

A Blueprint for the Management of the Trail

The MMM Trail System Management Blueprint has two main purposes:

1. Collect the best recommendations and strategies that have come out of the Connecticut and Massachusetts Trail Study working groups to meet the Study's primary objective of ensuring long-term trail viability.
2. Establish a clear basis for management of the trail should it be designated as a National Scenic Trail.

The Blueprint is organized into seven sections, as follows:

Section A.	Landowners Issues
Section B.	Trail Use
Section C.	Trail Protection
Section D.	Trail Management and Maintenance
Section E.	Community Connections
Section F.	Administrative Framework
Section G.	Provisions If National Scenic Trail Designation Occurs
Section H.	Proposed Blueprint Budget

The implementation of this Blueprint will be coordinated through the Trail Stewardship Council as described in Section F: Administrative Framework.

The following Management Principles underlie the Blueprint and are critical to its success:

- There is full involvement of a wide range of trail constituents
- The Blueprint builds off of existing trail partnerships and traditions
- Private property rights are respected and landowners participation encouraged
- No new regulatory trail protection is proposed or advocated by this blueprint or by the trail stewardship council on private property.

The cost to implement this blueprint is estimated at \$271,000 and is described in Section H: Proposed Blueprint Budget.

Each section begins with a goal statement followed by a set of recommended tasks, policies and objectives that could be undertaken to support achievement of the goal.

A. Landowner Issues

Goal: Work with landowners hosting the trail to foster good communication along with support for, and involvement in, sustaining the trail.

1. Set up a system to communicate with landowners, including:
 - a. All landowners receive at least one newsletter per year with trail updates and contact information;
 - b. Keep up-to-date contact information on web site (trail maintainers, section leaders, town contacts).
2. Maintain an up-to-date landowner database (parcel map/ database updated annually).
3. Establish a mechanism to enforce trail policies.
 - a. Develop relationships with enforcement authorities and individuals (local, state, land owner)
 - b. Develop strategies to address trash, illegal dumping, trespassing and parking issues.
4. Provide increased liability protection for landowners hosting the trail.
 - a. Establish a "liability protection fund" to pay legal costs in the event of a suit;
 - b. Explore additional options, including the National Park Service VIP program; personal liability policies; adding landowners to insurance coverage of trail stewardship/ protection organizations.
5. Seek to formalize permission for trail access such as through voluntary, revocable written agreements that are mutually beneficial to trail stewards and landowners.
6. Trail relocation requests are to be expected and will be accommodated in a timely fashion.
7. All existing landowner uses and rights including hunting, fishing, timber management and trail uses such as equestrian, mountain biking, and snowmobiling will continue to be at the discretion of landowners.
8. Provide educational materials to local commissions, recreational users, and other stakeholders regarding private property rights associated with the trail.

B. Trail Use

Goal: Set trail system use policies to provide positive trail experiences, respect trail capacity and landowner rights.

1. Support the MMM Trail System primarily as a continuous, long-distance hiking trail with uses such as mountain biking, equestrian, or snowmobiling on sections based on landowner wishes and terrain suitability.
 - a. landowners have the final say regarding trail uses on their property
 - b. the Stewardship Council will be available to review and provide recommendations on multi-use issues brought forth by user groups or landowners.
2. Develop a conflict resolution process to address landowner and trail user issues, utilizing the Trail Stewardship Council.
3. Track trail use levels, types, impacts and conditions including using standard methodologies for comparison with other trails and trail systems.

C. Trail Protection

Goal: Secure a continuous off-road trail system that respects natural resources, from Long Island Sound to the MA/NH border.

1. Trail protection is defined as supporting the long-term existence and use of the MMM trail.
2. Trail protection will occur using a wide range of tools including but not limited to: conservation restrictions; revocable recreational easements; fee simple acquisition; or memoranda of agreement.
3. Trail protection will occur with landowners on voluntary basis only. No land takings will occur.
4. No specific trail system corridor width is required or established.
5. Trail protection will be encouraged and assisted (financial, coordination, establishing priorities) by the Stewardship Council, working with the Appalachian Mountain Club (MA), Connecticut Forests and Parks Association (CT), state agencies, land trusts, communities, and others.
6. Track the current level of protection on maps and database.

