



Braintree Trail Guide

1st Edition - 2017



This guide is dedicated to the memory of **Patrick G. Flynn** who served as Chair of the Braintree Conservation Commission from 2008 to his unexpected passing in 2016.

Pat loved nature, parks and open space and took great pleasure in sharing that passion with others. In 2015 Pat suggested the Commission create this guide to provide information to residents on all the natural areas available in Braintree.

It is our hope that this guide inspires you to take a walk on one of Braintree's trails.



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Guidelines for Use

Leave no trace. Carry in-carry out any trash or refuse.

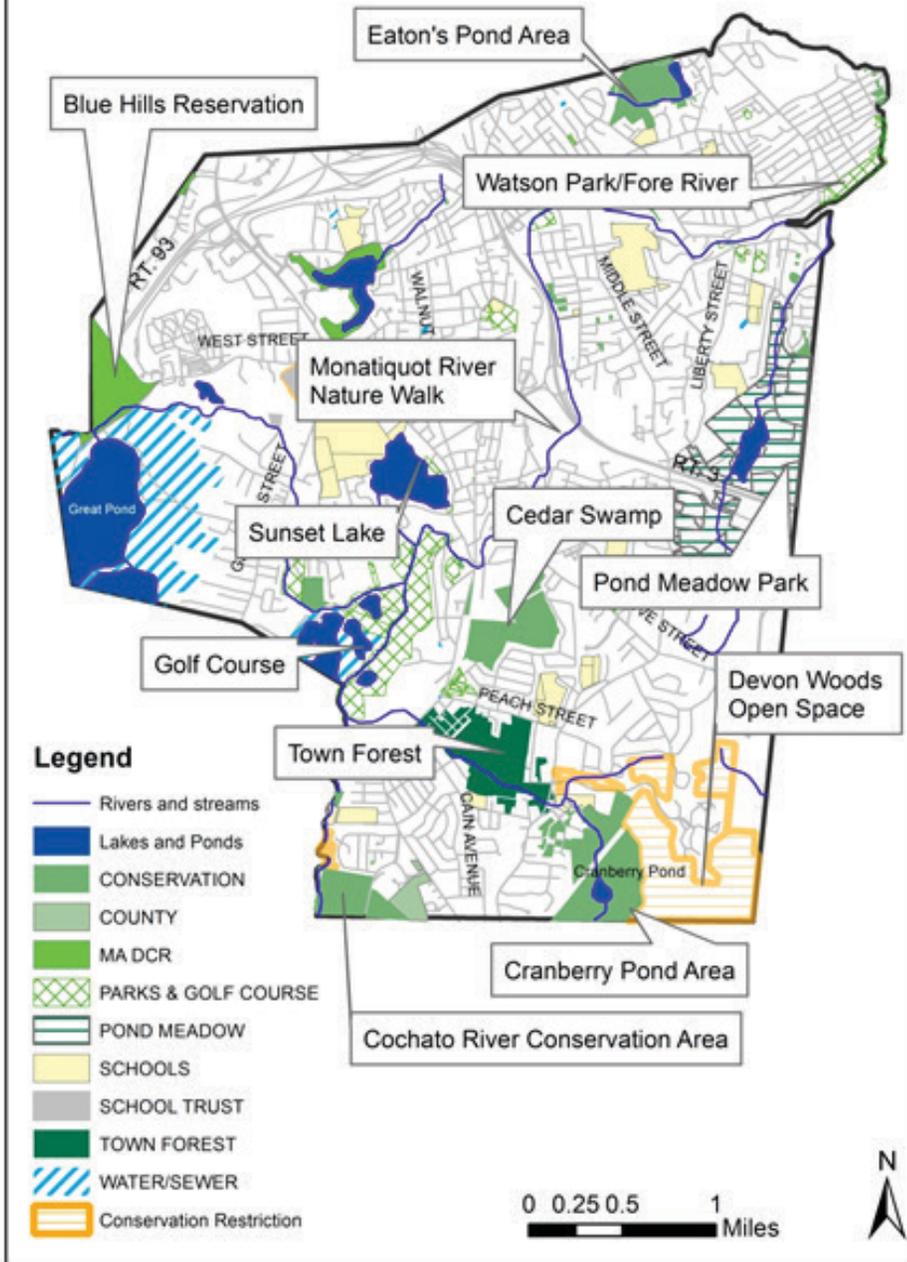
Leave what you find, do not dig for artifacts, respect wildlife, be considerate of other visitors.

Tread lightly. Take only pictures, leave only footprints, stay on the trails.

Respect private land-owners' property boundaries and privacy.

Leash your dog, pick up after your pet and keep our open space healthy.

Overview Map



The following open space areas are included in this guide.

- Eaton's Pond Area
- Cranberry Pond Area
- Pond Meadow Park
- Monatiquot River Nature Walk
- Town Forest
- RiverWalk (Watson Park Area)
- Sunset Lake

Other significant open space areas in Braintree include:

Cochato River Area: A 54-acre area on the Holbrook Town line along South St. with extensive wetlands.

Water Supply Land: The 320 acres of water supply land surround Great Pond Reservoir and protect the drinking water supply.

Devon Woods Open Space: The protected land around Devon Woods condominiums totals 243 acres and abuts the Cranberry Pond Area.

Cedar Swamp: This unique, 87-acre area supports a stand of Atlantic White Cedar.

Braintree Municipal Golf Course: The 18 hole golf course is largely within the floodplain of the Monatiquot and Cochato Rivers and offers as cross-country skiing in the winter.

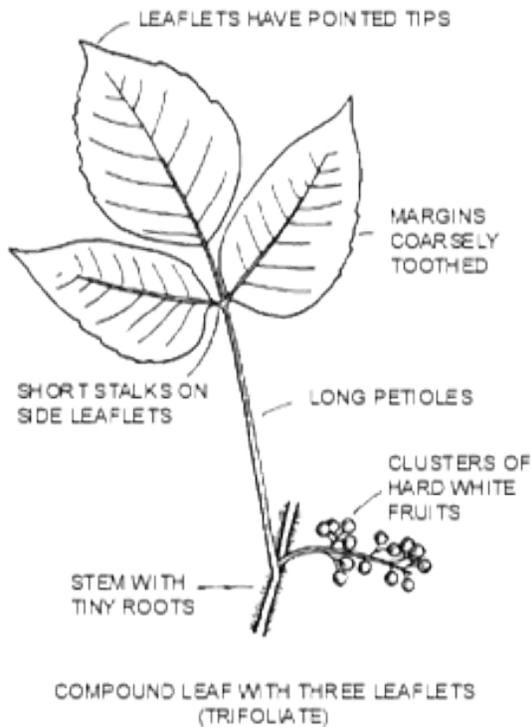
Blue Hills Reservation: A portion of the state Blue Hills Reservation is in Braintree.

