

Sterling Trails

Hog Hill Trail: (1) Moderate

Unique Features: The Hog Hill Trail provides both forest tranquility and scenic vistas of landscapes shaped by farming. In particular, the trail offers an insight into the unique operation of the former Kristoff Brothers Pig Farm.

Length and Difficulty: The standard route (red color) is hiked clockwise, 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 to become 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 is hilly and is rated moderately easy.

Trailhead Address: 12 Merrill Road, Sterling, adequate parking across the road;

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities: Allowed recreational activities are hiking, snow shoeing, hunting and cross-country skiing. Mountain biking, horseback riding motorized vehicles and pets are prohibited. Check with the DCR for more details.

Butterick Nature Trail: (2) Easy, Dog-Friendly

Unique Features: The Butterick Nature Trail winds through a delightful, undulating and forested landscape and includes a side trail to the well-preserved Town Pound. The trail forms a loop, where the return path is situated in a little valley, providing the visitor with the sense of leaving the busy world behind; 0.5 miles, easy;

Length and Difficulty: The trail is slightly under 0.50 miles roundtrip, including a side trail to the Town Pound. The trail starts at the cement stairway, loops around and ends at the corner of the parking lot where tennis courts once were located. The trail is rated as easy.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities: Given the terrain and the steps, the Butterick Nature Trail is suitable for walking and nature observation. Dogs are allowed provided dog owners clean up after them.

Trailhead located behind the Butterick Building; dogs permitted, Trail brochure available.

Pegs Pond Trail: (3) Easy, Scenic, Dog-Friendly

Unique Features: a short walk through a mature pine woods, scenic walk around 1/3 acre pond;

Length and Difficulty: 0.33 miles, easy;

Trailhead located behind shed at corner of Sterling Senior Center parking lot, 36 Muddy Pond Road, Sterling. dogs permitted.

Stillwater Basin Trail (4) Moderate, Scenic

Unique Features: The trail offers a lovely view out over the Stillwater River and the opportunity to walk along the shoreline of a secluded arm of the Wachusett Reservoir. A section of the trail follows a hill crest, while other parts meander through younger forest along hilly trails and through majestic mature forest on a wide, level path in the vicinity of the turn-around point at Bean Road;

Length and Difficulty: 3.5 miles roundtrip, hike is rated moderate as there are a number of hills.

Trailhead location: 5 Griffin Road an overflow parking lot opposite playing fields.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities: Passive recreational activities allowed on the trail: Hiking, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing. Fishing in the Basin is allowed with certain restrictions. Check with the DCR for more details. Mountain biking, horseback riding motorized vehicles and pets are prohibited. No bodily contact with the water is allowed. No dogs are permitted. There maybe slash on the trail that has to be dodged.

Pine Hill Esker Trail (5) Moderate, Scenic

Unique Features: The trail starts at the site of a 19th century chair factory and joins a dirt road with stone walls in a mature forest, crosses a meadow and goes back into forested terrain. Unique for this trail are its eskers and kettle ponds and the views of a wetland pond where Rocky Brook flows into the Stillwater River. The trail is located on DCR watershed protection land.

Length and Difficulty: For clarity, the trail is divided into three sections: A, B and C, with one-way lengths of 0.65 mi., 0.45 mi. and 0.45 mi., respectively. The full hike, as described below, includes all three sections. The side loop on Sect. B is included on the return. The A+B+C trail length is 3.1 mi., while the two shorter versions, A+B or A+C, are both 2.2 mi. in length. The elevation varies between 428 ft and 540 ft, with several short steep hills. The difficulty is rated moderate.

Trailhead Location: 124 Beaman Road. Parking available at the Eight Point Sportsmen Club, 143-163 Beaman Road.

No dogs allowed.

Sterling Section of the Mass Central Rail Trail (6) Easy, Scenic

Unique Features: The trail is level and smooth (watch for bicycles and joggers) and is for the most part forested and offers a range of scenery, from woodland to wetland to vistas across West Waushacum Lake and The Quag. A half-mile loop foot trail, off the Sterling Section of the MCRT proper, takes you to the former location of the Waushacum Park Picnic Grounds.

Length and Difficulty: The round trip distance, including the loop trail, is 3.8 miles. Without the loop, the distance is 3.3 miles. The difficulty is rated easy.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities: In keeping with DCR's mission of water supply and water quality protection, allowed activities include walking, biking, snowshoeing and cross-

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country skiing, open water fishing during designated DCR season and boating (only electric motors). Dogs, horses and all motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Trailhead Location: next door to 21 Gates Road, There is a dedicated parking lot. There is another trailhead at 17 Wauschacum Avenue.

Gaylord Trail at Hardscrabble Road (7) Easy

Unique Features: The Gaylord Trail at Hardscrabble Road is a pleasant and quiet trail on a wide old road. The trail initially passes wet and swampy areas, but after crossing the power line, the Gaylord Trail enters mature forest, and stone walls line this part of the trail. On older maps, the road is called North Nelson Road. The name change to Hardscrabble Road occurred only in 1971. What prompted this name change is, however, not known.

Length and Difficulty: The trail is only about 1.5 miles round-trip. From the trailhead at the lower end of Hardscrabble Road to the turn-around point at Upper North Row Road, there is about 150 feet of elevation gain. This old road trail is rated easy.

For the more ambitious hiker, there is a substantial extension to Fitch Basin, 1.9 miles round-trip. In addition to its length, this extension also has some quite steep hills. The Fitch Basin Extension is rated moderate.

Trailhead location: 10 Hardscrabble Road, parking on side of Hardscrabble Road

There is standing water on the Fitch Basin extension under the power lines that must be routed around in the spring.

Lynde Basins Trail (8) Moderate, Scenic, Dog-Friendly

Unique Features: This trail offers several interesting man-made and natural features. The trail passes by dams, gate houses and spillways, part of the former Clinton Water Works. In terms of natural scenery, it offers views to lakes and basins, crosses wetland areas and passes by the Wekepeke Brook with beaver activity.

Length and Difficulty: The round trip distance is 2.7 miles, and the trail has a number of short hills, some of which are moderately steep. The difficulty is rated moderate.

Trailhead location: 49-103 Heywood Road, parking in lot for 4 cars.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities: Passive recreational activities allowed on the trail: Hiking, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. Also mountain biking and horseback riding. All motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Allenwood Trail (9) Moderate, Scenic, Dog-Friendly

Unique Features: Scenic vistas towards farms and fields, later on views over Lynde Basins. Observe dams, gate houses and spillways as the visible remaining parts of the former Clinton Water Works. Crossing the Wekepeke Brook offers views out over beaver-created wetlands.

Length and Difficulty: The round-trip distance is 4.1 miles, and the trail has several short hills, some of which are moderately steep. The difficulty is rated moderate.

