



HEYWOOD RESERVOIR TRAIL

TRAIL LOCATION & PARKING

The trailhead is located at the junction of Upper North Row Road and the former Hapgood Rd., about 0.8 miles west of the intersection with Heywood Road. The parking area accommodates 6 -7 cars. The Heywood Reservoir Trail traverses a portion of Wekepeke Watershed lands owned by the Town of Clinton in both Sterling and Leominster.

UNIQUE FEATURES

The trail offer scenic vistas of the Heywood Reservoir, a lovely section along Heywood Brook and a short open meadow trail section near Sholan Farms.

LENGTH & DIFFICULTY

The standard route (red color) is hiked clockwise, and is roughly 2.4 miles long and crosses the open field on return. The Open Field Bypass Route begins at **A** as a wide, grassy lane, but later becomes a rather narrow forest path to **B**,

from where the standard route is followed in the opposite direction (2.7 miles in total). The trail route has several hills and is rated *moderately easy*.

ALLOWED & PROHIBITED TRAIL ACTIVITIES

Hiking, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing are permitted. In season and with proper licenses, fishing and hunting are also allowed. Motorized vehicles are prohibited.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

The trail has minimal elevation variation and is for the most part easy, but there is a short, steep section, one stream crossing and several wet area crossings on stepping stones. Some areas have large roots in the path. Trekking poles can be helpful at the stream and wet area crossings.

0.00 miles: The first 100 ft or so is a dirt path, then becoming a paved path, the former public road called Hapgood Road.

0.33 miles: Follow large trail to the right.

0.36 miles: Occasional wet and muddy areas.

0.41 miles: The trail begins to follow a stone wall.

0.43 miles: The trail cuts through the stone wall.

Shortly afterwards, notice on the right a large *erratic*,



i.e., a boulder carried by glacial ice.

0.56 miles:

Trail goes downhill towards the reservoir.

0.61 miles:

The reservoir

comes into view between the trees. Soon, the trail bends to the right and follows the reservoir 's edge. Pink lady slipper orchids can be seen in the spring.

0.78 miles: The southern end of the Reservoir has been reached, with a large cleared area and a rope swing. Observe side trail leaving sharply to the right. Continue along the path on top of the dam.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION: A delightful, 0.56 mile round-trip extension to the hike follows the trail to the right behind the reservoir dam, becoming an old cart road

with stone walls on both sides, leading to a farm at Upper North Row Road and ending at a yellow gate.

0.81 miles: Trail reaches the gate house, located at the midpoint of the dam.

0.83 miles: About 50 to 60 steps from the gate house, watch for and take side trail to the right into the woods on a short steep downhill slope. After the slope, the trail is fairly narrow and winding. Watch out for poison ivy.

0.93 miles: On stepping stones, carefully cross Heywood Brook, flowing from the reservoir. Trail continues uphill and parallels the stream.

1.05 miles: The trail reaches the spillway and the Heywood Reservoir and continues along the east side of the reservoir. Watch for large roots in the path.

1.21 miles: Observe side trail to the right.

1.23 miles: Trail crosses a wet area on large stones.

1.32 miles: Trail turns to the right, uphill, out of the forest and into a hillside with shrubby vegetation. Do not attempt to continue straight, along the rock side of the reservoir.

1.39 miles: Trail junction with trail from Sholan Farms. Left turn to follow this new trail downhill and back into the woods.

1.47 miles: Trail returns to the edge of the Heywood Reservoir and curves right.

1.49 miles: Crossing of a wet area on stepping stones.

1.52 miles: Last crossing of wet areas on stones.

1.54 miles: Viewing area for the Heywood Reservoir.

1.83 miles: Trail reaches Hapgood Road, turning left to follow the gravel road back to the trailhead. If instead you turn right, the road will shortly take you to the Falls Brooks Reservoir, connecting you to the Monoosnoc Ridge Trail (blue blazed).

2.02 miles: Large trail goes off to the right, leading to Devil's Pulpit. Explore on your own.

2.14 miles: Rusty yellow gate, marking the boundary between Sterling and Leominster. Crumbling asphalt trail from here onwards.

2.34 miles: Observe trail to the left that was taken on the outbound part of the hike.

2.67 miles: Return to the trailhead

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HEYWOOD RESERVOIR

The name originates with a farmer, C. Heywood who in the early 19th century owned most of the watershed from Rocky Hill to the west to Bee Hill to the east, and so it is today known as the Heywood Reservoir. In 1837, to supplement his farm operation, Heywood built a sawmill and a mill pond where the current dam is located.

In the late 19th century, Clinton was growing rapidly, and local water sources were insufficient to meet the town's needs. The chosen solution was to use gravity fed water from the Wekepeke Brook, and for this purpose Clinton acquired land in Sterling. The resulting system of ponds, dams, gatehouses and pipes is referred to as The Clinton Water Works. By 1897 water from Heywood Mill Pond was also used.

Around 1922, a simpler system was developed solely using water from Heywood Pond due to its higher elevation. To ensure sufficient water capacity, a dam was built in 1926, increasing the

water supply nearly 8-fold. A well-preserved gatehouse is located at the middle of the dam.



FLORA AND FAUNA

Much of this trail runs through hardwoods and white pines with some patches of laurels. Listen for the vocal "teacher teacher" call of the ovenbird, a small ground dwelling warbler, or the ethereal notes of the wood thrush. Chickadees, woodpeckers and nuthatches are seen and heard as they flit in groups through the trees. Deer, coyotes, foxes and fishers can also be found in these woods, though you may only see droppings or tracks in mud or snow.



In damp areas or after rain, look for the bright orange eft, a 2-3 inch salamander moving through the leaf litter or on the trail. The eft is a juvenile newt spending its first years on land before

returning to water to mature into the greenish yellow adult stage of its life. You might also spot a wood frog, light brown body with a dark mask, hopping in the leaf litter. Check the surface of the reservoir for insect life such as "water boatmen" skimming across the surface of the water or dragonflies and damselflies zooming through the air. Look for panfish such as pumpkinseed or blue gills in the water. During the fall and spring bird migration, ducks and the occasional loon are potential wildlife sightings.

On the short section of trail that cuts through an open meadow behind Sholan Farms, butterflies can be seen flitting to milkweed and other wildflowers. The field-loving birds like yellow warblers, swallows, and bluebirds are seen and heard. In summer, turkey broods (families) of hens and their poults spend much of their time eating insects in the grasses. In early spring, woodcocks, a small brown game bird with a long bill for probing the earth, reliably perform their aerial acrobatics and *peent* (high whistling) calls just after sunset or just before dawn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The establishment of the *Heywood Reservoir Trail* was made possible through the access granted by the Town of Clinton. In addition, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife holds a conservation easement on this property providing public access for wildlife-related and other types of passive recreation.

HEYWOOD RESERVOIR



Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) Sterling's OSIC was established in 2003 as a permanent town committee, to broaden awareness and enhance access to significant open space, cultural and recreational resources.