

# Explore Wachusett Watershed

## Wachusett Reservoir Watershed

### TRIP-TIP SELF-GUIDED ADVENTURE

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#### Welcome

Explore the Wachusett Watershed. This DCR Trip-Tip self guided adventure features easy walks located within 15 minutes driving time of one another in the Wachusett Watershed area for great views of water features.

**Earth, Wind and Water at North Dike Wachusett Reservoir in Clinton**

**Forest Hike at Gate 22 Wachusett Reservoir in West Boylston**

**Watershed View at Mass Central Rail Trail in Sterling**

Trip-Tip gives families information and some fun ideas to explore the great outdoors at DCR Massachusetts State Parks and Watersheds. With a little preparation and a sense of adventure, people of all ages can safely enjoy our outdoor spaces.

Look through this guide to help plan your outing. Choose one area, two areas, or make it a multi-day adventure. Visit them in any order, you decide. Challenge yourself to visit all the parks. We hope you enjoy this Trip-Tip tour.

#### Share Your Adventure!

Share your Trip-Tip adventure with others through word of mouth, or on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtiptip**.

#### Things To Know, Before You Go

**Water Supply Protection lands are regulated to protect the drinking water for over 3 million people. Please familiarize yourself with the current regulations, and pay attention to signs.**

- Carry-in, carry-out all of your belongings, including trash
- Stay on designated trails
- Dogs and domestic animals are prohibited on Water Supply Protection lands
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate
- Trails open sunrise to sunset
- Dress for the weather, expect wind in open areas along the reservoir
- No restrooms available
- No parking fees, do not block gates

# Earth, Wind, and Water Hike

## Wachusett Reservoir North Dike

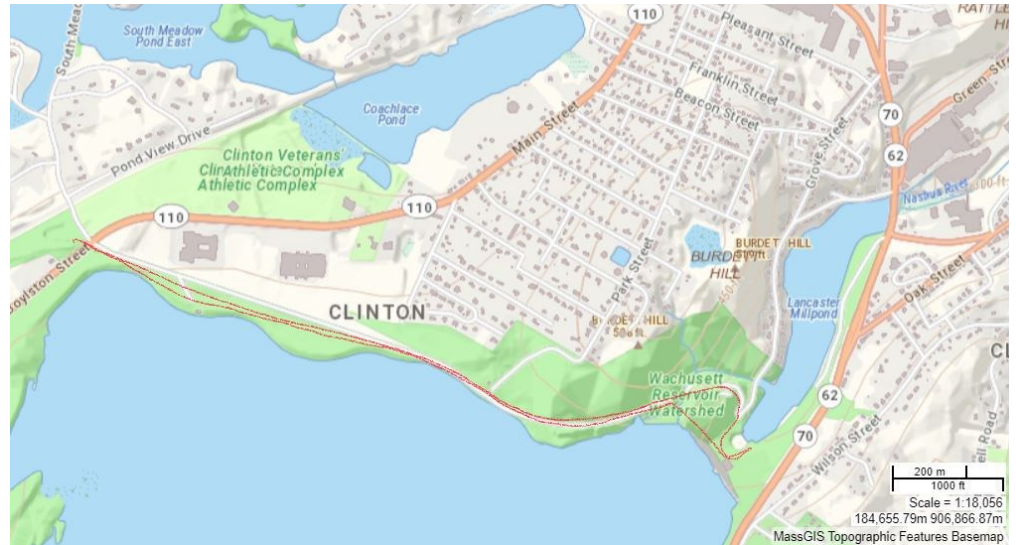
Wachusett Reservoir, Gate 39, Route 110 & South Meadow Road, Clinton

Website: <https://www.mass.gov/locations/wachusett-reservoir>

Headquarters (508)792-7806 Watershed Rangers (978) 365-3800

Parking: Free parking, small lot at corner of Route 110 and South Meadow Road, Clinton.

This flat 3 mile round trip hike could take around 2.5 hours. See views above the Wachusett Reservoir and walk down to the lower Wachusett Dam area to see interesting architecture and a fountain. The reservoir is a man made lake, created by damming the south branch of the Nashua River.