Trailhead location: 6 Heywood Road, parking in lot for 4 cars. Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities Passive recreational activities allowed on the trail: Hiking, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing, as well as mountain biking and horseback riding. All motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Heywood Reservoir Trail (10) Moderate, Scenic, Dog-Friendly

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 and Difficulty: The Heywood Reservoir Trail is 2.67 miles in length. With the optional extension, the length is 3.23 mile. The elevation along the trail ranges from 592 ft to 772 ft. The difficulty is rated moderate.

Trailhead Location: Hapgood Road (abandoned road) at Upper North Row Road. Off-road parking for six cars.

Allowed and 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. There are areas of standing water that must be negotiated and a small stream that in high water could be difficult to cross.

Wauschacum Overlook Trail (11) Easy, Scenic, Dog-Friendly

Unique Features: Woodland Trail leading to a pleasant view of East Lake Wauschacum.

Length and Difficulty: 1/4 mile, rated easy.

Trailhead Location: 6 Tara Lane



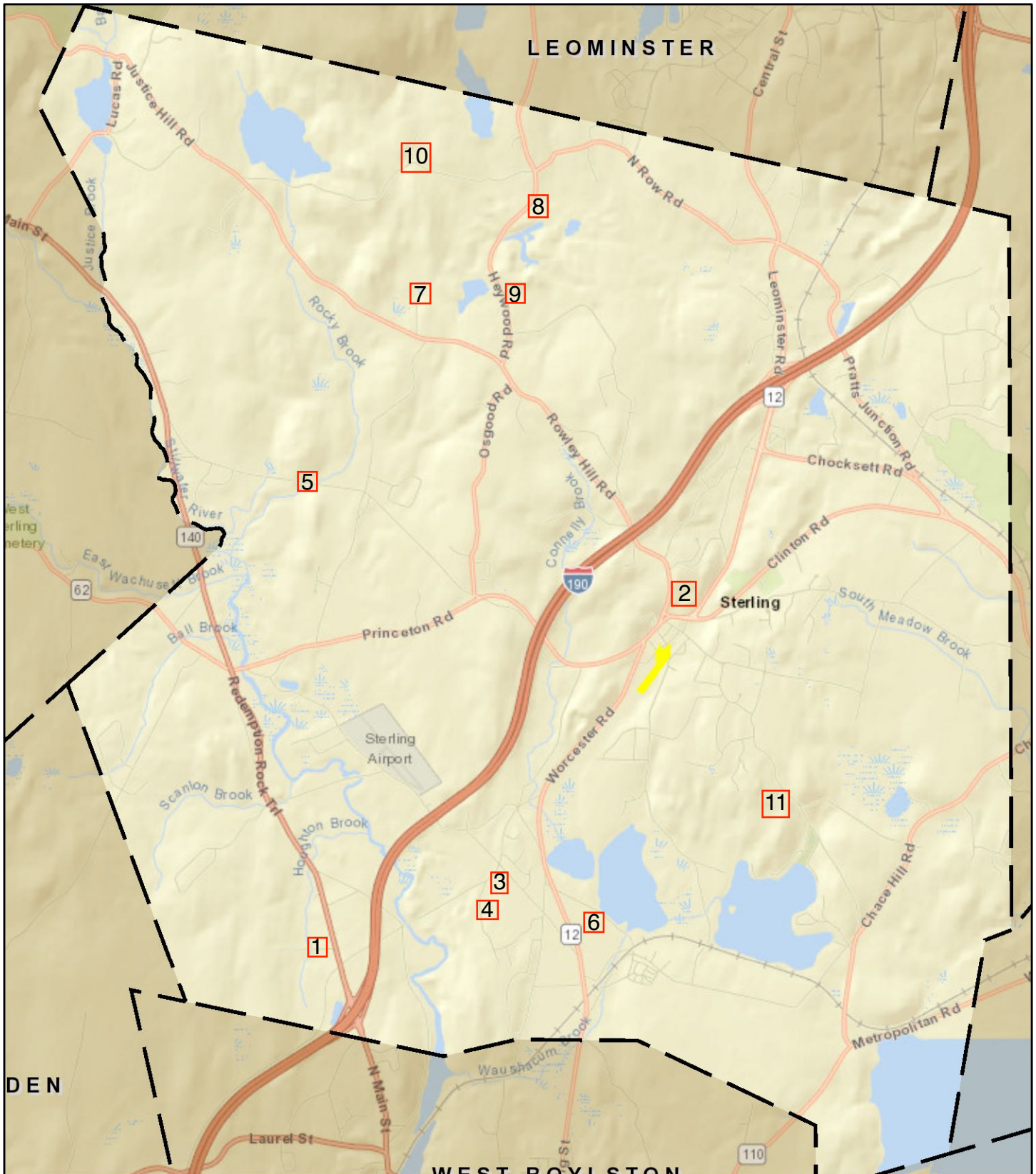
Sterling Trails

Sterling, MA

1 inch = 4448 Feet



April 9, 2020



Data shown on this map is provided for planning and informational purposes only. The municipality and CAI Technologies are not responsible for any use for other purposes or misuse or misrepresentation of this map.

Wachusett Reservoir

The 4,135-acre Wachusett Reservoir was built between 1897 and 1908 by damming the South Branch of the Nashua River. It is the second largest body of water in Massachusetts and is part of the water supply system for metropolitan Boston. It has an aggregate capacity of 65 billion U.S. gallons (240 million m³) and an area of almost 7 square miles (18.2 km²).

The reservoir is fed naturally by the Nashua, Quinapoxet, and Stillwater rivers. For water supply purposes, the Quabbin Aqueduct carries a very large volume of water from the Quabbin Reservoir to Wachusett, which can alter shoreline levels.



Flora and Fauna

Much of the land here is forested with mixed hardwoods and groves of white pines with some broad mowed grassy paths. Look for forest dwelling warblers, woodpeckers and chickadees. Listen for thrushes in the woods and see butterflies and other pollinators in the more open grassy areas. Woodcock are active in the spring in the open areas overlooking Muddy Pond. In the Stillwater Basin waters, various

water oriented birds such as mergansers, loons, ring-neck ducks, Canada geese, eagles and others can be seen depending on the time of year. Sharp eyed hikers may be lucky to see an otter coursing through the water. Laurel patches provide evergreen cover in winter, low bush blueberries, wild cherries, birches and oaks provide fruit, seeds and acorns for a variety of wildlife. Look carefully for narrow game trails trod by resident deer, rabbits, foxes, and coyotes. Indian pipes with their ghostly white stems can be seen pushing up the leaf litter in summer. Wintergreen and partridge-berry, small evergreen plants with bright red berries can also be seen along portions of the trail.

Environmental and Water Protection Considerations

There is a delicate balance between access and watershed protection, given that the reservoir is a significant source of pure drinking water for 2.5 million residents of 47 communities around Boston. The public already has far greater access to watershed area of the Wachusett Reservoir than is the case with the majority of public water supplies.

Specifically, DCR permits only passive recreational activities on established trails, such as hiking, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. Trail users should be mindful of their role as stewards and protectors of the watershed lands.



