

https://www.conwaydailysun.com/news/local/north-conway-rec-path-clearing-completed-quickly/article_5822e982-a3e6-11ec-b190-5f4e08f61609.html

FEATURED

North Conway Rec Path clearing completed quickly

Tom Eastman

Mar 15, 2022



An excavator works along the cleared route near Hawk Road in the beginning phases of the logging for the Conway Recreation Path on Friday. Fadden Chipping and Logging of Center Conway began working on the logging by Thompson Road on March 1. (RACHEL SHARPLES PHOTO)

CONWAY — Clearing for the 2.9-mile paved North Conway Recreation Path in North Conway, began March 1 and wrapped up last Friday.

The rec path will extend south from Cranmore Mountain Resort alongside the North-South Road and Pudding Pond and terminate at Hemlock Lane, just north of Walmart North Conway.

The \$3.5 million project is on track to be completed in November.

According to the MWV Trails Association, "The North Conway Recreation Path is designed to provide opportunities for physical activity to improve fitness, mental health, and safe transportation alternatives.

"Walkers, joggers, bicyclists and others will enjoy this multi-purpose scenic path and all that it offers along the way, including access to local businesses, and connections to the Pudding Pond and Sticks & Stones trailheads for hiking and mountain biking," the association said on the website mwvrecpath.org.

"After this section is completed, we look forward to continuing the trail eastward toward Fryeburg to link to the Mountain Division Trail. We are also looking westward, planning a 1.6-mile section in Bartlett from Attitash Ski Area and Thorne Pond to (Josiah Bartlett Elementary School) and Bartlett Library," the trails association said.

"Eventually, we will 'Close the Gaps' and link these short sections to form a continuous trail system, a "Linear Parkway" that provides recreational opportunities to residents and visitors along the way," it said.

Tommy Fadden of Fadden Chipping & Logging of Conway was at work at the site last week and told the Sun that as of March 9, the path had been cleared south from Cranmore Mountain to Pudding Pond and they were getting ready to go from Pudding Pond to the Walmart end. He said the work would be wrapped up March 11.

General contractor is A.J. Coleman and Son of Conway, who submitted a low bid of \$2.6 million for construction.

MWV Trails Association held a groundbreaking in November for the multi-use trail, which was first envisioned over a decade ago.

Chris Meier, president of the MWV Trails Association, said this section could be completed as soon as November 2022, though the contract with Coleman gives them until June of 2023.

"It's great to see it finally being worked on," said Meier, who is a bicycle enthusiast. "I can't wait to ride it."

Meier added that the project still needs to raise approximately \$350,000.

At the March 2 budget hearing of the North Conway Water Precinct, Water Superintendent Jason Gagnon told commissioners the precinct is proposing locating a water main with an easement along the Rec Path's corridor.

Meier said after the meeting, that under the proposal the NCWP would contribute some of the cost of the easement to the Rec Path project.

"This would not slow the project because it is the same contractor (Coleman) and would result in less clearing because they can use the cleared corridor (rather than creating a second clearing)," said Meier.

The trail has been 14 years in the making — first envisioned by former valley resident Steve Swenson, now of Exeter.

Meier explained that progress had slowed in recent years because of a complication with the defunct Conway Bypass project.

Meier praised Executive Joe Kenney (R-Wakefield) for arguing that because the recreation path is an alternate transportation route, the state did not have to pay back the federal funds it had used to acquire the bypass corridor, now the layout of the Rec Path.

Reporter Daymond Steer contributed to this article.

Tom Eastman

Reporter