

# BURLINGTON CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP HANDBOOK



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## Conservation in Burlington

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From its incorporation in 1799 through the early 1900s, the Town of Burlington flourished as a small agricultural community with only a few hundred residents. When industry and large-scale infrastructure came to town, agricultural and forested lands gave way to housing developments, office buildings, and industrial parks. The development boom, precipitated by the construction of Route 128, brought about the Burlington that we have come to know today.

Realizing the necessity to better preserve and manage open space and natural areas, the Burlington Conservation Commission was established in 1966. Among its other duties, today the Conservation Commission works to acquire, manage, and protect natural resources within town.

Burlington has over 250 acres of land under the protection and management of the Conservation Commission. These Conservation Areas are town-owned lands that have been set aside specifically for natural resource protection (such as drinking water protection and wildlife habitat preservation) and for passive recreation (such as hiking and bird-watching).



## Burlington Conservation Areas

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The Burlington Conservation Stewards work with the Conservation Commission in the management and protection of over 250 acres of permanently protected open space. While the primary purpose of these Conservation Areas is for the protection of natural resources, many of these areas are also accessible to the public for passive recreational activities such as hiking and bird-watching.

There are currently 17 Conservation Areas in Burlington, with five offering maintained trails for passive recreational opportunities. A map depicting the locations of the Conservation Areas is included in this handbook on page 6.



Mill Pond Reservoir and Conservation Area  
Photo by J. Wernmer

## Rules for Using Conservation Areas

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Burlington's Conservation Areas may be enjoyed through passive recreational activities, such as hiking, bird-watching, and picnicking.

Horseback riding, large-group outings, and camping are subject to Conservation Commission approval. Please contact the Conservation Department if you wish to pursue any of these activities in Conservation Areas.

There shall be **NO** littering; dumping; vandalism; off-leash dogs; radios without headphones; hunting or trapping; removal of plants, wildlife, or other material; cutting of firewood; swimming; firearms; camp fires; alcohol; or motorized vehicles of any kind.



## What Is Conservation Stewardship?

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Conservation stewardship is simply the careful and responsible management of our natural resources, ensuring the continued health of the fragile ecosystems around us. The goal of a Burlington Conservation Steward is to ensure natural resource protection within and across Town boundaries.

Conservation stewardship in Burlington is primarily achieved through **land management** activities (such as trail maintenance and invasive species removal) and **public education and outreach** (such as leading walks).

Some of the ways that individual Stewards can help out with the care of our conservation land are:

- Visiting nearby conservation areas often to monitor for changes or potential issues
- Picking up and properly disposing of trash that others have left behind
- Volunteering on a scheduled workday
- Pruning back branches and removing other blockages to established trails
- Notifying the Conservation Department of issues that are too big to handle personally, such as downed trees over trails, illegal dumping, and encroachment
- Serving as a primary contact person for a specific conservation area
- Talking to friends about Burlington's conservation land and other open space



Snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) hatchling  
Photo by J. Wennemer

## Becoming a Conservation Steward

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If you are interested in volunteering, simply contact the Burlington Conservation Department and we will arrange to meet you to discuss the program and your interests.

## Land Management

*Land management activities in Burlington are specifically designed to help preserve natural resource areas while encouraging thoughtful use and enjoyment of these lands. Land management activities ensure that we have access to natural areas for exploration, education, and recreation while maintaining the integrity of the wilderness.*

Stewards can be extremely helpful in caring for our conservation lands by performing low-key maintenance on a frequent basis. Much of this maintenance can be done individually during casual walks or visits to conservation areas, while other work needs organized workdays to get the job done. This section details guidelines for the most common Steward efforts, including:

- Monitoring and Reporting
- Trash Clean Up
- Routine Trail Maintenance

## Monitoring

Monitoring is the first step in land management in Burlington. Burlington Conservation Stewards monitor our Conservation Areas and report on the general status of the property and any problems or issues observed.

Monitoring is an easy way to help protect and maintain our preserved natural spaces. As you walk the trails at our Conservation Areas, simply make note of your observations, with specific interest paid to those issues outlined below.

### What to Look For

- Unusual changes in natural or human-made features
- Unusual wildlife, plants, or other notable natural features
- Evidence of illegal or illicit activities, such as underage drinking, fires, unauthorized motor vehicles, hunting or trapping, shooting, or disposal of pollutants
- Emergency situations such as personal injuries, crimes in action, or forest fires
- Damage or destruction of vegetation
- Large deposits of trash or landscaping debris
- Vandalism
- Any type of construction
- Encroachment onto conservation land by neighboring properties
- Overgrown trails that you are unable to trim yourself
- New trails being created
- Broken boardwalk sections
- Trails that are chronically wet or muddy outside of the spring wet season
- Other issues that you consider to be worth reporting

### What to Bring

You should bring the following items with you when monitoring Conservation Areas:

- Map provided by Conservation Department depicting boundaries and trails
- Field notebook and pencil
- Cell phone
- Insect repellent, sunscreen, appropriate clothing and footwear, first aid kit

All monitoring reports should be compiled on the Burlington Conservation Stewards Monitoring Form. These are available on our website: [http://cms2.revize.com/revize/burlingtonma/community\\_development/bcs.php](http://cms2.revize.com/revize/burlingtonma/community_development/bcs.php)

or may be obtained at the Conservation Department. Please follow the instructions on the monitoring forms and submit completed forms to the Conservation Department when complete.

Any photos submitted shall have an accurate date stamp on the image and should be saved as JPEGs before submission. Please follow the naming format below, which includes Conservation Area name, the date of monitoring, and the image number: Sawmill\_Brook\_10.30.10\_001.jpg.

All images should be sent to [conservation@burlington.org](mailto:conservation@burlington.org) or brought to the Conservation Department offices.

## Trash Clean Up

It is unfortunate but true that a reliable supply of trash continues to appear in our conservation and open space area, so regular clean-ups by individuals or organized workgroups is one of the most important activities that Stewards can perform. This trash is not only unsightly, but it can also pollute water and soil and pose threats to wildlife.

Often, individual Stewards picking up trash on their own does the trick, but occasionally, trash problems are too large for individuals alone, and workdays or a report to the Conservation Department are more appropriate solutions. You can work with the Conservation Department to set up a work day.

### Trash Disposal

- Small amounts of trash collected by individuals can often be put out with the Steward's weekly trash pick up. On workdays, if a small number of bags of trash is collected, the volunteers can often distribute the bags among themselves to be left at their curb for weekly pickup.
- For larger amounts of trash, contact the Conservation Department to schedule a pick-up by the Town. When possible, move the trash to the side of a nearby truck-accessible road and pile it so that it is not an inconvenience or danger to visitors and neighbors.

### Helpful Tools for Trash Clean Ups

- Work gloves to protect against broken glass & metal, unsanitary garbage, and thorns
- Trash bags
- Clothing that covers arms and legs to protect against thorns, poison ivy, and ticks
- Waterproof boots or old shoes if removing trash from wet areas
- An old backpack for carrying litter

## Trail Maintenance

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**Before commencing any trail maintenance activities**, please check in with the Conservation Department so that we are able to make sure all of our trails are getting the attention they deserve.



### Trimming and Clearing Trails

Cutting, clearing, and trimming may only be done when vegetation is interfering with hiking/walking on authorized trails through our Conservation Areas. Trails may not be rerouted or enlarged (in width or height) without the express permission of the Conservation Department.

Trimming and clearing activities are only permitted on authorized trails, which are marked on trail maps. If you are unsure of the status of a trail, please check with the Conservation Department.

Routine trail maintenance tasks may include:

- Clearing downed trees and limbs that block established trails or pose a safety hazard
- Pruning/trimming vegetation that overhangs trails
- Trimming vegetation around signs and kiosks so that they are clearly visible
- Reporting chronically wet trails to the Conservation Department
- Monitoring trails to ensure that new ones are not being created without permission and that closed trails remain closed

### Permission

For light pruning/trimming and removal of downed limbs or trees across trails, Stewards can proceed without seeking approval from the Conservation Department, as long as the trail is on a conservation area (if questionable, please contact the Conservation Department). For larger projects, such as creating new trails, Stewards should contact the Conservation Department to discuss the project.

### Trail Appearance

A well-maintained trail should look natural, with few visible cuts on bordering vegetation. All cut branches and brush should be moved well off the trail with the cut end pointing away from the trail.

## Removing Blowdowns

Blown down trees and limbs should be removed as soon as possible from trails where they present a hazard of falling on visitors or block the trail in such a way that would encourage visitors to create new trails around them. Contact the Conservation Department for approval or assistance in removing blown down limbs or trees.

Cut deadwood should be left to decompose where it fell but off the trail. Blowdowns that are not hazardous and do not completely obstruct very rugged trails can be left in place if they contribute to the character of the trail.

## Contact Information

Conservation Department	781-270-1655	Conservation@burlington.org
Police Non Emergency	781-272-1212	
Emergency	911	

Mail for the Stewards should be addressed to:

Burlington Conservation Stewards  
c/o Conservation Department  
25 Center Street, Burlington, MA 01803

Burlington Conservation general website:

[http://www.burlington.org/community\\_development/conservation.php](http://www.burlington.org/community_development/conservation.php)

Burlington Conservation Stewards website:

[http://cms2.revize.com/revize/burlingtonma/community\\_development/bcs.php](http://cms2.revize.com/revize/burlingtonma/community_development/bcs.php)

## Map of Conservation Areas in Burlington