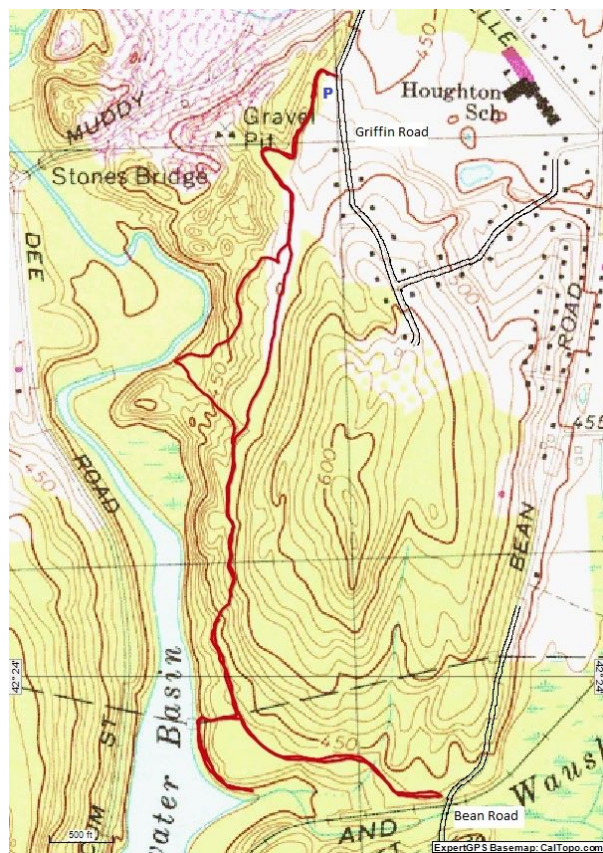
Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC)

Sterling's OSIC was established in 2003 as a permanent town committee, to broaden awareness of and enhance access to significant open space, cultural and recreational resources.

STILLWATER BASIN TRAIL



Stillwater Basin Trail



Parking and Trail Location

There is ample parking near the trailhead on Griffin Road, except during large sports events. The *Stillwater Basin Trail* is located primarily on DCR land along the Stillwater River and the arm of the Wachusett Reservoir, called the Stillwater Basin. The trailhead is opposite the ball fields on Griffin Road, which can be reached from Muddy Pond Road.

Unique Features

The trail offers a lovely view out over the Stillwater River and the opportunity to walk along the shoreline of a secluded arm of the Wachusett Reservoir. A

section of the trail follows a hill crest, while other parts meander through younger forest along hilly trails and through majestic mature forest on a wide, level path in the vicinity of the turn-around point at Bean Road.

Length and Difficulty

The round trip distance is roughly 3.5 miles, and the trail has a number of shorter hills, some of which are moderately steep. The elevation along the trail ranges from 381 ft to 511 ft. The difficulty is rated *moderate*.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities

Passive recreational activities allowed on the trail: Hiking, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing. Fishing in the Basin is allowed with certain restrictions. Check with the DCR for more details. Mountain biking, horseback riding-motorized vehicles and pets are prohibited. No bodily contact with the water is allowed.

Trail Description

The trailhead is located at backside of the overflow parking area, where the trail starts with a relatively steep, but short climb, to the ridge line. Overall, the trail roughly parallels the Stillwater River with a turn-around point at Bean Road. The outgoing path and the return path are not identical, as the outgoing route is slightly longer and provides at one point a view out over the Stillwater River.

0.03 miles: The trail reaches the ridge line, where it turns left and follows a narrow ridge trail

0.16 miles: The trail reaches a small log cabin-like shed (private property). Follow the trail past the shed to the beginning of a grassy area and then to a wide path to the right

0.22 miles: A short side trail takes the hiker to a view point over the Muddy Pond, a former peat bog is a popular site for Worcester County birdwatchers.

0.37 mile: The trail route to be followed leaves the grassy area at roughly a 60 degree angle, going into the woods and slightly downhill

0.43 miles: The main trail turns to the left, while a side trail continues more or less straight

0.58 miles: The trail has a significant downhill part

0.67 miles: The main trail makes a sharp turn to the left, while following the side path to the right brings the hiker to a view over the Stillwater River

0.83 miles: The trail reaches a junction with a trail coming in from the left (this is the route that will be taken on the return trip)

0.97 miles: A fairly steep downhill part begins

1.22 miles: A wide path to the right begins here that leads to an arm of the Wachusett Reservoir

1.28 miles: Make a left turn to walk along the Wachusett Reservoir to Waushacum Brook

1.44 miles: The Waushacum Brook enters the Wachusett Reservoir. Return to the main trail

1.65 miles: Back to the main trail; continue by taking the trail to the right

2.00 miles: The trail reaches the yellow gate at Bean Street. Turn around point

2.49 miles: Relatively steep uphill section of the trail.

2.78 miles: Trail junction with the outbound route; follow the trail to the right

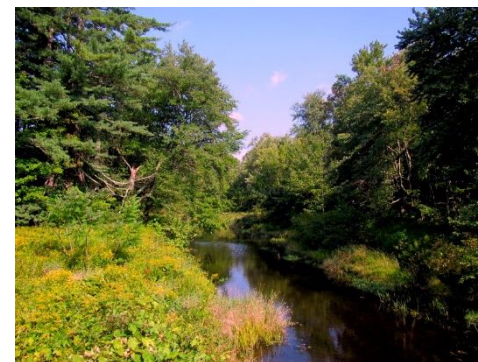
3.09 miles: The trail rejoins the outbound route

3.30 miles: The trail is back to the log cabin

3.47 miles: Back at the trailhead

Stillwater River

The Stillwater River is part of the Nashua River watershed. It begins in Princeton, in the watershed generally known as the Upper Worcester Plateau, or the Monadnock Upland. From here, the Stillwater flows 8.1 miles (13.0 km) through Sterling before entering the Stillwater Basin and the Thomas Basin at the Wachusett Reservoir.



Geological Information

Esker (from Gaelic *eiscir*, ‘ridge of gravel’) is a ridge, often serpentine, composed of stratified sand and gravel from a melting glacier and often containing large quantities of pure water.

Some 13,000 years ago, towards the end of the last ice age, glaciers were melting and receding, resulting in torrential streams of glacier water. The path of a given stream would follow existing crevasses in the glacier and, being confined by the glacier ice walls, would carve a tunnel through the bottom part of the glacier and a V-shaped channel or valley into the terrain. As the flow diminished, the glacier tunnel and V-channel filled up with glacial outwash in the form of sand and gravel. After the glacier ice had completely melted, these outwash-filled tunnels remained and became the ridges, or eskers that are visible today in the landscape. Esker heights may range from 16 to 160 ft and widths from 160 to 1,600 ft; the lengths can vary from a few hundred feet to tens of miles. There are several named eskers in eastern Massachusetts and on Cape Cod.

