

Salmon River State Forest: Blackledge Block – Grayville Trails



Public Meeting to Present Trail Network Authorization Options

Meeting Goal: Receive public feedback on authorized trail network options

Date: February 3rd, 2022

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM & 7 PM – 8:00 PM (see Zoom links at end of document)

Background: The Grayville trail system is comprised of approximately 14 miles of informal trails within a 670-acre area. Trail construction occurred over the last two decades and has included cutting herbaceous and woody plants out of intended pathways, removing downed trees from trails, and installing narrow wooden bridges to cross streams. Section 23-4-1 (b) of the general regulations of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection states *“No person shall deface, destroy, alter, remove or otherwise injure in any manner any structures buildings, vegetation, earth or rock material, trees, or fuelwood, nor shall any wildlife be molested or disturbed except as authorized by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.”* This trail network was constructed without authorization and has resulted in the alteration of vegetation, earth, rock material and trees in this area of state forestland.

During the Salmon River State Forest Blackledge Block 10-year Management Planning process, a request to authorize a subset of the current informal trail network was received from the public; CT DEEP is considering this request. This trail network is mostly present in upland forestland of dry, stony soils with some sections traversing wet areas and steep slopes subject to erosion. These wet areas tend to have the widest trails as hikers and cyclists search for the driest route around the wet area. In these areas, the ecological impact of the trails is most severe and has resulted in rutting, soil compaction and erosion.

Recreational trails provide public access to the state’s abundant natural resources and can be a great way for people to see the beauty of their public forestlands. At the same time, trails fragment and degrade habitat by creating avenues for non-native invasive plant infestations, which reduce biodiversity, and for some species can create movement barriers. Trail use also negatively impacts wildlife by inducing stress, changing foraging locations and behavior, reducing the area available to raise their young, and increasing predation risk. Trails used by mountain bikers, hikers, horseback riders, and dog walkers can also negatively impact those engaged in fish and wildlife-based recreation such as hunting and wildlife viewing, especially those seeking a more solitary outdoor experience. As such, the authorization and construction of such trails needs to be well planned to maximize recreational opportunities while minimizing negative impacts.

State forestland is managed to maintain a productive and healthy forest ecosystem, its associated wildlife and wildlife habitats and for public access. Management efforts seek to strike a balance between these overarching management goals. Due to the popularity of the current trail network, there is a need to authorize a system of trails. As a result, alternative trail networks are being considered.

Trail Density Considerations

Public lands in Connecticut have a variety of designations. These designations provide a framework under which management goals and objectives can be crafted to align land management strategies and techniques with the intended purpose of said property. Public lands generally fall into one of three categories: Park, Forest or Wildlife Management Area (WMA). DEEP manages lands under all three categories for public access, however, within forests and WMA's recreational use is balanced with other land management objectives such as timber harvesting, field mowing, invasive species control, wildlife management, fish stocking, pheasant stocking, etc. As a result, trails on these lands may have a greater impact on other uses of these properties. Trail density metrics can be one way to quantify trail volume on a property and is a measurement land managers can use in an effort to balance the multitude of land uses. Currently, DEEP has not adopted trail density standards, however, MA DCR has implemented the following trail density standards for reference. This information was gathered from the MA DCR Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual and can be viewed by following this link [Trails Program \(mass.gov\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/trails-program).

Density Metric Examples

Low	0 – 3 km/sqkm (1.8 miles / 247 acres)
Moderate	3 – 6 km/sqkm (1.8 to 3.7 miles/ 247 acres)
High	6 – 9 km/sqkm (3.7 to 5.6 miles/ 247 acres)

Excessive Greater than 9 km/sqkm

Reserves - DCR will strive to maintain a low density of trails (ideally less than 3 kilometers per square kilometer) that are not highly developed (class 1–3) within Reserves to protect their ecological and recreational intent. DCR may close trails to achieve the values of Reserves.

