



ESSEX COUNTY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Kamon Farm

Preserve, Maintain, Respect

Fall 2023

A View from the Chair

Dear Friends,

Once again, the weather is dominating our discussions about trail projects. While overall we prefer too much rain to too little, the wet weather affects our ability to make trail repairs and means that everything needs to be cut back and mowed at about twice the rate as in a dry season. We've had to delay some long-planned projects but rest assured that they will be completed when conditions are a bit drier. See Director of Trail Maintenance Carol Lloyd's report on pages 4 and 5 for more details.

Have you noticed changes to our landscapes in addition to the frequently wet conditions while you're out on the trails? There are trees that are dropping brown wilted leaves, lacking the usual color, and lots of dead trees. Mayer Tree Service Arborist David Anderson offers some insight into what we're observing in his "A Tale of Two Summers" article on this page.

While we wait for weather more favorable for trail projects, we're as busy as ever. We're planning events, applying for grants, prioritizing and planning future trail projects, and...protecting trail connections. This last item is something we spend a lot of time on. These connections are crucial in that they allow longer distance trail users like horseback riders, runners, and bikers to go for miles without having to use our busy streets to access trails, at significant risk. There are many crucial trail connections that make our fantastic trail networks possible, and not all are protected.

Connections of all kinds are at the core of what we do at ECTA, with connections to trails and the people who own and/or use them of equal importance. Protecting, maintaining, and creating trail connections and establishing relationships between ECTA, landowners, and the people who use the trails in our area, is a top priority for us.

We greatly appreciate the support of everyone who is in our connection network. Thank you!

With gratitude,

Martha Sanders
Chair, Board of Directors



October 7, 2022



October 13, 2023

Photos by Mark Liptak

A Tale of Two Summers

Last summer's extreme hot and dry summer took a toll on many trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. Most plants were severely damaged if not outright killed. Further, when it is hot and dry for weeks the soil becomes so dry the water cannot percolate. The best attempts at surface watering would not help. This summer we have the opposite problem...we were lucky if we got three days in a row without rain. Too much rain brings problems for plants as well. The constant rain caused a lot more diseases. When things are constantly wet it's the ideal conditions for fungus and bacterial diseases. Mushrooms, conks and other fungi are in their element in this wet weather as well. Most of these fungi are harmless but some wood decay fungi increase the breakdown of wood causing trees to be more vulnerable. Again, we are grateful for the rain, and we realize so many plants that are growing tenaciously are recovering from last year's severe weather.

Due to last year's drought, there are dead trees everywhere. We still see dead American Elms. To this day Dutch Elm Disease is a black eye for arborists because we still don't have a cure or many great treatment options. The remnants of a few scattered gypsy moth caterpillar infestations (now called spongy moth) are evident by the stone dead White and Red Oaks seen throughout the state. It seems more and more that a healthy Sugar Maple in Massachusetts is more of an exception than the rule. If you have Sugar Maples, do what you can to keep them healthy. Once they start to decline from the top, they can be difficult, if not impossible, to save. Canadian and Carolina Hemlocks have been losing the battle to adelgid and elongate scale. As trees drop their needles, they lose their energy source and slowly die. A stand of Hemlocks is one of the most beautiful forests and it is truly sad to see these trees dying or dead. Ash Trees have been decimated by Emerald Ash Borer. All trees become brittle when they die back but Ash trees are one of the most fragile. Our native Beech and the European Beech trees used in so many of our landscapes are being overwhelmed by Beech leaf disease. There is not much known about this new disease, but it is damaging and killing Beech trees indiscriminately. Although there are a few experimental treatments that may help at this point there is no cure. Beech leaf disease has made an exponential jump since last spring when you would see it occasionally, now it's rare to see a healthy Beech.