Because most eskers contain large quantities of pure water, protection is important. The soil overlying an esker is often porous, and contamination from farm or industrial operations could easily seep down and contaminate the water-carrying layers. Thus, it is prudent to maintain forest cover on top of an aquifer-containing esker.

Eskers are also valued by sand and gravel companies as a ready source for large quantities of material. The esker encountered on this trail was at one point in time pasture land but was in the 1960s sold to two local sand and gravel companies. Use the trail description to find where the contours from the excavations of millions of cubic yards of sand and gravel remain in the landscape. After exhausting much of the material, a large subdivision was proposed to the Sterling Planning Board in the mid-1980s. MDC then acted to protect this invaluable water source by land acquisition, finalized in 1989. (Note MDC was the name of the state agency which is now named the DCR Watershed Protection).

Kettle ponds are another very visible example of glaciers shaping the landscape; a kettle pond is formed

when a large block of ice breaks loose from the retreating glacier and becomes partly buried in glacial outwash. When this ice chunk finally has melted, a deep lake or pond has been formed. The side loop on Sect. B brings you to a small lovely kettle pond. Several other kettle ponds can be found in this area.

Flora and Fauna

Notice the transition from a closed oak pine canopy to a small open meadow on the first part of the trail. In summer, this area is alive with butterflies and dragonflies. Sparrows and warblers may be seen flitting back and forth. The calls of blue jays, chickadees and nuthatches can be heard in both the field and forests year-round.

Milkweed and other flowers provide food for monarch butterflies and other pollinators such as beetles, bees and hummingbirds. The plants provide a place for monarch caterpillars to feed and form a chrysalis before emerging as an adult.

In the esker area, the drier land is covered with more grasses, lichen and moss. The exposed soils are attractive nesting sites for turtles to dig holes and lay their eggs. You may see the remains of eggs that have been dug up and eaten by raccoons, foxes, skunks or coyotes. In late summer, the forested wetland is perfumed with the scent of the white floral shrub meadowsweet. Skunk cabbage is prominent in spring.

Be quiet here as you might spy ducks or a fishing heron near the wetland formed near the mouth of Rocky Brook and the Stillwater River. Spring woodland flowers such as Lady Slippers and the state flower, trailing arbutus (Mayflower) can be found along the edge of the trails. The evergreen wintergreen carpets much of the forest floor, with a white bell-shaped flower in spring, red berries in fall and winter.

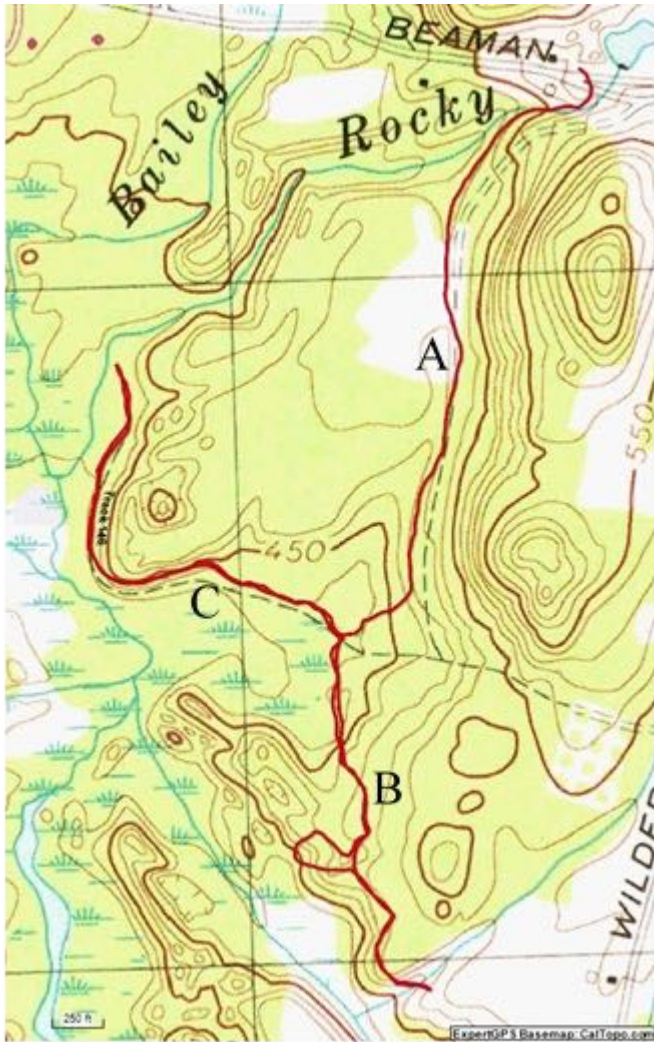
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PINE HILL ESKER TRAIL



Pine Hill Esker Trail



Unique Features

The trail starts at the site of a 19th century chair factory and joins a dirt road with stone walls in a mature forest, crosses a meadow and goes back into forested terrain. Unique for this trail are its eskers and kettle ponds and the views of a wetland pond where Rocky Brook flows into the Stillwater River. The trail is located on DCR watershed protection land, so dogs are not allowed.

Length and Difficulty

For clarity, the trail is divided into three sections: A, B and C, with one-way lengths of 0.65 mi., 0.45 mi. and 0.45 mi., respectively. The full hike, as described below, includes all three sections. The side loop on Sect. B is included on the return. The A+B+C trail length is 3.1 mi., while the two shorter versions, A+B or A+C, are both 2.2 mi. in length. The elevation varies between 428 ft and 540 ft, with several short steep hills. The difficulty is rated *moderate*.

Trail Description

Trail begins at the crossing of Rocky Brook on remnant of an asphalt bridge. Then a slight right turn at the stone wall leads to a shortcut to the main trail. Watch your steps carefully.

0.05 miles: Shortcut merges into the main trail, which is a wide dirt road with stone walls on both sides.

0.15 miles: Gap in stonewall provides opportunity to explore the forest and the Rocky Brook.

0.23 miles: Trail enters a meadow area.

0.58 miles: Pass a small side trail on the left side. Note the young white pine trees on both sides of the trail.

0.65 miles: Trail junction of Sections A, B and C. The trail description continues with Sect. B.

0.74 miles: Grove of large pine trees, followed by a short uphill.

0.86 miles: Trail joins remnant of a circular track, possibly remnant of the sand and gravel extraction.

0.90 miles: Clearing with gravelly soil, as evidence of an esker, laid bare by the sand and gravel excavation. The trail continues downhill at the left side.

0.97 miles: Clearing, with same telltale sign of the esker. Closer examination of surrounding terrain gives evidence of sand and gravel extraction.

0.99 miles: Trail goes over large culvert.

1.04 miles: Trail turn-around, at the location of wetland and a permanent stream.

1.19 miles: Optional (but recommended) side loop on the left side, shortly after remnants of the circular track.

1.23 miles: Trail loops gently to the right. Deep down to the left is a small pond (a kettle pond).

