

AMount Washington Valley Rec user's guide

Wheel Family Fun Sally McMurdo

Last July, a 2.9-mile paved non-motorized, multiuse path was completed, reaching from Mount Cranmore in the north to Hemlock Lane in the south. The Mount Washington Valley Rec Path Phase 1 was finally completed!

Gradually, word got out about this new path. Locals and visitors started using it for walks and runs.

Cyclists pedaled it for recreation and transportation. Families showed up with strollers, strider bikes, and pedal bikes. Dog owners discovered a new place to exercise their dogs. Roller bladers, skateboarders and roller skiers finally had a place to try out their wheels.

The path was designed to have flow and interesting views along the way. Not straight or flat like a rail trail, it curves and meanders through open areas and forests. The grade is never over 5 percent to meet ADA requirements, but there are some hills to crank up and glide down. Views of Pudding Pond, the Green Hills and Mount Washington form its backdrop. Benches along the way invite users to rest and appreciate their surroundings. Soon, interpretive signs will be installed along the path to inform users about the area's history, natural features, and animals.

The MWV Rec Path is in a very strategic location. Positioned between North-South Road and



At the Hemlock Lane end of the MWV Rec Path, a couple walking passes a dad and his young daughter learning how to ride her bike on the rec path. In the distance is a view of snow-capped Mount Washington. (SALLY MCMURDO PHOTO)

the Pudding Pond Town land and Green Hills Preserve areas, it forms a recreation and transportation backbone.

Along its spine, connections were preserved to other trails and pathways. Users can custom make their routes depending on what they want to see and experience. It helps if they know the lay of the land and what's out there.

That's the reason for this week's article. I realized in talking with people using the rec path that many didn't know those other options existed and how to reach them. They basically saw the rec path as an "outand- back" experience. It can be that, but it can be much more.

Mountain bikers, hikers and trail runners who have been using trails on the East Side of North Conway for years are aware of those connections. New visitors to this area may not. That's the impetus behind my "Mount Washington Valley Rec Path Phase 1 User's Guide." I'd like people to know there are more experiences to be had on the East Side and the Rec Path will help them find them.

Mount Washington Valley Rec

Path Phase 1 User's Guide 1. What is the MWV Rec Path Phase 1? The MWV Rec Path Phase 1 is a 2.9-mile paved path that is ADATrail accessible (less than 5 percent grade) and goes from Cranmore Resort in North Conway to Hemlock Lane near Walmart. It is the first phase of a valley- wide Mount Washington Valley Rec Path. Phase 2 is in the planning stages now to connect from Cranmore to Scenic Vista.

2. Where is it? MWV is on North Conway's east side. Much of the path parallels the North-South Road on its eastern side, passing by Pudding Pond, Green Hills Preserve, and ending at Cranmore Mountain.

3. Who can use it? It is a non-motorized, multi-use path and alternative transportation corridor that can be used by walkers, runners, cyclists, skateboarders, roller skiers and bladers. It is also designed to be used by people using assistive mobility devices like wheelchairs and walkers. Only Class 1 electric bikes are allowed, and no motorized scooters, skateboards and one-wheels. Dogs are permitted on leash.

4. Where can you park? The parking areas with the most room are at either end — Hemlock Lane on the south, near Walmart, and Cranmore Mountain's Lot 2 on the north. Limited parking is available at Thompson Road off Artist Falls Road. Currently, that lot holds about 10 cars. It is a popular starting point for mountain bikers and hikers as well as rec path users so it tends to get crowded on weekends.

5. What connections to other trails can you make from the rec path? On North Conway's east side area, there is a maze of mountain bike trails and hiking trails as well as the new Redstone Quarry interpretive trail. The mountain bike trails are maintained by White Mountain NEMBA (New England Mountain Bike Association). Trails are signed and illustrated on their "East Side Mountain Bike Trails" map, available online at wmnembachapter.org/maps.

Later this season, WMNEMBA plans to install more trail connection

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crossing signs along the Rec Path alert users to trails intersecting the path. Here you can see a Pudding Pond dirt path coming in from right, crossing, and going left. (SALLY MCMURDO PHOTO)

signs and an East Side map at Hemlock Lane kiosk.

Hiking trails are found in the Pudding Pond Area and in The Nature Conservancy's Green Hills Preserve.

The Pudding Pond trails map is found on the town of Conway's website (tinyurl.com/tpt6t987), while Green Hills Preserve maps can be found online (tinyurl.com/4c88zdbh) and on the Green Hills kiosk near Thompson Road.

The new Redstone Quarry Interpretive Trail starts from Hemlock Lane parking area, crosses the railroad tracks and follows a road toward the powerline and into the quarry. Fascinating signs along the way tell the quarry's history through old photographs of workers and machines that existed there before. Relics of that equipment still occupy the historical site. For more information and a map, go to tinyurl.com/bdhks3me.



At this junction near the Rec Path a short distance from Thompson Road, a Green Hills Preserve kiosk directs hikers to hiking trails up Peaked, Middle and Rattlesnake Mountains. The wooden sign on the tree in the middle points the way for mountain bikers to “Sticks and Stones.” The sign on the right shows the way to Pudding Pond Trails. (SALLY MCMURDO PHOTO)

6. How do you find your way to make connections? Listed above are several map sources for specific areas. There’s also a map on the rec path and each of MWV REC Path kiosks at Hemlock Lane, Thompson Road and Cranmore. However, there’s only one map currently that shows all the trail connections. WMNEMBA’s East Side Mountain Bike Trails map (tinyurl.com/ymyspd22) has the information you need to plan your route. Although the scale is small, it gives a good overview of the key features and trails in the East Side area.

It helps to know the lay of the land and natural and manmade points of reference. Working left to right (westeast) on the map, key things to note are the location of North South Road, railroad tracks, MWV Rec Path and powerlines. If you can locate any of those, you can find your way around the East Side. In between the rec path and the powerline, you’ll find Pudding Pond trails and mountain bike trails like “Pillar to Pond.” Confident riders can make a loop of the Rec Path and these trails for some mixed pavement/ trail experience.

Across the powerline at the south end, you’ll find the Quarry trails and mountain bike trails like “Cheater”, “Rattlesnake” and “Swamp.”

Crossing the powerline at the Thompson Road end, hiking trails head up Peaked, Middle and Rattlesnake mountains. Mountain bike trails also head to “The Knot”, “Sidehill” and “Cardiac.”

7. Where can you go to find amenities? If you’re hungry, thirsty, need restrooms or want to shop or get your bike fixed, you’re never very far from those conveniences on the Rec Path. At its south end, you’re near many restaurants, bike dealers, shops, and grocery stores near Walmart, Mount Valley Mall and Settler’s Green.

At the Rec Path's northern end, Cranmore Mountain Resort and North Conway Village also offer lots of food, lodging, bike services and shopping services.

Commuters can also use the path to make their connections to work, schools, and other places of interest.

The Mount Washington Valley Rec Path offers something for everyone. Get out on it soon and explore your options.

Sally McMurdo is a bike safety instructor and cyclist who lives in



Hemlock Lane's parking lot has lots of room for rec path users, mountain bikers and hikers. (SALLY MCMURDO PHOTO)

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