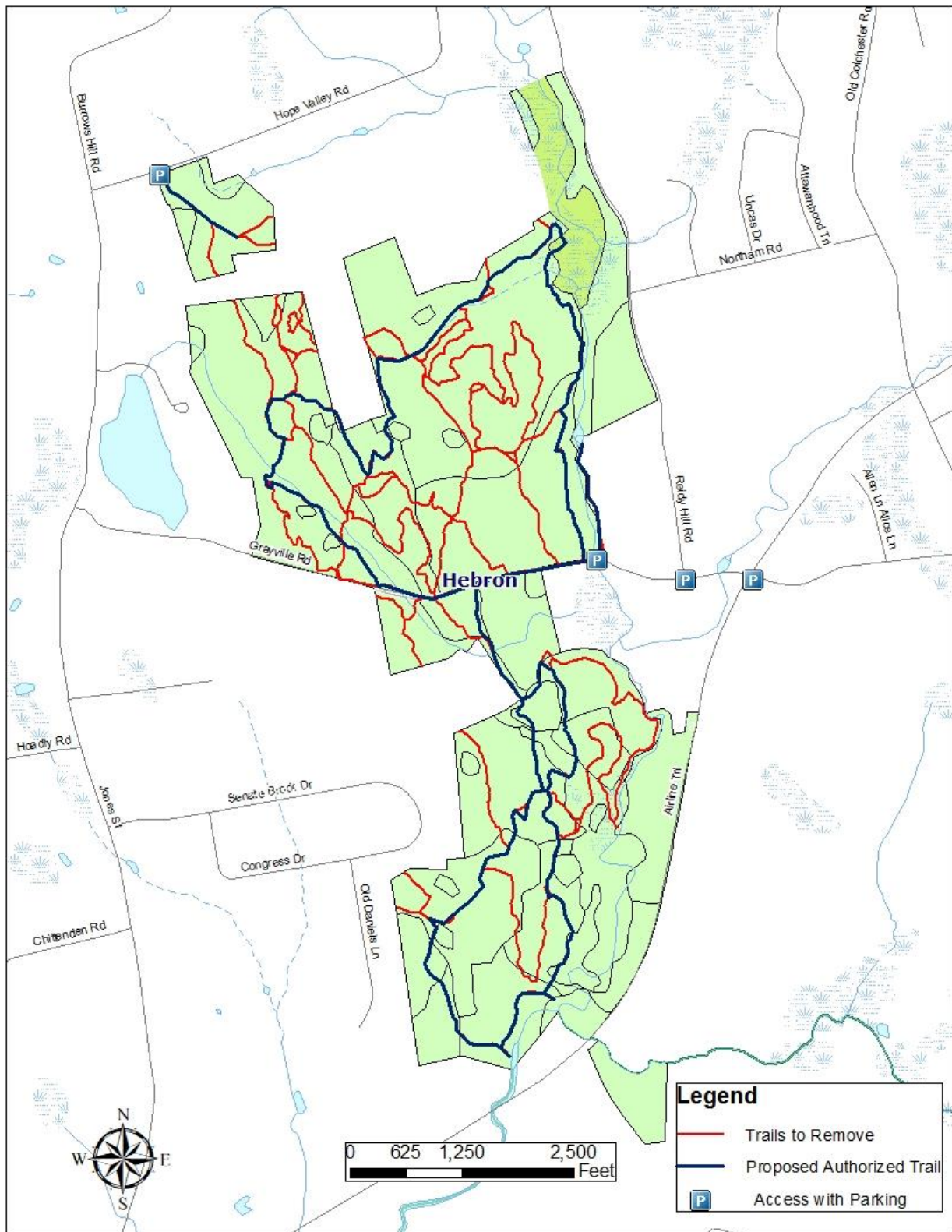
Parklands - A diverse mix of recreational activities will be allowed in the wide range of Parklands properties. While not every activity will be appropriate in every location, the range across the system could include athletic field uses such as baseball and soccer, intensive uses such as swimming pools, downhill ski areas and golf courses and dispersed recreational activities such as motorized and non-motorized trail uses. Agency policies, resource protection, public safety, and recreational goals will continue to determine activities that are encouraged and/or allowed in individual properties

Woodlands - DCR will strive to maintain a moderate to low density and diversity of trails within Woodlands (ideally less than 6 kilometers per square kilometer) that protects the objectives of each property as well as recreational access.

The current density of informal trails within the Grayville trail system is 5.2 miles/247 acres, which is considered high by the standards adopted by Massachusetts. Trail density is not the sole metric to gauge trail impacts, but it does provide guidance on what may be appropriate for a given section of land. Trail density combined with trail area of influence, local threatened/endangered and/or of special concern species, important habitat features, parking/access, trail usage and soil condition/disturbance should all be considered when evaluating the sustainability of a trail.

Trail Network Option # 1: Proposal included in the first draft of the Forest Management Plan

Moderate Trail Density (2.2 miles/247 acres)



Moderate Trail Density Details

- Moderate trail density by standards noted in the “Trail Density Considerations” section of this document with a density of 2.2 miles per 247 acres.
- 6 miles in length – with additional trails pending neighboring landowner permission

