

Moving Together  
23



# Inclusive and Accessible Trails Toolkit Project

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October 4, 2023



# Project Overview

**Goal:** Develop an Inclusion and Accessibility Trail Guide to serve as a toolkit to assess and improve knowledge, accessibility, and utilization of trails across Central Massachusetts. Through the development and implementation of a trail assessment toolkit, it is our hope to increase outdoor recreational opportunities for all populations.

**Accessibility** – The quality of being easy to obtain or use; the quality of being easily understood or appreciated.

**Inclusion** - The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized; a state of being valued, respected, and supported.

***Improve the understanding of what obstacles marginalized communities face when accessing trails and provide recommendations to better support these groups so that it is easier to use trails.***

# Project Overview

**Goal:** Develop an Inclusion and Accessibility Trail Guide to serve accessibility, and utilization of trails across Central and Eastern Oregon. A trail assessment toolkit, it is our hope that this guide will be used to

**This is NOT a revision to any accessible design standards.**

**This will NOT be a mandatory assessment.**

**This WILL take a holistic approach to improving inclusion on trails.**

What obstacles prevent someone from accessing a trail before getting there?

What obstacles create a hinderance once someone is on a trail?

*Improve the understanding of what obstacles marginalized communities face when accessing trails and provide recommendations to better support these groups so that it is easier to use trails.*

# Inclusion & Accessibility Toolkit Overview

This Inclusion and Accessibility Toolkit aims to

1. Create a Rating/Grading System for Trails.
2. Provide Recommendations for Improving Access to Trails.
3. Develop Mapping Criteria to Highlight Accessibility Concerns along Trails.
4. Demonstrate Examples of the Toolkit Being Utilized on Seven (7) Trails in the Region

# Inclusion & Accessibility Toolkit Overview

## Potential Users of the Toolkit

- Local Governments
- Land Trusts
- Trail Committees
- Other Landowners
- Trail Users

# Youth Trails Stewardship Pilot Program

***Goal: Encourage our youth to be out on the trails!***

- Assist with the development of Inclusion & Accessibility Toolkit
  - Develop Ranking Criteria for grading rubric based on focus groups
  - Help carry out Trail Audits using toolkit's grading rubric



# Process for Youth Engagement

1. Outreach to interested youth organizations in the region
2. Response from Mass Audubon
3. Initial meeting with youth group at Broad Meadow Brook
4. Accessible trail walk at Broad Meadow Brook
5. Follow-up Meeting
6. Trail Walk at Green Hill Park

# Accessibility Considerations For Grading Rubric - Examples

## 1. Knowledge & Awareness of a Trail

Do you know that the trail exists? Is there a map that includes information about the trail system at large? Or a map that includes locations of mile markers in case of emergencies?

## 2. Location of and Transportation Access to a Trail

Is the trail close to senior living facilities or Environmental Justice-designated areas? Is there a public transportation stop?

## 3. Physical Features of a Trail

What is the surface material of the trail? Are both symbols and colors used to differentiate between trails in the same trail system?

## 4. Comfort While on a Trail

Do you feel safe on the trail? Do you know where you are going? Does the parking lot have tree coverage to cool down trail users?

## 5. Trail Multi-Modality

Are there markings to designate trail use changes (ex. changes between walking-only to multi-use with motorized vehicles allowed?)



# Trail Dialogue Events

## **Dialogue #1 (2/28/2023)**

-Brainstorm attributes to add to the rubric for each rubric category

## **Dialogue #2 (6/12/2023)**

-Stakeholders give initial feedback, revisions and suggestions on draft rubric

## **Dialogue #3**

-Upcoming, looking at late October 2023 to present trail audit results and lessons learned

\*\*Stakeholders invited throughout the process include trail organizations/owners, non-profit advocacy organizations representing marginalized populations (aging folks, youth, BIPOC, low-income folks), environmental organizations, local disability advocates, etc.

# Trail Audits Completed (5/7)

- Aqueduct Trail – Northborough, MA
- Gilmore Pond Loop Trail - Westborough, MA
- Arbutus Park Trail – Sturbridge, MA
- Farm Trail – Sutton, MA
- Shaw Trail – Sutton, MA



Gilmore Pond Loop Trail

# General Toolkit Outline

- ADA/ABA Overview
- CMRPC's Guidance for building and marketing accessible trails based on 5 categories of attributes (Transportation/Location, Comfortability, Physical Attributes, Trail Knowledge/Awareness, Trail Multi-Modality)
- Based on stakeholder input, literature reviews, trail audit feedback
- Finalized grading rubric with guidance on how to use it
- Trail audit summaries & recommendations
- Mapping criteria overview
- Funding sources table/other guidance on funding trail improvements



# Next Steps

## 1. Finalize Draft Rubric

- Further literature reviews as needed based on stakeholder input
- Create audio version of grading rubric through partnership with Worcester Talking Book Library

## 2. Youth Stewardship Program

- Train interested youth on how to map trails

## 3. Finish Trail Audit Trial Run

- Perform trail audit on 1-2 more trails in MA (Shrewsbury, Sudbury)

## 4. Toolkit Completed, Presentation of Findings

- Finalize toolkit
- Present findings and lessons learned in late Fall 2023
- Project completed by December 2023

# MassTrails Grant Funding

- This project has been made possible with Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program funding from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.





# Thank You!

Questions?

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