



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

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Patrick-Murray Administration Announces New Recreational Trails Policy in 14 Communities

Plan will provide public access to more than 40 miles of trails.

BOSTON – May 22, 2012 – Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan and Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) Executive Director Fred Laskey today announced a new policy for public access to open space along historic aqueducts in 14 communities across the state. “This policy is a great example of promoting multiple environmental goals – clean water supply, open space access and connecting people to the outdoors,” said Secretary Sullivan. “We welcome partnerships with local communities to help enhance safety while providing public access to this pristine open space and trail network.” The new public access policy applies to the Sudbury, Weston, Wachusett and Cochituate aqueducts, which formerly comprised the water supply system for greater Boston and currently serve as emergency back-up water supply. The aqueducts form a recreational trail network through 14 Metro west communities of **Berlin, Boston, Clinton, Framingham, Marlborough, Natick, Needham, Newton, Northborough, Sherborn, Southborough, Wayland, Wellesley, and Weston.** “These aqueducts follow miles of scenic, tree-lined paths across the landscape, which will be a great addition to the open space in these communities,” said MWRA Executive Director Laskey. “This is a model that has been in place at the Weston Reservoir for many years and we’ve recently entered into a similar agreement in Natick. It’s been a very successful program and we look forward to expanding it.” Beginning at Jamaica Pond in the late 1790s, greater Boston’s water system grew into one of the country’s best water systems over the next two centuries. As demand grew, planners looked to the Metro west area outside of Boston for larger sources: Lake Cochituate in the 1840s, then the Sudbury system in the 1870s, the Weston and Wachusett Reservoirs at the turn of the 20th Century and the Quabbin Reservoir in the 1930s. After decades of neglect, MWRA began to modernize the system with a new deep rock aqueduct and covered storage tanks, making the historic aqueducts and reservoirs part of an emergency back-up system, no longer in daily use. “This new policy has the potential to open more than 40 miles of trails across densely populated suburbs west of Boston. These are public lands, and the public deserves the opportunity to enjoy hiking and biking on them,” said Joel Barrera, one of Governor Patrick’s appointees to the MWRA Board of Directors. “This new policy will improve the quality of life in Massachusetts for generations, and is an example of creative and cost-efficient policymaking.” With this policy, MWRA is now formally encouraging public access to the general public through partnerships with neighboring communities. Communities can enter into agreements with MWRA to assume some stewardship responsibilities, allowing for the trails in their towns to be officially open to the public for recreational use. MWRA has developed a new [aqueduct trail logo](#) for signage that will also include the name of each community.

[MWRA’s New Recreational Trails Policy](#)

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