

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BRANCH OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

POLICY/PROCEDURE #310

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SUBJECT: MULTIPLE USE TRAIL POLICY FOR DEEP PROPERTIES

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I. OBJECTIVE

Trails are a vital tool for connecting people with nature and are highly valued by the public (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2016). There are over 2,000 miles of trails on state lands in Connecticut, some of which link to trails maintained by private land owners, municipalities, or other organizations. Trails are a common feature on most DEEP Properties and are some of our largest recreational amenities. Trails can even help protect rare habitats and sensitive resources by concentrating use on designated, sustainable pathways.

II. STATE LAND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ROLES IN TRAIL MANAGEMENT

1. State Park Lands are intended to be managed for public recreation that balances public access with natural and cultural resource protection. To this end, Parks and Recreation Supervisors (PRS) lead, administer and implement recreational trail systems planning, design, and maintenance on DEEP properties in cooperation with natural resource protection staff and the DEEP Trails Coordinator. Final decisions concerning the creation of new trails in State Parks will be made by the Director of the State Parks Division in consultation with the Director of the Wildlife Division and the Director of the Forestry Division.
2. State Forests are intended to be managed for the ecological integrity of forest ecosystems and support forest recreational uses where appropriate. Decisions on whether to develop new trails, expand the use of existing trails, or discontinue existing trails shall be based on the principles of forest management. Final decisions concerning the creation of new trails in State Forests will be made by concurrence of the Director of the State Parks Division and the Director of the Forestry Division.

3. Wildlife Management Areas are intended to be managed for the purposes of wildlife conservation and wildlife centered recreation. Proposals to develop new trails may only be considered to the extent they enhance these purposes, or are demonstrated to be a crucial link between existing trail networks outside the Wildlife Management Area boundaries. Final decisions concerning the creation of new trails in Wildlife Management Areas will be made by the Director of the Wildlife Division in consultation with the Director of the State Parks Division and the Director of the Forestry Division.
4. Natural Resource/Parks/Trails Professional Staff shall support the PRS in trail system planning and design, and to seek consensus on proposals brought before them.

III. TRAIL USE

1. PRS shall, as determined by the Director of State Parks, Forestry or Wildlife Divisions as provided above, determine scope of uses (e.g., hiking, cross country skiing, cycling, equestrian) of DEEP authorized trails on DEEP lands, and shall make the determination by considering department regulation and criteria for use and closure (see page 2 "Criteria for Trail or Road Closure"). Wherever possible, the broadest range of uses shall be accommodated. Trail uses, other than hiking, shall be prohibited on the Appalachian Trail, Connecticut Forest & Park Association maintained trails, and trails crossing Wildlife Management Areas except where these trails utilize maintained roads or, where DEEP authorized trails supporting other uses, coincide. No motorized (electric/combustion), off-road use may be allowed, except where permission for such use is specifically authorized. Specific areas within a facility where high or specialized demand is experienced may be posted for foot travel only.
2. DEEP trails may link with trails on private, municipal or other property with the written consent of the effected landowner.
3. The PRS shall work with the Forestry Division to identify trail closures necessary to support forest management as part of *Forest Operation Plan* development processes.
4. The PRS shall work with the Wildlife Division to identify closures on WMA's necessary to support wildlife management.

IV. CRITERIA FOR ROAD AND TRAIL CLOSURE

1. The PRS may, for purposes of imminent threat to public health or safety, institute a temporary closure of any trail or road, or portion thereof, without consultation. Further, the PRS may temporarily or permanently close a trail or road, or section thereof, on any state lands in their management unit, if such trail or road is in a Forest or Wildlife Management area, such closure shall be made in consultation with appropriate Forestry or Wildlife Division staff. . Such temporary or permanent closure to a specific use or uses may be made for any one of the following reasons:
 - i. Safety of the users of DEEP lands.

- ii. Documented impact of the trail/road's use on the environment. Consider impact on wildlife, plants, cultural resources, wetlands and watercourses, erosion potential, and extreme conditions (mud, fire, ice).
- iii. Ability to accommodate the activity (staffing, carrying capacity, parking, availability of self-policing, availability of funding to build bridges and other wet area crossings and/or maintain the trail etc).
- iv. Upon determination that a trail or section thereof is not authorized.

