

# WAKEFIELD TRAIL STEWARD HANDBOOK

*"I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles."*  
— *Anne Frank*

# Natural Resource Conservation in Wakefield

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The Town of Wakefield Conservation Commission (Commission) administers and enforces the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). In addition to its regulatory duties under the WPA, the Commission is also responsible for the acquisition, management, and protection of natural resources within Town. The preservation of open space not only adds aesthetic value to the Town, it also provides year-round recreational opportunities as well as habitat and migration area for wildlife.

As the current beneficiaries of the Town's ecological assets, we share the accompanying responsibility of protecting and maintaining lands set aside for the public's enjoyment and recreation, to protect our water resources, plant and wildlife habitat, and to preserve some of Wakefield's unique natural beauty.

## What Is Trail Stewardship?

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Trail stewardship is the thoughtful and responsible involvement of citizens in managing the Town's trail system. The ultimate goal of trail stewardship is to ensure that these areas are cared for and protected for use both now and by future generations. It combines monitoring, reporting and minor maintenance activities aimed at protection and preservation of these invaluable assets.

Without a strong stewardship program to monitor the lands controlled by the Town, open space can be degraded or lost. A byproduct of a good stewardship program is greater public interest and support for conservation lands.

Trail Stewards (Stewards) can be extremely helpful in caring for our open spaces by performing lowkey, low-effort maintenance on a frequent basis. Much of this maintenance can be done individually during casual walks. Larger maintenance or trash removal days may also be organized and conducted through the Conservation Department or Parks Department.

## What is the role of a Trail Steward?

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Stewards help out with the care of Town owned trails by:

- Visiting designated trails at least one time per month to monitor conditions and provide to the Commission a written status update documenting any changes or potential issues.
- Picking up and properly disposing of trash that others have left behind. Trash not only pollutes the environment but could also be harmful to wildlife.
- Trimming branches and removing other **access impeding** blockages.

- Notifying the Commission of any larger issues that should not be handled personally such as: downed trees prohibiting trail passage, dead limbs overhanging trails, illegal dumping, unauthorized land use activities and encroachment.
- Assisting with trail marker installation and identification of areas where improved signage is necessary.

## How does one become a Trail Steward?

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If you are interested in volunteering, simply contact the Wakefield Conservation Department at 781-224-5015 or [conservationdepartment@wakefield.ma.us](mailto:conservationdepartment@wakefield.ma.us). We will arrange to meet you to discuss the program and your interests. Each steward will be assigned a designated trail.

## Trails in Wakefield

Wakefield offers a network of maintained trails for passive recreational opportunities. A map depicting the locations is included in this handbook

## Rules for Trail Use

Trails may be used for **passive activities** such as hiking, biking, bird watching and snowshoeing.

There shall be **NO** littering; dumping; vandalism; off-leash dogs; removal of plants, wildlife, or other material; cutting of firewood; swimming; firearms; campfires; alcohol; or motorized vehicles of any kind.

## Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring is the first step in land management. Stewards monitor our trails and report to the Commission the general status of the property and any problems or issues observed. Please plan to visit and report on your designated site at least one time per month.

Monitoring is an easy way to help protect and maintain our open spaces. As you walk these areas, simply make note of your observations, with specific interest paid to the issues outlined below.

- Human caused damage or destruction of trees or vegetation.
- Overgrown trails.
- Creation of new trails from an unknown source.
- Encroachment onto conservation areas/trails.
- Large deposits of trash or yard refuse.
- Any type of construction.
- Evidence of illegal or illicit activities such as fires, motorized vehicles, hunting displays or disposal of pollutants.

- Other Issues or areas of concern.

Please document your findings on the Trail Stewards Monitoring Form. If possible, take a photo of the problem. The information provided on these forms will not be available for public viewing. The Commission will review the submitted information and follow-up, if warranted, to the appropriate department (Park, DPW, Police) only. Forms are available on our website: [www.wakefield.ma.us.conservation-commssion](http://www.wakefield.ma.us.conservation-commssion).

## Contact Information

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|-------------------------|--------------|--|
| Conservation Commission | 781-224-5015 | Conservationcommission@wakefield.ma.us |
| Police Non-Emergency    | 781-245-1212 |  |
| Emergency               | 911          |  |

Wakefield Conservation general website: <http://www.wakefield.ma.us.conservation-department>

## Trail Maintenance

### Trimming, clearing and routine maintenance of trails

Trimming and clearing activities are only permitted on authorized trails. Maps will be provided to denote authorized trails. If you are unsure of the status of a trail, please first check with the Commission. Cutting, clearing, and trimming may only be done when vegetation greatly interferes with passage on authorized trails.

**Trails may not be created, rerouted or enlarged.** Any and all such trail improvements must first be discussed with and approved by the Conservation Commission.

Routine trail maintenance tasks include:

- Clearing downed trees and small branches that **prevent** access of established trails or pose a safety hazard. **Downed trees that may be climbed over or walked around are to remain in place.**
- Light pruning/trimming of vegetation that obstructs trails. Small, wispy branches may be cut back only far enough to gain passage. Removal of larger branches with a saw is not allowed.
- Trimming vegetation around signs and kiosks so that they are clearly visible. •Trash removal that can be safely and easily carried out by a single person.
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Trail Appearance - A well-maintained trail should look natural, with few visible cuts on bordering vegetation. All cut branches and brush should be moved well off the trail with the cut end pointing away from the trail.

**Deadwood and downed trees that neither create a hazard nor completely obstruct a trail be are to be left in place to decompose. As they break down, they create valuable habitat and add critical nutrient value to the soil.**