

## Using the Bay Circuit Guide and Maps

The Index Map shows the overall BCT and locates the detailed maps that apply to the area you may wish to walk, ski, or ride. On the Index Map, green indicates sections of the trail that are completed, and, in most cases, are blazed. Red indicates sections still being developed by local groups. Contact your local trails group or visit the Bay Circuit website to learn the latest on these sections: [www.serve.baycircuit.org](http://www.serve.baycircuit.org)

Each detailed map shows the Bay Circuit Trail and other public foot trails of which we are aware. The route of the BCT is described on the back of each map, in the north-to-south direction. In most cases, these plus the trail markings should be adequate to follow the BCT. However, if you are interested in exploring the other trails shown, or in more detailed trail guides to the BCT, we strongly urge you to obtain local trail maps and guides. Those we know of are listed on the For More Information page that accompanies each map, along with information on where to obtain them. Trail users who are familiar with topographic maps may find the U.S.G.S. maps helpful. The relevant area maps are listed on each For More Information page. Topo maps are sold at Moor & Mountain in Andover; REI in Reading and Framingham; EMS in Peabody, Brighton, Dedham, MA, and Salem, NH; and some other camping equipment and map stores.

Protected open spaces, the "jewels" of the greenway, are shown in green tint on the maps. Most of the information is from MassGIS but may not be completely up-to-date, as new areas are added from time to time. These open space areas are generally open to the public; but there are exceptions, for example, when areas are closed to protect nesting birds. Please respect posted closings.

Detailed maps are available for many of the larger jewels, especially the State Forests and Parks and properties of the Trustees of Reservations and Massachusetts Audubon. Information on where to obtain these maps is listed under the particular "jewel" and organization. Conservation Restrictions, shown in green outline, are generally not open to the public. Parking places for three or more cars near trailheads are shown with a P in an oval.

Corrections, additions, and suggestions for improving the maps and associated text are very welcome. These maps are being printed in small quantities so updates can be frequent. The best way to communicate corrections is to make black and white photocopies, mark them with colored pencil or pen, and send them to the Bay Circuit Alliance, 3 Railroad St., Andover MA 01810.

## Trail Markings

The BCT markings are of two types. At trail heads and road crossings, there is generally a 4"x4" plastic BCT logo like that on the Trail Guide Index Map. Along the trails white rectangular dollar-bill-sized blazes are painted or nailed to trees or posts, or occasionally painted on the pavement. At turns, two blazes are used, with the upper one offset in the direction of the turn. Sections along roads may not be marked. Blazing is the responsibility of local trails groups. If blazing is inadequate, notify the local trail group listed with the map.

## Permitted Trail Uses

Permitted trail uses along various sections of the BCT include walking, running, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and horse riding; however, not all trails allow all these uses. The landowners and managers determine permitted trail uses. All of the BCT is open for at least walking, and most suitable sections are also open for cross-country skiing in the winter. Inquire of the local trails organization or the land owner about equestrian and bicycle use, if in doubt. Appropriate contacts are listed with each map. Nearly all of the BCT is closed to motorized vehicle use.

## Motorcycles, Dirt Bikes and ORVs

Nearly all trails in the Bay Circuit corridor are closed to motorized vehicles because they cause extensive trail damage and because the noise and smell disturb wildlife, other trail users and neighbors. Illegal use by motorized vehicles can cause trails to be closed to all users and is often used as an argument against new trails.

## Trail Etiquette

The joy of using trails, the continued right of public access over private lands, and the future expansion of the trail system are all dependent on how users respect the land, other users, and the rights of the landowners. All non-motorized users need to work together to promote our trails. Here are some suggestions:

- Park your car in a safe and legal place. Some good parking spots are shown on the trail maps.
- Guard against all risk of fire. Don't smoke in the woods, especially when conditions are dry.
- Be polite and friendly to fellow trail users, landowners and trail neighbors. Mountain bikers should use caution near hikers, and both hikers and bikers should yield to horses for the safety of all.
- Protect wildlife, plants, and trees.
- Keep children and pets supervised and under control. Don't let pets harm wildlife or annoy neighbors. Most wildlife refuges and farming areas on the BCT are closed to pets.
- Take your litter home with you. Carry a plastic grocery bag and pick up litter you see. One hiker can compensate for several thoughtless people with little effort. Clean trails and woods encourage others to be neat and landowners to welcome trail users.
- Keep to marked trails, especially on private land. Leave all livestock, crops, and machinery alone. Walk around the edge of farmed fields. Leave gates as you found them.
- Don't make unnecessary noise. Quiet enhances your own experience and that of others and increases your chances of seeing wildlife.
- Avoid walking on very wet trails. Horses and mountain bikes especially should stay off wet trails to prevent damage. Mountain bikers should carry their bikes past wet areas.
- Some trails are closed to bicycles. Inquire about local rules and obey posted signs.

## Trail Maintenance

Most trails are maintained by volunteers. This is certainly true of the Bay Circuit Trail. Many hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians help with trail maintenance through local trails organizations. Contact your local organizations, most of which are listed with the relevant BCT map, or call the Bay Circuit Alliance office (978-470-1982) or email [tmac@baycircuit.org](mailto:tmac@baycircuit.org) for information on how to become involved. Trailwork can be fun and rewarding.

## Safety and Health

You are 100% responsible for your own safety on the trails, as well as for any children with you. The Massachusetts Recreational Use Statute states clearly that "An owner of land who permits the public to use such land for recreational purposes without imposing a charge or fee... shall not be liable ... for injuries to person or property sustained by him while on such land ..." In other words, you have no grounds to sue if you get hurt. Landowners are NOT responsible for maintaining safe trails; TRAIL USERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSESSING TRAIL SAFETY FOR THEMSELVES. If you don't think a bridge is safe, don't cross it! The Bay Circuit Alliance strongly supports this law as essential if we are to retain public access to trails.

Potential natural hazards along the Bay Circuit of which you need to be aware and against which you should be on guard:

- Poison ivy is common. "Leaves three, let it be." In the autumn leaves can be a very pretty red. Sometimes the plants look like shaggy vines wrapped around trees.
- Lyme disease, while less common than in more southern coastal areas, does occur here. Know how to avoid deer tick bites and how to recognize the disease symptoms. Prompt treatment is essential and effective.
- Raccoons and other wild animals in this area can be rabid. Don't approach one, especially if it appears friendly.
- West Nile Virus has been found in a few Massachusetts communities. It is carried by mosquitoes. To avoid this rare disease, dress appropriately and use bug repellent.
- Be prepared for nature's adversities. Carry water, adhesive bandages, sun-block, and bug repellent.

## Hunting

Hunting is not allowed in Massachusetts on Sundays (not true in other states). On other days there is nearly always some hunting season open. It's a good idea to wear blaze orange in the woods unless you are sure the area where you are walking is closed to hunting. Orange is an especially good idea during grouse season (mid-October to late November) and is required in state Wildlife Management Areas during this season. Orange is absolutely essential during shotgun deer season (late November to mid-December). For exact dates, contact the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Leverett Saltonstall Bldg., 100 Cambridge St., Boston, MA 02202, 1-617-727-3151, ext. 340.

## Acknowledgements

These maps are the result of the efforts of many people and organizations, both private and governmental. Most of the road and water data come from U.S.G.S. topographic maps as digitized by MassGIS. Most of the open space data come from MassGIS, who in turn received it from numerous volunteers in the various cities and towns, and especially the Essex County Greenbelt Association.

The Trustees of Reservations have been enormously helpful in translating the MassGIS data into a format that the Bay Circuit Alliance could use for these maps, as well as providing detailed maps of their many reservations in the Bay Circuit corridor.

Trail data has come from maps of the Department of Environmental Management, Conservation Commissions and other local government departments, the many detailed Bay Circuit and town trail guides, land trusts, land owners, local Bay Circuit Trail Committees, hiking clubs, and individuals too numerous to name.

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The Bay Circuit Alliance wishes to thank all of you who have helped directly or indirectly. We encourage everyone to help complete the Bay Circuit Trail, enhance our open spaces, improve these maps, and above all, enjoy our open space jewels and trails.

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