

The Hallowell Recreation Area (RES) Trail Working Group

National Park Service (NPS) – Rivers, Trails, Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Project

Final Report - Accomplishments and Recommendations

Summary: This is the final report submitted in September 2019 to the Hallowell Recreation Commission for the NPS RTCA Project. The Hallowell Conservation Commission in collaboration with the City Council's Recreation Commission will prioritize and follow up on recommendations.

The RES Working Group formed in December 2017 after the Hallowell Conservation Commission (HCC) submitted an RTCA application and the National Park Service selected the project. During the project, the RES Working Group met 15 times, spent hundreds of volunteer hours executing a work plan, walked miles in The RES, talked to dozens of stakeholders, surveyed over 200 RES users, generated and published an informational guide and trail map, installed trail signs, and raised the level of cooperation between key user groups. The Hallowell Conservation Commission thanks the volunteers and representatives from the Hallowell Recreation Commission, Hallowell Public Works, the Central Maine Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association, and the Manchester Country Riders for their commitment to the project and interest towards making the RES an enjoyable experience for all. Special thanks go to Burnham Martin, Project Manager NPS Rivers & Trails, and Marie Caspard, NPS Intern, for their guidance and patience in the process.

Listed below, by category, are The RES Working Group's accomplishments, ongoing plans status, and recommendations. The Working Group focused on trail management and user experiences on the existing trail network. However, public discussions and gathered inputs covered other topics related to the recreational area. The recommendations are worthy of the City's consideration to continually improve users' experiences at the City's largest and most valuable recreational space, The RES. The evolving management process for all City parks can benefit from the learnings of this project. Final recommendations are 1 to 5+ years into the future and will be inputs to the City's 2020 Comprehensive Planning process.

TRAILS – The online user survey resulting in over 200 responses highlighted many needs. Signs and a trail map, a process to resolve user conflicts, and coordination between user groups and the City were prominent concerns. The RES Working Group, with National Park Service assistance addressed concerns by mapping existing trails, identifying their use, and establishing a communications plan.

Accomplishments

- Completed a printable and online RES trail guide and information pamphlet ([City website link](#)). Link also includes trail maps for Jamies Pond and Berry Conservation Area/Howard Hill Historical Park
- Worked with City staff to establish a section on the City website for "Parks and Recreational Resources" documents
- Installed posts and wooden trail signs for RES trailheads and major trail intersections
- Completed memo of understanding with Central Maine Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association on trail maintenance
- Completed memo of understanding with Manchester Country Riders snowmobile club on trail maintenance
- Established a park steward as an initial point of contact to community user groups and as a primary conduit to City on park needs; key responsibility is an annual trail assessment with user groups
- Completed communications plan with Hallowell Recreation Commission for ongoing trail maintenance to include major planned projects to emergency unplanned trail clearings

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- Monitored the completion of the first phase boundary survey to establish the City's and all land owners' property lines and lobbied for funding to complete second phase of boundary survey to permanently mark RES boundaries

Ongoing plans:

- Plan for next set of wooden trail and location signs at RES (HCC)
- Plan for Town Farm Rd entrance and informational signage; recommend a granite stone with engraved with "Hallowell Recreation Area" for entrance to match signage at Granite City Park; include other signage for map and use policies (HCC and Recreation Commission)
- Plan for additional signage to respect private property and to deter unauthorized motorized vehicles (HCC and Recreation Commission)
- Plan to monitor the completion of boundary survey and prioritize resolution of any outstanding items highlighted in final survey report (Property Committee, HCC, Recreation Commission)
- Plan to review and execute on annual trail assessments (HCC, mountain bike, and snowmobile clubs)

Recommendations

- Apply for grants or other means of funding for trail enhancements or new trails, specifically for community trail connectivity. Trail connectivity opportunities exist to other trail networks, other Hallowell destinations, and neighboring communities (e.g. Manchester, Jamies Pond, downtown Hallowell, Cohen Center, Elementary School, Kennebec River Rail Trail, etc.)

PARKING PERMITS and FEES – The current fee system, based on user survey responses, is considered unfair, confusing, and not clear on where or how to get vehicle parking permit. The City provides approximately 60 -70 parking permits per year for \$25 to non-residents; residents do not require a parking permit.

