

# Bicycling

## Policy

DWSP allows bicycle access on authorized roads and trails within water supply lands in the Ware River Watershed (Map 10) except within the Exclusion Zone of the Ware River Intake. DWSP restricts bicycling during “mud-season,” during watershed management operations, and during other situations, which are posted. Electronic bicycles are allowed on DWSP roads and rail trails, but they are prohibited on all natural surface trails.

## Summary

Activity	Ware River Watershed System	Intake Buffer Zone	Exclusion Zone
Bicycling	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- ☐ **Prohibited**      ☐ **Allowed - General Restrictions**      ☐ **Specific Restrictions**
- ☐ General public access within the Ware River Watershed System is allowed from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset through gates or designated (posted) areas only. Night Access is prohibited on DWSP owned lands in the Ware River Watershed System. Any activity which injures or defaces the property of the Commonwealth is strictly prohibited. Littering is strictly prohibited. Carry in/Carry out. Do not feed wildlife. Groups of 25 or more are required to obtain a group access permit from the Quabbin Visitor Center prior to access.
- <sup>1</sup> Bicycle access allowed only on trails designated by DCR Division of Water Supply Protection lands in the Ware River watershed. Bicycling restricted during mud-season, watershed management operations, and other situations, which will be posted. E-bikes are allowed only on existing roads and rail trails; they are not permitted on single track or other natural surface trails.

## Explanation

Watershed regulation (313 CMR 11.09(2)(a)14.) provides: “The use of bicycles, skis and other means of non-motorized transportation within the Watershed System shall be permitted only in areas designated by the Commissioner.” DWSP has identified 75 miles of forest roads, rail trail, and single-track trail for bicycle use.

Bicycling has multiple potential water quality impacts, including physical and microbial water quality threats from erosion, and behavior such as illegal body/water contact, littering or vandalism. Creation of illegal trails can impact historic and cultural resources, wetlands, and endangered species habitat.

Well planned, constructed, and maintained single-track trails can provide sustainable recreational opportunities while minimizing risks to watershed resources. DWSP worked with the mountain biking community to identify and develop a set of authorized trails/roads that avoid sensitive areas (buffer zone and riparian areas), ensure that proper stream crossings are in place, avoid leading riders to or from private property, emphasize connectivity within the watershed, and reduce the redundancy of multiple trails within an area. Existing trails that are not part of the authorized network will be abandoned and allowed to return to a natural state.

DWSP specifically prohibits bicycling on pedestrian only footpaths and skid roads designed for temporary watershed management. DWSP restricts bicycling during mud season and for operational needs.

Legislation which went into effect on August 10, 2022 defines an e-bike as either a Class 1 or Class 2 electric bicycle ([St. 2022, c. 176, ss 14-17](#)). E-bikes are considered “non-motorized” as they are specifically excluded from the definitions of “motorized bicycle” in [M.G.L. c. 90, s. 1](#) and [M.G.L. c. 90D, s. 1](#). E-bikes – like traditional bicycles – can be used only in areas designated by the Commissioner. As traditional bicycles are allowed on DWSP’s Ware River Watershed internal roads and improved surface trails, then e-bikes are also allowed in those places.

The 2022 legislation, however, also provides that an e-bike cannot be “operated on a trail designated for nonmotorized traffic, that a ... state agency has jurisdiction over, if such trail has a natural surface tread made by clearing and grading the soil and no surfacing materials have been added...[unless the agency promulgates regulations permitting otherwise]” (St. 2022, c. 176, s 14). Current Watershed Protection regulations do not permit this use; therefore, e-bikes are currently not allowed on any single-track bike trail or any other natural surface way on DWSP property in the Ware River watershed.

