2020 Accomplishments/2021 Goals

Caring for a New England Treasure

The 215-mile New England Trail (NET) includes portions of four largely contiguous trails: the Mattabesett, Menunkatuck and Metacomet Trails in Connecticut and parts of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts. Designated as a national scenic trail in 2009, and marked with blue blazes in Connecticut and white in Massachusetts, the NET has something wonderful to share with everyone.

The principal trail stewards of the NET are the staff and volunteers of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) in Connecticut and the Western Mass Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) in Massachusetts. They are assisted by the National Park Service (NPS) in managing, protecting, restoring and caring for this scenic New England treasure. For more information, including guides and maps, please visit www.newenglandtrail.org.
NEW ENGLAND TRAIL
2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Total Trail
215 miles

Caring for the Trail
636 Volunteers

Giving Time to the Trail
5,798 volunteer hours

Valuing Volunteer Time
$157,706

Hike50 and Hike100 Challenge
1,500 + Participants
287 Challenges Completed
21,750 miles hiked in 2020

Reflecting Upon a Year Like No Other

2020 has been a year of incredible change, upheaval and unrest throughout the United States. During this year we have been reminded over and over again of the importance and privilege of easy access to natural spaces for the sake of our mental and physical health. It was inspiring to see so many people take to the trail in search of fresh air, space and safe recreation. Thank you to those who chose the NET for their adventures this year and to the volunteers and partners who helped take care of and celebrate this incredible recreational resource.

In 2020 we saw an 18% increase in the amount of miles hiked on the NET!

“I enjoyed seeing the state I grew up in (CT) from a different perspective. Up on the rolling ridges you get transported away from a highly urbanized state to an adventure in solitude.”
-Patrick B. of Branford, CT.

2021 COMMITMENTS:

We are working to develop innovative projects, programs and partnerships to enhance the trail experience, to cultivate an enduring network of trail volunteers and partner organizations, and to ensure that the NET is accessible, inclusive and relevant for all. We are committed in 2021 to forming a trailwide conservation and land protection strategy to lead us into the second decade of the New England Trail.
Enhancing the NET

NEW NET WEBSITE: In June 2020, we launched our new and improved New England Trail website. The site now features a series of technology updates that will make it infinitely easier for hikers to learn about the NET and plan their own outings. Some of the highlights of the new site include a GPS enabled interactive trail map for on-trail adventures, a page devoted to thru-hiking and planning longer distance trips, an enhanced reservation system for overnight sites on the trail, and much, much more. Check it out for yourself at newenglandtrail.org.

INCREASED ACCESS TO NET: This fall, the City of Easthampton received funding to build a new community park on recently protected land, which will also create a new trailhead and parking area for the NET. This will provide new and safer access to the NET in Easthampton. This new connection to the NET will also include an accessible loop trail to a scenic viewshed. Construction is planned for summer 2021, with an opening in fall 2021. (Image right: map of conserved parcels)

“This year was more challenging than ever for many of us. Despite the challenges, ... I was grateful and happy to still get out on a trail that holds a special place in my heart.” -Mat J. of Collinsville, CT

The NET is “a well maintained trail that leads you to beautiful views and interesting landmarks along the spine of MA and CT.”

-Margaret C. of Winchester, NH


Purchase NET guides at the CFPA Bookstore or the AMC Bookstore.
Trail Crews and Field Work

It would take more than a pandemic to stop our volunteers and crews from doing what they do best! Despite a delayed start, new travel restrictions and the need for increased safety precautions, our staff, volunteers and crews were able to accomplish several large projects in 2020.

VOLUNTEER PROJECTS: In CT, CFPA volunteers and staff are wrapping up a 2-year effort working on a major trail improvement project on the Metacomet section of the NET in Farmington (south of Rt 6). Here the trail has historically had poor drainage and clay soil making it difficult to improve. With the technical assistance and equipment support of volunteer Kent Glowa (owner of Kencore Construction), the project is near completion. This project has required hundreds of volunteer hours moving rock (by hand) and stone (by highline), framing the steps & structures, building a bridge, excavating & lining a LONG rock swale-- all to create a solid and sustainable trail for hikers. What a great team effort! (see image below).

In MA, AMC completed a major accessibility project at the Rising Corner Road trailhead in Southwick, MA thanks to Recreational Program Grant funding. Volunteers put in hundreds of hours alongside a construction crew to create a quarter-mile of accessible trail to a floating boardwalk installed in 2016. The trailhead also now includes two new accessible parking spaces. Additionally, thanks to significant volunteer efforts led by Ray Girard, the NET was relocated off a major 2-mile roadwalk in Northfield, MA onto a mix of private and public land, creating a much safer and scenic hiking experience.

TRAIL CREWS: In CT, a 9-member AmeriCorps NCCC Team joined CFPA for 3 weeks and assisted with the 0.4 mile trail clearing and construction project, moving the NET to a more scenic and wooded location and off of a fenced property line and tote road. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to cancel our traditional summer crews, but planning is underway to resume both crews in summer of 2021.

LOOKING TOWARDS 2021: We are looking forward to hosting public workparties, hikes and events again! While we have missed seeing all of your faces, the challenges faced this year have deepened our commitment to improving and protecting the trail. We are moving into 2021 with a renewed focus on working with key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, trail-wide land protection strategy for the NET corridor.