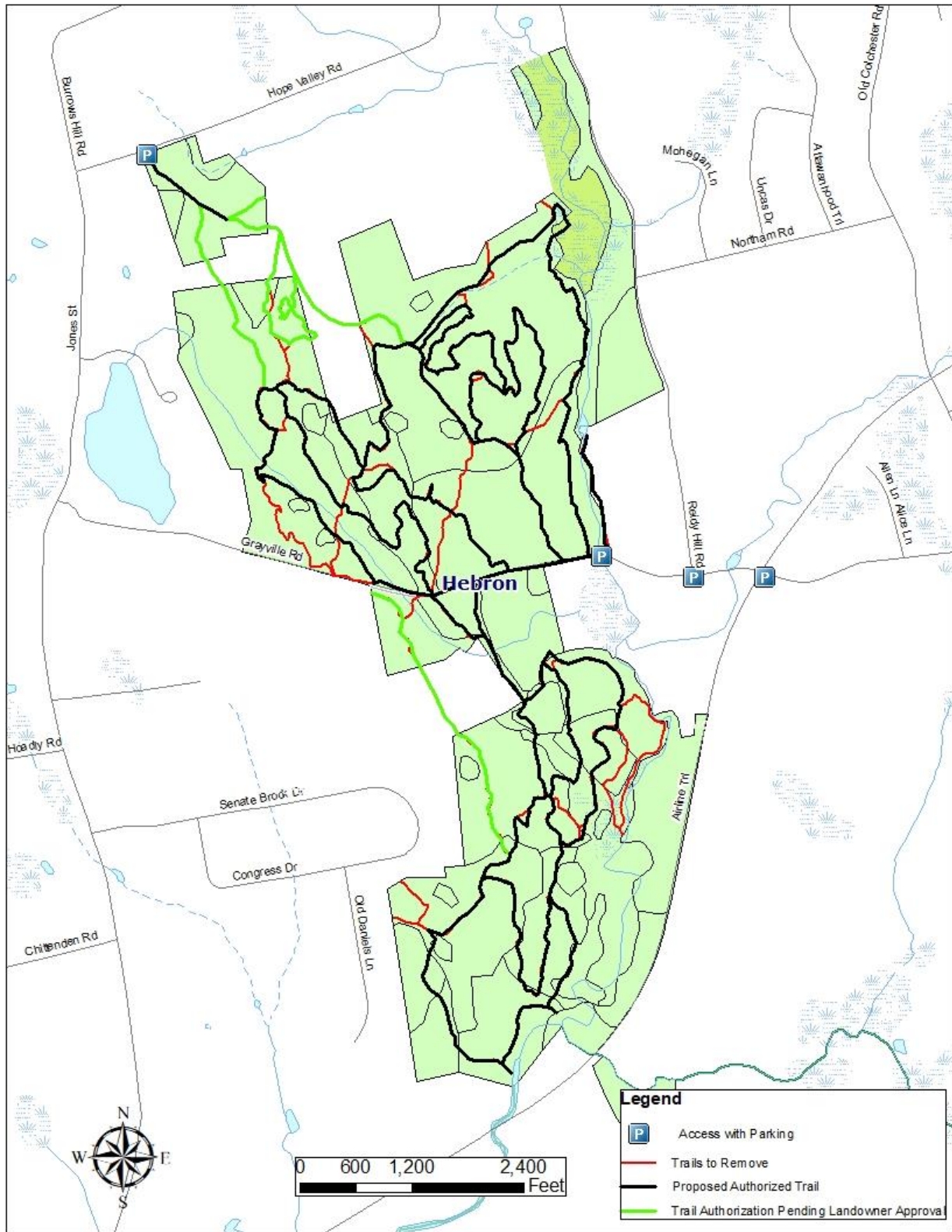
Presentations from DEEP staff, including forestry, fisheries, wildlife, bureau of outdoor recreation, and land acquisition and management.

Presentations will include trail network pros & cons – covering the following topics:

- Parking
- Trail maintenance
- Trail marking
- Wildlife considerations
- Impacts to neighboring landowners
- Informal trail removal

Trail Network Option # 2: Revised proposal based on public comment and outreach

High Trail Density (4.1 miles/247 acres)



High Trail Density Details

- High trail density by standards noted in the “Trail Density Considerations” section of this document with a density of 4.1 miles per 247 acres.
- 11 miles in length – with additional trails pending neighboring landowner permission

Presentations and trail rationale from DEEP staff, including forestry, fisheries, wildlife, bureau of outdoor recreation, and land acquisition and management.

Presentation will include trail network pros & cons – covering the following topics:

- Parking
- Trail maintenance
- Trail marking
- Wildlife considerations
- Impacts to neighboring landowners
- Informal trail removal

Public Forum

Comments can be directed to:

Salmon River State Lands Forester - Nathan Piché

Nathan.piche@ct.gov

Public Comment Deadline: February 17, 2022

Zoom Meeting Links

Noon:

Nathan Piche is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Grayville Section Salmon River SF public outreach

Time: Feb 3, 2022 12:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/99661901099>

Meeting ID: 996 6190 1099

Passcode: 555953

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213.19.144.110 (Amsterdam Netherlands)

213.244.140.110 (Germany)

103.122.166.55 (Australia Sydney)

103.122.167.55 (Australia Melbourne)

149.137.40.110 (Singapore)

64.211.144.160 (Brazil)

149.137.68.253 (Mexico)

69.174.57.160 (Canada Toronto)

65.39.152.160 (Canada Vancouver)

207.226.132.110 (Japan Tokyo)

149.137.24.110 (Japan Osaka)

Meeting ID: 996 6190 1099

Join by Skype for Business

<https://ctdeep.zoom.us/skype/99661901099>

7:00 pm

Nathan Piche is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Grayville Section of Salmon River SF - public outreach

Time: Feb 3, 2022 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/99606246842?pwd=VktHc2dQdFgvZ1U5ZjQ4MGJjSkVYQT09>

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Passcode: 842987

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