



Encouragements & Cautions

The Manchester-Essex Woods, also known as the Wilderness Conservation Trust, is an area that includes the earliest unpaved road connecting the two towns as well as ancient cart paths. Several miles of foot trails have been created and are maintained by volunteers. Special historical sites include Millstone Hill, one of the highest points in Manchester; Bear's Den, Bishop's Grave, and Baby Rock, in Essex; and a brass plaque commemorating private efforts to preserve trees and open land in this area dating back to 1879.

Most of this area is unspoiled, rugged country with high cliffs and rocky outcrops resulting from glacial activity during the ice age; ancient red maple swamps; and pine, hemlock, and oak forests with occasional beech, maples, and wildflowers. More than 160 plant species have been identified in the Heron Pond and Cedar Swamp area. Many animals and birds make their homes here, and many birds rest here during spring and fall migrations. The Commonwealth's Natural Heritage Program and The Nature Conservancy encourage protection of these woods as critical habitat for rare plants and wildlife.

Most foot trails are marked with identifying signs or with color blazes on trees or rock cairns along the route. Carrying a compass is strongly recommended, however.

To help choose your route when planning a hike, we have provided a designation of degree of difficulty. Please see the map legend for more information. This ranking system is subjective, but we hope it will prove helpful.

Please refrain from going off the trail. Conservation areas often contain delicate plants and fragile soils that are easily damaged. Moreover, property boundaries are generally unmarked, so that off-trail usage may constitute trespassing on unprotected land.

Be sure to check for ticks when you leave the woods, especially during the warm months. Also, be aware that hunters may be in the area during the hunting season.

Please report emergency issues to the town police departments (Manchester 978-526-1212, Essex 978-768-6200). Other concerns can be reported to MECT.

About MECT

MECT is the primary protector of the Wilderness Conservation Area and other woodlands and wetlands in Manchester. All MECT-owned properties are open to visitors; privately-owned lands under conservation restriction vary according to owners' desires. MECT underwrites the cost of innovative environmental programs for local school and youth groups that use conservation lands as outdoor laboratories.

MECT is funded and staffed by concerned residents and friends of Manchester, Essex and surrounding communities. We occasionally receive grants from foundations for special projects. We receive no government aid; instead we assist local governments in cooperative environmental initiatives.

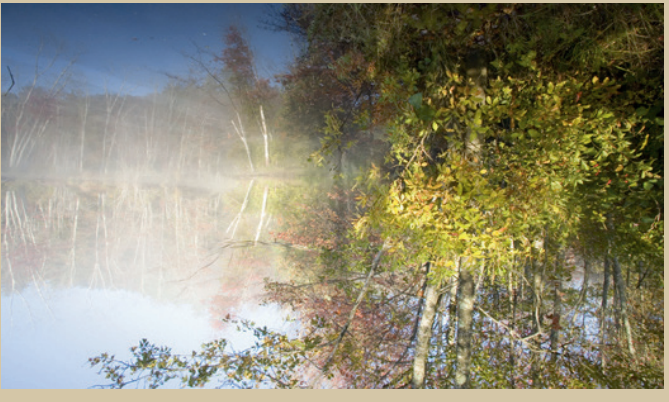
For more information, membership, answers to your questions, and information on our capital needs, email us at conserve@mect.org, visit us at www.mect.org, or write to us at P.O. Box 1486, Manchester, MA 01944.



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Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust (MECT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving ecologically important land and wildlife habitat in Manchester and Essex, Massachusetts, and promoting its use for quiet recreation, education, and research.



Manchester-Essex Hiking Trails