Important Precautions

Walking in the woods can be a fun and relaxing experience but it is important to be aware of the potential hazards, such as poison ivy and ticks.

Poison Ivy

Poison ivy is very common in the New England landscape, particularly in areas which have been disturbed and in “edge habitat” which is the edge of an open area and a more wooded area. It can be found growing on trees as a vine or as 1-3 foot high single plants covering an area. As a vine it has a very hairy appearance (unlike other vines such as grape vine or the invasive bittersweet vine).



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Note:
the white fruits are often not present.

Ticks

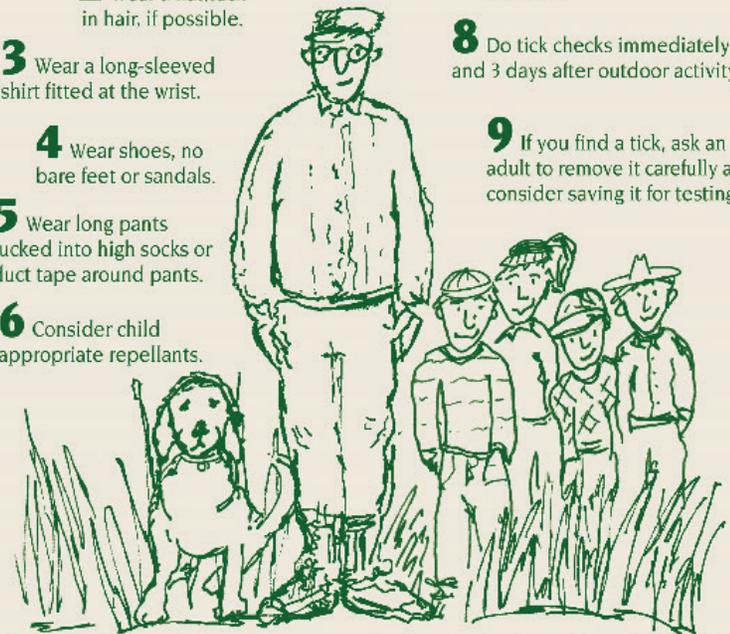
It is also important to be vigilant for ticks, which are typically found in grassy or brushy area. Deer ticks transmit Lyme and other diseases and have become increasingly common in our area. They are active anytime temperatures are above freezing.

It's Lyme Time!

Be Tick Aware!

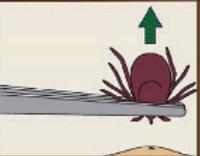


- 1** Walk in the middle of trails; avoid sitting on logs and leaning on trees.
- 2** Wear a hat, tuck in hair, if possible.
- 3** Wear a long-sleeved shirt fitted at the wrist.
- 4** Wear shoes, no bare feet or sandals.
- 5** Wear long pants tucked into high socks or duct tape around pants.
- 6** Consider child appropriate repellants.
- 7** Wear white or light-colored clothing to make it easier to see ticks.
- 8** Do tick checks immediately and 3 days after outdoor activity.
- 9** If you find a tick, ask an adult to remove it carefully and consider saving it for testing.





Lyme Disease is transmitted by a tiny tick, most often the size of a poppy seed.



Remove tick with tweezers. Pull straight out as close to the skin as possible. Save tick in container and call doctor.



lyme disease .org

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Eaton's Pond Area

100 acres, 6-acre pond, 3 miles of trails, mountain biking

Access

The area is accessible from Skyline Drive across from the Braintree Moose Lodge on West Howard St. Parking and the main trailhead is located on the northwest side of Eaton's Pond.

Overview

Eaton's Pond conservation area presents a variety of ecosystems, from the shallow pond itself to the wetlands of Hayward Creek and the oak/pine woodlands reminiscent of the Blue Hills.

Trails

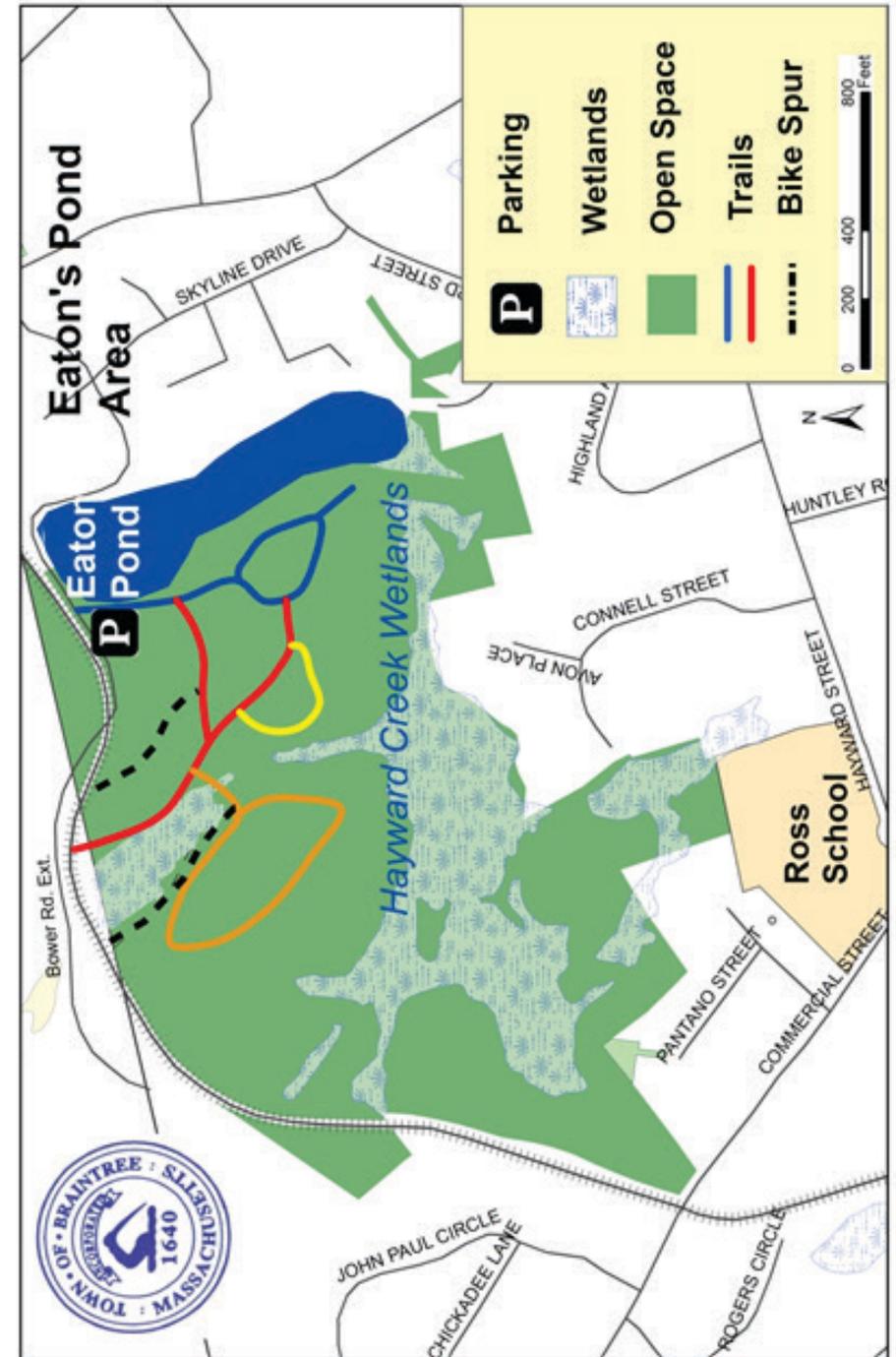
Four distinctive trails cross the conservation lands:

BLUE (easy): A loop trail along the pond leading to an interesting dam and a great location for birding.

RED (easy): Views of granite ridges on either side and more great birding in the wetland area. Eastern white pine and white oaks dominate. Downy woodpeckers are commonly seen along this trail.

ORANGE (moderate): Foundation of an old ice house can be seen after crossing a footbridge. Upland woodlands lead to a quarry with a view of the Penn's Hill water tower. Scrub (pitch) pines and blueberry bushes are found in this elevated area.

YELLOW (easy): Aspens and old apple trees from a long abandoned orchard are found on this sublime trail that leads to a Quincy granite quarry.



Eaton's Pond Area continued

History

Originally set aside as the South Commons of old Braintree, granite for King's Chapel was quarried here in 1749. It continued as common land until a 26-year-old John Adams, four years before he became a Braintree selectman, was "appointed and inpowered by the town to draw conveyances and securities respecting said South Commons." After this sale of the commons to private interests, it continued to be used for quarrying, grazing and as a source for ice houses into the 20th Century. The foundations of ice houses, old storage areas for this once all-important source of refrigeration, dot the landscape.



Old quarry area (photo credit: Braintree Weymouth Civic Community)

In 1978 The Army Corps of Engineers completed a flood control project including the large dam on Hayward's Creek and the outlet control structure from Eaton's Pond itself.

Wildlife

In addition to deer, wild turkeys, downy woodpeckers, hawks and other wildlife are commonly seen. Great blue heron, snowy egrets, foxes, owls, coyotes and even bald eagles have been spotted at this hidden gem



Old quarry area (photo credit: Braintree Weymouth Civic Community)

Aquatic Invasive Plants

Eaton's Pond is quite shallow, only about 6 feet at its deepest. It is also eutrophic, meaning it contains excessively high levels of nutrients. Aquatic invasive species find an easy foothold in this environment. You may see them growing in the pond during summer months. Minimizing the use of fertilizers, particularly those containing phosphorus, near water bodies, and rinsing boats and other equipment can help to stop the spread of aquatic invasives.

Smith Beach, Watson Park & Fore River

~24-acre area, including park with picnic areas, splash pad, playground, ball fields, basketball & tennis courts and a half mile of walking paths, as well as two marinas and a small saltwater beach

Access

Watson Park access and parking is along Gordon Rd. off Quincy Ave. Another parking lot is at Edgehill Rd. and Vinedale Rd. next to Smith Beach. A public boat launch is located at the Braintree Yacht Club.

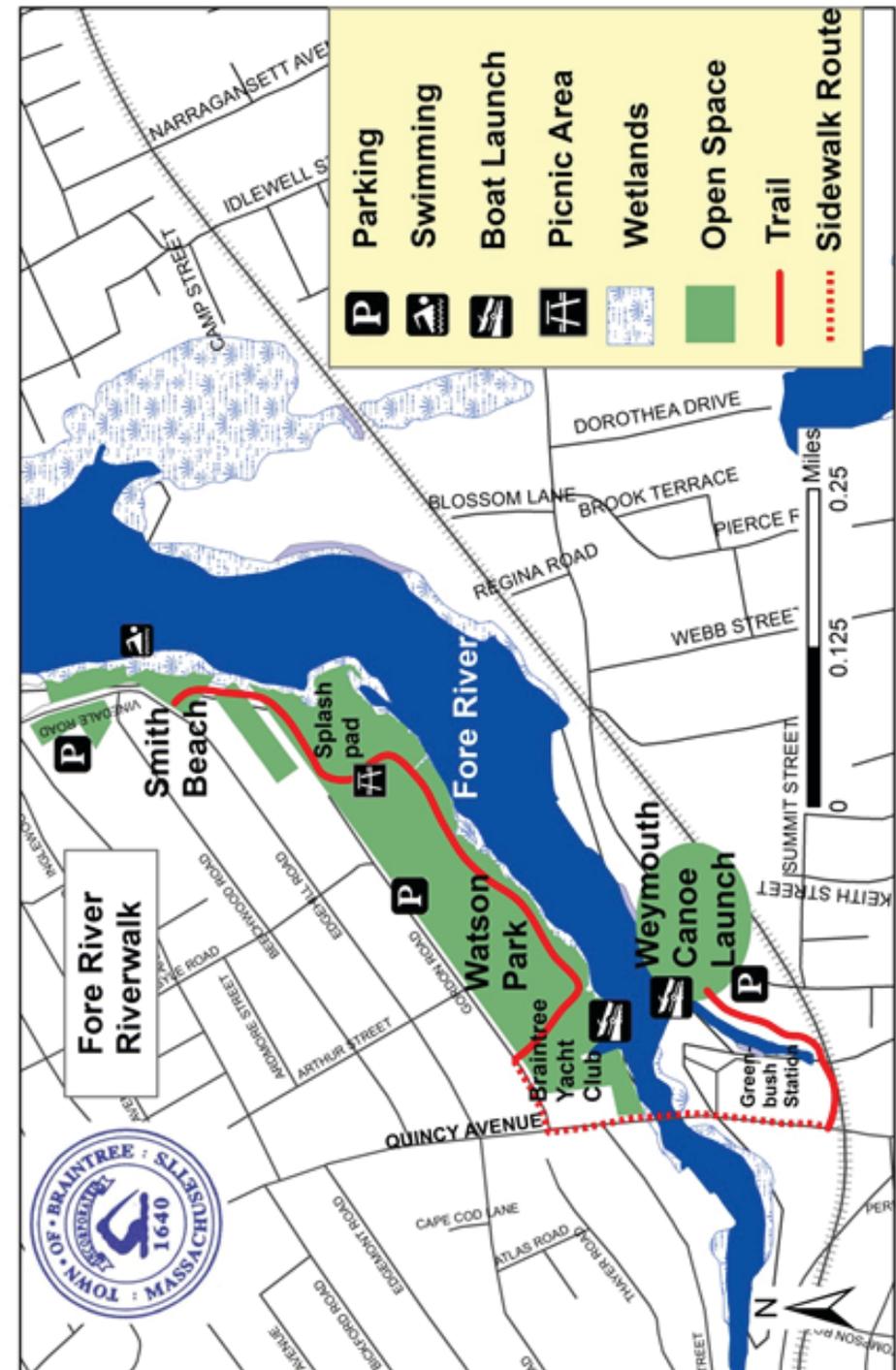
Overview

Smith Beach and Watson Park provide the opportunity to enjoy Braintree's coastal resources.