1.32 miles: Side trail rejoins the return trail.

1.55 miles: Trail junction of Sections A, B and C. The trail description continues with Sect. C outbound.

1.58 miles: Wet area most of the times of the year.

1.78 miles: View to wetland pond where the Stillwater River meets Rocky Brook. The distant structure is part of the Sterling water system.

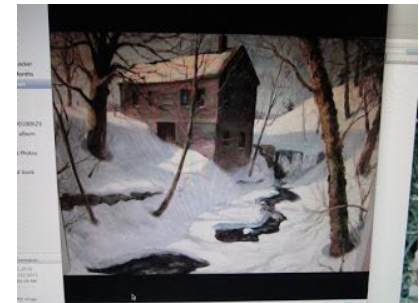
2.00 miles: Trail turn around point at the edge of the Rocky Brook.

2.45 miles: Trail junction of Sections A, B and C. Turn left to return to start. Watch for shortcut near trail end.

3.10 miles: End of trail.

Historical information

The Rocky Brook Conservation Area is owned by the Sterling Conservation Commission and is the site of a 19th century water-powered chair factory started by Mr. Newton Burpee and depicted in the painting below.



Parking and Trail Location

The trailhead for the *Pine Hill Esker Trail* is on Beaman Road, close to the *Rocky Brook Conservation Area* sign. It is about ¼ miles West of the junction with Wilder Rd and about 0.5 mi from Rt. 140. There is limited parking on the shoulder of the road. Additional parking is available at The Eight Point Sportsmen's Club.

Near the bridge where the Quag and the West Waushacum join was the location of the *Waushacum Park Picnic Grounds* built in 1879 by the Fitchburg and Worcester Railroad Company with a train stop at the entrance. The Park offered the visitor a wide range of amenities: dance hall, bowling alley, merry-go-round, baseball diamond, boat and canoe rental as well as hotel and cabin accommodations. The annual boat parade attracted more than 1000 people.

Visitors arriving by train from Worcester in Sterling Junction could take a short walk to the *Sterling Camp Ground*, from where the steam yacht *Sterling* ferried them across the West Waushacum Lake to the wharf at the Picnic Grounds.



The need for clean drinking water in Boston, however, brought an end to the Picnic Grounds. In the early 1900s, both East and West Waushacum Lakes were acquired by the Metropolitan Waterworks (now DCR), but Waushacum Park continued to operate until 1915 when all the buildings were razed. The Loop Trail off the Rail Trail proper takes you to the site of Waushacum Park and is in fact a remnant of roads and paths of the former park.

Flora and Fauna

Three distinct habitats can be experienced on this trail: a wetland, oak-pine forest and the lake. The cattail swamp along the rail trail is home to wetland birds, muskrats and minks. Listen for the "konkaree" of the red-winged blackbirds in spring and summer and look for green and great blue herons fishing along the marshes and shores of the Quag and West Waushacum Pond. During spring and fall migration a variety of ducks can be seen on the open water. Loons visit this pond on occasion. In the area of red oaks and white pines, squirrels, rabbits and chipmunks skitter across the trail. Deer and bobcat have been seen in the area.

Lowbush blueberries are an attraction in summer. Buttonbush, water lilies and pickerel weed grow along the lake edges. Patches of vinca, an evergreen ornamental groundcover with a blue or white flower, are seen in spring and a patch of red pines with their



rounded cones are clues to previous building locations before the land was purchased by the state.

Wachusett Greenways

Wachusett Greenways' mission is connecting communities with trails and greenways. This all-volunteer nonprofit group and its partners began in 1995 to build and maintain trails. The Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) is WG's largest project, connecting 30 miles along a former railroad between Barre, Oakham, Rutland, Holden, West Boylston and Sterling. (www.wachusettgreenways.org)

Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection

DCR/DWSP owns 21,028 acres of land in the Wachusett Reservoir Watershed and manages these watersheds primarily for water quality protection, drinking water supply, and environmental resource protection purposes. Public access, therefore, is carefully regulated and controlled to protect over 2 million people's source of drinking water. Visit www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-central/wachusett-reservoir.html for more details.

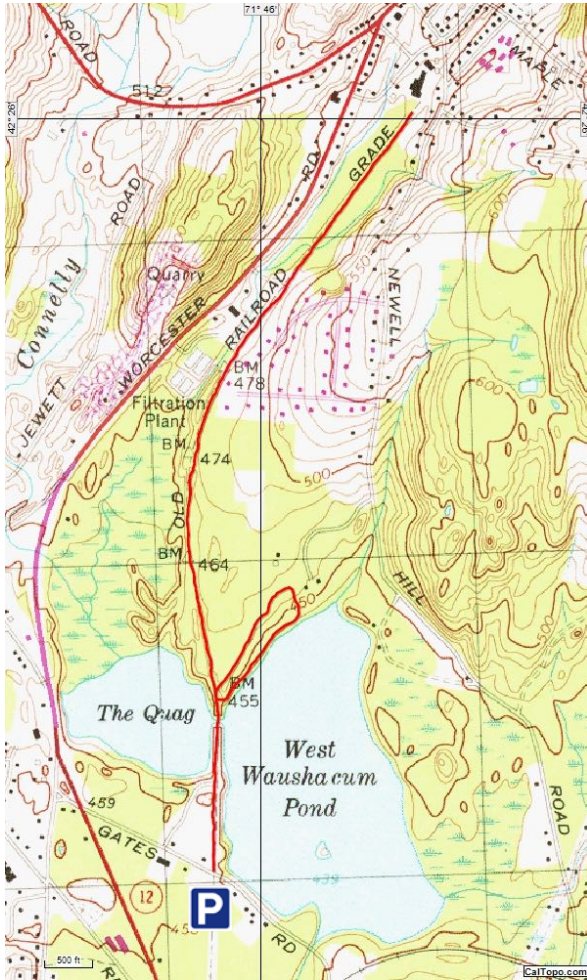
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STERLING SECTION



Sterling Section of Mass Central Rail Trail



As the trail name implies, this trail is part of the *Mass Central Rail Trail* (MCRT), constructed and maintained by *Wachusett Greenways*. The property is owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division of Watershed Supply Protection.

Unique Features

The trail is level and smooth (watch for bicycles and joggers) and is for the most part forested and offers a range of scenery, from woodland to wetland to vistas across West Waushacum Lake and The Quag. A half-mile loop foot trail, off the Sterling Section of the MCRT proper, takes you to the former location of the *Waushacum Park Picnic Grounds*.



Length and Difficulty

The round trip distance, including the loop trail, is 3.8 miles. Without the loop, the distance is 3.3 miles. The difficulty is rated *easy*.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities

In keeping with DCR's mission of water supply and water quality protection, allowed activities include walking, biking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, open water fishing during designated DCR season and boating (only electric motors). Dogs, horses and all motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Trail Description from former Sterling Cider Mill

0.00 miles: Start of trail is at the yellow post at the south end of the parking area. First part of the trail (about 1/3 of a mile) cuts through a cattail marsh where beaver activities can often be seen.