V. NEW TRAILS

1. It is the policy of the DEEP to first consider improvement and enhancement to existing trails rather than construct new trails. Of our over 2000 miles of trails, more than half are unofficial, thus they are not authorized, blazed or maintained. New trails may only be considered when user needs are not met or an existing trail is to be replaced or relocated to protect natural or cultural resources, or for purposes of public safety. The PRS shall adhere to the following process when planning and implementing new trails or use changes.
2. Document the need for a new trail with a description of:
 - i. The reason for a new trail -resource protection/a critical connection/a new user experience, etc.
 - ii. The users to be served by the new trail.
 - iii. How this trail can accommodate mobility challenged users.
 - iv. How trail design, construction and maintenance (and restoration of any trails to be abandoned) shall be funded.
 - v. Why the existing trail network cannot accommodate the stated need.
3. If it is determined that a new trail is needed:
 - i. Plan and map the proposed route. Include consideration of parking and access points, landscape features, presence and sensitivity of rare and imperiled species, impact on other users (e.g., hunters), and implications for invasive species management. There are a number of guidance documents available for trail planning. Suggested are International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) "Trail Solutions"; US Forest Service "Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook", and CT Forest & Park Association documents which are on file in Hartford with the Trails & Greenways Program.
 - ii. Conduct an internal review of the route, parking, access and amenities with the appropriate resource managers from the divisions of forestry, fisheries, wildlife, law enforcement, etc, and complete the *Trail Design Review Form* (Appendix A); Attach a NDDDB map.
 - iii. Finalize the route or abandon the project depending on the outcome of the internal review. The resource managers shall present their findings to the PRS for a final action. If a consensus decision to proceed with new trail development is not reached, and:

1. The proposal is in a State Park, the State Parks Division Director shall make the final decision.
 2. The proposed trail is in a State Forest, the final decision shall be by concurrence of the Director of the State Parks Division and the Director of the Forestry Division.
 3. The proposed trail is in a Wildlife Management Area, the Director of the Wildlife Division shall make the final decision.
 4. The proposal trail is in a Natural Area Preserve, Coastal Reserve or other special management area, the Deputy Commissioner shall make the final decision.
- iv. Once a commitment to develop a new trail is made, the PRS shall:
1. Determine the need for permits when new bridges and/or culverts are planned.
 2. Submit a request for review through the Natural Diversity Database for compliance with the Connecticut Endangered Species Act.
 3. Identify the party responsible for funding, construction and maintenance (consider volunteers, May Day, Friends Groups). Any volunteers that may be performing trail construction shall be required to sign our volunteer waiver form that shall be kept on file with the Park and Recreation Supervisor.
 4. Submit a project request if assistance from the Engineering and Field Support Services Division and/or funding is necessary.
 5. Final inspection of trail.
 6. Blaze trail.
 7. Work with the Trails & Greenways Program to add the new trail to official DEEP maps.
4. New recreational trail requests and requests for changes in trail use on DEEP property can be initiated at any time by user groups as described here:
- i. User group must complete a *Trail Request Form* (Appendix B), and submit it to the appropriate PRS. The form must be accompanied by a map. The map should incorporate the requested trail, any existing trail systems (available from the Park and Recreation Supervisor), entrance points, any proposed amenities such as parking areas, kiosks, etc., and any water crossings (streams and/or wetlands).
 - ii. The PRS shall review the Trail Request Form for accuracy and viability, suggesting corrections and changes as necessary. The PRS may ask the applicant for additional information.

111. If the PRS agrees that the project has value, he/she may initiate and conduct an internal review using the *Trail Design Review Form* process described above in Section V 1 *New Trail Construction*.
- 1v. Once the internal review is complete and a decision is rendered on the request (pursuant to paragraph V.3.iii.), the PRS shall communicate the decision to the applicant.
- v. If the proposal is approved, the requesting organization shall then work with the PRS to obtain the appropriate permit(s) and to develop DEEP's *Cooperative Trail Maintenance Agreement* (Appendix C). This agreement details trail maintenance responsibilities and shall be filed at the park unit office where the trail is located.
- v1. Any volunteers that shall be performing trail construction shall be required to sign our volunteer waiver form that shall be kept on file with the PRS.

VI. TRAIL MAINTENANCE

1. Trail maintenance may be performed by park staff under the direction of the PRS.
2. Maintenance on authorized trails performed by individuals or user groups must have prior approval from the PRS who shall supervise the work as needed.
3. Any volunteers that shall be performing trail maintenance shall be required to sign our volunteer waiver form that shall be kept on file with the PRS.
4. A trail re-route moved greater than 500 feet from the existing trail, shall be considered a new trail proposal and the PRS must follow the process outlined above in section V.
5. The PRS shall submit an NDDDB review request when a re-route is proposed within an NDDDB area.
6. Any re-route that includes a water crossing must be reviewed by the Fisheries Division. The PRS is responsible for determining the need for permits when new bridges and/or culverts are planned

VII. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

1. Clear communication of trail routes and uses is paramount for user safety and protection of the environment. Trail system maps, information on how to read trail blazes and allowed uses should be clearly displayed and preferably at trail head parking areas utilizing existing kiosks. Trail system maps that indicate "you are here" are also encouraged at major intersections.
2. Plastic blazes, 2"x6", each installed with two aluminum nails are preferred.
3. The publication of information and educational materials on trail use and safety is encouraged. Pamphlets, brochures, etc. should not be limited to one user group, but should include material that reflects the multiple use of the trails.
4. User groups shall be requested through the Cooperative Trail Maintenance Agreement to use social media outlets to improve communication between users. Trail closures, hunting times, wet conditions, special events, volunteer opportunities

and DEEP programming should be an important aspect of a communication process and promote responsible trail use.