David M. Anderson
Arborist, Mayer Tree Service

This information is comprised of two Mayer Tree Service blogs and used with their permission.
www.Mayertree.com

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SUSANNA AND ANN



Photo courtesy of Colloredo-Mansfeld Family

At our Annual Meeting in April, ECTA founders Susanna Colloredo-Mansfeld and Ann Getchell, pictured here at about age 20, changed their status as directors on our Board to directors emeritae. This means that they can continue to attend board meetings and receive all board communications, but they don't vote, and their attendance is optional.

Since ECTA's founding in 1982, Susanna and Ann have been a continuous source of wisdom, guidance, and good humor in all things related to trails in our area. Simply put, ECTA is what it is today because of them. Thank you, Susanna and Ann!

We look forward to many more years of their company!

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Photo by August Capotosto

TRAIL MAINTENANCE | FALL 2023

By Carol Lloyd, *Director of Trail Maintenance & Management*

2023 HAS BEEN A WET YEAR FOR THE TRAILS. WHILE OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY HAVE BEEN RECEIVING RECORD TEMPERATURES, WE HAVE BEEN GETTING RECORD RAIN. CONSEQUENTLY, THE TRAILS HAVE BEEN VERY WET AND BIG REPAIR PROJECTS HAVE BEEN PUT ON HOLD. BUT AS WITH 2021, OTHER RAINY-DAY PROJECTS HAVE FILLED IN THEIR PLACE.

Mowing

Every year we mow but this year we MOWED! The trails we usually do once a year, we did twice. And the trails we mow monthly for the summer months are still getting mowed as of this October writing! They all look very green and very beautiful!



Tree Removal

Because the ground has been so wet and the wind has been fairly strong, a lot of trees have come down. We are lucky to be able to rely on the trail stewards and trail users to report these trees. We are also very lucky to have people who can remove the trees quickly. So, between the calls from the users and our network of tree experts, we have been able to move quickly to keep the trails open.



Boardwalks

Two boardwalks in Willowdale West were identified in our Trail Maintenance Project as needing repair. They had been installed many years ago and because of all the use that they received, had started to fall apart. They were determined to be one of the Topsfield priorities because of the significant traffic that they received, both bicycle and pedestrian. To move forward with this project, we received permission from DCR to do the work, the Ipswich Conservation Commission gave their approval as part of our Trail Management Plan to replace the boardwalks in-kind. And, we were able to get a grant from Athletic Brewing Company which paid for construction. They were built and installed by Chip and Myles Cheston of Tasks Unlimited and Trees Unlimited.



Easements

As we have previously reported, much of our effort is going into protecting trail connections. This means identifying the important links and working with landowners to negotiate and put easements on their trails. This process can be a lengthy but definitely rewarding one. Since the last newsletter we have been able to firm up the Pulsifer easement which is part of the trail system from Appleton to Ipswich River Watershed. John Gledhill graciously gave us an easement on his trail that is part of the connection from Bridge Street to Rt. 22 in Hamilton. It connects to the easement on the Gardner property. Thank you, Nat and John! It's these links that are a part of protecting the trail system forever.



ECTA EVENTS

2023 WAS A FUN AND BUSY YEAR FULL OF EVENTS!

We kicked off the season in March with our first ever canicross, **Tails for the Trails**, at Pipestave Hill in West Newbury. Our 28th annual **Equine Tack and Paraphernalia Sale** at the Topsfield Fairgrounds was held in April. In May we had our 6th annual **Ride in Memory of Patrick Keough** and a beautiful day for our 9th annual **Spring for the Trails Half Marathon**.

In June we enjoyed our annual **Summer Solstice Party** under a tent at Groton House Farm! We held our 4th annual **TrifECTA Trail Challenge** virtually in June and July, our 19th annual **Run for the Trails** in September, and our 3rd annual **Poker Bike Ride** in October.

Registration for our annual Thanksgiving 5k and Kids Fun Run, Thanks for the Trails, is now open.
Go to www.ectaonline.org and click on Events for more info.





Essex County Trail Association
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Nichols Field

Photo by Mark Liptak

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ectaonline.org
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