Trails

The Francis Toland walkway meanders along the salt marsh and connects Smith Beach to Watson Park. Lee's Way, dedicated to Braintree's first Town Council President Lee Dingee, runs along the Fore River in the park. A memorial bench and tree remembering former Conservation Commission Chairman Patrick Flynn overlooks the Fore River. Mature white oaks, crab apples and eastern red cedar line the river and along the stone wall built by the Civilian Conservation Corp during the 1930's.

Lee's Way continues past a meadow area to Gordon Rd. From that point one can walk along the sidewalk, cross the Quincy Ave. bridge and continue down toward the Greenbush Station and see Smelt Brook and the Weymouth Canoe Launch.



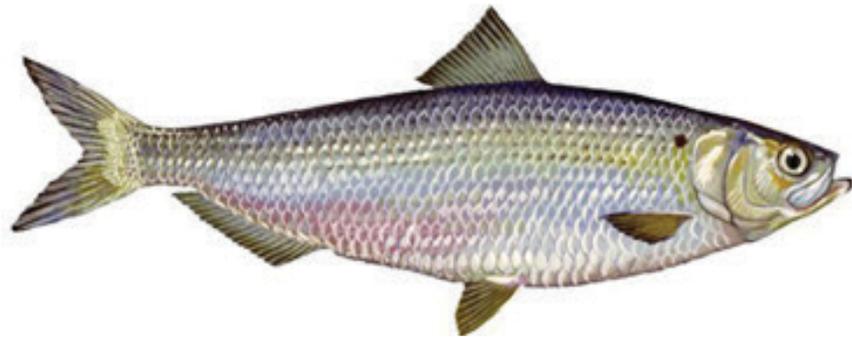
Smith Beach, Watson Park & Fore River continued

History

Watson Park was once part of the homestead of Thomas A. Watson (1854-1934), who famously helped invent the telephone, built the once-thriving Fore River Shipyard, and founded the Braintree Electric Light Department.

Fore River Watershed

Most of Braintree is in the Weymouth Fore River watershed. The tidal, saltwater Fore River meets the freshwater Monaquot River upstream of Quincy Ave., creating a brackish estuary. The rivers support large populations of anadromous fish such as river herring and rainbow smelt. Anadromous fish spend much of their adult life in the ocean, but return to freshwater rivers in the spring to spawn.



River Herring

Great blue herons, snowy egrets and many other birds use the estuary and mud flats, as well as aquatic crabs, clams and mussels.

The salt marsh along the Toland Walkway contains uniquely adapted plants, such as cordgrass, salt marsh hay and marsh elder.



Toland Walkway at Smith Beach



Lee's Way -Watson Park (photo credit: Braintree Weymouth Civic Community)

Monatiquot River

~.5-mile short wooded trail along river

Access

Trail access is behind Shaw's off Pearl St. The trail starts at the bridge that crosses between Pearl St. Plaza and Horizon Plaza, off John Mahar Highway, and ends shortly before the stone railroad bridge behind the plazas.

Overview

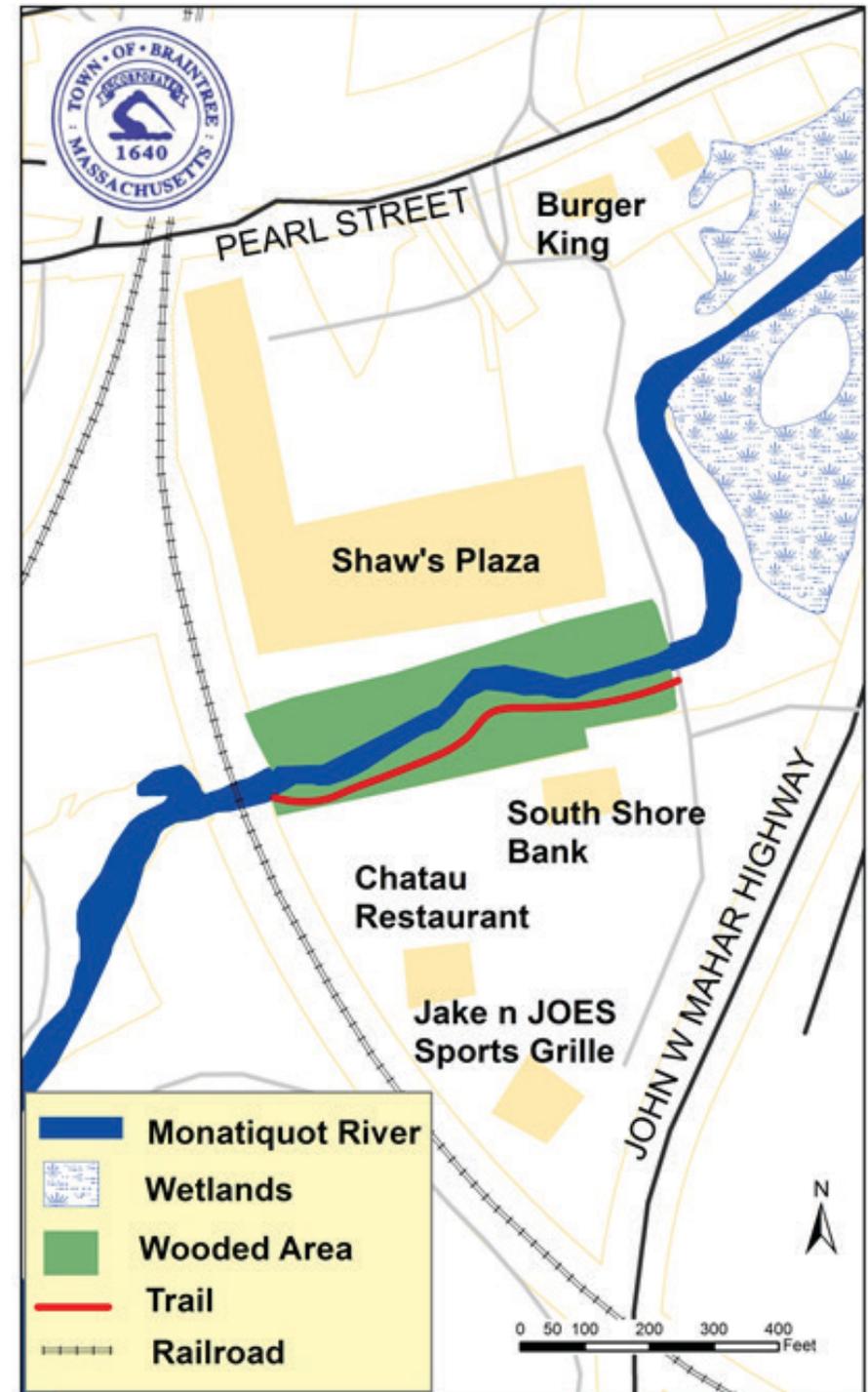
The Monatiquot River begins where the Farm and Cochato Rivers join at the Braintree Municipal Golf Course, and then meanders through the town before emptying into the tidal Fore River near the Quincy Avenue bridge.

