

Foxborough's Conservation Land

A Guide to the Open Space in Your Neighborhood



Over the years, Foxborough residents have had the foresight to set aside almost 2,000 acres of **Town-owned conservation land** to help protect wildlife, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and maintain the Town's natural resources and rural character. Many of these lands – like the Lane Homestead, Sallie Property, Cocasset River Park, and the Canoe River Wilderness – have adequate parking and trails so that the public can enjoy them. Other parcels are smaller and do not have established trails – they provide wildlife habitat and buffers, helping maintain the sense of “elbow room” in neighborhoods. Foxborough's Conservation Commission is responsible for managing these lands, creating and enforcing regulations for their use, monitoring boundaries and maintaining a trail network. Other organizations, including the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Norfolk County Commission and Trustees of Reservations also own and/or manage protected land in Foxborough.

What Does the Conservation Commission Do?

The Foxborough Conservation Commission is part of Foxborough's Town government – and is a seven-member volunteer Selectmen-appointed body. It is part of the Conservation Commission's mission and legal obligation to protect the lands it owns in trust for the citizens of Foxborough. All Town conservation land is protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution. Some of these parcels were donated to the Commission to be protected as conservation land, while others were purchased by the Town for this purpose. The Commission and its Agent are responsible for managing this land, posting boundaries, maintaining trails and parking lots, and acting as stewards to the natural resources of these properties.

What Activities Are Permitted on Conservation Land?

The Town's conservation lands are protected for their natural resource values and passive recreation, including walking/hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, picnicking, photography, fishing, nature study, and other passive recreation from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset. Mountain biking and horseback riding are permitted on some properties. A few smaller properties have no established trail networks or parking available, but help protect wildlife and nearby neighborhoods' character.

What's Not Permitted on Conservation Land?

- Use of unauthorized motorized vehicles, including ATVs and dirt bikes
- Dumping or disposing of lawn clippings, leaves, brush or any other materials
- Pet owners must remember to pick up after their pets
- Possession of alcoholic beverages or glass containers
- Cutting vegetation or clearing of any kind, including creating trails
- Collecting plants or animals, firewood, or artifacts
- Camping and fires (*without a permit from the Commission*)
- Hunting, except on Commission-approved (*only*) conservation lands
- Target shooting and trapping
- Collecting native plants or wildlife
- Storing personal property like canoes, lawn equipment or firewood
- Construction of fences, sheds or other outbuildings

How Do I Know Where My Lot Ends and Conservation Land Begins?

The Conservation Commission has copies of existing surveys for Town-owned land and can assist in locating boundary markers between residential lots and Town land. For precise location of lot lines or installation of bounds, homeowners need to consult with a licensed surveyor. Please note that where the Town has posted Conservation Land Boundary signs, they tend to be located a few feet within the conservation land, and not on the precise boundary.

May I Remove Trees on Conservation Land?

You need to obtain permission from the Conservation Commission before removing any tree that is located on Town conservation land, including trees that may be dead, dying or posing a hazard to private property. You are permitted to cut any tree limb that is overhanging your property but only back to the property line. Please do not remove dead trees or limbs from conservation land, as they have value to wildlife for food and shelter. Residents are not permitted to clear trails or operate chainsaws on conservation land.

What About Invasive Plants?

Invasive species are non-native plants that tend to crowd out native plants – common “invaders” in Town include European Buckthorn, Japanese Barberry, Japanese Knotweed, Burning Bush, Garlic Mustard and Oriental Bittersweet. Homeowners who are interested in helping manage such plants on Conservation Land are appreciated, but must contact the Conservation Commission in advance to discuss these projects.

Where Can I Put Leaves and Brush?

The Town of Foxborough has a Town-operated composting facility on East Belcher Road; it is unlawful to dispose of these materials along roadsides or on other Town land. Homeowners are encouraged to dispose of lawn clippings and leaves in small composting areas in their yards. While these materials are natural, piles of them destroy underlying vegetation, do not decompose rapidly, and stop new trees and shrubs from growing.

How Does the Commission Address Encroachments on Town Land?

When the Commission or its Agent becomes aware of encroachments (*activities occurring on conservation land that are a violation of the Commission's regulations*), they will contact the relevant landowner(s) and work with them to address the situation. The Commission will require the removal of encroachments, followed by the re-naturalization or restoration of the land with appropriate native plant species. The Commission has the authority under Town bylaws to impose fines when a landowner refuses to respond or fails to meet agreed-upon deadlines, or to address serious encroachments through litigation. The Commission does not sell or exchange land to address issues.

What Should I Do if there are Illegal Activities Occurring on Conservation Land?

Contact the Foxborough Police (508-543-4343) and then the Conservation Commission (508-543-1251) if you witness illegal activities or vandalism of Town property. For more routine issues like trees down across trails, please call or email the Conservation Agent with info about the location and severity of the problem.

How Else Can I Help?

The Conservation Commission appoints volunteer property stewards to help monitor properties and to serve as our “eyes and ears” in the field. Stewards agree to walk properties regularly, familiarize themselves with the Commission's regulations, and report management needs such as overgrown trails or downed trees. Please contact us if you are interested in serving as a volunteer property steward.

Who Can I Contact to Get More Information?

If you have any questions about Foxborough's Conservation Land, please email Conservation Agent Jane Sears Pierce (jpierce@foxboroughma.gov) or contact the Conservation Office (508-543-1251). Also, trail maps and other resources can be found on the Commission's website at www.foxboroughma.gov/conservation.