Jackson](#), with significant contributions from Kevin McGarigal, [Liz Willey](#), Andrew Milliken, Scott Schwenk, and Eduard Ene). It is supported by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North Atlantic-Appalachian Region, the Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center ([NE CASC](#)) and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

⁶ <https://biomap-mass-eoea.hub.arcgis.com/>

⁷ **Critical Natural Landscape (CNL)** represent large landscape blocks that are minimally impacted by development, as well as buffers to core habitats to enhance connectivity and resilience.

⁸ **Core Habitats** represent areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, exemplary natural communities, and resilient ecosystems across the Commonwealth.

⁹ **Rare Species Core** captures those areas that are critical to the long-term conservation of rare and vulnerable species and their habitats. It includes habitats for more than 400 animals and plants protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA), based on information contained in the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) database. It also includes habitat for an additional 21 species of conservation concern as identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) developed by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife).

At Brimfield State Forest, there is significant overlap of Rare Species Core habitat with:

- Vernal Pools
- DFW Cold Water Fisheries
- NHESP Priority Habitat
- Wetland Core Habitat
- Aquatic Core Habitat
- Vernal Pool Core Habitat
- Forest Core Habitat

As noted above, NHESP identified 22 Certified Vernal Pools and 20 Potential Vernal Pools at Brimfield State Forest. Additionally, approximately 681 acres of Brimfield State Forest are mapped as **Vernal Pool Core**¹⁰ meaning that these areas represents the top 10% of high quality and interconnecting vernal pool clusters in the state.

Vernal pool habitats are a unique and integral part of the Massachusetts landscape. Like many other habitat types in the Commonwealth, vernal pools are under threat from the effects of development, pollution, and climate change. Protecting the vernal pools themselves as well as the surrounding habitat and areas of connectivity among them will contribute most significantly to the persistence of the irreplaceable species that depend on these ecosystems. Maintaining intact (e.g., undeveloped, unfragmented) upland habitat around pools not only buffers them from pollution and other environmental stressors, but also allows for free movement of organisms to and among pools, thereby facilitating gene flow among local populations and improving genetic diversity within them. Vernal Pool Core and Local Vernal Pools identify areas

where land protection could be most effective in preserving well-functioning systems.

The Vernal Pool Core also overlaps with portions of NHESP Priority Habitat surrounding Dean Pond, Rare Species Core Habitat, and Aquatic Core Habitat.

There are generally fewer trails in these areas but there are several unauthorized trails, as well as damage points.

Aquatic Core supports more species relative to surrounding areas. These areas provide both habitat and migration corridors to a myriad of species, including a variety of plants, fishes, amphibians, birds, mammals, and insects; and hundreds of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Recent research shows that an even greater number of species are growing dependent on aquatic habitats and surrounding areas as climate change alters temperature and precipitation patterns. These trends point to the increasingly urgent need to protect aquatic habitats to ensure long-term persistence of both terrestrial and aquatic species. For these reasons, identification, conservation, and restoration of habitats important to aquatic biodiversity are paramount.

At Brimfield State Forest, there is significant overlap of Aquatic Core habitat with:

- DFW Cold Water Fisheries
- NHESP Priority Habitat
- Vernal Pools
- Vernal Pool Core
- Wetland Core
- Rare Species Core

¹⁰ Vernal Pool Core Habitat is identified as having greater capacity for resilience and adaptation to the effects of climate change. These areas are identified as having high-quality buffer habitat, including areas known to contain important populations of MESA-listed vernal pool species, clusters of pools that are

likely to function as large habitat complexes, and are surrounded by intact uplands. These uplands, most often forested, provide supporting habitat for wildlife populations and facilitate connectivity between the vernal pools.

Soils

The soils at Brimfield State Forest vary considerably across the property in response to its glacial history, rolling upland terrain, extensive wetlands, numerous streams, and diverse forested landscapes. According to USDA Soil Survey mapping, the forest contains a mixture of well-drained upland soils formed in glacial till, sandy and gravelly glacial outwash deposits, shallow rocky soils on steeper slopes, and poorly drained hydric soils associated with wetlands, streams, ponds, and seasonally saturated depressions.

Common soil conditions within the forest include:

- Well-drained to moderately well-drained fine sandy loams and stony glacial till soils throughout much of the upland forest;
- Sandy and gravelly soils associated with glacial outwash deposits, terraces, and former meltwater channels;
- Rocky soils and shallow bedrock-controlled soils on steeper slopes, ridgelines, and knolls;
- Poorly drained and very poorly drained hydric soils associated with forested wetlands, shrub swamps, vernal pools, stream corridors, and pond margins; and
- Seasonally saturated soils occurring in low-lying depressions and drainageways throughout the forest.

The diversity of soil conditions contributes to the forest's ecological richness and supports a variety of natural communities, including upland forests, wetlands, vernal pools, and cold-water stream systems. The extensive occurrence of wetlands, vernal pools, and hydric soils throughout Brimfield State Forest reflects the important role that soils play in maintaining

the forest's hydrologic and ecological functions.

Trail planning and management should remain cognizant of the range of soil conditions present throughout the forest, as many are susceptible to erosion, rutting, compaction, and long-term degradation when disturbed. Steeper slopes containing shallow or rocky soils are particularly vulnerable to soil loss, trail incision, exposed roots, and accelerated erosion where drainage is not managed. Sandy and gravelly soils may be prone to displacement and trail widening under concentrated recreational use, especially where grades are excessive or drainage is poorly controlled. Wetland and seasonally saturated soils are generally unsuitable for trail construction or repeated disturbance because they are susceptible to rutting, compaction, hydrologic alteration, and vegetation loss.

Unauthorized trail development has contributed to localized soil impacts in some areas of the forest, particularly where trails traverse steep slopes, poorly drained areas, or sensitive habitats. Sustainable trail design, maintenance, and restoration efforts should consider soil characteristics, slope, drainage patterns, and seasonal wetness to minimize impacts to both natural resources and recreational infrastructure while improving long-term trail sustainability.

2.2 Cultural Resources

The existing conditions of cultural resources and an assessment of archaeological sensitivity for Brimfield State Forest are detailed in the 2025 Archaeological Assessment Survey conducted by Heritage Consultants, LLC for DCR (not included in this document and on file at DCR due to sensitive archaeological site locational information).

That assessment identifies archaeological sensitivity across the property, inventories above-ground historic features, and provides regional context for Indigenous and historical period occupation and land use.

Land for Brimfield State Forest was first purchased by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1924 and the state forest and saw significant activity by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s. CCC activities included the development of roads, dams, and recreational facilities within the state forest, as well as general forest management. Recreational areas built by the CCC within Brimfield State Forest include the Dearth Hill Pond area, the Woodman Pond area, and the Dean Pond area, all of which are still actively used by visitors today. As the site of CCC Camp S-60, Brimfield State Forest has the largest collection of extant CCC camp buildings in Massachusetts.

Cultural resources identified during fieldwork conducted by Heritage include numerous CCC-era buildings and associated infrastructure, along with some mill and dam remains that may be part of the Wales Brook Complex (WAL-HA-1). Heritage also noted that eight CCC-era buildings, which were recorded as extant in 2023 appear to have been demolished. None of these buildings were previously listed on the National/State Register of Historic Places or inventoried by MHC, although seven of the resources were located within Woodman Pond, a CCC-era inventoried area.



Figure 7. View of the historic stone dam at Dearth Hill Pond.

2.3 Recreational Resources

The Brimfield State Forest consists mainly of upland forest and forested wetlands with some open water areas, including several ponds, allowing visitors to explore and experience different landscapes. Dean Pond, Dearth Hill Pond, and Woodman Pond, provide opportunities for water-based recreational activities such as fishing. With approximately 28 miles of biking and hiking trails and ample space to relax at one of the picnic areas, visitors to Brimfield may engage in many different recreational activities.



Figure 8. View of a typical picnic area with picnic table and coal grill adjacent to Dean Pond.

Regulations and Restrictions

Brimfield State Forest is open year-round, from sunrise to sunset. Additional rules may be posted on the trail head kiosks and forest website.

Authorized Trail Uses

Authorized uses may include (subject to site-specific designation, seasonal conditions, and posted restrictions):

- Hiking / Walking
- Trail Running / Jogging
- Biking / Mountain Biking (on designated roads and trails)
- Horseback Riding (where designated or appropriate)
- Cross-Country Skiing / Snowshoeing
- Snowmobiling
- Nature Observation / Birding
- Fishing (in accordance with state regulations)
- Hunting (in accordance with state laws, seasons, and safety restrictions)
- Picnicking / Day Use Activities
- Dog Walking (subject to leash requirements and waste removal requirements)
- Educational and interpretive programming

Unauthorized Trail Uses

The following trail uses are prohibited unless expressly authorized by DCR:

- Operation of unauthorized motor vehicles, including ATVs, dirt bikes, and other off-highway vehicles
- Unauthorized trail building, trail modification, jumps, berms, or obstacle construction

- Off-trail riding or repeated off-trail travel that causes vegetation loss or erosion
- Dumping of trash, debris, yard waste, or other materials
- Tree cutting, vegetation clearing, or collection of forest products without authorization
- Disturbance of wetlands, streams, vernal pools, pond shores, or other sensitive resource areas
- Camping
- Open fires
- Consumption of alcohol
- Vandalism, graffiti, or other destruction of signs, gates, infrastructure, or natural features
- Unauthorized structures, including blinds, platforms, ramps, or shelters
- Commercial activities without permit or authorization
- Discharge of firearms except as lawful and authorized during hunting seasons and in appropriate areas
- Harassment, feeding, trapping, or disturbance of wildlife except as authorized by law
- Activities that create unsafe conditions or interfere with authorized recreational use, management access, or emergency response
- Any use inconsistent with DCR Parks and Recreation Rules, 11posted regulations, trail designations, or temporary/permanent closures

DCR may modify authorized and unauthorized use over time in response to changing recreational demand, resource protection needs, safety concerns, evolving management priorities.

¹¹ 302 CMR 12.00.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/302-cmr-1200-parks-and-recreation-rules/download>

Features Of Interest

- Dearth Hill Pond
- Dean Pond
- Woodman Pond
- Monson-Brimfield-Wales (MBW) Trail

Recreation Resources

- Trails system
- Picnic areas
- Waterfront area

Day-Use Area

During the summer, parking fees are listed although there is little to no enforcement or kiosks available for payment. This lot provides access to the waterfront area and adjacent picnic areas where families can spend the day along Dean Pond, sunbathing along its shores, and picnicking in the nearby woods or pavilion; all near a comfort station. During field work, it was observed that this building was locked and not accessible. There are also some trails for visitors to walk or bike around the pond.

Picnicking

Picnickers may enjoy one of two picnic areas: one large picnic area near the waterfront area on the southeast shore of Dean Pond (see Day-Use Area, above for additional information) and one small picnic area near Dearth Hill Pond. The large picnic area provides visitors with ample access to picnic tables, grills for cooking, and scenic pond views; while the smaller picnic area at Dearth Hill Pond only has picnic tables.

Water-Based Recreation

Brimfield State Forest's ponds offer visitors opportunities for a variety of water-based recreation activities at Dean Pond, Dearth Hill Pond, and Woodman Pond. Swimming is not allowed at any of the ponds,

however, fishing seems to be very popular, as is picnicking near the water.

Trail-Based Passive Recreation

Visitors seeking other recreational opportunities may access an extensive trails network. Hikers, runners, bicyclists, and other recreationists can roam the 28 miles of official forest roads and trails along ponds and through woodlands, providing visitors with the opportunity for a light hike or ride, or an entire day of park exploration. When there is snow cover, the Forest's trails are also enjoyed by cross-country skiers and snowshoers. The Monson-Brimfield-Wales (MBW) Trail, a 14.5-mile-long-distance trail, was created in 1998, passing through the Forest and connecting to several local trail systems, and unique local and historic sites.

Hunting

Brimfield State Forest provides public land for hunting during all legal hunting seasons, with highest levels of use during the fall deer hunt.

Winter Recreation

During winter, as weather and site conditions allow, visitors may participate in ice fishing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. The Forest does not currently provide dedicated trailer parking for snowmobile users.

The Dearth Hill Pond Parking Lot serves as a primary year-round parking area for park visitors and is prioritized for plowing and sanding during winter conditions. However, because the lot is an unimproved gravel lot, seasonal mud and freeze-thaw conditions can periodically limit its availability and indicate a need for future improvements. The Dean Pond Road Parking Lot and several smaller roadside

pull-off areas also provide access for winter recreation, subject to snow, ice, and roadway conditions.

2.4 Ownership and Management

Brimfield State Forest is located in Hampden County, spanning the towns of Brimfield, Monson, and Wales, in close proximity to Route 20 and Interstate 90. It is owned and operated by the DCR. The property is 3,680 acres; including three tracts that do not connect to the main body of the forest. The forest continues to expand, with acquisitions completed during the process of developing this trail plan.

The fragmented nature of the forest can make management more complicated, as accessibility varies in the more remote areas causing difficulties for maintenance and safety concerns. The four non-contiguous tracts that make up Brimfield State Forest are:

- **Main Tract (Dearth Hill Road).** Dearth Hill Road leads to the main entrance and divides this tract, providing access to numerous entry points. This tract is mainly surrounded by a combination of rural residential properties, and undeveloped land.
- **Mount Hitchcock Road Tract.** This tract, located south of the Main Tract, is surrounded by rural residential properties and undeveloped land.
- **McBride Road Tract.** This tract, located south of the Mount Hitchcock Road Tract, is surrounded by rural residential properties and undeveloped land.
- **Main Street Tract.** This tract is located east of the Main Tract and is

primarily bordered by rural residential properties and undeveloped land.

Note: Near the end of this trail system planning project, a new 97-acre parcel was acquired and added to Brimfield State Forest. Given the timing of the acquisition, this parcel is not included in the trail system inventory or represented in facts and figures cited throughout this plan.

Landscape Designation & Landscape Stewardship Zone

For each of its properties, DCR assigns a Landscape Designation (Reserve, Woodland, or Parkland) and Landscape Stewardship Zone (1,2,3), which dictates the allowed activities and management objectives within the designated areas.

¹²The Brimfield State Forest is mainly designated as a Reserve (89%) and as Parkland (3%). Landscape Stewardship Zones are established through the Resource Management Plan (RMP) process. Because an RMP has not yet been completed for Brimfield State Forest, Landscape Stewardship Zones have not yet been designated for the property.

Reserve: The least fragmented forested areas where ecological processes will predominate and inform management, and where commercial timber harvesting is not allowed. Areas providing public recreation opportunities, connections to nature, and protection and appreciation of natural and cultural resources. Forested areas actively managed for forest health, resource protection, sustainable production of timber, and recreation.

¹² Massachusetts DCR Stewardship Council. (July 28, 2022). *DCR's Landscape Designations and Management Guidelines: 10-year review.*

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-stewardship-council-landscape-designation-presentation-2022-7-28/download>

Each designation has its own set of ecosystem services and management priorities.

Reserves will conserve large contiguous blocks of high-value ecosystems. These are areas where the dominant ecosystem service objectives will be biodiversity maintenance, nutrient cycling and soil formation, and long-term carbon sequestration. Reserves are areas that users often value for spiritual reasons and that may provide elements of a wilderness recreational experience. There will be no commercial harvesting of timber in Reserves. Forest management will generally consist of letting natural processes take their course, although under specific circumstances, more active management might be permitted. For example, wildfire fuels management may be necessary for Reserves in Southeastern Massachusetts. Recreational activities will generally be passive, but existing authorized motorized uses will be maintained until they can be evaluated according to DCR's Motorized Trail Recreation Facility Assessment Policy. This evaluation will guide continuation of pre-existing Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use in Reserves.

2.5 Trail System Development

As documented in the 2025 Archaeological Assessment Survey prepared by Heritage Consultants, LLC for this project, land that would later become Brimfield State Forest was first acquired by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1924. By 1936, the forest had expanded to more than 3,000 acres.

Much of the forest's early infrastructure and recreational development occurred during the 1930s through the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Beginning in 1933, CCC Company 135

constructed roads, trails, dams, and recreational facilities throughout the property. In 1936, the CCC constructed Dingley Dell Dam, later renamed Dean Pond Dam, creating Dean Pond as a major recreational focal point within the forest. By 1937, a beach, bathhouse, parking area, and picnic grounds had been developed around the pond. In 1938, the CCC constructed a dam to create Dearth Hill Pond and built a bridge along Dearth Hill Road. Evidence of this period of development remains visible today, including portions of the cobbled road bases beneath the gravel surfaces of Hill Road, Two Pond Road, and Stage Road. The buildings at Woodman Pond were constructed in the 1950s on the site of an earlier CCC-developed recreation area.

The forest also contains remnants of historic regional transportation corridors. A portion of the former Brimfield Electric Trolley Corridor, which carried passengers and freight between 1907 and 1927, passes through the northern portion of the forest near U.S. Route 20. Although the trolley tracks have been removed, portions of the former railbed are now incorporated into the Grand Trunk Trail, a multi-use, non-motorized trail extending through Brimfield, Sturbridge, and Southbridge. In Brimfield, the trail generally follows the former trolley alignment and, in places, parallels the graded right-of-way of the Southern New England Railway, a subsidiary of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada that was planned as a regional rail connection but was never completed.

Today, the Grand Trunk Trail provides recreational access through the Quinebaug River corridor and connects with a broader network of trails and conserved lands. The Brimfield segment includes access near U.S. Route 20 and Five Bridge Road and continues through lands associated with

the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' East Brimfield Lake project before extending eastward toward Sturbridge, Westville Lake, and Southbridge. Although gaps remain between some completed segments, the corridor is being developed as part of the larger Titanic Rail Trail, a planned approximately 66-mile regional trail network following portions of the historic Grand Trunk/Southern New England transportation corridor. The Titanic Rail Trail is included in the Commonwealth's MassTrails Priority Trails Network, with ongoing projects intended to improve connections among existing trail segments and expand regional recreational access.

2.6 Park Layout, Access, and Circulation

Access and Parking



Figure 9. View of the entrance from Dean Pond Parking Lot.

Most visitors arrive by vehicle, and park at one of the four formal parking lots along Dearth Hill Road and Dean Pond Road. Dean Pond Parking Lot provides parking for activities at Dean Pond, is paved, and provides visitors with informational signage, public restrooms, handicap parking, and picnic tables.

Other visitors may access the Forest from informal roadside parking areas along Hollow Road, Sutcliffe Road, Main Street and Dearth Hill Road or via foot from

adjoining conservation lands or private property. Additionally, the Monson-Brimfield-Wales (MBW) Trail traverses portions of the forest and serves as a multi-town, multi-use trail system connecting conservation lands, recreational destinations, and rural landscapes in the communities of Monson, Brimfield, and Wales. The MBW Trail links Brimfield State Forest with nearby open space and recreational resources, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Conant Brook Dam Recreation Area and Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary. While there are no bus stops or bus routes near Brimfield State Forest, this regional trail connection expands recreational opportunities beyond the forest boundaries and contributes to Brimfield State Forest's role within a broader network of protected open spaces and recreational resources.

Paved Access Roads

While paved roadways surround the main portion of Brimfield State Forest, there are no main paved roads which go through the large section of forest. The local paved roads that surround the forest provide connections to some of the more remote properties as well as the Dean Pond area. This major day-use area is located off Dean Pond Road and has paved parking lots, accessible parking spaces, restrooms, picnic areas, and swimming areas.

There are few paved access roads that lead into the busiest sections of the forest and are located directly off Route 20. These access roads connect to popular areas within the forest such as the Dearth Hill Pond Headquarters located at the end of the paved section of Dearth Hill Road. Tiderman Road, another paved local road, connects to an unpaved access road leading towards Woodman Pond.

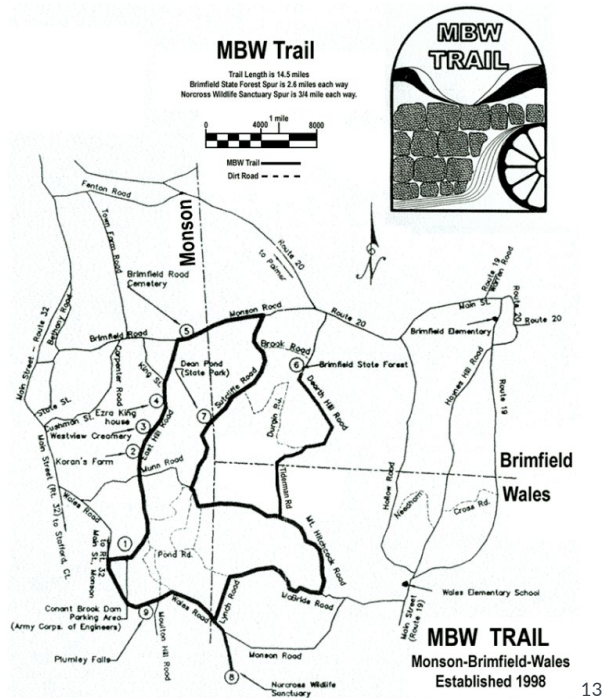


Figure 10. Monson-Brimfield-Wales (MBW) Trail Map.

Unpaved Forest Roads/Ways

Many of the unpaved forest roads were originally built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to support park maintenance and fire control. Today, some dirt roads are M.G.L. Chapter 90 roads, meaning they are managed by the municipality and eligible for state funding for construction, maintenance, and repairs, and are defined as Forest Roads under M.G.L. Chapter 90 and the DCR Park Use Regulations.

¹⁴Registered and insured vehicles may use those roads in accordance with those authorities. Although their condition and width vary, these roads are generally gravel or natural-surface roads and also provide important routes for search and rescue.

These roads form the main corridors through the Main Tract of Brimfield State Forest. Only some of this historic network

is open to public vehicles, including certain roads that extend from local paved roads, while other unpaved roads are not open for public vehicle use. During fieldwork, several local vehicles were observed using open road segments as shortcuts through the area despite the uneven surface.

Some unpaved roads are still used by vehicles, but others have become overgrown and deteriorated to the point of being nearly impassable. In some places, vegetation has narrowed the road from the edges. Even so, the foundations of these historic roads still provide stable, though undermaintained, multi-use corridors.



Figure 11. Example of erosion and washout within a trail corridor.

In addition to vegetation overgrowth, many roads show erosion, gullies, and washouts that expose the underlying road base of large stones. These conditions often create uneven footing. These routes likely appeal to visitors seeking direct or relatively easy long-distance hikes, whether out-and-back or loop routes, without steep grades or especially difficult terrain.

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<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/docs/Recreation/MBWTrail.pdf>

¹⁴ A forest road is any paved or unpaved way constructed and maintained for use by wheeled vehicles registered under M.G.L. c.

90, whether such a corridor is normally open for such use or not. 302 CMR 12.02 Definitions. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/302-cmr-1200-parks-and-recreation-rules/download>

The following forest roads are also important for general management activities and emergency access:

- Dearth Hill Road (Dearth Hill Pond Lot)
- Tiderman Road
- Hollow Road
- Wales Road
- Anderson Road
- Gleason Road
- Durgin Road
- Hill Road
- Stage Road
- Madison Road
- Two-Pond Road
- MBO Road
- Robinson Road
- Marwood Road

Authorized Forest Trails

While most of the trails at Brimfield State Forest appear to be multi-use, they vary in width, condition, difficulty, and primary user groups. Most of the trails used by all users are wider trails to specific features, and trails around day-use areas. These trails are primarily natural surface.

Forest Trail. Any path or way with a trail tread width 50 inches wide or less constructed or maintained for use by one or more of the following: pedestrians, wheelchairs, horses, bicycles, snow vehicles or recreation vehicles (as designated).¹⁵



Figure 12. View of a trail with a natural surface adjacent to a stone wall.

Unauthorized Trails

Unauthorized trails within Brimfield State Forest provide insight into visitor preferences and recreation demand, indicating a desire for longer-distance routes, a variety of loop options, and diverse trail experiences. Many of these trails appear to be experience-driven, often utilizing challenging terrain, scenic viewpoints, distinctive natural features, and remote forest settings. Their location and pattern of use suggest demand for more technically challenging trail opportunities than are currently available within the authorized trail network.

The development of unauthorized trails has also been influenced by historic disturbance events. Following the 2011 tornado, extensive tree damage and blowdowns rendered many existing trails impassable and contributed to temporary forest closures. In response, users created alternative routes to bypass obstructed trail segments and reconnect desired destinations, some of which remain in use today.

¹⁵ 302 CMR 12.02 Definitions. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/302-cmr-1200-parks-and-recreation-rules/download>

While these trails reflect important recreation interests and user needs, they present significant management challenges related to access control, maintenance, public safety, and long-term ecological integrity.



Figure 13. View of active trail layout using pin flags, in preparation for unauthorized trail creation.

Unauthorized trail development can increase trail density, fragment habitat, create erosion and drainage issues, and complicate efforts to manage recreation in a manner that is consistent with DCR's resource protection and stewardship objectives

2.7 Trail Conditions



Figure 14. View of a typical forest road.

The 28-miles of authorized forest roads and trails at Brimfield State Forest are in fair shape overall, with 26% ranked as "Good, 57% ranked as "Fair," and 17% ranked as "Poor." However, this does not take into account the nearly 31-miles of unauthorized trails that have been added. Most of the condition challenges are associated with excessive root damage, erosion on steep slopes (especially along the banks of waterbodies), and rutting through wetland complexes. Most of the unauthorized trails are narrow mountain bike paths and are in "Fair" condition (67%), with 19% ranked as being in poor condition.



Figure 15. View of an abandoned trail through a wetland.

2.8 Recreational Conflict

Brimfield State Forest supports a wide range of recreational uses, including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and seasonal passive recreation. This diversity of uses contributes to the forest's value as a regional recreation destination but also creates management challenges where uses overlap in space and season.

The potential for conflict is most evident where different user groups share trails and access corridors, particularly where differences in speed, trail expectations, and recreational objectives create compatibility concerns between hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, and seasonal motorized users. In addition, unauthorized off-highway vehicle use and informal trail creation can contribute to trail degradation, soil erosion, vegetation loss, wetland disturbance, and conflicts with authorized non-motorized recreation. These unauthorized uses may also compromise emergency access, complicate trail management, and create confusion for visitors navigating the forest trail system.

As with many large multi-use public landscapes, the primary management challenge is balancing recreational access and user experience with the protection of natural resources, maintenance of sustainable trail infrastructure, and discouragement of unauthorized uses that undermine both ecological integrity and long-term stewardship objectives.

2.9 Ecological Impacts of Trail Activities

Brimfield State Forest serves a smaller community of users compared to other state forests; however, there is a disproportionately large number of

unauthorized trails, including some new ones being actively constructed through previously intact blocks of forest and wetlands. Encroachment of trails into these intact areas can have significant impacts on the function and quality of sensitive habitats, as well as species populations within the forest.

The new development of unauthorized single-track trails can lead to fragmentation and degradation of intact habitats, which provide critical refuge from direct impacts and/or buffer indirect impacts from human activities in the forest. As discussed above, Brimfield State Forest has been identified as supporting 4 types of Core Habitat, over 20 certified vernal pools, and 7 endangered and threatened species, all of which emphasize the statewide significance of undisturbed, intact areas. Unauthorized trails damage vegetation and soils, while also providing a vector for invasive species into previously intact areas. Over time, these activities could reduce the resilience of these areas to the effects of climate change.

All trail-related uses, trail creation, management, and maintenance have the potential to negatively impact a variety of sensitive natural and cultural resources at Brimfield State Forest and therefore require careful planning and implementation.

Of particular concern to DCR with respect to recreational uses, trail system management, and trail maintenance at Brimfield State Forest are:

- Creation and use of unauthorized trails
- Erosion and sedimentation
- Unsustainable trail design/tread construction
- Trail structure conditions and maintenance

- Wayfinding and public safety

These concerns have negative impacts on:

- NHESP Rare & Endangered Species
- Vernal pools
- Wetland resources
- Sensitive cultural sites
- Ecological health and resilience

Some of the main causes of trampling, erosion, sedimentation, and soil disturbance are:

- Illegal motorized trail use
- Creation and use of unauthorized trails by users, including motorized users
- Off trail uses
- Off leash dogs
- Limited resources for trail planning and maintenance
- There are at least forty unapproved geocaches in the Forest. Inappropriately located geocaches may threaten sensitive natural resources.
- Trail users at Brimfield State Forest often hike off trail to locate geocaches, trampling vegetation as they move through the forest and creating new unauthorized trails.

Trampling

Trampling is a significant concern within Brimfield State Forest's sensitive habitats. As previously mentioned, more vulnerable species such as vegetation, salamanders, and turtles often do not have enough warning to leave a trail or the ability to fend off danger presented along these trails. Some of these dangers include off-leash dogs, which eat or kill small wildlife, or bicycles which can run them over while moving at high speeds.



Figure 16. American giant millipede (*Narceus americanus*).

It should be noted that the goal of this report is not to condemn bicycling within the park, but to illustrate the need to minimize and mitigate the negative impact these activities have on sensitive areas. Off-trail recreation and unrestricted expansion can have direct and indirect impacts on the function of adjacent habitats.

Off-trail recreation, recreation on unauthorized trails, and recreational uses that widen trails have caused various problems including soil compaction, damage to vegetation, increased erosion and sediment problems, encroachment on wildlife refugia, as well as direct mortality of small and slow wildlife (e.g., salamanders, frogs, turtles, fledgling birds).

Erosion and Sedimentation

Erosion occurs when wind or water (primarily water) carries soil from its existing location. Erosion is particularly problematic on trails with steep slopes and those without proper drainage because water becomes channelized, eroding and carrying soil with it, and depositing it elsewhere (sedimentation).

This is most likely to occur where trails are aligned along the “fall-line” of the slope (the most direct path up or down) which is common for old forest roads, older trails, and some newer style mountain bike trails. As soils on trails erode, the trails become

further gullied, making it more difficult to divert the water off the trail. Trail layout and structures, such as drainage dips, grade reversals and water bars, can be used to get water off the trails. A “contour” alignment can help address this issue. Eroded soils eventually end up as deposited sedimentation and can negatively impact water resource areas.



Figure 17. Example of erosion and exposed roots along a trail.

This is particularly important to consider when trails are located on steep slopes, in areas with highly erosive soils, and areas around wetlands can negatively impact the long-term sustainability of the trail, the user experience, the quality of wetland resources, and NHESP habitats. Therefore, careful planning, design, and long-term management are critical factors to consider in the trail planning process.

Soil Disturbance

Soil disturbance is a necessary part of trail construction and maintenance, but soil disturbance can also negatively impact below-ground archaeological resources. Soils can also be disturbed by illegal off-highway vehicle use, and unauthorized trail building.

Much of Brimfield State Forest retains high archaeological sensitivity for resources from all time periods due to a favorable environment, access to abundant resources, and the presence numerous above-ground historical period resources, particularly those built by the CCC. Virtually none of Brimfield State Forest has undergone professional archaeological testing so ground disturbance in areas of archaeological sensitivity should be approached with caution and in consultation with the DCR Archaeologist to avoid inadvertent impacts to buried cultural resources. Above-ground features, such as stone walls, foundations, and cellar holes can be preserved through regular vegetation clearing. Extant CCC-era buildings should be maintained to ensure their structural integrity.



Figure 18. View of an overgrown and underused trail that is regenerating with native plant species.



Figure 19. View of an abandoned trail with understory growth.

2.10 Climate Change Impacts and Resilience

Climate change is projected to bring more frequent and intense storms, increased flooding, warmer winters with more freeze-thaw cycles, and hotter, drier, longer summers. While total annual precipitation is increasing, a greater proportion of the rainfall is expected to fall as high-intensity events as opposed to gentler, sustained rainfall. In addition to affecting forest ecosystems, these changes are expected to increase stress on trail

infrastructure and maintenance systems throughout the forest. Further, the Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment identifies forest health degradation as a priority impact in Massachusetts due to changing climatic patterns and increasing pest occurrence. These changes are expected to impact how visitors experience Brimfield State Forest, and should inform planning for trail locations, resilient design, and maintenance.

Brimfield State Forest is characterized by a combination of wetlands, forested lowlands, intermittent streams, drainage corridors, and small waterbodies that contribute to localized flooding and seasonally saturated conditions throughout portions of the property. Many trails within the forest follow historic alignments established along naturally flatter terrain, drainage corridors, or areas adjacent to wetlands and streams. While these locations may have historically provided practical routing opportunities, they are also inherently vulnerable to prolonged saturation, muddy conditions, erosion, and washout. Existing muddy trail conditions, rutting, standing water, and erosion observed near Dean Pond, along Marwood Road, and around Woodman Pond are expected to worsen as precipitation intensity and runoff volumes increase. Portions of Summit Trail east of Dean Pond Parking Lot already exhibit significant erosion and washout associated with concentrated runoff and intermittent drainage features intersecting with the trail corridor, conditions that are expected to intensify with larger storm events and increased high-flow conditions. Similarly, low-lying sections of Marwood Road that currently hold standing water and support wetland-like conditions are likely to experience more frequent and prolonged

inundation, erosion, and degradation in the future.

The eastern portions of the property, including areas associated with Wales Brook and Needham Brook, may experience increased flooding and seasonal inundation. These areas support mapped NHESP habitat, certified and potential vernal pools, RTE amphibian and turtle habitat, and cold-water fisheries resources. Increased flooding in these areas may support ecological resilience and habitat function; however, adjacent trails and unmanaged recreational use could increase erosion, sedimentation, and disturbance to sensitive resource areas as flooding expands.

Less snowpack and more freeze-thaw cycles in winter may lead to accelerated trail degradation and will shorten the season for snow-related recreation. More frequent blowdowns from high wind and saturated soils can expose root systems, create trail hazards, and require increased maintenance. Supporting forest health, including managing pests and invasive species, is important to maintain the ecosystem services forests provide such as erosion mitigation, flood storage, and cooling for wildlife and state forest visitors.

Climate-resilient trail planning, design, and maintenance includes considerations such as accounting for how water will flow across and down trails, avoiding trail crossings over wetlands or crossing at the narrowest point, and sizing drainage structures generously to accommodate larger storms are all factors in effective climate-resilient trail siting and design. Trail managers should anticipate increased maintenance needs, including supporting the function of natural drainage systems and addressing routine wear and tear

before large storms, which can exacerbate vulnerabilities.

3. Management Goals, Features, Experiences, and Expectations



Figure 20. Example of a gate to prevent motorized vehicles from entering the forest trail system.

3.1 Trail System Management Goals

Management of the trail system at Brimfield State Forest should support DCR's broader Core Principles by providing diverse and equitable outdoor recreational opportunities; conserving natural and cultural resources; advancing climate resilience; supporting healthy communities; and inspiring stewardship through public engagement, education, and collaboration.

Consistent with these principles, the trail system should be managed to help DCR achieve four broad goals:

- Provide the public with opportunities to experience, appreciate, and interact with the property's natural, scenic, and cultural resources through an equitable, inclusive, and welcoming trail system.
- Provide opportunities for a diverse range of recreational and physical activities within a natural setting that supports connections with nature and contributes to healthy communities.
- Protect and steward natural and cultural resources by incorporating sound science, research, and technical expertise into trail planning and

management and supporting climate change mitigation, adaptation, and long-term resilience.

- Provide opportunities for trail users and collaborators to connect through stewardship of the property's natural, cultural, and recreational resources and foster future generations of stewards through public engagement, education, and collaboration.

To achieve these goals, the trail system should effectively contribute to four primary objectives:

- Highlight natural, scenic, and cultural features and provide appropriate opportunities for access, interpretation, and education where public use can occur without adversely affecting sensitive resources.
- Provide a variety of desired recreational experiences for users with different interests, abilities, and experience levels.
- Connect important features, destinations, access points, and regional trail networks.
- Provide appropriate access to support forest, fire, emergency, and resource management activities.

The trail system should achieve these objectives while simultaneously:

- Avoiding or minimizing impacts to sensitive natural and cultural resources, particularly where increased access could result in disturbance or degradation.
- Meeting user needs and expectations by providing safe, welcoming, and sustainable recreational experiences.
- Minimizing ecological impacts and incorporating practices that support climate resilience and the long-term sustainability of natural resources.
- Minimizing maintenance costs and management requirements through appropriate trail siting, design, construction, and stewardship.

3.2 Features, Access Points and Connections

The most valuable qualities of Brimfield State Forest are the abundance of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. All management activities and improvements should maintain sustainable public recreation and education opportunities consistent with the property's Reserve Landscape Designation, while protecting the highly important natural and cultural resources in the Forest.

Hiking, mountain biking, hunting, access to the ponds, historic sites and buildings, and the recreational experiences provided by the road and trail system itself are also notable features of the forest.

Specific access points, day use areas and features include:

- Dean Pond Parking Lot
- Dean Pond (day use area)
- Dearth Hill Pond Parking Lot
- Dearth Hill Pond
- Woodman Pond

- Mt Waddaquaduck Summit

In addition to the primary access areas identified above, small roadside pull-off parking areas are located along several public roads that border or provide access to Brimfield State Forest. These dispersed access points provide additional opportunities to enter the Forest and connect with its extensive road and trail network. Collectively, the primary parking areas and smaller roadside access points provide multiple points of entry to the Forest and should be considered as part of future trail planning, wayfinding, and overall access management.

Trail Connections

Brimfield State Forest is part of a broader network of conservation lands and recreational resources in south-central Massachusetts. With approximately 50 miles of roads and trails, opportunities remain to improve connections within the forest and to adjacent protected lands, enhancing recreation, access, and regional trail continuity.

Several nearby conservation areas offer opportunities for connectivity. Rattlesnake Mountain Conservation Area lies to the southeast but currently has no formal trail connection to the forest. Immediately south, the Mount Pisgah Conservation Area, managed by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, connects to DCR's detached parcel along Mount Hitchcock Road and serves as an important recreation corridor, particularly for mountain biking.

The Monson-Brimfield-Wales (MBW) Trail provides regional access to Brimfield State Forest and links conservation lands across Monson, Brimfield, and Wales. Additional connections exist through the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, which maintains

properties south and northwest of the forest, as well as the nearby Dingley Dell Conservation Area managed by the Opacum Land Trust.

To the southwest, the Conant Brook Dam Flood Risk Management Project Area, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, provides opportunities for hiking, fishing, and other passive recreation.

As DCR continues to expand Brimfield State Forest through fee ownership acquisitions, additional opportunities may arise to enhance the trail network and improve connectivity both within the forest and to adjacent protected open spaces. Future acquisitions may provide opportunities to establish new trail connections, improve access between existing trail segments and destinations, and create a more cohesive recreational network. These opportunities should be evaluated in conjunction with natural and cultural resource protection, sustainable trail planning, and long-term land management objectives.

Future trail planning should consider opportunities to strengthen connections between Brimfield State Forest and these neighboring conservation lands while balancing recreation goals with resource protection and long-term stewardship.

3.3 Recreational Experiences and Expectations

The DCR desires to manage the Brimfield State Forest in a way that provides a range of users with a diversity of allowed recreational experiences while simultaneously protecting the sensitive natural and cultural resources of the forest.

Walking, Running, Hiking, Snowshoeing, and Cross-Country Skiing

Experiencing the natural environment on foot is the slowest and perhaps simplest mode of travel. One can stroll leisurely, observing the world around you or engaging in deep conversation with a friend; families can take the time for discovery as the hike; or one can hike, run or ski at a strenuous pace, raising the heart rate, sweating on the hills and feeling the rush of both accomplishment and exercise.

Some pedestrian trail users desire wide, relatively short to moderate distances (1 to 4 miles) that they can travel without too much challenge. Some users will also desire a fully or mostly accessible trail surface that is firm and stable without obstructions. Trail runners, hikers, and cross-country skiers often desire challenging trails that offer variable terrain, provide access to more remote areas, scenic vistas, are longer (8-10 miles), and might even require some wayfinding skills. Within Brimfield State Forest, runners include individuals, groups such as school cross-country teams and participants in organized events. Runners in the Brimfield State Forest can find a variety of well-marked running loops of three to six miles on easy to moderate trails, as well as some more challenging terrain.

Cross-country skiing can only be experienced in Brimfield State Forest a few times a year, but the experience of being able to strap on the skis after a storm, surround yourself in a white wonderland and feel like you are the only one in the woods can be marvelous. While skiing is a pedestrian trail use, it is perhaps most similar to mountain biking in terms of the types of trails desired, the speed and

distance traveled and the equipment and technical skill required.

The trail user experience at Brimfield State Forest will be **enhanced by ensuring** trails that:

- Provide routes at a variety of distances with accessibility and level of challenge for the individual
- Bring the user through a diversity of landscapes and habitats
- Connect access points, features, and destinations in the forest
- Are well marked and signed
- Provide various loops options

The trail user experience at Brimfield State Forest can be diminished by:

- Encountering damaged, illegal, or eroded trails
- The presence of dog waste, or other trash or dumping
- Encountering illegal motorized vehicles or aggressive off-leash dogs
- Situations that are confusing or poorly marked trails
- Overcrowding of trails
- Flooded trails and other blocked trails
- Sudden and steep slopes

Mountain Biking

Mountain biking is a mode of travel that can add speed, distance, technical skill, and physical challenge to the trail experience. In these ways, the experience is similar to trail running and cross-country skiing. In general, most users on mountain bikes desire to connect with nature and experience diverse landscapes and destinations in the same way that other users do. However, the mountain biking experience also includes technical challenges. Experiencing a trail on wheels (and on skis to some extent) is somewhat different than on foot. The flow of the trail

– its twists and turns, its ups and downs, its obstacles – all contribute to the mountain biking experience. The quality of the trail is integral to the quality of the experience.

As with pedestrian users, mountain bikers desire varying distances, levels of challenge and technical difficulty, and want to find the levels that are right for them. But they may also desire to increase their level of technical challenge as they develop. Mountain bikers may travel 5 to 15 miles during an outing, and an adequate trail system should provide approximately 40 miles of trails of varying types, levels of difficulty and terrain. Single-track trails and loop trails are important to the mountain bike experience, and loops of various difficulties are important to the different riders. All of Brimfield State Forest's trails are open to mountain bikers; however, these are multi-use trails and are not for the exclusive use of mountain bikers.

On all trails, mountain bikers should expect to encounter other users, including dogs and pedestrians. They should expect to ride in a manner that will not startle others. They should be prepared to slow down, and yield to walkers and hikers, especially on downhill segments. And they should expect to stay off some trails.

DCR includes mountain biking as an authorized use of Brimfield State Forest and desires to provide an adequate trail experience including a variety of types of trails, difficulties, and terrains. DCR prohibits jumps, berms, obstacle construction, and other unauthorized trail modifications and therefore Brimfield State Forest is not anticipated to include expert trails, man-made obstacles, or off-trail opportunities.

In summary, the mountain biking experience at Brimfield State Forest is enhanced by trails that:

- Provide a variety of difficulties, distances, and terrains
- Offer loop opportunities
- Provide sufficient mileage
- Connect key destinations

The biking experiences at the forest can be diminished by:

- Poorly maintained or damaged trails
- Lack of signage / confusing trail networks

Horseback Riding

Exploring Brimfield State Forest on horseback provides a unique and highly valued recreational experience. Equestrians are able to travel greater distances than pedestrian users while experiencing the forest from an elevated perspective that offers expanded views of the surrounding landscape. The relationship between horse and rider also contributes to a distinct connection with the trail environment and overall outdoor experience. Horseback riding on forest trails requires specialized skills, experience, and appropriate trail conditions to support safe and enjoyable use.

Equestrian users often seek wide, well-connected trails or forest roads that accommodate horses and provide access to trailheads, staging areas, and compatible destinations throughout the forest. Other riders may prefer a broader variety of trail experiences, including narrower trails, loop opportunities, and routes of varying lengths and terrain conditions.

The equestrian experience within Brimfield State Forest is enhanced by many of the same qualities valued by pedestrian trail users, in addition to:

- Trails maintained with appropriate horizontal and vertical vegetation clearance for horses and riders

- Access to water sources suitable for horses
- Trailer-accessible parking and staging areas

The equestrian trail experience is diminished by:

- Inadequate vegetation clearance or trail tread maintenance
- User conflicts or encounters that may startle horses, including motorized vehicles, uncontrolled off-leash dogs, and high-speed or non-yielding mountain bike traffic.
- Structures not designed for equestrian access (bridges, etc.)
- Lack of signage / confusion regarding trails suitable for horseback riding

Snowmobiling

Snowmobiling offers an opportunity to experience the forest and the landscape in winter on a motorized recreational vehicle. Snowmobiling is a popular activity in north central Massachusetts; however, current climatic conditions have reduced the length of the season and created less consistent snow cover.

Most snowmobilers desire open, groomed trails with safe wetland crossings that connect various access points, parking areas, and destinations. Snowmobilers also desire trails that are connected to a broader regional snowmobile network. Mostly, snowmobilers desire snow.

Experiencing and Learning about Nature

Experiencing and learning about the natural world can be accomplished through the various forms of trail-based recreation, although it is perhaps best appreciated on foot. Pedestrians can explore and observe natural habitats while using the main trails;

stopping to investigate some small plant or insect, standing still and soaking up the sights, smells and sounds of a particular woodland, or searching for the perfect photo opportunity – these are activities most easily engaged in when the pace is slow and reflective. The experience of finding a moment of solitude in the Forest is special; a moment to revel in the glory of nature, to reflect on one's own existence, to meditate or pray. These special moments are enhanced by the diversity and natural beauty of the Forest landscape.

Engaging in these experiences is enhanced by:

- Access to a variety of diverse habitats
- A sense of solitude
- Well-maintained trails
- Clear trail signage and maps

This experience can be diminished by:

- Disturbance from other users
- Damage to natural habitats
- Poorly maintained or confusing trails

Stewarding and Improving Trails and the Environment

The experience of being able to volunteer one's time and energy to improve an area or trail system that you enjoy is a valuable experience that many seek. Modern society often lacks opportunities to get outside and engage in physical labor, and volunteer stewardship on trails offers the opportunity to improve the environment, enhance recreational experiences and realize visible and tangible accomplishments. Such activities also strengthen participants' sense of connection to the environment and trail system and provide opportunities for environmental education and skill development.

In addition, the Brimfield State Forest trail system has some significant ongoing maintenance needs, and volunteer stewardship has been and can be a critical component of successful trail system management.

The volunteer stewardship experience is enhanced by:

- Well-organized and clearly defined volunteer projects
- Opportunities to meet and socialize with others
- Projects which have a clear, lasting, and visible benefit

The volunteer experience is diminished by:

- A lack of organization
- Bureaucratic red-tape
- When accomplishments do not appear to have longevity

Recreating with Dogs

Family pets, especially dogs, are an important part of today's society. For many owners, dogs are members of the family. Just like humans, dogs need to both exercise and socialize with other dogs to be healthy. As a result, many users of Brimfield State Forest desire to recreate with their dogs on trails and allow their dogs to socialize and recreate together.

While some dog owners prefer to keep their dog on a leash to both control and protect the dog, frequently, dog owners desire to recreate and exercise their dogs off-leash. Current DCR regulations require that dogs at most state and urban parks, including Brimfield State Forest, be on-leash.

The reasoning for this is that some dogs can be aggressive, and even friendly dogs off-leash, particularly on trails, can startle or frighten other users or dogs as they

approach. Dogs off-leash will also tend to run both on and off trail, contributing to off-trail impacts, and potentially disturbing wildlife.

For many dog owners, the experience of recreating with their dog is enhanced by:

- The ability to allow their dogs to run and explore at their own pace
- The experience of allowing dogs to socialize with each other in wide open spaces

- The opportunity for human owners to socialize with each other

The experience of recreating with a dog can be diminished by negative encounters with other users or other dogs. Since off-leash dogs on trails can impact other users and potentially off-trail environmental resources, dog owners should expect to recreate with their dogs on leash and on trail.

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4. Management, Staffing, and Partners

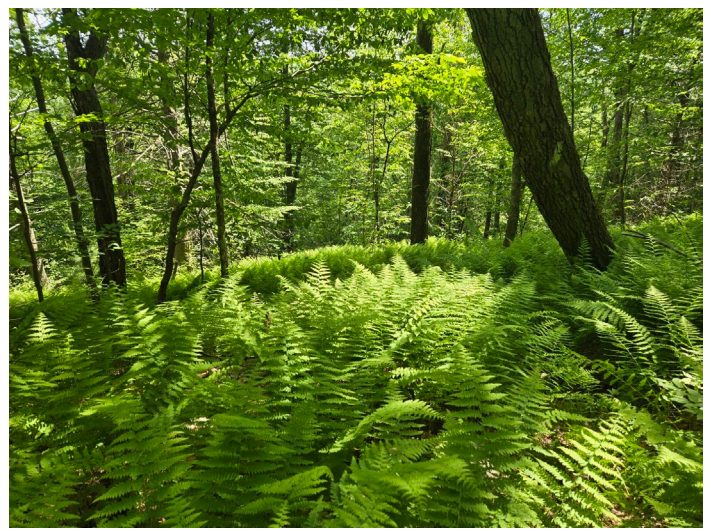


Figure 21. View of ferns growing and obscuring the forest trail.

4.1 Permitting Procedures

All trail maintenance, improvement, and construction activities within Brimfield State Forest must be reviewed and approved by DCR. Activities are guided by DCR's Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual, with the level of review determined by the nature, location, and potential impacts of the proposed work. DCR staff, volunteers, and partner organizations must coordinate with the appropriate DCR personnel before initiating work.

Proposals for new trails, reroutes, and major maintenance or infrastructure improvements should be documented using DCR's Trails Proposal Form. These projects include bridge construction or replacement, wetland and stream crossing improvements, substantial tread reconstruction, and significant drainage or erosion-control work. Proposals should identify the location, purpose, work limits, proposed methods, resource constraints, and anticipated maintenance responsibilities, supported by maps, photographs, and design information appropriate to the project. Routine maintenance may proceed within an approved work scope; activities beyond that scope require additional DCR review.

Projects that may alter wetland resource areas require evaluation under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and applicable local wetland bylaws. DCR will determine whether review and permitting through the local Conservation Commission are necessary. Projects that reduce existing erosion, sedimentation, and other impacts to wetland resources should be prioritized, including trail improvement, rerouting, or closure where appropriate.

Work within mapped Priority Habitat may require review by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, unless an applicable exemption applies. Early coordination should identify opportunities to avoid resource impacts and establish the required reviews.

Activities involving ground disturbance must be coordinated with DCR's Office of Cultural Resources and, where applicable, the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Depending on the location and scope of work, additional documentation, consultation, or archaeological investigations may be necessary before implementation.

Inclusion of a project in this Trail System Master Plan identifies a planning recommendation and does not constitute

authorization to begin work. Projects must receive DCR approval and complete applicable resource reviews and permits before implementation. Volunteer and partner-led work must also follow the authorization procedures described in Section 4.2.

4.2 Trail Maintenance and Stewardship

DCR staff are responsible for routine maintenance of the Brimfield State Forest trail system. Typical activities include clearing fallen trees and vegetation, maintaining drainage features, repairing trail tread, replacing signs and trail markers, and addressing minor erosion and safety concerns. Maintenance should focus on designated trails and approved work priorities to provide safe recreational access while protecting natural and cultural resources.

Larger or more technically complex projects may require qualified contractors or approved partner crews working under DCR oversight. Trail relocations, substantial erosion repairs, bridge and crossing construction, and other major improvements must follow the project review and approval procedures described in Section 4.1. Projects completed by contractors must also comply with applicable DCR procurement requirements.

When staff discover a potentially unauthorized trail during forestry operations, maintenance, or other field activities, they should document its location, take photographs, and record evidence of recent construction and observed safety or resource concerns. Findings should be reported promptly to the property manager or designated DCR contact so the trail's authorization status can be checked against agency records and

appropriate review initiated. Active unauthorized construction, immediate hazards, or ongoing resource damage should be referred promptly to appropriate DCR supervisory or enforcement personnel. Recommendations for evaluating these trails, documenting management decisions, and conducting follow-up inspections are provided in Section 5.2.

Volunteer and partner-led stewardship can supplement DCR's maintenance capacity and support trail restoration, monitoring, signage, and invasive species management. Projects must be reviewed and approved before work begins through a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding, as appropriate and determined by DCR. Agreements should define approved locations and activities, work methods, equipment, scheduling, supervision, safety requirements, resource-protection measures, and responsible contacts.

Ongoing partnerships should be supported by approved annual work plans that identify priority projects and the limits of authorized routine maintenance. Changes to approved locations, methods, structures, or work limits require additional DCR review and written approval. General stewardship agreements do not provide blanket authorization for new trails or trail modifications; those projects must also complete the applicable trail proposal, resource review, and permitting processes.

4.3 DCR Staffing

Brimfield State Forest is managed by a limited core staff of two people responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations, maintenance, public access, and resource stewardship across a large and diverse property. Year-round staffing is supplemented by seasonal personnel

who assist with routine maintenance, visitor services, and seasonal operational needs; however, the scale of the property, extensive trail and road network, recreational infrastructure, and broad management responsibilities present ongoing operational challenges.

4.4 Friends of Groups

At present, Brimfield State Forest does not have a formally organized “Friends” group dedicated specifically to stewardship of the property. However, the forest benefits from an active recreational user community, regional trail networks, and opportunities for volunteer stewardship, public engagement, and partnership-based management. Establishing a formal friends organization or stewardship partnership could provide additional capacity for trail maintenance, user education, volunteer coordination, fundraising, and long-term resource stewardship consistent with DCR management objectives.

4.5 New England Mountain Bike Association

The New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA), through its local chapter and volunteer network, has been active at Brimfield State Forest, conducting trail maintenance, trail improvements, and other stewardship-related activities. These activities, however, have not been formally coordinated with or approved by DCR.

DCR requires volunteer trail work and other stewardship activities on DCR property to be conducted under an approved Volunteer Stewardship Agreement (VSA) or other applicable authorization. Such agreements provide a framework for coordinating proposed work with DCR staff and ensuring that activities are consistent with agency management

objectives, trail standards, and natural and cultural resource protection requirements. NEMBA and its volunteer network represent an engaged recreational user group with the potential to support future stewardship of the trail system. Any future volunteer maintenance, trail improvements, or organized stewardship activities should be coordinated with DCR in advance and conducted under an appropriate VSA or other DCR authorization. Formalizing future activities in this manner would help ensure that volunteer efforts address identified management needs, support sustainable recreational use, and remain consistent with the long-term protection and stewardship of Brimfield State Forest.



Figure 22. View of the understory adjacent to a forest road.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Advance Outreach and Education on Responsible Recreation and Forest Stewardship

Education and outreach should be conducted to foster a shared ethic of care, helping visitors understand that the forest is home to diverse wildlife, significant ecological communities, and cultural resources, and that trail use carries a shared responsibility to sustain the health and resilience of the forest.

- Develop and deploy public-facing outreach materials, including trailhead signage, kiosk content, and digital communications, to convey Leave No Trace principles and the importance of staying on designated trails, particularly during mud season.
- Communicate how thoughtfully designed and managed trail systems support both recreation and conservation by concentrating visitor use, protecting sensitive habitats, and fostering a shared responsibility among land managers, partners, and visitors to steward the forest's ecological and cultural resources.
- Showcase Brimfield's longstanding human and ecological histories, from Indigenous Nipmuc use to CCC-era infrastructure – to deepen visitor

connection and sense of responsibility for the Forest.

- Educate visitors and stewardship partners about DCR's trail proposal, review, and approval process, including use of the DCR Trails Proposal Form and opportunities to participate in approved volunteer projects. Explain that new trails, reroutes, and major trail modifications require advance approval and that unauthorized construction can damage resources, complicate wayfinding, and increase maintenance demands.
- Communicate proactively about forest management activities so that visitors understand what to expect during management operations, how to recreate safely, how trails may be affected, and how the activities contribute to long-term forest health, regeneration, habitat diversity, and climate resilience.
- Explore opportunities to partner with NEMBA, , and other user groups to amplify educational messaging.

5.2 Develop a Sustainable, Clearly Organized Trail System

Brimfield State Forest's trail network should be refined to create a more sustainable, manageable, and user-friendly

system that balances recreation, resource protection, and operational capacity.

Recommendations include:

- Reduce redundant, braided, and poorly aligned trails to simplify the network and concentrate maintenance efforts on priority routes.
- Designate a core system of sustainable trails that support multiple recreation types while minimizing environmental impacts.
- Evaluate feasibility of authorizing select unauthorized trails where they improve network connectivity, enhance recreation experiences, and meet environmental, sustainability, and trail design standards.
- Establish clearly identified loop opportunities of varying distances, skill levels, and recreational experiences for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and passive recreation.
- Close, restore, and formally discontinue trails that extend beyond DCR property boundaries or connect to adjacent private lands without authorization, while directing visitors to authorized trail connections where available.
- Identify opportunities for bike-specific trail experiences where appropriate and compatible with DCR management goals.
- Preserve select low-use or undeveloped areas as quieter habitat-focused zones with limited trail development.
- Improve trail alignment over time by relocating unsustainable trail segments away from steep slopes, wet areas, and erosion-prone locations.
- Establish a consistent response when staff discover a potentially unauthorized trail during forestry operations, maintenance, resource assessments, or other field activities. Document the location using GPS where practical, take photographs, and record evidence of recent construction, connections to existing trails, unauthorized structures, and observed safety or resource concerns. Report findings promptly to the property manager or designated DCR contact and confirm the trail's authorization status against agency records.
- Refer active unauthorized construction, immediate safety hazards, and ongoing resource damage to appropriate DCR supervisory or enforcement personnel. Coordinate any immediate protective measures with DCR before undertaking work.
- Evaluate confirmed unauthorized trails for closure and restoration or potential adoption or rerouting. Consider network connectivity, recreational value, natural and cultural resource impacts, trail sustainability, property boundaries, and long-term maintenance capacity. Any proposed adoption or reroute should follow DCR's trail proposal and approval process.
- Maintain an internal record of trail discoveries, management decisions, and follow-up inspections. Monitor closures for renewed use or construction and assess restoration progress. Clarify that recording a trail on an inventory or emergency response map does not, by itself, authorize recreational use or maintenance.

5.3 Prioritize Trail Maintenance, Repair, and Infrastructure Improvements

A proactive maintenance program is needed to improve trail conditions, address infrastructure deficiencies, and reduce long-term management burdens.

Recommendations include:

- Restore damaged trail segments and correct chronic drainage issues through sustainable trail design practices, including replacing failing water bars with grade reversals, drainage dips, and improved tread shaping.
- Develop a comprehensive maintenance plan for trail infrastructure, including culverts, bridges, boardwalks, retaining features, drainage structures, and stream crossings.
- Assess aging trail structures for safety, functionality, and climate resilience, prioritizing replacement or retrofit where needed.
- Review wetland and stream crossings during repair planning to determine whether relocation, redesign, or enhanced crossing structures can reduce resource impacts.
- Apply DCR climate resiliency standards to future trail and crossing improvements.
- Use DCR's Trails Proposal Form to document and review proposed new trails, reroutes, and major maintenance or infrastructure projects, including bridge construction or replacement, wetland and stream crossing improvements, substantial tread reconstruction, and significant drainage or erosion-control work.
- Coordinate proposals with appropriate DCR staff early in project

development to establish work limits, design requirements, resource reviews, permitting needs, and long-term maintenance responsibilities. Obtain written DCR approval and complete applicable reviews and permits before implementation.

- Establish a clear communication process and target response timeframes for trail proposals so volunteers and partners understand where their requests stand. Identify a DCR point of contact, acknowledge receipt, and provide an initial response describing any additional information needed, anticipated review steps, and expected timing. Provide updates at key milestones, including referral for NHESP or cultural resource review, and notify proponents when delays or changes affect the schedule. Communicate final decisions in writing, including approval conditions, reasons a proposal cannot proceed, or next steps needed to advance it.
- Identify routine maintenance that can proceed within an approved work scope and activities requiring additional project-specific review. Apply this distinction when planning the trail repairs, new connections, and crossing improvements recommended in this Master Plan.

5.4 Improve Trailheads, Parking Areas, and Wayfinding

Improved access points, orientation, and signage are critical to enhancing public safety, reducing confusion, and improving overall visitor experience.

Recommendations include:

- Formalize primary trailheads with consistent park entry signage,

orientation kiosks, regulatory signage, and trail maps in accordance with DCR Trail Guidelines and Best Practices.

- Improve secondary trailheads and pull-off parking areas with wayfinding signage, boundary identification, and parking improvements where safety concerns exist.
- Evaluate parking configurations at major access points to improve circulation, trailer access, and visitor safety.
- Evaluate trailheads to ensure they provide safe, clearly identified, and appropriate access to the authorized trail system.
- Install clear intersection signage, directional markers, and route identification throughout the forest.
- Develop a coordinated trail naming and numbering system to improve navigation, emergency response, and public communication.
- Update digital trail information and actively manage trail data on public recreation platforms such as Trailforks and AllTrails to improve consistency between on-the-ground signage and online mapping.

5.5 Improve Recreational Experience Through Trail Classification and Design

The trail network should provide diverse, intentional recreational experiences that better match user expectations and objectives.

Recommendations include:

- Designate trails by intended recreational experience, use type, and difficulty level using a consistent classification system for hiking, mountain biking, and other trail uses.

- Consider adopting trail rating systems that align with recognized recreation platforms to improve user understanding of trail conditions and difficulty.
- Identify opportunities for accessible recreation experiences, including trails and amenities suitable for people with mobility impairments.
- Identify, enhance, and interpret trail destinations and focal points—such as summits, ponds, scenic overlooks, and cultural features—that anchor loop experiences, strengthen the trail network, and enhance visitor orientation.
- Conduct assessments of trail suitability and prioritization for Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD) in accordance with applicable accessibility guidance.
- Identify locations appropriate for trail-based amenities, staging areas, and gathering spaces that support organized recreation while minimizing conflict with natural resources.

5.6 Protect Natural and Cultural Resources

Long-term trail management should prioritize avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of impacts to natural and cultural resources.

Recommendations include:

- Avoid locating trails in wetlands, riparian corridors, vernal pool habitat, rare species habitat, and other sensitive ecological communities wherever practical.
- Evaluate opportunities to relocate trails currently creating repeated wetland, stream, or erosion impacts.

- Route trails to follow sustainable contours rather than fall-line alignments where feasible.
- Incorporate ecological restoration into trail closures and reroutes through revegetation, decompaction, and habitat enhancement.
- Establish periodic ecological monitoring along sensitive trail corridors to assess cumulative impacts on soils, vegetation, and habitat conditions, and use findings to inform adaptive management actions including trail relocation, seasonal closures, or strategic trail hardening and design improvements.
- Coordinate soil disturbance, trail construction, and infrastructure improvements with DCR cultural resource staff and applicable permitting agencies.
- Integrate interpretive signage where appropriate to educate users about natural and cultural features while discouraging off-trail use.

5.7 Strengthen Stewardship Partnerships and Volunteer Coordination

Given DCR's limited staffing and maintenance capacity, stewardship partnerships remain essential to long-term trail management.

Recommendations include:

- Continue working collaboratively with user groups, municipalities, volunteer organizations, and state agencies to maintain, improve, and steward trails.
- Establish or update Volunteer Stewardship Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding, as appropriate and determined by DCR, to ensure volunteer and partner-led projects are reviewed and approved

before work begins. Agreements should identify approved work locations and activities, methods, equipment, scheduling, supervision, safety requirements, resource-protection measures, and responsible DCR and partner contacts.

- Prioritize partnerships that support trail maintenance, mapping, signage, monitoring, invasive species management, and trail restoration.
- Develop approved annual work plans with ongoing stewardship partners to identify priority projects and define the limits of authorized routine maintenance. Require additional review and written approval for changes to project locations, methods, structures, or work limits.
- Explore opportunities for supplemental volunteer and financial support for trail improvements, particularly where recreation demand is high.
- Ensure that volunteer and partner agreements are coordinated with DCR's trail proposal and approval process. General partnership agreements should not be treated as blanket authorization for new trails, reroutes, or major improvements; project-specific approvals, resource reviews, and permits should be completed before implementation.

5.8 Improve Connectivity Within and Beyond the Forest

Brimfield State Forest serves as part of a broader regional recreation network and should continue to strengthen connections both internally and externally.

Recommendations include:

- Improve internal trail connections between major destinations, trailheads, and recreation nodes.
- Evaluate opportunities to connect with adjacent open space, municipal trail systems, and regional recreational corridors.
- Assess opportunities to improve long-distance trail continuity, including linkages to broader trail networks and commuter trail systems where appropriate.
- Coordinate with adjacent landowners and agencies, including MassWildlife, the Army Corps of Engineers, and private conservation organizations, to improve signage, access, and trail continuity at identified connection points.

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5.9 Recommended Trail System

Figure 23. Brimfield State Forest Proposed Trail System. A full-page version of this map is provided in Appendix B.

Recommendations for Parking Areas and Trailheads

T1 – Dearth Hill Road Trailhead

This trailhead is a small pedestrian entrance off Dearth Hill Road. There is no parking available for this trailhead.

CLOSE – Other trails in this area are heavily affected by erosion and are recommended for closure. This trailhead would become disconnected from the trail network.

T-2 – Dearth Hill Road Headquarters and Trailheads

The DCR Headquarters for Brimfield State Forest is located in this area. There is a historic dam located here creating a small pond which is used for fishing. A visitor's parking area is located at this location, and a Dearth Hill Road (a Town-owned public road) continues south into the Forest.

DCR should pave the visitor's parking lot and add trailhead signage and wayfinding signage at each trailhead. DCR should consider working with the Town to improve Dearth Hill Road at the headquarters area to reduce impacts to the water system in this area. The area is heavily trafficked by vehicles.

T-3 – Robinson Road Trailhead

This is a somewhat unofficial trailhead located off Route 20 in a residential area. The area is underused with ambiguous boundaries and possible encroachment.

DCR should assess boundaries and add boundary markers. Trailhead signage should be added to improve user experience, and wayfinding signage to reinforce trail use instead of trespassing on adjacent land.

T-4 – Palmer Road Trailhead

These trailheads are underused and overgrown. There is no parking available.

CLOSE – Due to conditions and use, DCR should close these trails and trailheads. Steep terrain and wet areas also affect these trails. If these trailheads are removed, the forest trail should be closed to the intersection with Robinson Road to the south.

T-5 – Hollow Road Trailheads

Located on the southern end of Hollow Road, there is a trailhead to the east at Neeham Road and to the west just north of Hollow Brook. The eastern trailhead is a forest road which connects to Haynes Hill Road and there is pull-off parking available at the trailhead.

DCR should repair the vehicular gate at the eastern entrance and add trailhead signage to improve user experience.

CLOSE – Braided trail at entrance. Maintain main trail to eliminate eroded or wet areas.

ADMIN ONLY - The western trailhead should be maintained and converted to administrative use only.

T-6 – Haynes Hill Road Southern Trailheads

There are two trailheads located on the western side of Haynes Hill Road. There is no parking available at either trailhead, and the trailheads are not marked. DCR should add trailhead signage at the southern trailhead to remain. There are two driveways in this area and the boundary is ambiguous, so boundary markers should be added as well and the trailhead should be maintained to improve user experience.

CLOSE – Northern trailhead is not located on DCR property and should be closed with the trail which connects back to the forest road.

T-7 – Haynes Hill Road North Trailhead

This trailhead is located to the northern part of Haynes Hill Road, and there is a small parking area at the trailhead. This parking area is seasonal since it is used as a turn-around for school buses during the school year. DCR should work with the school district and consider expanding the parking area to accommodate year-round use. Boundary markers and trailhead signage should be added to improve user experience.

T-8 – Route 19 Trailheads

The trailheads along Route 19 are in varying conditions, and there is very little parking available. This parking is pull-off from the busy road and DCR should consider improving access in these areas.

REPAIR – There are two trailheads located to the west and east of Route 19 which should be maintained. The trailhead to the west connects back to Haynes Hill Road and the rest of Brimfield State Forest. Trailhead signage should be added to improve user experience.

REASSESS – DCR should reassess the trailhead to the east of Route 19. This area of the Forest property is the most underused and unmaintained.

ADMIN ONLY - There is a trailhead at the end of the utility line which should be converted to administrative use only. This trailhead connects to the utility line and should have minimal recreational use. Other trails connected to this area should also be converted to administrative use only.

CLOSE – A trailhead located to the north of the utility line is underused and should be officially closed.

CLOSE - There is a southern trailhead across from Holland Road which is underused and affected by eroded slopes and poor drainage.

T-9 – Mount Hitchcock Road East Trailheads

There is an official trailhead and unofficial trailhead off the eastern end of Mount Hitchcock Road. The official trailhead has a parking area and connects back to the Wales Watershed Management Area. DCR should work with the WWMA management to improve the trailhead and manage access in the area. Trailhead signage should be updated, and the parking should be paved to improve maintenance and user experience. This area has many unauthorized trails for mountain biking.

REASSESS – Due to use and access requirements at the WWMA property, DCR should assess practicality of using this area for access into the Forest trail network. Direct connection to the Brimfield State Forest is not available from this trailhead.

CLOSE – Unauthorized access from the adjacent utility line connects to the

unauthorized trail network in this area. This access should be closed to better manage access in this area.

T-10 – Lynch Road/Pond Road Trailhead

This trailhead starts at the intersection of Lynch Road and Pond Road. Boundary lines are ambiguous at the entrance, and a second entrance is to the west of the main entrance. A little pull-off parking is available at this trailhead, and no signage is installed.

DCR should assess boundaries and add boundary markers. Trailhead signage should be added to improve user experience, and wayfinding signage to reinforce trail use instead of trespassing on adjacent land.

T-11 – Stanton Road Trailhead

A small trailhead is located on the east side of the dirt road. No parking is available and there is no signage.

CLOSE – The trail connecting back to the forest road should be closed, including this trailhead. See trail closures section.

T-12 – Mount Hitchcock Road Western Trailheads

There are three trailheads in this area on the western edge of Mount Hitchcock Road. No parking is available at these trailheads, and signage is not installed. DCR should assess boundaries and add boundary markers. Trailhead signage should be added to improve user experience, and wayfinding signage to reinforce trail use instead of trespassing on adjacent land.

CLOSE – To focus use on the authorized trails and better control access, the small unauthorized entrance should be closed

along with the unauthorized trail in this area. The trailhead to the east of the forest road on the south side of the road is unmarked and located across from the northern trailhead.

T-13 – Dean Pond Road Unauthorized Trailheads

There are three unauthorized trailheads located to the south of the Dean Pond Recreation Area. These trailheads are not marked and do not have any parking.

CLOSE – The southernmost trailhead should be closed to have fewer entrances in the area.

REASSESS – The northeastern trailhead connects unauthorized trails to Dean Pond Road. The trail connecting to this trailhead should be reassessed for adoption since it provides a longer trail loop opportunity. DCR should review the use and access for this trailhead. If the trailhead is to remain, then trailhead and wayfinding signage should be added.

REASSESS – The western trailhead appears to be the remnant of a forest road and has been used to create access for an unauthorized trail. DCR should review the use and access for this trailhead.

T-14 – Dean Pond Trailheads

Dean Pond Recreation Area is a popular destination at the Brimfield State Forest with water access and a beach. There are trails going around the Pond.

DCR should update trailhead signage and install wayfinding signage. Rules signage should also be updated. The parking at the dam should be repaired to resolve drainage issues and provide striped parking.

REASSESS – DCR to review all trailheads and trails to prioritize repairing popular

trails and closing trails affected by eroded slopes. DCR should consider protecting ecologically sensitive areas.

CLOSE – Trailheads to the south of Dean Pond Road. These trails were lost due to storm damage and lack of use.

T-15 – Dean Pond Road Trailheads

The trailheads north of the Dean Pond Recreation Area access the Brimfield State Forest from Dean Pond Road. There is little to no parking associated with these trailheads. DCR should add trailhead signage and wayfinding signage to improve user experience.

CLOSE – Trailhead closest to the Foscett Mill Stream. This trailhead is affected by steep slopes, underuse leading to overgrowth, and the connecting trails should be closed to underuse and erosion.

CLOSE – Trailhead located between the two forest road trailheads on Dean Pond Road. This trailhead is affected by steep slopes, underuse leading to overgrowth, and the connecting trail should be closed to wet conditions and erosion.

External Trail Connections

C1 – Rattlesnake Mountain (Southeast)

The Rattlesnake Mountain parcel is located to the southeast of the Brimfield State Forest along South Wales Road. The area is managed by the Department of Fish and Game.

DCR should consider working with the Department of Fish and Game to determine if an official connection would be beneficial to the trail network.

C2 – Mount Pisgah (South)

The Mount Pisgah property is also managed by the Department of Fish and Game. Connections from the north from Hollow Road and from the southern DCR property on Mount Hitchcock Road. The trails on the Mount Pisgah property are extremely popular with the mountain biking community.

DCR is working with the Department of Fish and Game to review the use of the trails and future connectivity between the parcels.

C3 – Monson-Brimfield-Wales (MBW) Trail

A trail established in 1998 as a route that connects to the Brimfield State Forest and Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary as well as many other points of interest.

The trail starts at the Conant Brook Dam parking area, travels north on Pond Road which changes to East Road, continues east on Brimfield Road/Monson Road, turn south on Dean Pond Road/Sutcliff Road, followed by a left turn onto Munn Road/Mount Hitchcock Road traveling southeast, and then west on McBride Road followed by a left turn south onto Lunch Road, and then finally a right turn on to Monson Road / Wales Road.

DCR should review these trail connections and potentially add wayfinding signage or otherwise promote this trail as an official connection to the trail network.

C4 – Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary (South)

This is a major conservation area to the south of the Brimfield State Forest. There are no formal connections between the two areas.

DCR should consider working with the management of the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary to determine if a future connection would be beneficial to the trail network.

C5 – Conant Brook Dam Flood Risk Management Project Area (Southwest)

Managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Conant Brook Dam area is another major conservation area located to the southwest of the Brimfield State Forest.

DCR should consider working with the Army Corps of Engineers to determine if a future connection would be beneficial to the trail network.

C6 – Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary and Dingley Dell Area (Northwest)

DCR should consider if future connections to these conservation areas would be beneficial to the trail network. These are wet areas and may not provide as much as a strategic connection as other options.

Adopt Trails to the BSF Trail System

Woodman Pond Area

- Renovate and adopt the trail around Woodman Pond.

Convert Trails to Administrative Use

Robinson Road to Hollow Road

- DCR to review trailhead access, renovate and convert forest road to administrative use only.

Haynes Hill Road / Route 19 Connection

- Convert the southern forest road (Cross Road) to administrative use only.

Haynes Hill Road / Route 19 Southern Connection

- Convert the southern forest road (Cross Road) and the utility line to administrative use only to control access.

Repair Trails

Central Section 1

- Repair Two Pond Road and other surrounding authorized trails.

Central Section 2

- Repair Stage Road to remove braided sections.

Hollow Road / Haynes Hill Road Connection

- Renovate existing trail and add trailhead and wayfinding signage.

Haynes Hill Road / Route 19 Connection

- Renovate the forest roads to repair erosion and wear of the surfacing.

Haynes Hill Road / Route 19 Southern Connection

- Renovate forest roads to repair wear and support maintenance.

Mount Hitchcock Road / Pond Road Connection

- Renovate forest road to repair wear and support maintenance.

Dean Pond Road / Dearth Hill Road Connection

- Renovate forest road to repair wear and support maintenance.

Southwestern Forest 2

- Renovate stream crossings
- Build new trail connection between authorized trails to close unauthorized trail connections.

Trail Closures

Mt Wadda-Quaduck Summit

- Dearth Hill Road to Summit trail affected by erosion. Build a new trail loop for Summit access.
- Close northern trails and trails subject to erosion.

Robinson Road to Hollow Road

- Close northern trailhead and abandoned trail to the west of the forest road.

Central Section 1

- Close unauthorized trails in area between the Summit Trail, Marwood Trail, and Two Pond Road that are affected by erosion and to help decrease trail density.

Central Section 2

- Close western extension off Hollow Loop Road to help decrease trail density.
- Close eastern extension off Hollow Loop Road to help decrease trail density.
- Close braided sections on Stage Road and repair main route.

Central Dearth Hill Road Area

- Close unauthorized Hollow Loop trail to help decrease trail density.
- Close unauthorized loop trail off Dearth Hill Road.

North Hollow Road Connections

- Close unauthorized trails to help decrease trail density.

South Hollow Road Connections

- Close southeastern connection to Hollow Road to help decrease trail density.

Hollow Road to Hollow Road Connections

- Close unauthorized trails and trails leading off DCR property to reduce connections out of BSF in this area.

Hollow Road / Haynes Hill Road Connection

- Close trails leading off DCR property to reduce connections out of BSF in this area.

Haynes Hill Road / Route 19 Connection

- Close dead-end trails and trails that lead off DCR property to reduce connections out of BSF in this area.

Haynes Hill Road / Route 19 Southern Connection

- Close unauthorized trails and abandoned trails.

Route 19 / Polly Road Connection

- Close trails leading off DCR property to reduce connections out of BSF in this area.

Mount Hitchcock Road Trailhead

- Close trails leading off DCR property to reduce connections out of BSF in this area.

Mount Hitchcock Road / Pond Road Connection

- Close trails leading off DCR property to reduce connections out of BSF in this area.
- Close unauthorized trails to reduce trail density.

Dean Pond Road / Dearth Hill Road Connection

- Close unauthorized trails and trails leading off DCR property to reduce trail density.

Dean Pond Road / Gleason Road Connection

- Close abandoned unauthorized trail from Gleason Road.

Central Section 3

- Close trails leading off DCR property to reduce trail density..
- Close east / west authorized trail (Marwood Trail) between forest roads due to poor stream crossings.
- Close unauthorized trail from Durgin Road to Anderson Road to reduce trail density..

Woodman Pond Area

- Close trails leading off DCR property to reduce trail density.
- Close trails that have been flooded.

Dean Pond Trails

- Close southern trail leading west off DCR property to reduce connections out of BSF in this area.
- Close trails removed from the main trail network to reduce trail density.

Dean Pond Road / Gleason Road Connections

- Close the east / west trail (Marwood Trail) from Anderson Road to Dean Pond Road.

Southwestern Forest 1

- Close three recently added unauthorized trails including the northern one connecting to Dean Pond Road. These trails do not

significantly add to the existing trail network and increase the trail density.

Southwestern Forest 2

- Close unauthorized trails that have been affected by erosion.

Trails to be Reassessed

Mt Wadda-Quaduck Summit

- Southern trails to create a loop with access to overlooks at the summit. Provide wayfinding signage.
- DCR should consider rerouting the Summit trail from the existing trailhead at the Dearth Hill main parking lot to reduce damage from erosion. Provide trailhead and wayfinding signage.

Central Section 2

- DCR to reassess Hollow Loop trail from Marwood Trail to Stage Road.

South Hollow Road Connections

- Reassess unauthorized trails and close braided trails. Consider adding connections as necessary to support new trail connections.

Hollow Road to Hollow Road Connections

DCR should consider building a new trail connection from the forest road to Hollow Road.

Route 19 / Polly Road Connection

- DCR to reassess the forest road connection. Bridge connection is non-existent.

Mount Hitchcock Road Trailhead

- DCR should reassess the system of trails at this trailhead.

- DCR should coordinate access to property owned by the Department of Fish and Game.

Dean Pond Road / Gleason Road Connection

- DCR should reassess the northern section of Gleason Road from the headquarters and the connection to Durgin Road.
- DCR should reassess trail from headquarters at Durgin Road to the intersection at Marwood Road and continuing south to Dearth Hill Road.

Woodman Pond Area

- DCR should reassess trail from Dearth Hill Road south leading off DCR property.

Dean Pond Trails

- DCR should reassess the northern trail leading off DCR property.
- DCR should reassess the trails around the pond to reduce erosion, protect sensitive habitat, and provide sustainable recreation trails.
- DCR should reassess the existing unauthorized trail and consider creating a small walking trail loop west of Dean Pond Road.

Dean Pond Road / Gleason Road Connections

- DCR should reassess the relocation of the trail to reduce erosion.
- DCR should reassess the unauthorized trail connection from Anderson Road to Dean Pond Road.

Dean Pond Area to Munn Road Connection

- DCR should consider if a new trail connection from the Dean Pond Area

south to Munn Road would be useful to the trail network.

Southwestern Forest 1

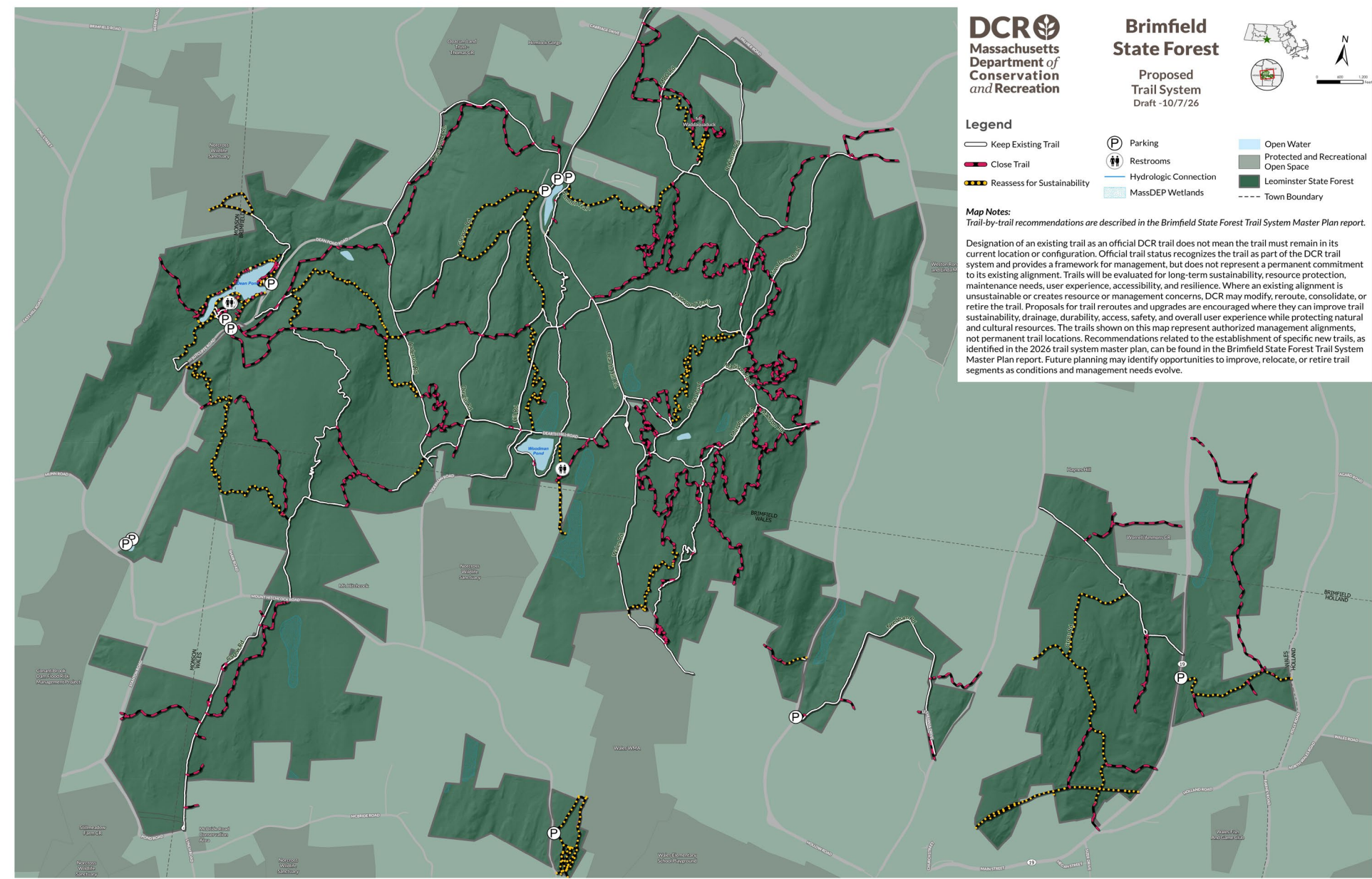
- DCR should reassess the trail connection from Dean Pond Road east to the authorized trail. This trail was recently cut into the forest and provides a potential opportunity for a larger trail loop.

Southwestern Forest 2

- DCR should reassess the trail connection from Anderson Road west to the authorized trail. Boundary markers should be added to clarify the DCR property.
- DCR should reassess the trail connection leading south up the hill from the unauthorized trail connecting from Anderson Road to Dean Pond Road. This trail is steep and affected by erosion.



Appendix B: Brimfield State Forest Proposed Trail System



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TRAIL SYSTEM MASTER PLAN
**DCR BRIMFIELD
STATE FOREST**