### 1.) Hike on an Earthen Dam

At arrival, check out the main kiosk poster to view historical photos of how the reservoir was created.

Or download the poster here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/wachusett-reservoir-kiosk-poster-north-dike/download>

Make sure you walk to the top of the hill to the stone bench to get a view of the water. You are now on the top of the North Dike. A dike is a dam made of earth and stone to hold back the water. About seven million cubic yards of topsoil were stripped from the reservoir site before it was flooded. Six million cubic yards of that were used to fill the dikes– what you stand on here. The landscape drastically changed as several houses were removed from the area and Small Pond and Sandy Pond were pumped dry and filled with gravel and topsoil.



This open expanse of land can get windy, so be sure to wear appropriate layers and bring a hat.

As you walk along the edge of the reservoir enjoy cloud watching.

Do you see any familiar shapes in the clouds?

## 2.) Rock Cut

Before you arrive at the Wachusett Dam, the trail will take you through a cut out of a rocky ledge on both sides. It will feel almost cave-like as you enter an impressive rock cut that was blasted through rock for the Central Mass Railroad to pass through.

Pause for a moment and appreciate the hard and dangerous work that was done with mostly hand tools. The air may feel wet and cool here, shaded from the sun, and even may smell different from the damp rocks and mosses.



## 3.) Wachusett Dam

When you arrive at the Wachusett Dam, you have an option of stepping down about 200 steps to the bottom, or walk the trail that slopes downhill to the fountain below. At the time of construction, this dam was the largest in the world!

Check out the poster in the kiosk by the fountain for facts about the dam, or download the poster here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/wachusett-reservoir-kiosk-poster-wachusett-dam/download>



## Forest Hike

### Gate 22 Wachusett Reservoir

Wachusett Reservoir, Gate 22, 211 Temple Street (Route 140) West Boylston

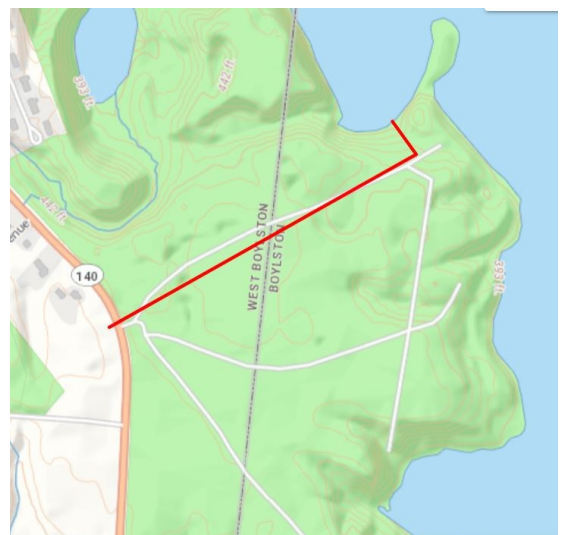
Website: <https://www.mass.gov/locations/wachusett-reservoir>

Headquarters (508)792-7806

Watershed Rangers (978) 365-3800

Parking: Free parking, at Gate 22, dirt lot at 167 Temple Street (Route 140) West Boylston

This quick easy hike will take you to the reservoir shore, can be as short as 1/2 mile taking half of an hour, or make it longer by walking along more trails in the area.



## 1.) Forest Road

How long will it take you before you can see the water through the trees? Follow the wide forest road just over 1/4 mile.

The water is always changing, you may find choppy waves on a windy day, or calm as a mirror on a clear day. What do you predict the water will look like?



## 2.) Take a Tree Walk

Along the way, pay attention to the trees of the forest on both sides of the trail. A diverse forest surrounds the reservoir. The trees and soils of the forest act like a big sponge soaking up water and trapping loose soil, litter, and chemicals.

Trees of different types and different ages are encouraged to grow in a healthy forest.

Try to find at least 3 different trees species.

Find a tree that looks old.

Find the youngest, smallest tree.

## 3.) Visit the Shore

Once you see the water, take the path to the left to walk down to the shoreline and explore.

