



**MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Office of Regional Planning
Best Management Practices**

Trail Maintenance

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Goal: Ensure protection of important natural and cultural resources while conducting routine or periodic trail maintenance activities. Enhance the trail users' experience.

Guidelines:

Trails are DCR's most important facilities for linking conservation and recreation. As such, they must be managed and maintained in ways that will not harm or destroy the natural and cultural resources of the Commonwealth, especially those for which DCR has direct stewardship responsibility. Specific guidelines for maintaining and developing trails are provided in the DCR Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual. <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/stewardship/greenway/docs/dcrguidelines.pdf>

The following information is focused on protection of natural and cultural resources related to trail maintenance activities. All trails impact the natural environment and require on-going maintenance. Routine or periodic maintenance includes; directing water off the tread with simple structures such as water bars and drainage lenses, maintaining existing drainage structures, vegetation clearing to maintain clearances and trail edges, replace and maintain signs and route markers, replacement of boardwalks and bridges in-kind, repairs to existing stone steps and crib walls in-kind.

General

- Routine maintenance activities may be conducted as needed if the sections of trail are located outside of wetland resource areas and outside of rare species habitat.
- Prior to any work activities within 100 feet of a wetland or 200 feet from a river or stream, contact the Conservation Agent or member(s) of the Conservation Commission in advance to discuss the proposed work. It is possible that a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) will have to be filed with the local Conservation Commission. Links to wetlands permitting forms and online wetlands viewers are provided at the end of this document.
- Trail maintenance activities within Priority Habitat for rare species may be subject to restrictions. Park staff must determine the location of Priority Habitat in relation to proposed maintenance work in advance of work activities.



- The Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) within DFW administers the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) and associated regulations. NHESP has reviewed a majority of the DCR trails system in relation to Priority Habitat for rare species. They have assigned a stop light type of color system to DCR managed trails. Trail sections designated as Green indicates that routine trail maintenance activities may be conducted without further NHESP review. Yellow indicates that NHESP has established certain conditions under which routine maintenance activities can be conducted. Red indicates that DCR must file a MESA project review checklist with NHESP. Links to the DCR Trails Dataviewer, MESA Project Checklist and on-line rare species Habitat Viewer are provided at the end of this document.
- In some cases a Habitat Management Plans (HMP) has been prepared by DCR staff and approved by NHESP. Routine maintenance is OK in these sections of trail within the guidelines of HMP recommendations. See contacts above to confirm.
- Prior to conducting trail maintenance activities that involve breaking the ground surface, e.g. installation of trail sign posts, consult with the DCR Archaeologist. Soil disturbance activities on state property typically require review from the Massachusetts Historical Commission through filing of a Project Notification Form (PNF). The DCR Archaeologist is authorized to perform a review on behalf of MHC.

Proactive Protection of Resources

- Heavily used trails within 50 feet of a certified or potential vernal pool should be assessed for possible rerouting to a less sensitive adjacent location if they have the potential to negatively impact the pool or species that live in them. Motorized trails should not be located within 100 feet of a certified or potential vernal pool.
- If erosion exposes artifacts such as Native American stone tools, the park staff should prevent further use of that section of trail until the DCR Archaeologist is able to conduct a field survey and provide recommendations related to future use or a need to reroute.
- If a section of trail is located close to a cellar hole or historic homestead cemetery, an unauthorized spur trail to the cellar hole may become established. Please review the Cellar Hole BMP that is included in the BMP Catalogue [INSERT LINK](#), and if necessary, contact the DCR Archaeologist for advice on protection / stabilization strategies.
- If use of a particular section of trail is contributing to dismantling or damage to a stone wall, consult with the Office of Cultural Resources regarding the potential need for trail relocation or other protection strategies.

Resources

- RDA form: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/service/approvals/wpa-form-1.html>
- MassDEP online map viewer: <http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/images/dep/omv/wetviewer.htm>
- DCR Wetlands Protection Act BMP:
- DCR Vernal Pool BMP:
- MESA Project Checklist: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dfg/nhesp/regulatory-review/mesa-proj-review-check-elect.pdf>
- Priority Habitat on-line viewer: http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/PRI_EST_HAB/viewer.htm
- MassGIS on-line data viewer: http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/map_ol/oliver.php
- DCR Trails Dataviewer: (<https://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dcr/trails/> username: dcr_trails password: dcr_trails) Please note that the Dataviewer works in Explorer not Chrome.