7. No regulatory protection of a “trail corridor” or “view corridor” is required.
8. New or relocated sections of trail will be laid out and constructed in an environmentally sensitive manner.

D. Trail Management and Maintenance

Goal: Support a volunteer-based trail stewardship program to ensure a well-maintained trail system.

1. AMC and CFPA will continue to be the lead volunteer-based entities for day-to-day trail system management and maintenance. The Trail Stewardship Council will assist and coordinate with AMC and CFPA as appropriate to ensure consistent and successful Trail management across the two states, including:
 - a. consistent guidelines for trail management and trail volunteers;
 - b. consistent trail signage standards;
 - c. consistent trail relocation procedures;
 - d. consistent mechanisms to monitor trail conditions;
 - e. evaluate and meet parking needs.
2. Use a trail guidebook and signage to clearly identify appropriate parking areas, as well as private land trail segments which need to be respected.
3. Additional organizations such as the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts and Connecticut Horse Council have strong track records of volunteer maintenance on certain trails. These organizations may play lead roles on the MMM Trail System if sections of the trail are deemed appropriate for such alternative uses.

E. Community Connections

Goal: Engage towns as trail system partners, and maximize trail connections to communities.

1. Appoint town representatives to Trail Stewardship Council.
 - a. encourage towns to appoint two representatives: one trail landowner and one from an appropriate “lead” town board/committee
2. Identify and promote physical connections between the MMM Trail and other resources such as town forests and parks, state forests and parks, other existing trail systems, down towns, or other compatible resources.
3. Develop a small grants program for communities to promote trail stewardship, connections, and protection.

F. Administrative Framework

Goal: Create a locally based trail administrative structure to assist and support the leadership role CFPA and AMC will continue to have in overall trail management and maintenance.

1. Establish a Trail Stewardship Council comprised of individual Councils in Massachusetts and Connecticut.
 - a. Each Trail Stewardship Council will have only advisory powers, and will use the management blueprint as a guiding document in the long-term management of the trail while working as a supportive partner with CFPA and AMC.
 - b. The Councils will decide if/when they need a formal Memorandum of Understanding;
 - c. By-laws will be developed by the Council based on similar groups, such as Westfield and Farmington Wild and Scenic Advisory Committees;
 - d. All meetings will be open to the public and governed by the applicable CT and MA state statutes (open meeting laws, etc.)
 - e. Working committees/subcommittees will be encouraged, and may be formed around trail segments and/or issues. Participation will be open to individuals and organizations beyond the Stewardship Council.
2. Members of the Council will include representatives from:
 - a. Massachusetts and Connecticut – two representatives for each state, to be determined by the commissioner of the appropriate state environmental agency.
 - b. The AMC – two representatives
 - c. CFPA – two representatives
 - d. Municipalities – one representative per town, ideally a pertinent town staff member or commission member, to be appointed by the chief legislative body
 - e. Landowner – one representative per town to be appointed by the chief legislative body
 - f. User Groups – four seats will be available on each state Council to represent user interests, including non-hiking interests such as equestrian, snowmobiling and mountain biking.
 - g. Regional Planning Agencies – one seat will be available for each regional planning agency that has the trail in their region
 - h. Nonprofit Land Conservation Organizations – one seat will be available for each land conservation group that owns or manages property over which the trail crosses.
 - i. Others as the Council sees appropriate including individuals, water utilities or corporate landowners.

3. The Stewardship Council will operate on a consensus-based decision-making process for most decisions; there may be certain decisions such as adoption of by-laws, changes to the management blueprint or election of officers where more formal votes will be desired.
4. Bi-state meetings to be held between Massachusetts and Connecticut as needed, but at least once a year.

G. Provisions if National Scenic Trail Designation Occurs

Goal: If NST designation occurs, provide federal assistance to implement this Blueprint, while supporting local management and property rights.