- 0.33 miles:** Short bridge over small stream.
- 0.38 miles:** Wetland changes to oak-pine forest.
- 0.50 miles;** DPW buildings can be seen on the right
- 0.73 miles:** Side trail to the right.
- 1.27 miles:** Location of the train stop on the Fitchburg and Worcester Railroad Line.
- 1.29 miles:** Loop trail leaves the Sterling Section of the MCRT to the left (black steel bench is a landmark) and following the shoreline of West Waushacum Lake.
- 1.50 miles:** The trail turns left along a slight rise and continues directly away from West Waushacum Lake turning right by a gate to houses along Trebor Lane to parallel the outbound route along the lake shoreline.
- 1.84 miles:** The side trail rejoins the Sterling Section of the MCRT at the location of the train stop.
- 1.90 miles:** Trail crosses bridge between West Waushacum Lake and the Quag, with great views on both sides. After that, the trail follows a causeway, built by the Fitchburg and Worcester Railroad Line
- 2.00 miles:** End of causeway
- 2.17 miles:** Trail kiosk near Gates Road, which is the southern end of Sterling Section of the MCRT
- 2.48 miles:** Crossing the bridge on the return
- 3.82 miles:** Trail returns to yellow post at the northern terminus.

History of the Sterling Rail Trail Area

The structure that today houses an antiques store and other small businesses was originally the Sterling Cider Mill. Founded in 1906 by Walter Hildick Sr., it took advantage of Sterling's apple orchards and of the direct access to railroad transport. During its heyday, the mill produced 2 million gallons of apple cider, apple juice and cider vinegar. In 1980s the cider mill halted its



pressing process due to environmental concerns, and in 1988 it finally closed down and moved its operation to Pennsylvania.

Parking, Trail Name Origin and Trail Location

There are two trailheads with ample parking: (1) At *Oh My Gosh Antiques* (the former Sterling Cider Mill), which can be reached by taking Waushacum Avenue from Main St., Sterling (Rt. 12) and turning right after crossing School St. (2) At Gates Road, about ¼ mile from its intersection with Rt. 12.

2.42 miles: Trail makes a moderately sharp turn to the right, away from the basin.

2.52 miles: Trail approaches the dam at the end of Upper Lynde Basin.

2.55 miles: Trail reaches the spillway.

2.59 miles: Trail junction with trail from the left.

2.70 miles: Return to the yellow gate at the trailhead.

Brief History of the Wekepeke

The name “Wekepeke” comes from the Nipmuck name, *Wickapicket*, for the Wekepeke Brook (this name also appears on older maps). It is likely that the name means “the place where linden (or bass wood) trees are.” Bass wood was an important material for the Nipmucks, *e.g.*, the long fibers in the bark were used for making rope and strings.

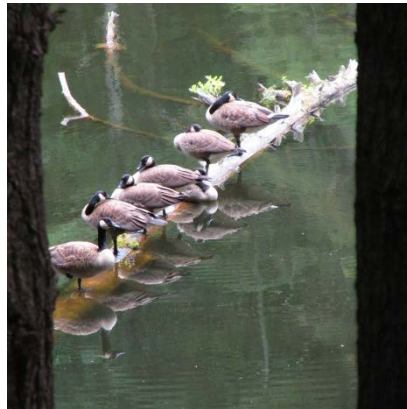
By the 19th century, the Wekepeke Watershed area was predominantly an agricultural region, to which smaller, water-powered commercial activities were added. A chair factory owned by J. Lynde was situated at Lower Lynde Basin. In the late 1800’s, Clinton was growing rapidly, and the local water sources were insufficient to meet the water needs. Piping gravity fed water of excellent quality from the Wekepeke Brook was the chosen solution, and to achieve this Clinton acquired the land in Sterling. The resulting system of ponds, dams, gatehouses and pipes is referred to as *The Clinton Water Works*.

On January 1, 1883, the first version of the Wekepeke water system was completed, which only drew water from the lowest reservoir, Spring Basin. Soon afterwards, efforts were underway to connect the other three basins (Fitch Basin; Upper and Lower Lynde Basins) to the system.

By 1926, after the Heywood Dam was built, only the Heywood Reservoir was used by Clinton. After the Wachusett Reservoir was completed and Clinton was allowed to draw drinking water from it, the Clinton Water Works were obsolete. By the 1960s the system was no longer in use.

Flora and Fauna

This trail passes by open water bodies, a beaver pond, a vernal pool and across some intermittent streams surrounded by forests of pine, oak, hickory and other hardwoods. In the wetter areas are jewel weed, cattails and a variety of ferns. Flowering trilliums are blooming in spring, and large groves of laurels put on a display in late June. Watch for poison ivy along the pond and some parts of the trail that get more sunlight. Some hemlock groves are suffering from needle loss due to the wooly adelgid an aphid-like invasive insect. Note the small round white egg masses on the underside of hemlock needles. Ducks, geese may be spotted on the water and kingfishers can be seen diving for fish.



Check muddy shores for animal tracks and frogs hopping into the water. Forest birds such as thrushes, blue jays, woodpeckers and wood warblers can be seen or heard.

Deer, bobcats, coyotes and bears are in the area, but the most commonly seen mammals are chipmunks and squirrels.

Acknowledgments

The establishment of the *Lynde Basins Trail* was made possible through the access granted by the Town of Clinton. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife holds a conservation easement on this property, providing public access for wildlife-related and other passive recreational activities.

Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC)

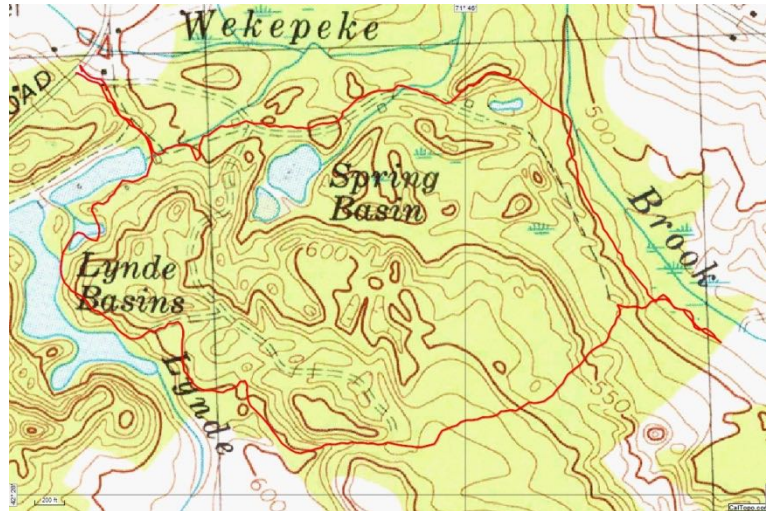
OSIC was established in 2003 as a permanent town committee, to broaden awareness of and enhance access to significant open space, cultural and recreational resources.

