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Massachusetts*

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Press Release

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Town secures \$50K grant for trail improvements at Great Esker Park

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Weymouth, MA – Mayor Robert Hedlund announced today that the Town of Weymouth has secured a \$50,000 grant through the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR) Recreational Trails Program (RTP) to improve trails at Great Esker Park located along the Weymouth Back River. A total of \$3.94 million was awarded in 2018 for RTP Grants to support design, construction, and maintenance in 75 trail projects across the Commonwealth.

“Trails through Great Esker Park provide access to one of the most beautifully preserved natural environments in all of Massachusetts,” **said Mayor Robert Hedlund**. “This grant will help us improve that access, and allow residents to better enjoy and experience Great Esker Park for the outstanding resource that it is. I thank the Baker-Polito Administration and the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board for supporting our project.”

Great Esker Park is a 137-acre natural open space, buffering the western banks of the Back River and running approximately 1.5 miles in length from Bridge Street (Route 3A) in North Weymouth to Osprey Overlook Park in East Weymouth. The park contains approximately six miles of paved trails and unpaved pathways used year-round by residents and regional visitors for passive recreation, and provides access to the Back River for water-based recreation. Popular uses of the park include walking, bicycling, running, fishing, birding, canoeing, kayaking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.

The Town’s RTP Grant will help finance improvements at three existing trail entrances and two popular waterfront vistas within Great Esker Park. Improvements are expected to

include [new trailheads, seating, and interpretive panels](#), as well as a new parking area with handicapped accessibility at the park's Bridge Street Entrance. On-road wayfinding signs are also planned for several intersections along Green Street to better direct residents to the various park entrances.

The trail improvements at Great Esker Park are intended to increase access to the park's pristine natural open space, enhance opportunities for passive recreation, and formally integrate the park into the Back River Trail, a community trail intended to run the length of the Back River to connect several discrete public parks in a unified, immersive trail experience. Improvements under the Town's RTP Grant will support branding of the Back River Trail at key locations throughout Great Esker Park. Earlier installments of the Back River Trail include Herring Run Pool Park in Jackson Square (2010), the Kibby Property extension at Abigail Adams State Park (2016), Osprey Overlook Park at the Town's capped landfill (2017), and the new Lovell Field in Jackson Square, recently [rededicated](#) in September 2018 following a \$6.45 million state-of-the-art renovation.

As a destination, Great Esker Park is unique in Massachusetts because it features one of the tallest glacial eskers in North America. The park is also entirely contained within an [Area of Critical Environmental Concern \(ACEC\)](#), a place in Massachusetts that receives special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness, and significance of its natural and cultural resources.

About the Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides competitive grant awards to municipalities, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to benefit the development and enhancement of local community trails, long-distance trail systems, and regional multi-use pathways. The RTP is administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and all grant applications are reviewed by the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board, an independent volunteer board appointed by the DCR Commissioner.

RTP grants are financed through the federal Recreational Trails Program as well as state capital funds. Federal funds are received directly from the fuel excise tax levied on off-road vehicles and are provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Surface Transportation Act, in coordination with MassDOT.

RTP Grants are capped at \$50,000 for local trail projects benefiting a single community. Each grantee is required to provide at least a 20-percent match in funding or in-kind services to support their community's project.

Since the Baker-Polito Administration came into office, approximately 150 miles of new trails have been designed, planned, funded, and/or completed statewide, with trail rehabilitation and repair also becoming a major priority. As part of the Administration's commitment to expanding and connecting trail networks across the Commonwealth, Governor Charlie Baker increased the RTP budget by 60 percent in June 2017

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