- 1) Trail Stewardship Council
 - a) The National Park Service will become a member of the Trail Stewardship Council and occupy a single seat.
 - b) The Trail Stewardship Council shall be established in a timely manner.
 - c) The National Park Service will not be eligible to chair the Council or hold other officer positions.
 - d) The Council and its subcommittees shall not be considered federal advisory committees for the purpose of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.
- 2) National Park Service Assistance
 - a) The primary role of National Park Service will be to assist the Council, its member institutions, and other partners in the implementation of this Management Blueprint, subject to Congressional appropriations.
 - b) The National Park Service will coordinate the expenditure of federal funds provided by Congress for the Trail with the Council, and will seek consensus from the Council on the most effective use of such funds.
 - c) Priorities for use of federal funds/assistance shall include: coordination and support of the Council itself and any subcommittees that the Council creates; trail continuity; maintaining up-to-date mapping and landowner contact information; signage; capital improvements such as parking and trailheads; trail maintenance; assistance to communities and other partners for trail connections, planning, enforcement, protection and enhancement; other priorities as established by the Council.
- 3) Limitations of NST Designation and Safe guards for Landowners
 - a) For the purposes of NST designation, no specific trail system corridor width will be established.

- b) Federal funds provided to purchase land or development rights as a result of NST designation may only be used in conjunction with willing seller transactions. Such expenditures must have the support of the MMM Trail Stewardship Council. Such funds could be used to support state, local or non-governmental organization initiatives to protect portions of the trail.
- c) The National Park Service will not acquire, own or manage any lands under authority of the NST designation.
- d) No segment of the MMM Trail shall be officially recognized as a portion of the National Scenic Trail against the wishes of the landowner.
- e) The National Park Service will not impose recreational use restrictions on any segment of the MMM Trail. If the NPS finds that a trail segment's uses are incompatible with NST designation, the NPS should seek the consensus of the Council to pursue alternative routes for the trail.
- f) The National Park Service will not impose any land use restrictions or viewshed restrictions.

H. Proposed Blueprint Budget

The estimated annual federal portion of the costs for implementing the Blueprint for Management is \$271,000 (see budget details below). These costs represent the level of federal funding estimated to be necessary to support the work of the local partners who will have primary responsibility for implementing the Blueprint for Management. It is anticipated the funding will support one half-time equivalent staff person for each state. The staff may be either from the National Park Service or the local partners. It is proposed that funding will be distributed for use by the local partners, primarily CFPA and AMC, through cooperative agreements or similar type arrangements.

In addition to this estimated administrative funding need, it is anticipated if the trail were designated it would also have access to the National Park Service Challenge Cost-Share funding dedicated to the National Scenic and Historic Trails. As well, it is hoped a designation may also leverage opportunities for additional funding through statutory aid or other means to support local and state land conservation activities associated with protecting the trail system. See Table 11.

Table 11. Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail Study Blueprint for Management Estimated Operating Budget-Federal Costs-Draft May 12, 2005

Category	Expense
I. Landowner Issues	
1a Newsletter - Printing, Design & Postage	\$5,000
1b Website Maintenance – outsource	\$5,000
2a Maintain and Update Landowner Database	\$5,000
3b Trash & Illegal Dumping Clean-up	\$4,000
4a Landowner Liability Protection Fund	\$20,000
8 Trail Brochure - Design, Print & Distribute	\$7,000
Sub-total	\$46,000
II. Trail Use	
3 Track Trail Use, Types, Impacts & Conditions	\$20,000
Sub-total	\$20,000
III. Trail Protection	
5 Support Voluntary Trail Protection Projects - surveys, appraisals, legal fees	\$10,000
7 Track current level of trail protection & GIS data upkeep - outsource	\$7,500
Sub-total	\$17,500
IV. Trail Management & Maintenance	
1d See Item II.3.	
2 Trail markers, trail head signs, road crossing signs, kiosks	\$20,000
Sub-total	\$20,000
V. Community Connections	
3 Community Small Grant Program	\$100,000
Sub-total	\$100,000
Staff and Administrative	
1 One Half-Time Equivalent for Each State	\$60,000
2 Stationary, envelopes	\$2,000
3 Office Supplies	\$2,000
4 Travel	\$2,000
5 General Postage	\$1,500
Sub-total	\$67,500
TOTAL	\$271,000