Trails

The Monatiquot River Nature Walk is a short but scenic trail that runs along the river bank past granite bedrock. Visitors can see and hear the river during any season. The trail begins down a short flight of stairs and crosses a boardwalk. Red maples, red and white oaks, and gray birches dominate the tree layer. Invasive plants such as glossy buckthorn are in the understory, but natives like greenbriar, blueberry and witch hazel can be found.

History

Historically, the Monatiquot River was of vital importance to residents for its fisheries and for the hydropower it supplied for industry, including for iron works, mills and factories, as well as for recreation. River herring and rainbow smelt were abundant in the past, but have dwindled as their seasonal migration upstream has been hindered by dam and other obstructions. Efforts to remove these could significantly increase numbers. The river also supports water-dependent species such as turtles and muskrats.



Sunset Lake

57-acre lake, with a 6-acre recreation area, including a beach, playground and boat launch

Access

Access to the beach and parking lot for the lake is on Safford St. off of Franklin St. A boat launch is located off of the High School Access Drive.

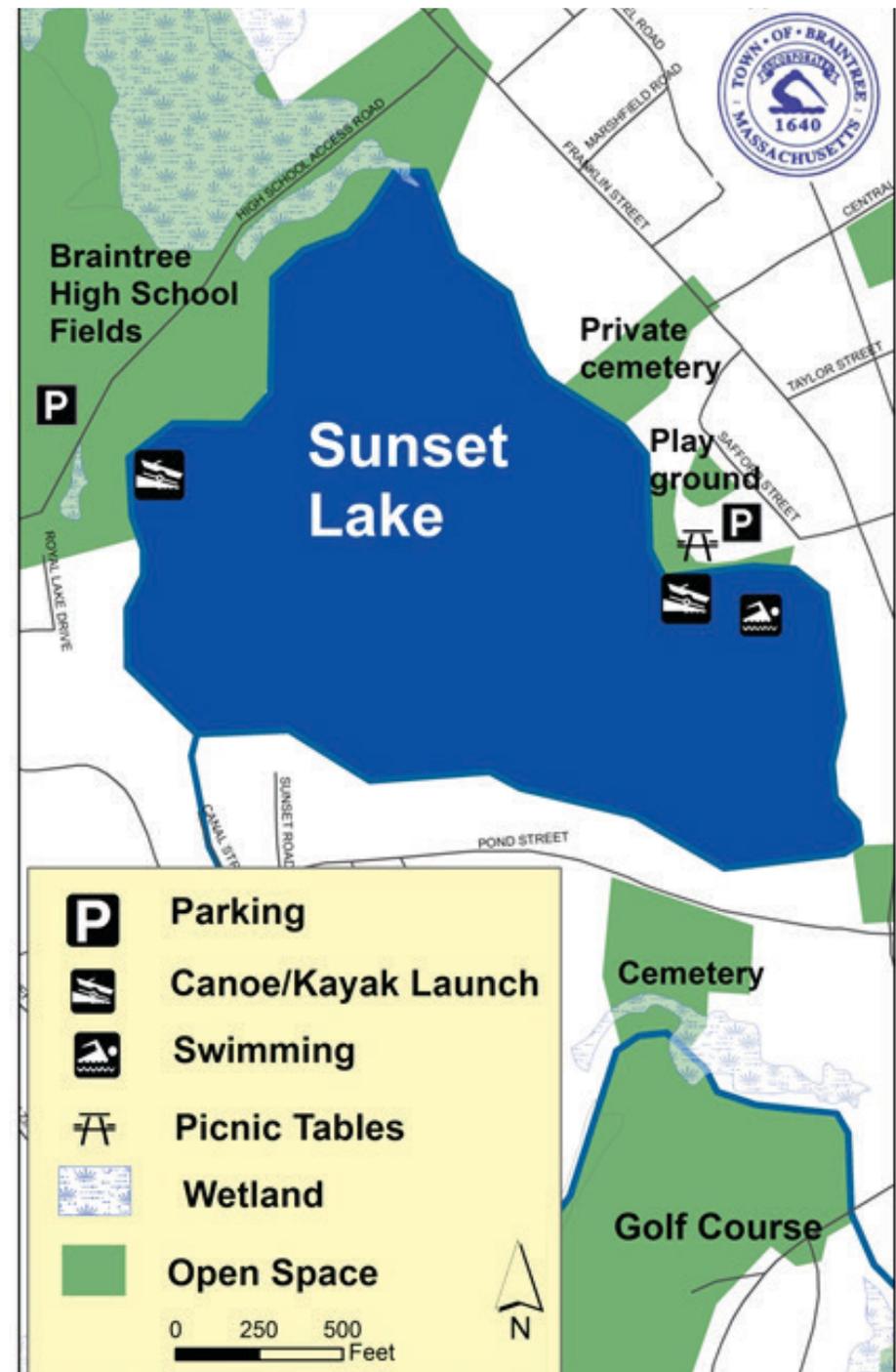
Overview

Sunset Lake is located in South Braintree and offers swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking and opportunities to just sit on a bench and relax. Beginning in late June, the Sunset Concert Series takes place each Tuesday night at 6 p.m. A playground is located near the beach parking area and there is a gazebo and several park benches located along the lake, as well as a sandy beach, which is staffed by a lifeguard in the summer.

