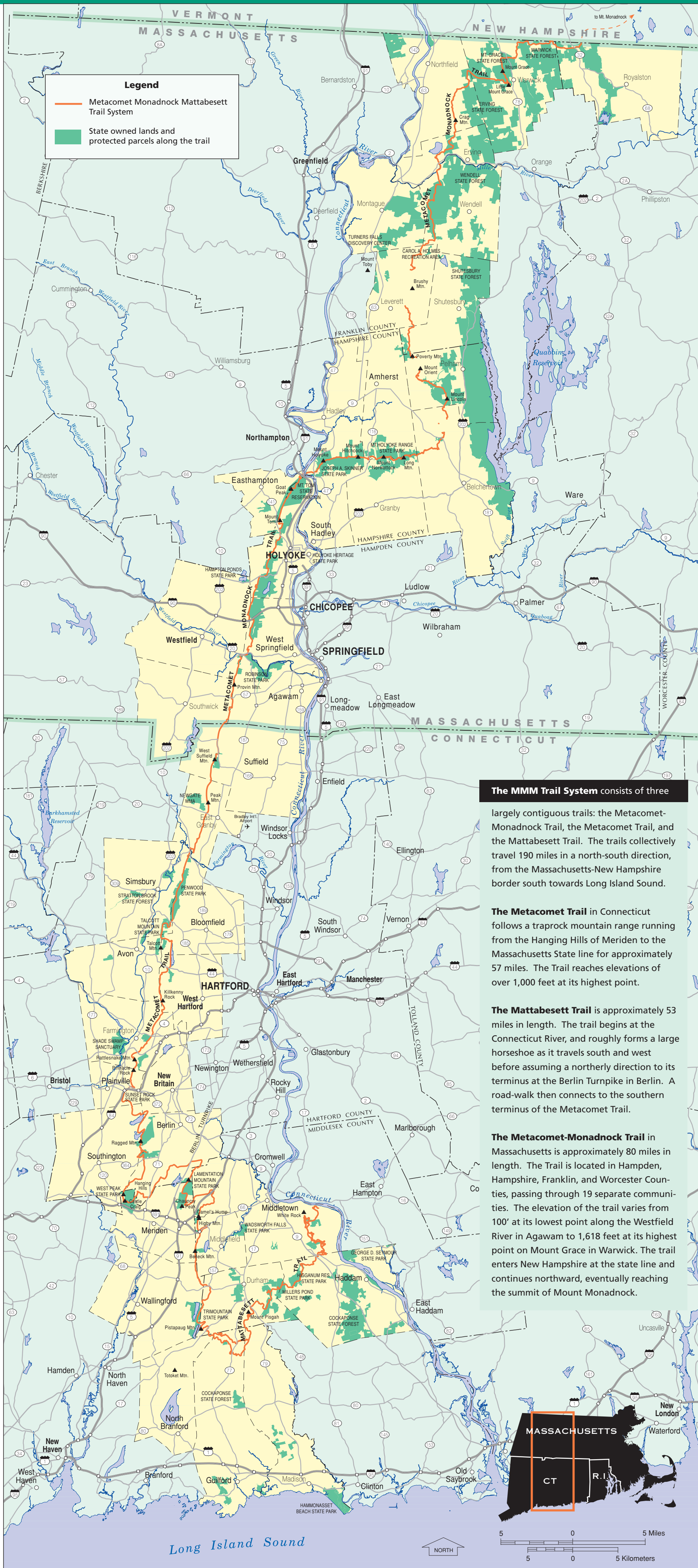


Metacomet Monadnock Mattabesett Trail System



The National Scenic Trails System

The National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543, as amended through Public Law 107-325) institutes a national system of historic, scenic, and recreation trails. National Scenic Trails are trails of at least 100 miles in length that provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential, and for the conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of areas through which such trails pass. Currently, there are a total of eight designated National Scenic Trails: Appalachian, Pacific Crest, Continental Divide, Ice Age, North Country, Florida, Natchez Trace, and Potomac Heritage.

How to Comment on this Draft

This brochure is an Executive Summary of the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett (MMM) Trail System National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment. This report has been prepared to provide Congress and the public with information about the resources and recreational use of the MMM Trail and how they relate to criteria for National Scenic Trails, applied by the National Park Service. A copy of the full study may be obtained by contacting: MMM Trail National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study
National Park Service, Northeast Region
15 State Street, Boston, MA 02109
tel. 617-223-5051

The full report is also online at:
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsAndLinks.cfm?projectId=15353>
For further information, or to make suggestions or comments on this study, please contact the National Park Service Boston Support Office.