LYNDE BASINS TRAIL



Lynde Basins Trail

mountain biking and horseback riding. All motorized vehicles are prohibited.



Parking and Trail Location

The trailhead is located at a yellow gate on the east side of Heywood Road, between the intersection of Upper North Row Road and Rowley Hill Road. The trailhead is 1.1 miles from Rowley Hill Road and 0.25 miles from Upper North Row Road. There is parking available for 3 – 4 cars.

Unique Features

This trail offers several interesting man-made and natural features. The trail passes by dams, gate houses and spillways, part of the former Clinton Water Works. In terms of natural scenery, it offers views to lakes and basins, crosses wetland areas and passes by the Wekepeke Brook with beaver activity.

Length and Difficulty

The round trip distance is 2.7 miles, and the trail has a number of short hills, some of which are moderately steep. The difficulty is rated *moderate*.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities

Passive recreational activities allowed on the trail: Hiking, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. Also

Trail Description

0.00 miles: Trailhead is at the yellow gate. The path starts level, wide and open (note a cellar hole to the left), and then enters the woods.

0.10 miles: A side trail from the right follows the edge of the Lower Lynde Basin. Keep left, observing the spillway for Lower Lynde Basin, with Gatehouse #3 on the dam. Shortly after the spillway, take the path to the left, along a fieldstone water channel.

0.29 miles: Wet area.

0.32 miles: To the left is Gatehouse #4 that controlled water flow from the settling basin into Spring Basin. There is a side road to the right. Continue straight and note the Spring Basin on the right.

0.44 miles: Path comes in from the right, leading to Gatehouse #5 and in a short distance see Gatehouse #6 to the right. In late May, flowering trilliums can be found in this area.

0.50 miles: After a rather wet and swampy area, the trail re-enters a wooded area. Within 0.1 of a mile, the trail bears left in front of Gatehouse #7, which was the chlorination station. From here water was piped underground to Clinton and Lancaster.

0.63 miles: A side trail comes in from the left. At the next trail junction, continue on the smaller trail straight ahead. Do not take the wider trail turning left and uphill.

0.71 miles: After a short and moderately steep downhill there is a trail junction, with side trail to the left. Continue straight, followed by curve to the right.

0.89 miles: Trail crosses 3 intermittent wet areas over the next 0.1 miles.

1.05 miles: Turn left and downhill at the trail junction on a spur trail, for the opportunity to view a beaver pond and to walk close to the Wekepeke Brook.

1.08 miles: Arrive at the Wekepeke Brook, the location of a historic ford and a large beaver pond. The trail curves to the right and follows Wekepeke Brook.

1.18 miles: Trail comes to an end at a stone wall, bordering a posted and privately owned meadow. Respect the landowner by not going any further.

1.27 miles: Trail is back to ford, turns left and uphill.

1.29 miles: Trail junction with outbound trail route. Continue straight and a moderately steep uphill.

1.33 miles: Trail turns sharply to the left, with small trail to the right. Shortly afterwards, the trail turns sharply to the right, with side trail straight ahead.

1.40 miles: Steep section of the trail, with some erosion. In 0.2 of mile, take a right turn at trail junction onto a larger road, continuing downhill.

1.71 miles: Slight left turn at trail junction to continue on side trail.

1.78 miles: Beginning of a fairly long downhill section of the trail followed by a small vernal pool on the left.

2.01 miles: Short trail to the left offers views to fields and Crystal Brook Farm on Tuttle Road.

2.10 miles: At the trail junction with a cluster of trees



in the middle, go to the left and soon see views of Upper Lynde Basin. Trail is winding, somewhat narrow, with protruding roots in some areas.

2.29 miles: Trail follows the edge of a smaller part of the Lower Lynde Basin and around an arm of the basin.

3.09 miles: Steep section of the trail, with some erosion. In 0.2 of mile, at trail junction take a right turn onto a larger road, continuing downhill

3.40 miles: Slight left turn at trail junction to continue on wide side trail

3.47 miles: Beginning of a fairly long downhill section of the trail followed by a small vernal pool on the left.

3.70 miles: At the curve of the path, turn left onto small side trail, to return to the Allenwood trailhead.

Note that junction is located next to side trail with views over farmland.

4.17 miles: Return to trailhead

Charles Allen and the Sterling Land Trust

The Allenwood Trail is named for Charles Allen who grew up on Crystal Brook Farm on Tuttle Road. He worked full time on the family farm, taking the reins upon the death of his father in 1939. Crystal Brook Farm was mainly a dairy farm, but apple orchards were also part of the farm's operation. In the 1980s, Crystal Brook Farm along with his brother Ralph's adjacent farm were among the first in the state to enroll in the Mass. Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, thus preserving the land for agricultural use in perpetuity.



In the mid-1990's Charlie Allen retired from farming and his grand nephew, Eric Starbard, took charge of the farm. Charlie built a new home on a large wooded tract that was part of the original Crystal

Brook Farm. In 2001, Charlie donated 27 acres of the land to the Sterling Land Trust, an action for which he was awarded the 2004 Conservation Advocacy Award by the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

He was an avid bird enthusiast. In addition, he made a thorough study of the many varieties of trees, wildflowers and wild animals native to the New England area. He spent his retirement years perfecting his woodcarving skills in the production of numerous

beautifully carved and painted birds. He also devoted time outdoors, clearing and developing a system of marked trails through the woodlands around his house and on the Sterling Land Trust tract. He walked those trails daily to maintain his physical condition and especially to enjoy the beauty of the nature around him.

Flora and Fauna



The meadows and fields bounded by stone walls frame a scenic view to Crystal Brook Farm on the first part of this trail. Watch for meadowlarks and bluebirds in the meadows. The forest is mostly oaks and white pine with some black cherry (note burnt potato chip-like bark), maples, black birches and hemlock. You'll first hear, then see nuthatches, chickadees and titmice in the woods. Oblong holes in dead trees indicate pileated woodpeckers, a crow-sized bird, at work. Enjoy the views of Lynde Basin and the wetlands along Wekepeke Brook. In spring, listen for frogs, spring peepers and wood frogs near vernal pools and other wet areas. In the summer, you'll notice the summer-sweet's fragrant white blooms. An abandoned beaver pond surrounded by beaver chewed stumps on the slopes is at the "beaver meadow" stage. It may evolve to a shrubby habitat and finally a forest, unless more beavers move in to re-dam the brook! Look for evidence of deer browsing shrubs, trees and shoots sprouting from stumps.

