

Since When is “Common Courtesy” a New Policy?

The MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife) implementation of a Walking Trails Policy is simply a request for common courtesy while using our public forests, meadows, wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes and ponds. We should not consider asking for permission to cut, slash, and paint a trail through our wildlife lands as a “new policy”! I am sure if someone cut a trail through your property you would feel the same way. Often what starts out as a few ribbons marking a pathway through our wildlife lands escalates into moving rocks, digging, and building bridges. The next thing to follow is motorized vehicles illegally using these "improved" trail ways. Soon after well intended but misguided individuals cut trails, we see illegal dumping, and the next thing is the gates go up!

Wildlife Management Area regulations have always prohibited cutting vegetation and removing soil without permission from MassWildlife. If you were to go camping, hiking, or picnicking at any of our state parks, you are also not allowed to remove any brush, branches, trees, or alter any of the grounds to suit your needs. The recently adopted Trails policy provides standard guidance to MassWildlife staff addressing trail development activity, and access to wildlife lands for hunting, fishing, walking and other outdoor recreation has not changed as a result of the Trails policy. (Some people have read the news articles and incorrectly assumed people could not be on paths on the WMAs...)

I applaud our DF&W for simply “doing their job” to protect our wildlife lands and waters by adopting sensible policies and regulating acceptable forms of access. This is what we pay these folks to do; conserve our wildlife and habitats for a well-managed New England landscape. **They are the scientists, biologists, and experts in understanding our rare and endangered species. *Our politicians and private interest groups should rely upon them for their expert advice, NOT tell them how to do their jobs.***

I have spoken with many of our sportsmen and sportswomen throughout our county and other people about the DF&W’s request for “common courtesy” and they are all in agreement. We whole heartedly support the DF&W Board and their staff in their efforts to continue to do their job of protecting Massachusetts' wildlife and wild lands.

Respectfully,

Ron Amidon, Chairman of the Board of Directors
Worcester County League of Sportsmen’s Clubs