The state stocks the lake with trout each spring. No motorized boats are allowed, but canoes, sail craft and rowboats are permitted. Eastern pondmussel, among other invertebrates, inhabits the pond. Swans, ducks, Canada geese and great blue herons can frequently be seen around the lake.

History

Originally known as Little Pond (in contrast to Great Pond the current town reservoir a mile to the west), Sunset Lake was once used as part of the Town's water supply. Generations of Braintree residents have enjoyed its recreational opportunities, as postcards dating back to the late 1800's have shown.



Pond Meadow Park

325 acres, 2-mile paved bike path and multiple unpaved trails, 20-acre pond, two picnic areas with shelters

Access

The park is located at 470 Liberty St. in Braintree. Access is also available from Summer St. in Weymouth.

Overview

The park contains a wide variety of habitats; meadow, woodlands, marsh, a 20-acre pond, and Smelt Brook and its tributaries. These habitats support an abundance of plant, animal and bird life. The park is popular for passive recreation, including hiking, bird watching, biking, cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing.

Trails

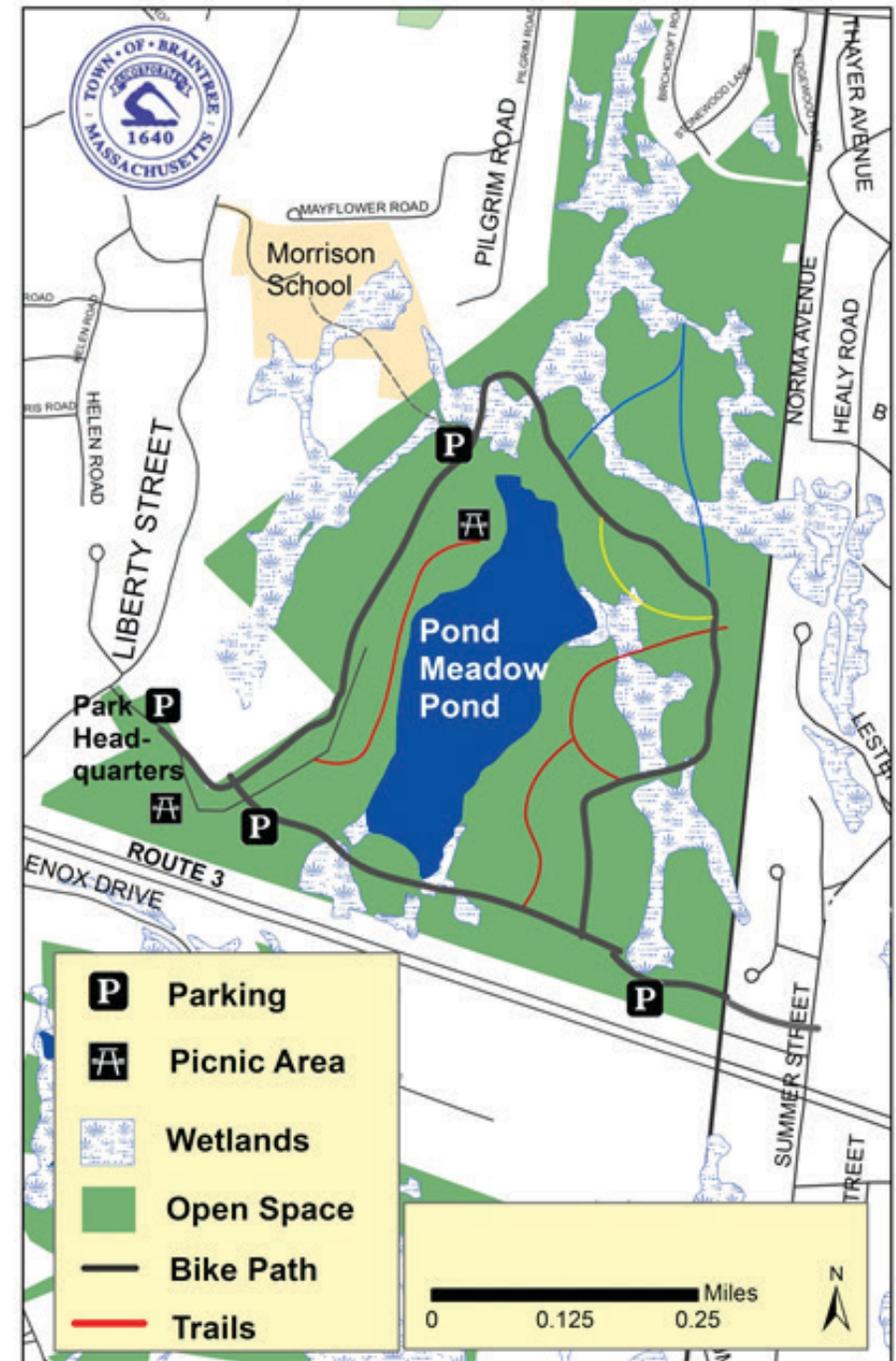
PAVED PATH: A two-mile paved path provides an excellent walking, biking or running route around the park. Many visitors walk dogs or bring strollers to use on the paved path.

RED: The two sections of the red trail wind around the pond, offering great views of the water through the trees. Oaks, red maples, sweet pepperbush and greenbriar are found along the red trail.

YELLOW: Black locust trees and an old apple orchard are found along the yellow trail, which includes a boardwalk through the wet area.

BLUE: Spicebush, musclewood trees and mature black gum trees are found along the blue trail.

MORRISON: Trail to Morrison School.



Pond Meadow Park continued

History

Through the foresight of a few citizens of the Towns of Braintree and Weymouth, land spanning both towns consisting of a small pond and derelict cars and trash, was soon to be transformed into one of the area's hidden treasures. By these citizens' action and with the support of local state senators and representatives, on July 19, 1972, the Weymouth-Braintree Regional Recreation-Conservation District, commonly known as "Pond Meadow Park", was established.

Land takings on the present site of the District were made in the spring and summer of 1974. Total land takings, plus land donations, resulted in the District managing approximately 325 acres including a shallow 20-acre pond. Shortly afterwards, after all permits were secured, construction began on road clearing, and construction of a dam and earthen dike to protect Weymouth Landing from the serious flooding that the area experienced in the past.

In the following years, the District Commissioners and full-time park rangers developed the Park's infrastructure. The heavily used bike and walking path was completed in 1984. Other projects included construction of picnic areas, two park entrances, paved roads, several paved parking areas, and an office building with restroom facilities.

In 1978, the Friends of Pond Meadow, a non-profit entity chartered to assist in the support and development of the Park, became established.



Picnic Shelter (photo credit: Lisa Irwin)

The park is staffed by rangers and is open daily from 9am – 7pm (in winter the park closes at 5pm). Special events are held at various times throughout the year, as well as a summer nature program for children.