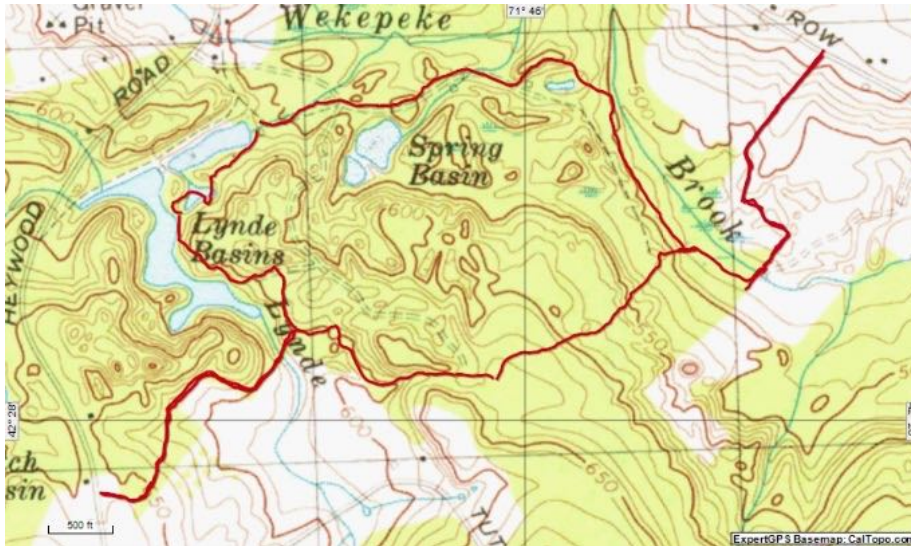
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ALLENWOOD TRAIL



Allenwood Trail



Parking and Trail Location

The trailhead is located on the east side of Heywood Road, 0.3 miles from Rowley Hill Road that connects with the center of Sterling. With care, the parking area should accommodate 4 to 5 cars.

Unique Features

Scenic vistas towards farms and fields, later on views over Lynde Basins. Observe dams, gate houses and spillways as the visible remaining parts of the former Clinton Water Works. Crossing the Wekepeke Brook offers views out over beaver-created wetlands.

Length and Difficulty

The round-trip distance is 4.1 miles, and the trail has several short hills, some of which are moderately steep. The difficulty is rated *moderate*.

Allowed and Prohibited Trail Activities

Passive recreational activities allowed on the trail: Hiking, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing, as well as mountain biking and horseback riding. All motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Trail Description

- 0.00 miles:** Trailhead and kiosk
- 0.04 miles:** Crossing stone wall
- 0.06 miles:** Left turn, paralleling stone wall and forest boundary
- 0.20 miles:** Trail junction marked by a wooden post; make right hand turn;
- 0.22 miles:** Open view towards the Crystal Brook Farm and fields
- 0.28 miles:** Stone in memory of Charles Allen
- 0.35 miles:** Wooden post at the right side of the trail
- 0.39 miles:** Continue straight where faint trail goes off to the left
- 0.43 miles:** Bridge across wetland and a small stream. Trail continue uphill and slightly to the right
- 0.46 miles:** Trail ends at junction with larger forest road; turn left. Note short side trail to the right goes to vista point.
- 0.55 miles:** Keep left at trail junction, identified with a cluster of trees in the middle. Trail becomes narrower
- 0.65 miles:** View out over Upper Lynde Basin
- 0.77 miles:** Follow side trail that goes along the edge



of Lower Lynde Basin

- 0.91 miles:** Trail makes a moderately sharp turn to the right, away from the basin
- 1.01 miles:** Trail junction. Continue on large trail to the right. Observe spillway from lower Lynde Basin
- 1.12 miles:** Gatehouse #4 to the left controlled water flow from the settling basin into Spring Basin. Continue straight, note the Spring Basin on the right
- 1.24 miles:** Path comes in from the right, leading to Gatehouse #5. In late May, flowering trilliums can be found in this area
- 1.30 miles:** Trail re-enters a wooded area and 0.1 mi later turns left in front of Gatehouse #7, the chlorination station for the Clinton Waterworks
- 1.43 miles:** Side trail from left, continue straight. At the next trail junction, continue on smaller trail straight ahead. Ignore wider trail turning left and uphill
- 1.51 miles:** Trail junction with side trail to the left, after a short and moderately steep downhill. Continue straight, followed by curve to the right
- 1.69 miles:** Trail crosses 3 seasonal wet areas over the next 0.1 miles
- 1.85 miles:** At the trail T-junction, turn left and downhill, leading to the Wekepeke Brook crossing.
- 1.99 miles:** Near stonewall and meadow, leave the larger trail and turn left and downhill
- 2.01 miles:** Crossing the Wekepeke Brook on new bridge
- 2.03 miles:** After a short uphill, trail enters wetland to the left and stonewall to the right
- 2.07 miles:** Entering forest. Follow flagged route
- 2.17 miles:** Right turn at T-junction of flagged trail route and the larger road
- 2.21 miles:** Trail enters open field; SLT land bounded by row of pine trees. Keep left to reach the easement along the edge of the field. Continue uphill to the gate and North Row Road
- 2.43 miles:** Turn-around point at North Row Road. Return along same route until T-junction, located at 1.85 mile on outbound route
- 2.84 miles:** Crossing the Wekepeke Bridge
- 2.98 miles:** Trail junction with outbound trail route. Continue straight and up a moderately steep hill
- 3.02 miles:** Trail turns sharply to the left, then sharply to the right

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 eight 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.

Acknowledgments

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.

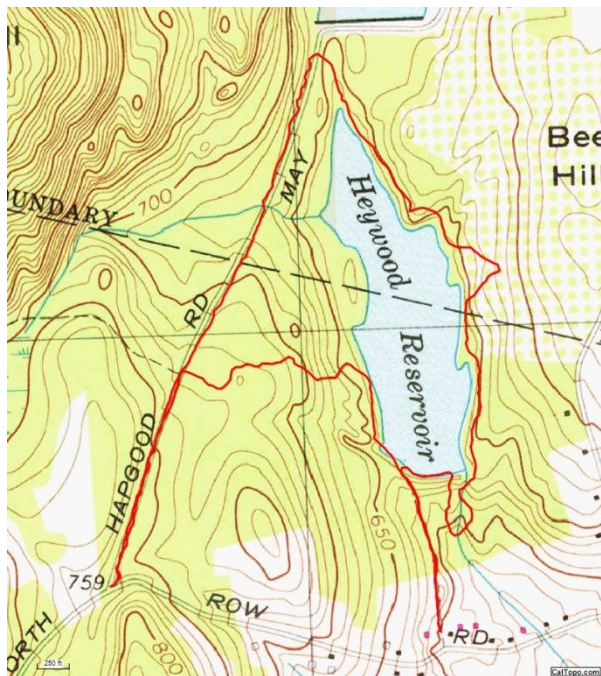
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HEYWOOD RESERVOIR TRAIL



Heywood Reservoir Trail



Parking and Trail Location

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

Length and Difficulty

The Heywood Reservoir Trail is 2.67 miles in length. With the optional extension, the length is 3.23 mile. The elevation along the trail ranges from 592 ft to 772 ft. The difficulty is rated *moderate*.

Allowed and 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 Heywood 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.