Remember, this water is drinking water for over 3 million people! It's a wonderful place to visit responsibly. Do your part to make sure it stays clean. Don't go into the water. Carry out everything you carry in, make sure you don't leave any traces behind.

The Wachusett Reservoir holds 65 billion gallons of high quality water from healthy watersheds that doesn't have to go through expensive filtering processes.



Can you see through the clear water to the rocky bottom?

That's because during construction, the layers of topsoil were removed, with most of it moved to create the North and South Dikes or earthen dams to hold back the water.

## Watershed View

### Sterling Section of Massachusetts Central Rail Trail

Parking at dirt lot off of Gates Road, Sterling, about ¼ mile from its intersection with Rt. 12

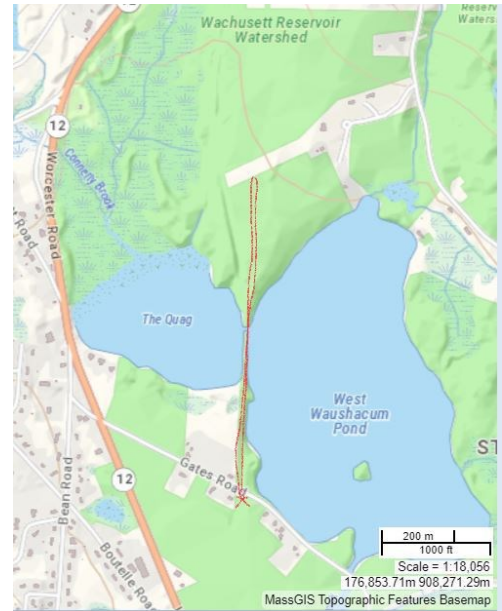
Headquarters (508)792-7806

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Round trip 3.3 mile hike, plan about 2 hours for this family friendly rail trail hike that offers a nice and easy walk between West Waushacum Pond and The Quag. Hike the full 3.3 miles, or turn around when ready to make it shorter.

#### 1.) Music of the Birds

Take in the sights and sounds of spring! Keep an eye out for migrating waterfowl and songbirds that are attracted to the forest cover close to the waterbodies. Listen as you walk along and try to hear 3 different bird songs.



#### 2.) Watershed View

Before you get to the green bridge over water, look to the left and view Wachusett Mountain off in the distance on the horizon. The high elevation is at the corner boundary of the Wachusett Watershed. When it rains on this side of the mountain, the water flows downhill, flows into rivers and streams and eventually can make it's way into the Wachusett Reservoir. Anything that you do in this location, can still effect the quality of drinking water that 3 million people depend on, all the way out to the Metropolitan Boston area. Take a break on the bridge, take deep breaths of fresh air, look around, and appreciate how watersheds connect all of us! Continue on the trail for a 3 mile round trip, or turn back now for a shorter walk.



#### 3.) Wonders of a Wetland

Continue on and you will walk past a wetland area. Wetlands act like a sponges to collect water and are part of the natural process of cleaning stormwater runoff– water that flows downhill and picks up pollutants along the way.

Listen for the red winged blackbird's song. Birders use mnemonics to recognize and remember birds songs.

Listen and you might hear the red-winged blackbird sing "Oak-a-lee!" Other common bird you might hear is the chickadee "chick-a-dee-dee" or "my tree..my tree."

Make up your own words for the bird calls that you hear.



## **Extend Your Experience!**

There are numerous trails to explore in the Wachusett Watershed. Continue exploring the area by taking a look at these well documented trail descriptions from the Sterling and Princeton Open Space Committees:

### **Sterling Open Space Committee**

<https://www.sterling-ma.gov/open-space-implementation-committee/pages/sterling-trails>

### **Princeton Open Space Committee Princeton Hikes**

<https://www.town.princeton.ma.us/open-space-committee/pages/princeton-trails>

## **Thank you for joining us for this Watershed Exploration Trip-Tip!**

During your next Trip-Tip, perhaps you'll visit a park that you didn't know about before. We hope that you will be invigorated to take even more Trip-Tip outdoor adventures all year long!