See the park website for more information: www.pondmeadowpark.org

Deer

There is a large population of white-tailed deer in and around Pond Meadow Park. It is a thrilling experience to see a deer but there are negative consequences to a high population. The understory of the forest is heavily browsed and not regenerating because of the high deer population.

Cranberry Pond Area

140 acres, 2 miles of trails, 7.5-acre pond

Access

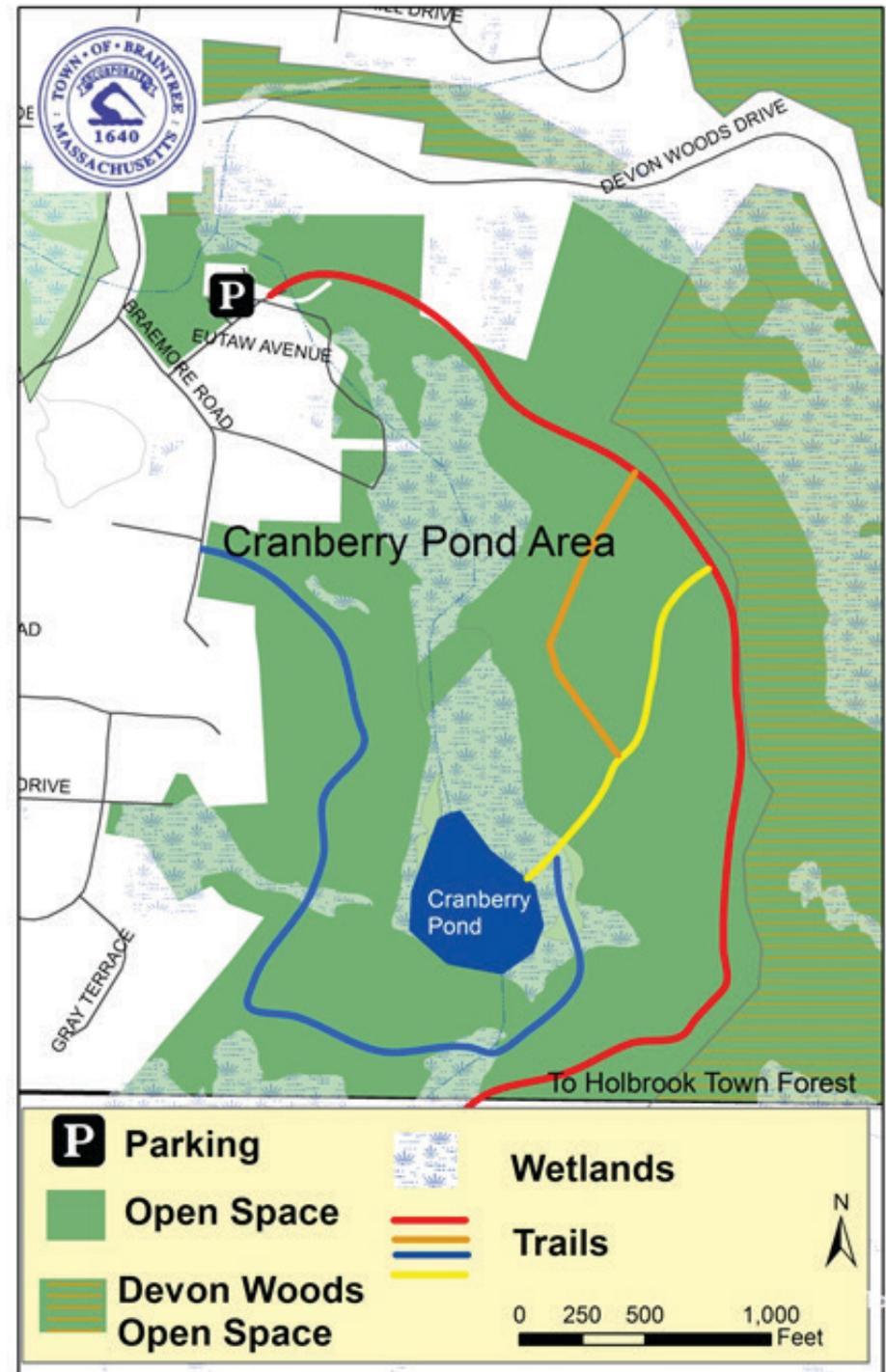
The main trailhead is located on Eutaw Rd. From Liberty St. (heading south toward Holbrook), turn left onto Old Liberty St., then right onto Braemore Rd. and left onto Hillsdale. A small, gravel parking area and kiosk are straight ahead.

Overview

Cranberry Pond is a 7.5-acre pristine pond surrounded by acres of protected land. The area includes bogs and extensive Atlantic White Cedar swamps, a globally rare ecosystem. Some of the area includes or acts as vernal pools, which support specific amphibians that depend on these fish-free habitats, particularly for mating and breeding in the spring. The surrounding forest includes chestnut oak trees which have distinctive deeply furrowed bark as well as beech, black birch, white pine and an understory of low-bush blueberries. Cranberry Brook flows through the area, including Cranberry Pond. The area is contiguous with other open space, including the Holbrook Town Forest and the Devon Woods open space, which is privately owned but has public access and is protected by a conservation restriction.

Trails

The red trail is the main trail through the area. Pick it up at the parking area and continue past the Atlantic White Cedar Swamp on the left side of the trail and the bog on the right side. Connect to the yellow trail to visit the pond or stay on the red trail to connect to the Holbrook Town Forest trails. The blue trail leads around the pond and out along the powerline right of way to Braemore Rd. From there it is a short walk back to the parking area on Eutaw Rd.