A Feasibility Study Conducted by the National Park Service

In cooperation with
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection • Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation • Connecticut Forest & Park Association
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission • Franklin Regional Council of Governments

The MMM Trail System consists of three

largely contiguous trails: the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, the Metacomet Trail, and the Mattabesett Trail. The trails collectively travel 190 miles in a north-south direction, from the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border south towards Long Island Sound.

The Metacomet Trail in Connecticut follows a traprock mountain range running from the Hanging Hills of Meriden to the Massachusetts State line for approximately 57 miles. The Trail reaches elevations of over 1,000 feet at its highest point.

The Mattabesett Trail is approximately 53 miles in length. The trail begins at the Connecticut River, and roughly forms a large horseshoe as it travels south and west before assuming a northerly direction to its terminus at the Berlin Turnpike in Berlin. A road-walk then connects to the southern terminus of the Metacomet Trail.

The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts is approximately 80 miles in length. The Trail is located in Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, and Worcester Counties, passing through 19 separate communities. The elevation of the trail varies from 100' at its lowest point along the Westfield River in Agawam to 1,618 feet at its highest point on Mount Grace in Warwick. The trail enters New Hampshire at the state line and continues northward, eventually reaching the summit of Mount Monadnock.

Castle Craig – Meriden, CT



Robert Pagani

Holland Glen – Belchertown, MA



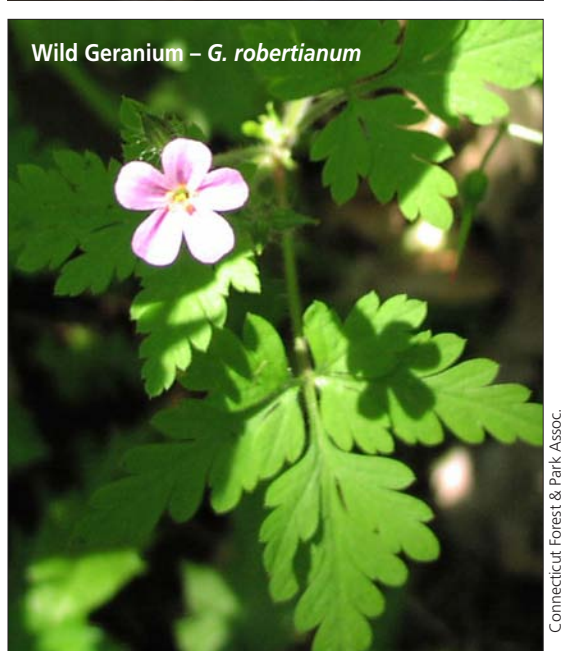
Chris Curtis

Merimere Reservoir – Meriden, CT



Robert Pagani

Wild Geranium – *G. robertianum*



Connecticut Forest & Park Assoc.

Appalachian Mountain Club – Trail Improvements



Glen Ayers

Connecticut River Valley – Hadley, MA



Chris Curtis

Metacomet Monadnock Mattabesett Trail

National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment

DRAFT Executive Summary – Spring 2006

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

June 2006



Study Overview

The Metacomet Monadnock Mattabesett (MMM) Trail System is a 190-mile trail route that has been in existence for over half a century. It travels through 39 communities in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The trail system is one of two long-distance recreational trails serving south-central New England.

The MMM Trail System hosts an array of scenic features and historic sites. Long distance vistas with rural towns as a backdrop, agrarian lands, unfragmented forests, and large river valleys are among the classic New England landscape features located along the trail system. The trail travels through important Native American and colonial historical landmarks and harbors a range of diverse

ecosystems and natural resources—traprock ridges, mountain summits, forested glades, vernal pools, lakes, streams and waterfalls.

As growth continues to change the landscape of southern New England, portions of the MMM Trail System have experienced increasing pressures that threaten the long-term viability of this continuous long-distance trail, including residential subdivisions and other growth pressures. These pressures are forcing relocations of the trail and options for such relocations are dwindling.

Responding to the perceived threats to the long-term viability of the trail system, Congressman John Olver

of Massachusetts and Congresswoman Nancy Johnson of Connecticut sponsored federal legislation to study the Metacomet Monadnock Mattabesett Trail System in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Two goals were established for the study that became Public Law 107-338 in December, 2002:

Primary Goal – To determine the best way to ensure the long-term viability of a continuous public-use trail system from Long Island Sound through Connecticut to the Massachusetts/New Hampshire border.
Secondary Goal – To determine whether or not designation as a National Scenic Trail makes sense as a means of achieving the primary goal of long-term trail system viability.

In addition, the study had four guiding principles:

- **Meaningful investigation of the trail system's long-term viability can only occur with involvement of a wide range of trail advocates, landowners, and other interested parties.**
- **Emphasis will be on strengthening existing trail system partnerships and characteristics of use, maintenance, ownership, and voluntary stewardship.**
- **Respect for private property rights is a fundamental component of a successful project.**
- **Federal condemnation of land will not be considered as an option in establishing or protecting the trail system.**

Robert Pagini

Higby Mountain – Middlefield, CT

Study Accomplishments

In addition to researching the trail and its natural, cultural and recreational attributes, several accomplishments completed during the study are worthy of particular note, including:

- **Mapping the Trail.** Modern GIS and GPS mapping techniques allowed for more detailed and accurate mapping of the existing trail system route.
- **Identifying and Communicating with Trail Landowners.** By cross referencing accurate trail location data with tax map records in town and city offices, 613 landowners owning 1,070 parcels of land on the trail system were identified and contacted.
- **Identifying Trail Issues and Opportunities.** Working committees, trail landowners, user groups, community officials, trail stewards and others all contributed to an understanding of trail issues and opportunities.
- **Research on Successful Long-Distance Trail Management.** Research was completed on different types of long-distance trail management practices across the U.S. to better inform the study process and products.
- **A Blueprint for the Future of the Trail.** The Blueprint is intended to be a useful guide to the future of the trail whether or not National Scenic Trail designation is implemented.

To ensure broad stakeholder involvement, an ad-hoc steering committee was formed in Connecticut and working groups were formed in Massachusetts to assist in the completion of the study, and involvement was open to all interested parties. Considerable effort was also put into engaging trail landowners and community leaders. The outreach included trail-use questionnaires, newsletters, community meetings, and the establishment of a website.

The mapping, landowner communication, and stakeholder dialogue sponsored by the study generated important spin-off accomplishments undertaken by volunteer partner efforts:

- **Extension to Long Island Sound.** A 14-mile potential route in Guilford, CT connecting the existing trail system to Long Island Sound has been identified.
- **Successful Trail Relocations.** Several landowners who were contacted during the study requested that the trail be removed from their lands. Trail managers and community partners subsequently moved several miles of trail in both Connecticut and Massachusetts onto permanently protected routes.

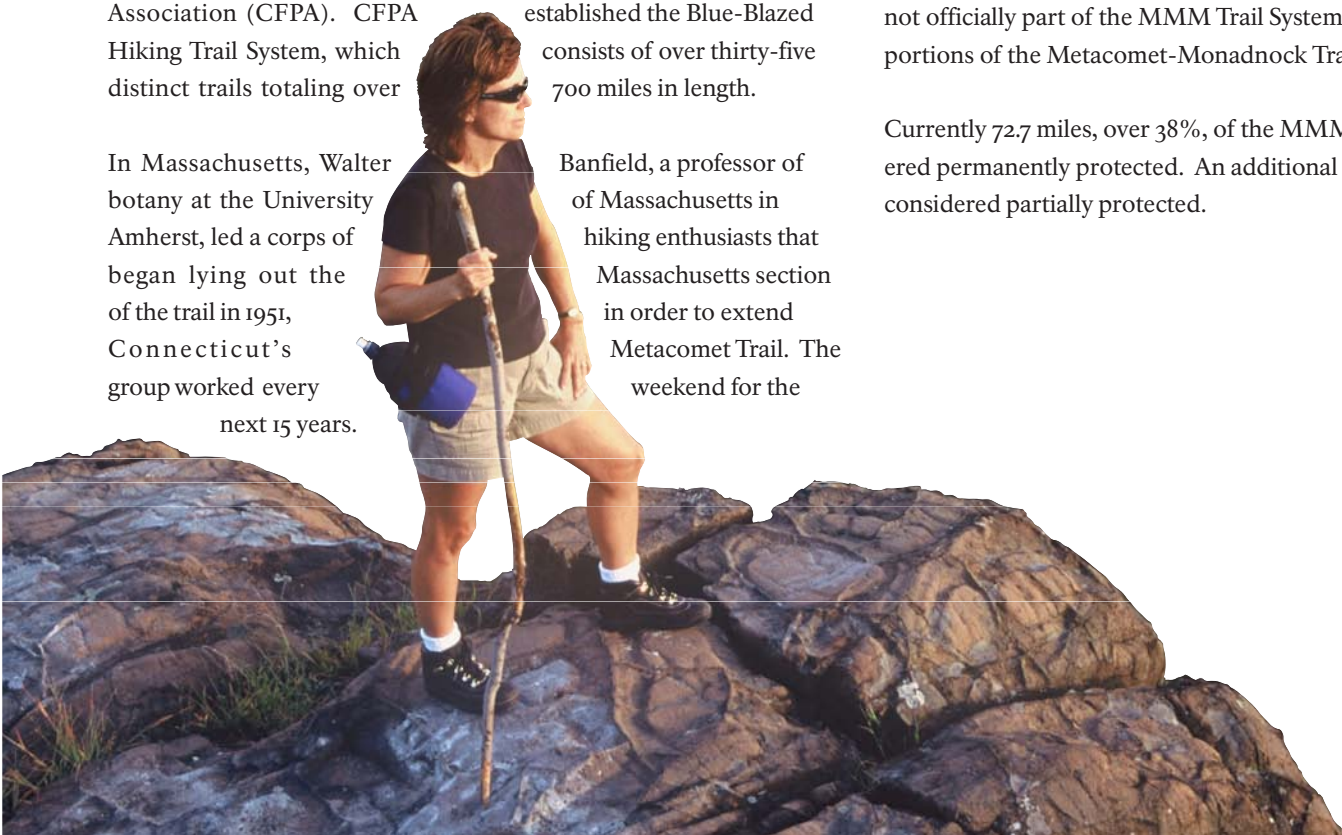
The Metacomet Monadnock Mattabesett Trail System

Trail Development History

In Connecticut, organized trail construction and maintenance activities for the Metacomet and Mattabesett Trails officially began in the 1930's under the auspices of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA). CFPA established the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System, which consists of over thirty-five distinct trails totaling over 700 miles in length.

In Massachusetts, Walter Banfield, a professor of botany at the University of Amherst, led a corps of hikers who began laying out the trail in 1951. Connecticut's group worked every weekend for the next 15 years.

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Muldoon/Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism

Trail Management

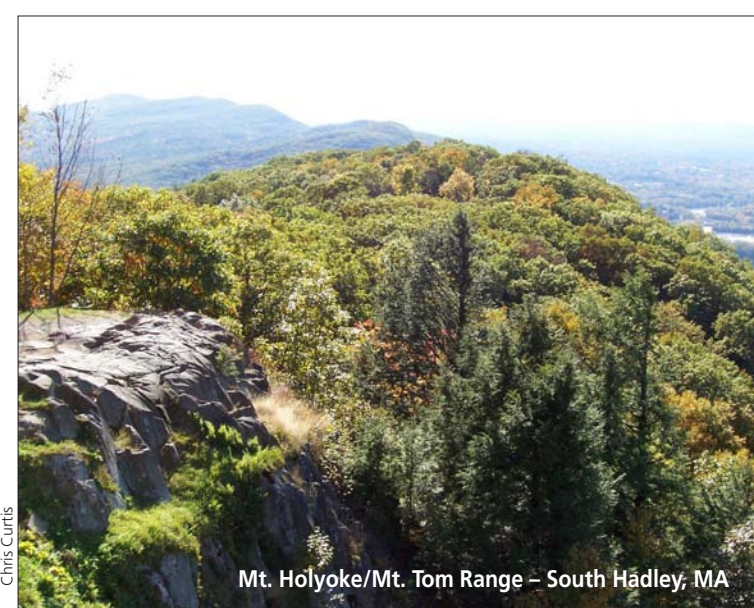
The principal stewards of the trail are the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA) in Connecticut and the Berkshire Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) in Massachusetts. The entire trail system is predominantly managed and maintained by volunteers, and much of it relies on the generosity and commitment of landowners who voluntarily allow it to cross their lands.

Recreational Use of the Trail

The MMM Trail System is primarily used as a continuous hiking trail, with alternative uses (permitted or not) occurring on certain sections of trail. Overnight camping is permitted in a limited number of locations, usually on state park or forest lands. Public and private owners of land crossed by the trail retain ultimate control over what uses are allowed on the portion of the trail that crosses their property.

Demographics and Land Use Along the Trail

The MMM Trail System passes through one of the most densely populated areas of the country. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the 39 municipalities that the trail system travels through have a combined population of 775,604 people and an average population per square mile of 686, which is eight times the national average of 80 people per square mile.



Chris Curtis

Mt. Holyoke/Mt. Tom Range – South Hadley, MA

Ownership and Protection

The 190-mile MMM Trail System travels through 1,070 parcels of land owned by 613 landowners in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The largest group of trail landowners are public and non-profit, who combined account for 49% of the total trail length. The individuals and corporations, are the next largest landowner with 35% of the trail. Over 13% of the existing trail is on roads, most of which are either woods roads or small local roads and are located in Connecticut. These statistics do not include an additional 10 miles of trail that are not officially part of the MMM Trail System but connect various portions of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts.

Currently 72.7 miles, over 38%, of the MMM Trail System is considered permanently protected. An additional 20.4 miles or nearly 11% is considered partially protected.

Significance Evaluation

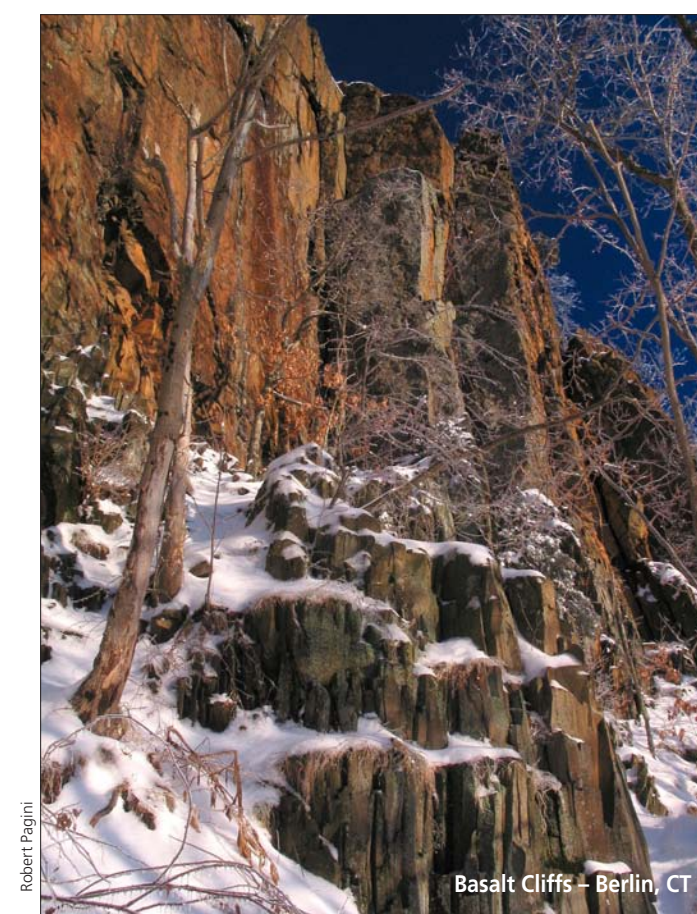
The study identified characteristics which make the MMM Trail system worthy of designation as a National Scenic Trail including:

- **Scenic Mountains.** The trail traverses the Metacomet, Mt. Tom, and Mt. Holyoke mountain ranges offering some of New England's most outstanding scenery and geologic features.
- **Historic New England Villages.** Over 50 national register listed historic districts abut the trail. There are outstanding views from the trail as well as links to many side trails.
- **Proximity to Population.** Over 2 million people live within 10 miles of the trail system, with easy access to an incredible natural experience.
- **Geologic Resources.** The trail offers some of the world's best opportunities to view volcanic, sedimentary, and glacial geology, including columnar basalt, fossils, and dinosaur footprints.
- **Endangered Species and Natural Communities.** Areas along the trail have an outstanding richness of habitat types, natural communities, and rare and endangered species' habitats. In Connecticut, 132 occurrences of rare species or natural communities have been documented within 1000 feet of the trail.

Management Alternatives and Environmental Assessment

The draft study report considers four alternatives:

- 1) Continuation of Current Practices;
- 2) Implementation of the Trail Management Blueprint through National Scenic Trail Designation for the Entire Historical Route of the MMM Trail;
- 3) Implementation of the Trail Management Blueprint through National Scenic Trail Designation from Long Island Sound to the NH Border, including a significant re-route in the Belchertown – Leverett area in MA;
- 4) Implementation of the Trail Management Blueprint without National Scenic Trail Designation.