Accomplishments

- Included parking information in RES trail guide and information pamphlet
- City Clerk now provides printed RES information pamphlet when parking fee is paid

Ongoing plans:

- Plan for entrance sign to provide parking and parking permit information (HCC and Recreation Commission)

Recommendations

- Supply both resident and non-resident vehicles with RES parking permit to provide visibility to police patrols and to not distinguish between residents and non-residents
- Reassess user fee objectives, how fees are used, and what users are paying for at the RES; consider other options and changes to fee process (e.g., collected fees going to trail or park budget; volunteer hours or club memberships offsetting fees; consider online purchase of permits, daily use fee receptacle, and other options to meet objectives)

DOGS – The survey highlights ongoing conflicts with non-leashed dogs. In June 2018 at The RES, there was one sign at beach area that states "*Leash, Curb and Clean up after your dog. It's required by law. First offense, min. fine \$50*"

Accomplishments

- Included policy, dogs are required to be leashed, in RES information pamphlet and on City website

Recommendations

- Post additional signs

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- Enforce compliance
- If there is negative feedback from enforcement, engage responsible dog owners to consider off-season options for off-leash dogs or run areas. (e.g., Use ball field when not in use or during winter months, include fencing to enclose; Allow dogs off leash at beach area between Sept-June only; etc.)

TRASH – The survey highlights lack of containers (only one in beach area in 2018 summer) and overflowing trash at picnic shelters when container full.

Accomplishments

- Included “carry in, carry out” policy in RES information pamphlet and on City website

Recommendations

- If City is going to provide trash containers, supply more than one and empty daily in summer, including weekends
- Evaluate carry in, carry out at all times for RES area

INFRASTRUCTURE and RESTROOM BUILDING – Unmaintained, dilapidated, and inoperable infrastructure poses safety issues, offers poor user experiences, invites vandalism, and mirrors negatively against the City’s image. From the unusable basketball court and unavailability of drinking water to soiled and filthy restroom fixtures, the RES beach area does not offer a pleasant user experience.

Accomplishments

- Suggested to Public Works to close restroom building for 2019 season after assessment of fixtures and ongoing plumbing issues
- Suggested to Public Works to continue summer porta-pot rentals and to place in shade

Recommendations

- Assess long-term usability, including ADA use, of existing building for toilet and changing rooms; remove, fix, or repurpose building
- Replace current restroom facilities and servicing with long-term seasonal rental or another option for year round use
- Provide accessible water fountain
- Assess condition of dam and risk of breach
- Assess remaining infrastructure (roads, culverts, utilities, basketball court, ball field, etc.) and determine usability, capital budget items, and maintenance schedules

RES FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN – For long-term health and sustainability of the City Forest, it needs to be managed. Two forestry management plans, initiated by the Tree Board, were made available to the City over the last 10-15 years. They are viable if overall goals are still aligned with City’s vision. Completed boundary survey would ensure that the City’s property is only land involved.

Recommendations

- Assess most current plan; determine if goals and objectives are still viable (Tree Board)
- After boundary survey is complete, engage a forester expert to execute a forestry plan to sustain the forest environment and potentially generate funding for trails or ongoing maintenance

CITY PARKS - Vaughan Field, Granite City Park, The RES, Effie L. Berry Conservation Area, and any residential or downtown pocket parks are special places and recreational assets to Hallowell residents. Our parks provide a wide variety of activities for a wide variety of users and are green, sustainable keystones essential for a livable and desirable community.

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Recommendations

- Consider intern positions to publish use guidelines, historical facts, and information pamphlets about each City park; highlight and market recreation areas on City website under Parks and Recreation Resources
- Establish and follow consistent branding, maintenance, and management policies across all Hallowell recreational areas
- Determine goals and priorities for City Parks to address appropriate full-time and part-time staffing and capital budgeting for oversight and maintenance of facilities, amenities, and infrastructure as well as area improvements.

2018-2019 RTCA Project RES Working Group members

- Rosemary Presnar, Hallowell Conservation Commission, Chair
- Ben Godsoe, Hallowell Conservation Commission
- Deb Sewall, Hallowell Conservation Commission
- Wes Davis, Hallowell Tree Board
- Kat Schweikert, Hallowell resident, Mapping Volunteer
- Paul Giguere, Manchester Country Riders (snowmobile club maintains 2 trails through the RES, #29 and #27T)
- Garry Hinkley, Manchester Conservation Commission & Central Maine Chapter of the NE Mountain Bike Association (Bike Association has built single track trails at the RES and promotes use)
- Burnham Martin, Project Manager, National Park Service
- Marie Caspard, National Park Service Intern, 2018

2018-2019 RTCA Project [GoogleDrive link to working documents](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1630uwnQIFcpvQx_jLsDdzHRrQwRUcd4) (MOUs, Communications Plan, User survey, final May 2019 meeting minutes and update, etc.) >
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1630uwnQIFcpvQx_jLsDdzHRrQwRUcd4

Document History

- v1104: RES Working Group submission to Recreation Commission for review on Dec 05, 2018.
- v0203: revisions from Dec meeting with Recreation Commission
- v0221: revisions from Feb meeting with Recreation Commission
- final v1: September 17, 2019 at completion of project