

Letter: DCR disputes claims about Fells management

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What's this?

Unfortunately, their success was limited and the continued use of that part of the trail by hikers had resulted in a widening of the trail in sensitive areas. Illegal use by bikers also contributed to impacts in that area.

Additionally, the trail in those sections continued to channelize water, leading to further erosion. For these reasons, a decision was made to reroute the trail to a less environmentally sensitive area.

The closing of that section of the trail, and the removal of the steps, will result in a restoration of the natural environment and allow for better water infiltration, substantially reducing the erosion.

Contrary to what has been alleged, we have not closed entire trails in the Fells. We have closed some unauthorized portions of trails, including parts of the Dark Hollow Pond Trail blazed by the Friends of the Fells three years ago. We have also closed approximately four miles of trail used by bikers because we felt that use of those trails by bikers is inappropriate.

Bikers are entitled to reasonable access to the property within established guidelines. To date, there has been no net increase in trails for bikers and, ultimately, their access will be much more limited than for walkers and hikers.

While we are establishing some multi-use trails, there will still be more than 50 miles of trail available only to walkers and hikers. Striking such a balance is part of our mission and one we can and will accomplish without "ruining habitats" or "destroying trails."

We believe this campaign of misinformation is an intentional effort to turn the clock back on a public process that incorporated ALL of our user groups.

Under the Resource Management Plan, the Fells can be shared by all and be home to a variety of activities without diminishing its beauty, character, or natural resources. — **Ed Lambert, commissioner, state Department of Conservation and Recreation**

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Melrose, Mass. — **(Editor's note: For more about this issue, [read the story here.](#))**

To the editor:

Thank you for your communication regarding the Middlesex Fells. As the agency charged with the stewardship of this great facility, we feel passionately about its protection for future generations.

We also feel strongly that providing access to this special place, for all users, is central to our mission and can be accomplished within our mandate to preserve and protect our natural resources.

This is why it is disturbing to see the misinformation being disseminated by a group that refers to itself as the "Friends of the Fells" (FoF) which is deliberately misleading the public in its suggestion that DCR is destroying the Fells and tearing up historic trails.

We strongly object to such characterizations and believe these actions are part of an agenda that seeks to limit access to other user groups that the "Friends" does not support.

The work recently accomplished by volunteers from the Student Conservation Association and others with professional experience was not the destruction of historic stone steps. The Student Conservation Association has instead been focusing its efforts on re-routing a small portion of the Reservoir Trail in order to protect the sensitive habitat bordering vegetative wetlands.

This work was done according to best practices around trail closures/rerouting and is part of a larger DCR plan to reroute portions of certain trails out of environmentally sensitive areas. This plan has been outlined in the recently completed Resource Management Plan (maybe we can add a link to this?).

The attempt to suggest that this action was taken to facilitate use of the trail by bikers is not honest. Those making this allegation know that the rerouted area, where the steps were previously, will be closed to BOTH hikers and bikers.

The "historic" stone steps, as they have been referred to, were only placed on the Reservoir Trail within the last seven years. Their purpose was to ease the impacts of hikers on sloped areas and to control for soil erosion.