Robert Pagini

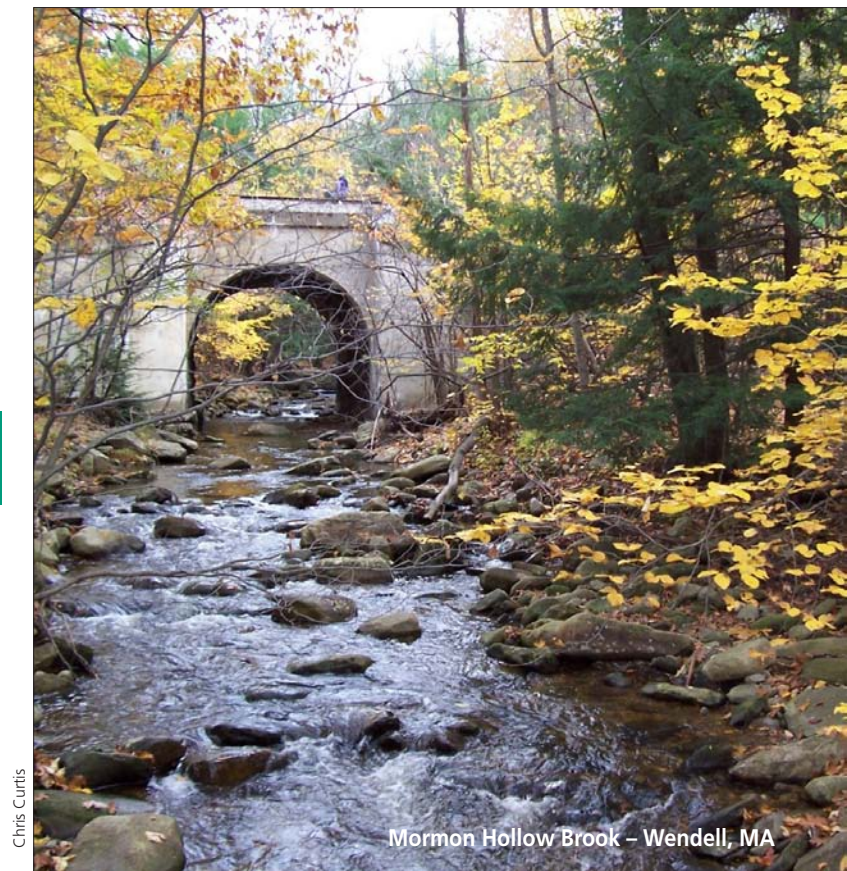
Basalt Cliffs – Berlin, CT

Preferred Management Alternative (Alternative 3)

The study concludes that the long-term viability of the MMM Trail System as a high quality, continuous, long-distance trail will require a sustained level of increased focus and resources by a wide array of trail partners. National Scenic Trail designation appears to be the most feasible way to generate such an increased level of attention and resources. With proposed trail extensions and relocations, the trail system would be approximately 220 miles in length.

The designation would:

- Provide the best opportunity to secure long-term trail viability
- Provide an opportunity for federal funding for trail management and protection
- Address critical landowner issues through commitment to a Management Blueprint
- Coalesce trail partners and communities through creation of a Trail Stewardship Council
- Facilitate a trail extension to Long Island Sound
- Elevate the profile of the trail system to the level of national significance



Chris Curtis

Mormon Hollow Brook – Wendell, MA

The preferred alternative includes the following:

"Blueprint for Management." The Blueprint for Management was developed with input from a full range of study participants to provide the best possible plan for long-term trail viability. Future trail management, administration and protection efforts would be based on the Blueprint.

Creation of a Trail Stewardship Council. The council would bring trail partners and stakeholders together on a regular basis to discuss trail issues and coordinate management activities, and generally guide implementation of the Blueprint for Management. The Council would have advisory powers only, being non-regulatory in nature.

Limited National Park Service Role. The Study identified no need for direct federal trail ownership or direct federal trail management. Thus, the National Park Service role in implementing the proposed National Scenic Trail designation would be one of providing technical and financial assistance to existing trail partners, coordinated through the Trail Stewardship Council.

A New Name. A new, unifying name is suggested (i.e., New England National Scenic Trail). Traditional trail names would continue to be used where appropriate — for example "Mattabesett Trail, part of the New England National Scenic Trail."

New Route Opportunities. In addition to the proposed extension to Long Island Sound in Guilford, CT, a new route for the National Scenic Trail is proposed in the Belchertown to Leverett section of the trail in Massachusetts. The new route is envisioned to take advantage of substantial state-owned lands that can provide a quality, protected trail route, while avoiding a trail segment almost completely devoid of protected lands.