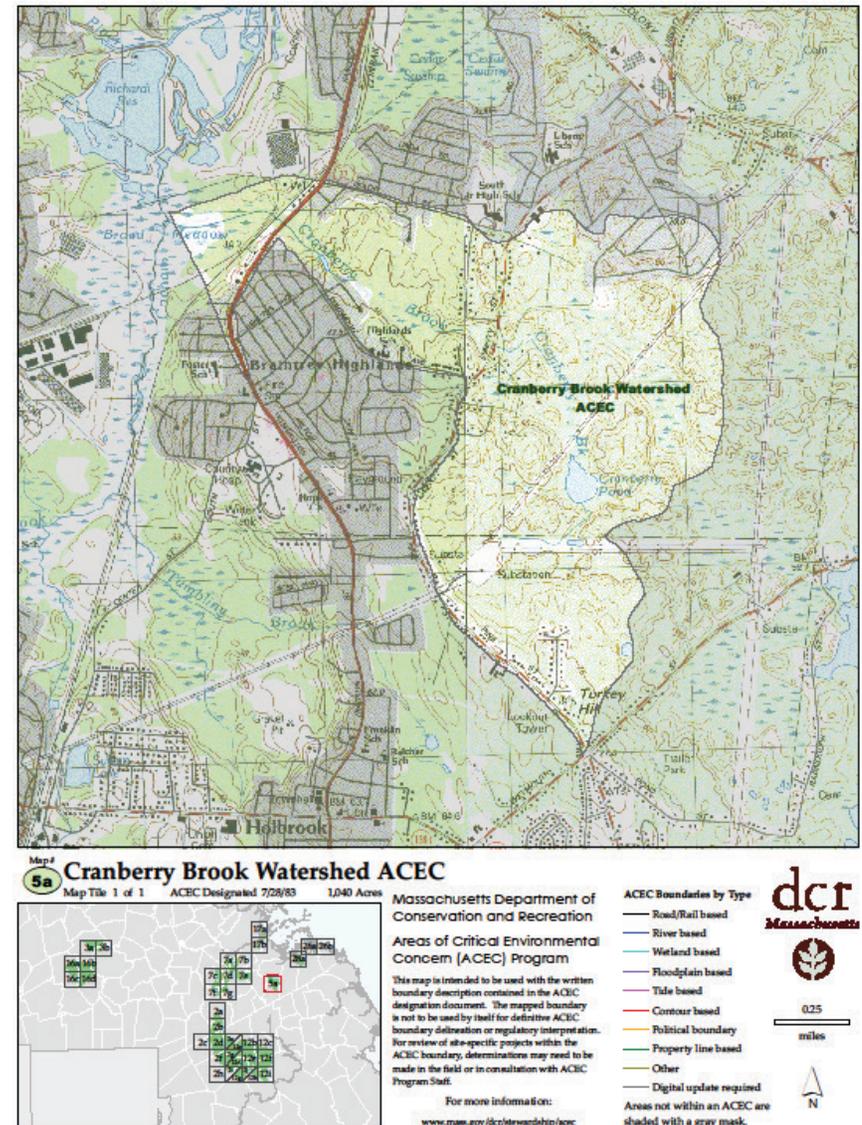
Cranberry Pond Area continued

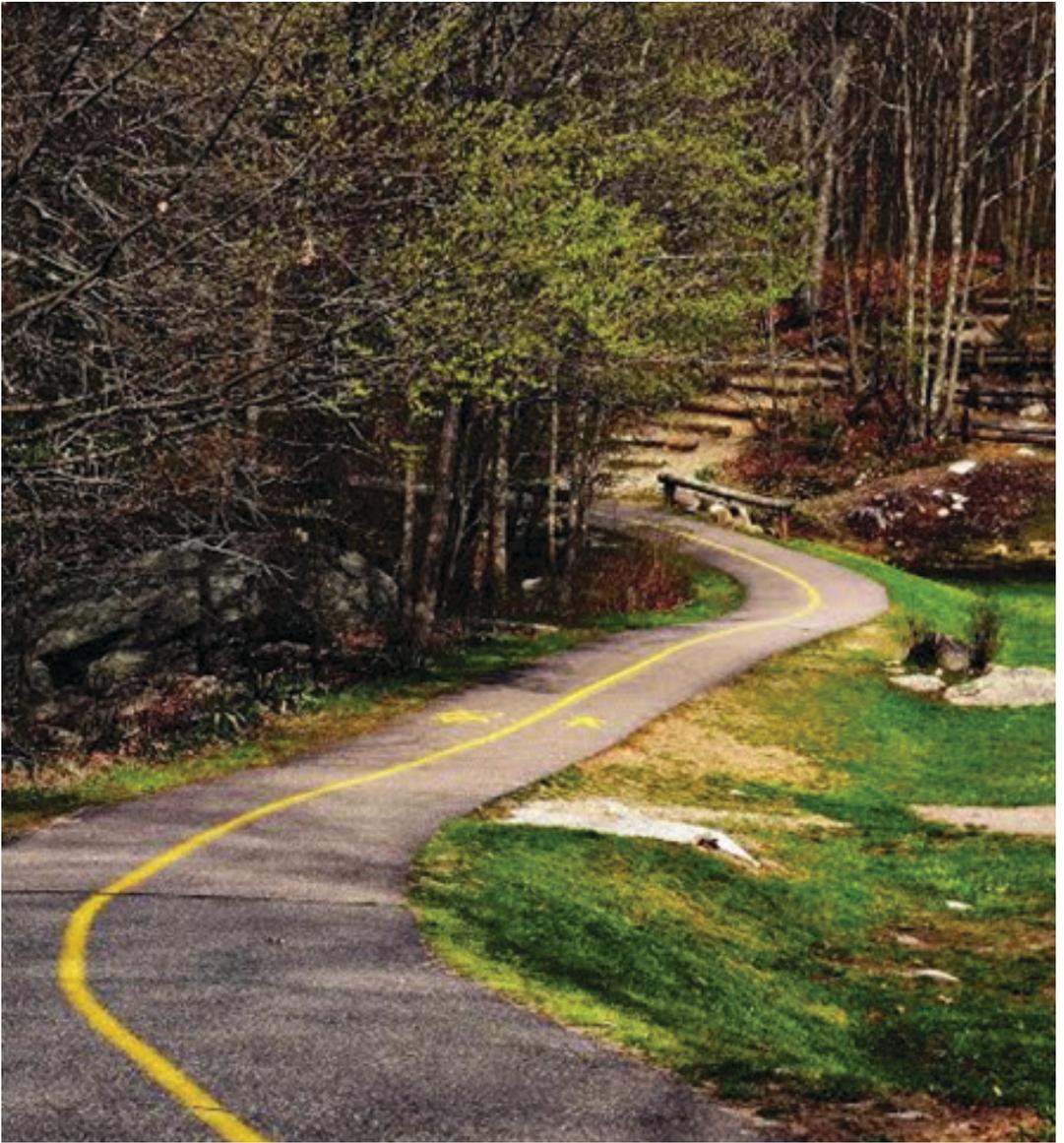
History

In recognition of the outstanding natural resources of the area, the property was acquired by the Conservation Commission in 1965. In 1983, the entire Cranberry Brook watershed was designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). ACECs are places in Massachusetts that receive special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness and significance of their natural and cultural resources. These areas also receive additional environmental regulatory protection.



Atlantic White Cedar Swamp at Cranberry Pond Area





For more information on the areas in this guide contact
the Planning & Community Development Department
at 781-794-8233 or visit:
www.braintreema.gov/planning/OpenSpace.htm

Paved Path at Pond Meadow Park