

Building the Tully Loop Trail

1998-1999

A North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership Project



Limited First Edition, January 2000

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Printing by Highland Press, Athol, MA.

The Tully Trail Project was supported by a 1999 DEM Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant, the Sudbury Foundation, the Fields Pond Foundation, Eastern Mountain Sports, and private individuals.

Introduction

The Tully Trail is a twenty-mile loop trail that weaves through a largely undeveloped area of rich wildlife habitat and spectacular scenery in the North Quabbin Region of Central Massachusetts. Linking Tully Mountain, Tully Lake, Doane's Falls, Jacob's Ridge, Royalston State Forest, Royalston Falls and Warwick State Forest in the towns of Orange, Royalston, and Warwick, the Tully Trail Project was formally initiated in 1998. Most of the trail was built in 1999, although some segments have existed for at least a hundred years and the final segments will not be completed until 2000. Based on Minutes of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), interviews with the Tully Trail Partners, funding proposals, newspaper articles, press releases and other related information, this report documents work on the Tully Trail from January 1998 through the fall of 1999, with some background information prior to 1998. The report is part of a 1999 DEM Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in collaboration with other members of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, and is intended to provide a comprehensive record of the initial construction of the Tully Trail both as a history of this particular trail and as an encouragement and resource for other trail partnerships and trail projects.

The trail is the second project of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership. Six members of the NQRLP—The Trustees of Reservations, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife worked together as the main trail partners, with important support and participation from the Appalachian Mountain Club and Harvard Forest. Each organization has contributed to the trail partnership in different ways and for different reasons, and each benefits from the trail separately, but the trail itself is the product of their successful collaboration. The Tully Trail was not the result of a directive by either the NQRLP or the Tully Trail Partners, although it meets the mission and goals of those organizations in its benefits to local residents and the general public. It is essentially a grass-roots project which grew out of the particular interests of individuals who represent the partner organizations and their commitment to the goals of those organizations, the landowners whose property the trail crosses, and the many volunteers who enthusiastically helped to build it.

An Initial Vision and a Partnership of Two

In the mid 1980's Dick O'Brien, Director of The Trustees of Reservations (The Trustees) Central Regional Office, spent many days clearing the overlook on Jacob's Hill in Royalston. After a strenuous morning's work he would break for lunch, and looking west across Long Pond and Tully Lake to Tully Mountain and Mount Grace, think how nice it would be if he could walk to what he saw. It was a fantasy, he says, not a project, but about 1990 he and Rick Magee, Interpretive Coordinator for the New England District of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), started to make a part of that fantasy a reality. Rick Magee works out of Basin Headquarters at Tully Dam and Tully Lake next door to Doane's Falls, The Trustees' Reservation just south of Jacob's Hill, and over the years an informal neighborly cooperation had developed between the two organizations. One day, O'Brien remembers, he and Rick Magee were shooting the breeze in the Doane's Falls parking lot and got to talking about a trail that would circle Tully Lake, connect with Doane's Falls, and continue up along Long Pond to Jacob's Hill, maybe even to The Trustees' property at Royalston Falls. The USACE had already begun putting in a trail from the picnic area at Tully Dam to the Tully Lake Campground, and then, according to Rick Magee, "It was just a thing that happened, talking about wouldn't it be great to have a trail all the way around the lake. The Corps would support it, but we'd have to connect with The Trustees of Reservations land to make the entire circuit. Well, that wasn't a problem, so Dick and his crew and I and the crew at Tully Lake got together and we just pushed the trail right around. Once The Trustees people were involved things really went fast. Before that it was basically one summer ranger and one laborer here at the Corps pecking away at it when they had some time. Once we got together with The Trustees we actually set aside days." They consistently set aside days over the next several years, and by the end of the summer of 1997 work on the lake trail and the connection to Doane's Falls was more or less complete.

The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership

Mission: Members of the NQRLP will collaborate to identify, protect, and enhance strategic ecological, cultural, and historic open space within the rural landscape of the North Quabbin Region.

In February 1997 a Harvard Forest study, Alisa D. Golodetz and David R. Foster's "History and Importance of Land Use and Protection in the North Quabbin Region of Massachusetts (USA)," was published in Conservation Biology. About the same time Andy Backman, planner for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM) completed the Guidelines for Operations and Land Stewardship (GOALS) Plan for the Northeastern Connecticut Valley Region, and the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust (MGLCT) developed its "Plan for the Second Decade." All three organizations emphasized the importance of collaboration in successful land protection, and at the February DEM public presentation of the GOALS Plan Andy Backman announced that MGLCT would be leading the formation of a regional council in the North Quabbin area. He called Leigh Youngblood, MGLCT Director of Land Protection, the following day to tell her that he had signed her up, and together with John O'Keefe, Director of the Fisher Museum at the Harvard Forest, they began to work on a regional collaboration. In May Peter Webber, Commissioner of DEM, David Foster, Director of Harvard Forest, and Bruce Spencer, President of MGLCT, sent out a letter inviting interested persons to an initial meeting at the Harvard Forest; 40 people attended, and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership was launched. Members of the NQRLP included representatives from private, municipal, regional, state and federal agencies, among them Dick O'Brien (The Trustees of Reservations), Rick Magee (USACE), Charlie Tracy (NPS Rivers & Trails), