

Atkinson Conservation Trails



1: Stickney Land

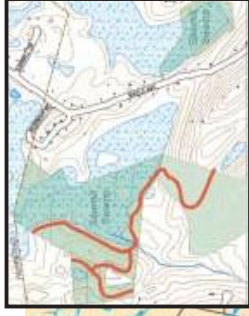
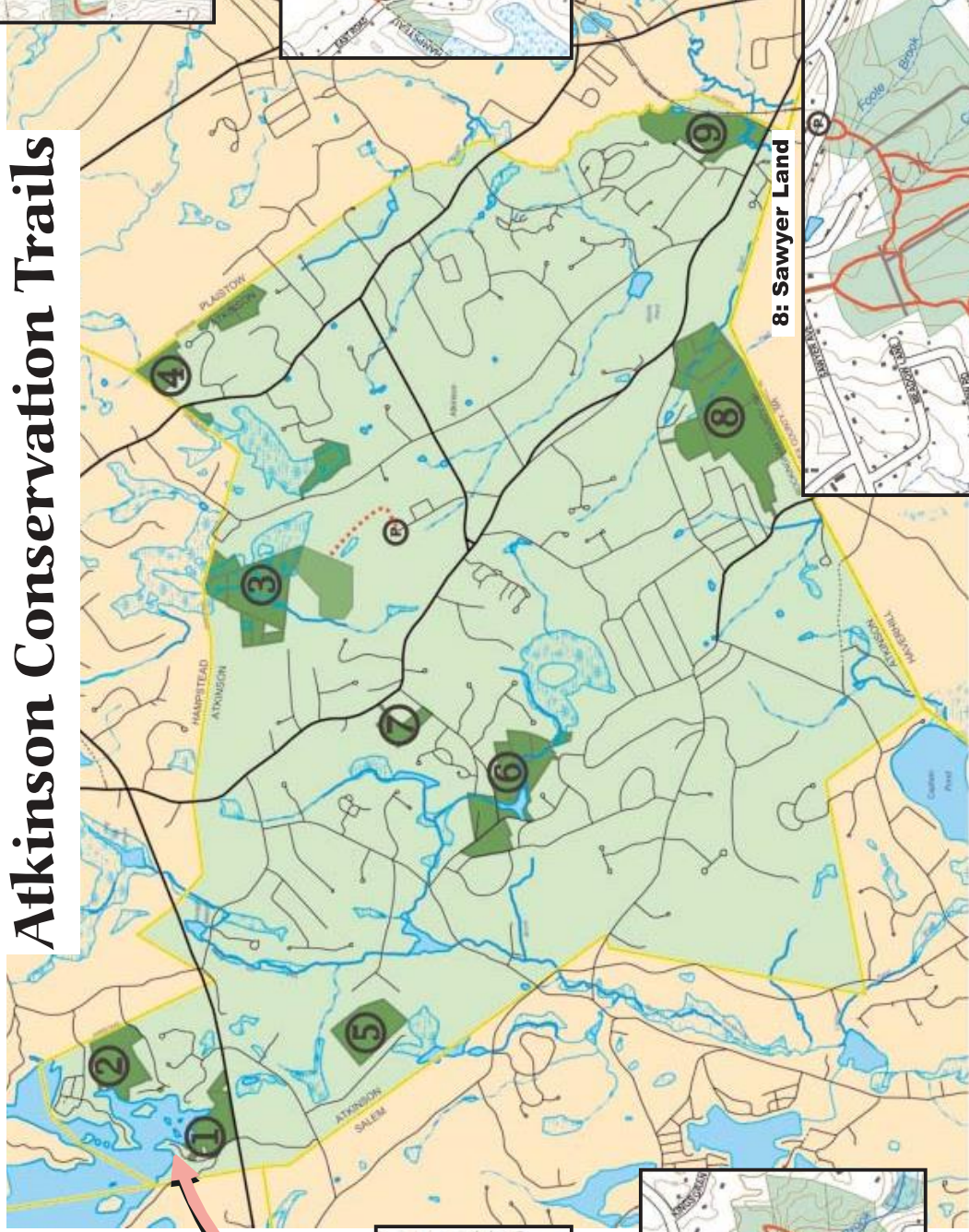
Atkinson Public
Canoe Launch



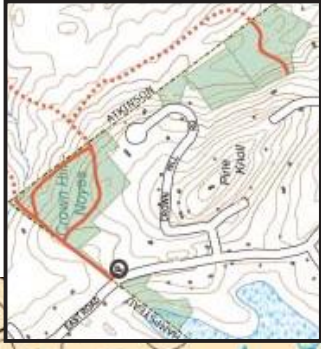
2: Marshall Land



6: Pope Road Land



3: Sawmill Swamp



**4: Crown Hill -
Noyes Rock**



**9: Carolyn Orr
Conservation
Land**



8: Sawyer Land

Marshall Trust (5) and Slade Town Forest (7)
are not shown.

For more information on these trails and others in town, go to the Atkinson Conservation web site at www.atkinsonconservation.org or email the Commission at staff@atkinsonconservation.org

This project is supported by funds from the sale of the Conservation License Plate (Moose Plate) under the NH State Conservation Committee (NH SCC) grant program.



Atkinson Trails and Lands

Conservation and the Community

Atkinson is characterized by its rural feel and tree-lined roads. Many have chosen to make this community their home because of these characteristics. Our desirable surroundings attract more development as others want to join in. At this point, much of our rural character exists because of the good stewardship of large landowners. Currently, only a little over 10% of Atkinson's land is conserved as permanent open space. Almost a third of that is due to "set-asides" for Open Space Cluster Development. We hope to keep our town "green" by conserving more of the beauty we all love.

What to See on the Trails

Forest Stands

Until the mid-1800's most of New Hampshire was cleared for farming activities. As farming moved to the Midwest, abandoned fields began to revert to their natural state. (New England is the only major region in the world being reforested!) The species that we see now may give us clues about how the land was used during agricultural periods. Stands of white pines are often found in fields that were used for grazing. You may also see other species, such as juniper, on the forest floor. These species thrived because they were unpalatable to cattle. Red maples are common in wet, lowland areas that were often used for hayting.

Forest stands can also give you clues about past weather events. White pines often give way to high winds. The hurricane of 1938 hit southern New Hampshire hard. Look for "pit and mound" topography, pits indicating where the roots had been and mounds indicating their final resting place. These wind throws open the forest floor to light, allowing sun-loving species to thrive until faster growing species take over. Our forests are a constantly changing landscape.

Geology

The topography of our region was dictated by the movement of glaciers during the last ice age. The power of these glaciers is evident in the massive boulders (glacial erratics) that litter our landscape, and the drumlins (large hills composed of rocks left by advancing glaciers).

Manmade Features

One of the most common manmade features we see on our trails are the wonderful stone walls characteristic of New England. Even these walls give us clues about the past. Straight walls that ignore the contour of the land often defined property lines; for example, the Massachusetts/New Hampshire boundary defined by a stone wall on the Sawyer land. Short walls that follow the contour usually divided a farm's different uses like grazing and crop fields. Walls containing many small stones might indicate a field that was plowed regularly. Also found on some conservation trails are house and shelter remains (foundations, etc.).

Town of Atkinson
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Wildlife

Most of the conservation areas in Atkinson have wetland habitats, which result in an abundance of wildlife in all seasons. Fields provide optimal areas to view migrating hawks, and sometimes bald eagles, in the spring and fall. There is usually beaver activity in the Sawmill Swamp area. Winter tracking by snowshoe is a great way to discover signs of wildlife in our area. Deer tracks are always abundant, but also look for coyote, beaver and even signs of black bear!

Trails

Updates are available online at www.atkinsonconservation.org

1 Ruth Stickney Land/Canoe Launch

Two gifts of the Ruth Stickney estate provide walking trails of approximately 32 acres protecting significant shoreline on Big Island Pond. There are approximately two miles of trails in some of the steepest terrain on any Atkinson conservation land. Parking is available at the trailhead at the end of Lakeside Drive.

