

Upper Section – Observation Tower

The rest of the trail to the tower features very thin soil. As a result, multiple pieces of bedrock stick out of the ground and trees do not gain much height in this area. Over time, high bush blueberry had completely overtaken the path. The SCA crew used a gas powered brush saw to cut the blueberry and other vegetation down to the ground level, creating a much more pleasant hiking experience.



Climbing the Quabbin observation tower is a fitting end to this hike. You now have a few different options on how to return to your car. You can either head back down the tower trail or take the paved road down the hill. Your third option is to pick up the foot path on the east side of the dirt parking area; this leads to Webster Road. From there, head south and take a right at the second intersection you encounter and follow the path back to your car.

The Student Conservation Association

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is an organization that provides college and high-school aged members with hands-on conservation and environmental opportunities in a variety of different fields. The SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in direct service to the land. Since 2003, the SCA has sent a crew out to Quabbin each summer for roughly 10 days to help improve and enhance various sections of trail throughout Quabbin Park.

The SCA crews that have been coming out to Quabbin are part of the Massachusetts AmeriCorps Program, which gives young adults aged 18-23 the opportunity to address a host of conservation challenges. The SCA Corps program runs for 10 months with a focus on environmental education as well as trail maintenance and construction. Additional information can be found at <https://www.thesca.org/>. Below is a photo of the team from 2017.



QUABBIN RULES AND REGULATIONS

ALLOWED IN DESIGNATED AREAS

- Fishing
- Bicycling
- Hiking
- Picnicking (without fire or grills)

ACCESS IS RESTRICTED TO HOURS POSTED AT GATES AND ENTRANCES

PROHIBITED

- Feeding Wildlife
- Disposal of human waste, refuse, or litter anywhere except where appropriate receptacles are provided
- Alcoholic beverages
- Swimming and wading
- All fires
- Horses, dogs, and other domestic animals
- Camping, skiing, hunting, trapping, and firearms
- Trespassing in posted restricted areas and on the ice
- Removal of historic artifacts or natural resources
- Drones

Please report violators to:

Watershed Rangers – 617-828-2452
MA State Police - Quabbin - 413-323-7561

QUABBIN RESERVOIR

Visitor Center

Department of Conservation and Recreation
100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007
Phone - 413-323-7221

www.mass.gov/locations/quabbin-reservoir

www.mass.gov/dcr/watershed

Quabbin Park and Reservoir

Middle Gate to Observation Tower Trail



Map and Guide

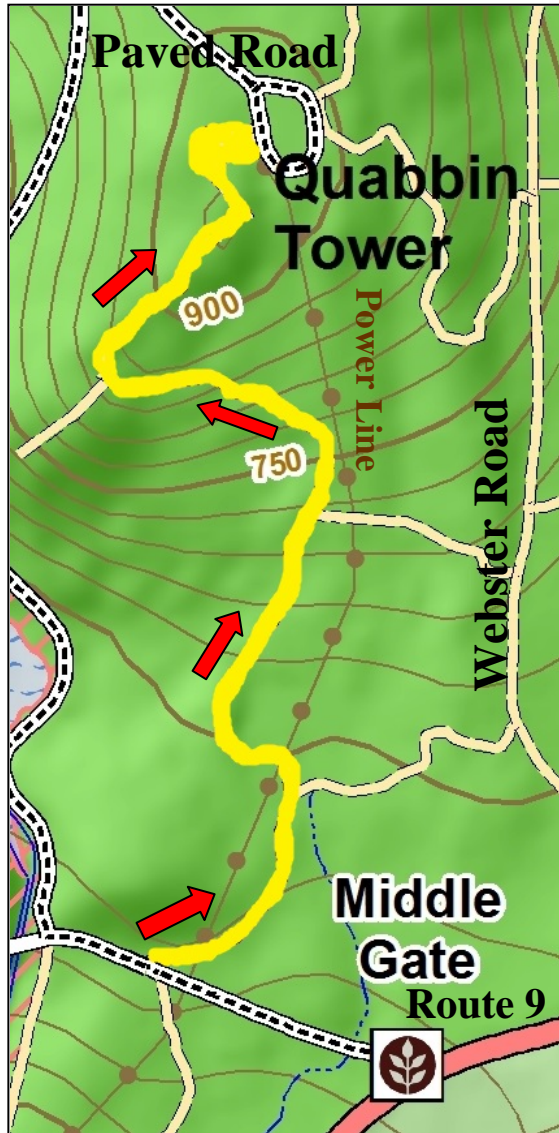


Trail Background

The 'middle gate to observation tower trail' was created in the 1980's as part of a larger 22 mile forest road and foot path system located throughout Quabbin Park. The trail begins at the parking area located a quarter mile inside the middle gate and ends at the summit of Quabbin Hill. There you will find the Quabbin Observation Tower which gives visitors a 60 mile view in all directions from the top floor. From bottom to top the trail spans 1.2 miles and climbs roughly 550 feet in elevation. Trees along the foot path sections have been marked with yellow blazing.

Lower Section – Forest Road

To begin the hike walk past the wooden barway (WR26) next to the middle gate parking area as the trail enters the forest. Follow the dirt road for roughly a quarter mile until you encounter your first intersection. Notice yellow blazing on the trees that indicates the trail to the tower on your left. You will walk through a power line opening where the dirt road transitions to a foot path as it enters the woods. From here, the elevation gain begins as you start your ascent of Quabbin Hill. During the 2018 season the SCA spent most of their 10 day hitch at Quabbin improving and re-establishing the 'middle gate to observation tower trail.'



Over time, vigorous plant regeneration had overtaken the upper and lower sections of the foot path and made the trail difficult to navigate. Hand tools were used to remove vegetation from the path. Some positive benefits of widening and clearing the trail are that it is now easier to follow and visitors should pick up fewer ticks, as there will be less vegetation to brush up against while hiking. But be aware, Quabbin does have a large tick population.



Red Pine Forest

About a quarter mile past where the elevation gain begins you will come across a stand of red and white pines. This area recently became impassable as a result of an invasive insect, the red pine scale, moving into the area and slowly killing the red pines. The dead trees fell, blocking trail access. In the future, different species of trees not susceptible to the scale should eventually re-colonize the site. This section required abundant chainsaw work from the SCA crew to clear the dozens of large snags that had fallen over and blocked the trail. The area now gives hikers the unique experience of walking through a rapidly changing forest with very little overstory canopy; allowing vast amounts of sunlight to shine down, resulting in vigorous regeneration.

Power Line Opening

After working your way through the pine plantation the trail climbs to a small ridgeline. Notice an abandoned beaver pond off to the left. From here, the trail leads to a powerline right-of-way opening in the forest. Make your way up the hill for a few hundred feet while keeping an eye out for yellow blazing on your left; this is where the trail heads back into the forest.



Middle Section

This forest section offers some great bird watching opportunities from spring through fall. The variety of tree species provides a good assortment of habitats for different species. After climbing a bit the trail levels and crosses a stone wall. The steepest part of the trail starts just beyond so this is a good resting spot. The final half mile to the tower features roughly 120 feet in elevation gain. This segment of the trail had become overgrown with grasses and other low growing plants and ferns. The SCA crew was able to remove the excess vegetation, and in most areas, re-established a clear 1-3 foot wide dirt foot path.