Susan Whalen
Susan Whalen, Deputy Commissioner

January 24, 2019
Date

Appendix A

Trail Design Review Form

The State Park and Recreation Supervisor (PRS), using this form, will solicit and document comments from the listed DEEP resource managers for the purposes of gathering detailed information about how to mitigate (if possible) the proposed project's potential impacts at the specific location. Resource managers are asked to submit comments specific to their divisions. A field review will be scheduled if requested.

Please review and respond by email on or before _____. If more review time is required, please notify the PRS. Attach additional pages if necessary.

Resource Manager	Comments/Conditions	Field Review Necessary? (Y/N)	Support Proposal? (Y/N/with noted Conditions)
Parks Name:			
Forestry Name:			
Fisheries Name:			
Wildlife Name:			
EnCon Name:			

Appendix B

Trail Request Form

It is the policy of the DEEP to first consider improvement and enhancement to existing trails rather than construct new trails. New trails should be considered only when user needs are not met or an existing trail should be rerouted to protect natural or cultural resources. Long term stewardship of existing trails is a priority; DEEP seeks partnerships to enhance and improve the experience of trails for users while ensuring protection of natural resources.

Name of State Land: _____ Town: _____

Organization Name: _____

Contact Names:

Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Town:	Town:
Phone:	Phone:
Email:	Email:

Is there liability insurance in place under the organization's name? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, please explain the nature of the coverage and amount (i.e., does it cover injuries sustained by all members of the group? Does it cover property damage?)

Justification for new trail or change of use: Describe the reason for a new trail – resource protection/a critical connection/ a new user experience, etc. Describe who will use the trail. Describe how the trail can accommodate users with mobility issues. Describe who will fund trail construction and ongoing stewardship and maintenance. Attach additional pages if necessary.

Explain type of work to be done by group:

What is expected of DEEP to establish the trail?

Is entire trail on State property? Yes ____ No ____ If no, list private property landowners. A letter of agreement from each private landowner must be submitted with this request.

Name:	Address:
Name:	Address:

Appendix C

Cooperative Trail Maintenance Agreement

Name of State Area: _____ Town: _____

Group Contact Name:

Name:	Title:
Address:	Town:
Phone:	Email:

State Contact Name:

Name:	Title:
Address:	Town:
Phone:	Email:

Permitted uses of trail (check all that apply): Hiking ____ Mountain Biking ____ Equestrian ____
Snowmobiling ____ Cross-country skiing ____ Interpretive ____ Motorcycle ____ Other

Trail will be open: Year Round ____ Seasonal ____ Explain _____

Access points: Existing trail ____ DEEP Parking Lot ____ DEEP Road ____ Town/State Highway ____

Trail will be marked by: Paint color _____ Other _____

Work on trail will be performed: Monthly ____ Annually ____ As Needed ____ Other _____

DEEP contact person should be notified at least twenty-four hours prior to any work being performed.
This notification should include a specific date, time, type and location of work to be performed.

Group Insurance renewal date: Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

The volunteers associated with this agreement will be expected to perform the following duties:

DEEP will be expected to perform the following duties:

Other terms and /or conditions: (1) The group agrees to take responsibility for the safety of its members. For example, the group will insure that trail workers are competent users of equipment, and using appropriate personal protective gear, etc. (2) The Group will inspect the trail at least annually during the month of September and note maintenance needs, hazards, illegal use, etc. The Group will send a letter to the DEEP Park & Recreation Supervisor (noted below) no later than September 30th of each year stating that the inspection has been made, any issues discovered, proposed or planned resolutions to any issues discovered, and their continued interest in maintaining the trail.

(3) _____

(4) _____

This Agreement does not cover design and construction of new trails; it is a maintenance agreement only. Group and State contact people should review this agreement and trail specifics a minimum of once annually to address any concerns, i.e.: illegal use, maintenance, vandalism, hazards, and organizational changes.

Termination: The licensed party or the Parks Division all have the right to terminate this agreement after sixty days written notice to the other parties, at which time all management, care, control, and responsibility for the premises will revert to the State. This Agreement shall be valid for the period of five (5) years from signing, after which the parties may renew, modify, or terminate the Agreement.

Signatures: This agreement is valid only if signed by those indicated below.

Group Representative:

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Date _____

DEEP Park & Recreation Supervisor:

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Date _____