A gift of Ruth Stickney allows community access to Big Island Pond for canoeing and kayaking. The quarter-acre parcel has parking for six cars on the right side of Stickney Road. Take Waters Edge off of Route 111, turn right onto Stickney Road. The canoe parking lot is two-tenths of a mile further up the road on the right, marked by a large sign "No Overnight Parking".

2 Marshall Town Forest

This trail is a loop that is a little over one mile long, covering a good portion of the 35 acre parcel, turning back at Big Island Pond. The trailhead is on the right side of Houle's Grove Road, which comes off West Road in Hampstead. Park along the side of the road. The trail features a series of 26 stations which identify natural and manmade features of the parcel. A copy of the trail point-of-interest guide is available online at the Conservation Commission website.

3 Sawmill Swamp Area

This trail features a new access trail cut by Boy Scout Troop 9, from the trailhead at the end of Woodlawn Terrace. The access trail is shown as a red dotted line on the main map. Trailhead parking is available for two or three cars. The first half mile of trail is privately owned; trail access was deeded to the town. The trail is approximately 4.3 miles long, descending from the trailhead to the Sawmill Swamp area. The Spickett and Little Rivers flow from the swamp, making this one of Atkinson's most ecologically significant wetlands. It provides important habitat for wildlife and water recharging functions for our community.

4 Crown Hill Forest/Noyes Rock

This trailhead is located on East Road on the Atkinson/Hampstead town line. There is only off-road parking for one car between the stone walls. This trail system is significant because it hooks into large trail systems in the Plaislow town forest and Hampstead. The trail is a one mile loop of moderately changing trail grade. There are two spurs off the loop that link Atkinson to the other trail systems. The Plaislow spur (red dotted line) branches; the left branch joins into the Plaislow trail system and the right lead to the Noyes Rock Shelter land in Atkinson. The second spur continues straight off the East Road access; but is not well marked, except for a granite boundary marker of the interior Atkinson/Hampstead line.

5 Marshall Trust

This meadow area is off Industrial Way, situated behind several manufacturing buildings and a private forest land. Bluebirds find this area particularly attractive, and can be found year round in the field. In addition, the field is an open meadow of wildflowers and other significant local plants, and is used as an access trail by deer and coyotes.

6 Pope Road Land

This trail covers approximately 4.5 acres of beautiful woodlands with views of Hovey Meadow Pond. The trailhead is located off the Pope Road recreation area, following the paved sidewalk over a stream flowing from the pond. Ample parking is located at the recreation area. The one mile trail loops through wooded highlands near Indian Rock (also known as "Meeting Rock").

7 Christa Slade Town Forest Lot

This trail is relatively flat and is less than a half mile long, providing beautiful views of the Stewart Farm Pond. The trailhead is located at the parking area just off Pope Road in Settler's Ridge.

8 Sawyer Nature Area

This fairly flat trail is a 1 1/2-mile loop through over 140 acres of new growth forest. The trail, which is an old woodlot road, is well defined and follows the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border on the southern side, evidenced by the original 18th century stone-wall boundary. There are three access points. The first access point—the trailhead—is off of Sawyer Avenue, just off Main Street, with parking for five or six cars. Less than a half mile down Sawyer Ave from the trailhead is the second access point. The third is at the end of Forest Drive. The trail system also includes several interior trail loops and offshoots.

9 Carolyn Orr Conservation Land

The trails on this parcel cover only part of the over 60 acres of conservation land. This was originally part of the Trinity House Camp, which served underprivileged girls from the greater Boston area. There are approximately three miles of trails covering fairly flat terrain. Abundant parking is available at the Community Center. There are two access points to the trails. The trailhead is located off the parking lot on the back side of the Community Center, and a second entrance is about 75 feet in from Robie Lane, on the left, and runs all the way to the pond.

Important Considerations

- Wear day glow orange during hunting season.
- After walking, check for ticks during spring and summer.
- Motorized vehicles are not permitted on conservation land.
- Follow "Leave No Trace" principles - take all trash with you (be a good steward - bring a bag and carry out trash), leave natural items you find, respect wildlife and be considerate of others using the trail system.

Stewart Farm Pond
Photo by Paul Wainwright