

Strafford Public Trails System Guidelines

At the direction of the town select board the Strafford Conservation Commission (SCC) is initiating a Strafford Public Trails System for recreational enjoyment. The trails system will be under the management responsibility of a trails commissioner appointed by the SCC. One goal of this initiative will be to establish and link a network of Strafford recreational trails with trail systems of neighboring towns, including the Gile Mountain trails and interstate Rivendell trail.

Landowner relations:

Recent legislation by the state of Vermont has limited landowner liability significantly. The law can be found in Vermont Statutes at title 12 V.S.A. chapter 203 §5791, et seq. This may explain the subsequent development progress in neighboring towns. Strafford trails will use existing town rights of way and public lands. Where trails need to pass over private property landowner permission shall be required. Written or verbal permission will be sufficient. The SCC trails commissioner will maintain a record of the person giving permission and the date given and any constraints imposed by owner. Hosting landowners and trails commissioner will determine the routing of the trail on their property and the overall scheme regarding the start, the destination. The general route will be controlled by the SCC. Routes will attempt to show points of interest such as special views, different natural habitats or historic sites. If a property changes ownership the new owner will be informed of the existence of the trail and permission should again be solicited by an SCC member. Permission can be retracted at any time. The landowner will be assured that if at any time there is any problem with the trail that cannot be resolved readily with the SCC it will be closed or rerouted. The town agrees not to use the existence of the trail to limit or restrict in any way any activity anticipated by the land owner hosting the trail such as development or subdividing. Nor will the town express any rights of ownership regarding the trail no matter how long the trail has been in use or existence. Land owners will negotiate any concerns with neighbors regarding the trail. . The land owners will yearly get a news update regarding the status of the trail system. The town report will be offered a report yearly regarding the status of the trail system.

Trail specifications:

The trails will be generally open to all human powered travel such as ski, foot travel, bicycle, and showshoe except where other modes are specifically permitted by the landowners and SCC.

Trails will be low impact in every way possible. No standing live trees over 3" in diameter will be cut . New trails will be narrow and ungraded to reduce impact, discourage motorized access and keep maintenance needs to a minimum. Most cutting will involve intruding branches or brush. Though trees may be used in marking trails it is our intent that no markers will penetrate live wood. Paint or tape markings or separate sign posts are preferred. All trails will be planned by the SCC and maintained on a

volunteer basis without cost to the town. Trails will avoid or put in place protections where they pass through sensitive areas, for example boardwalks, notices to leash dogs. Trails will be continually monitored for any of the problems just mentioned. Inquiries will frequently go to the land owners regarding any trail problems. Trails will where possible connect to other trails or lead the hiker to an especially attractive or historic objective. The trail commissioner will make maps available and a detailed website communicating trail locations and other details.

This guideline will be maintained, updated and available from the SCC and a copy will reside in the SCC file in the town office.

Last updated 1/12/21 MH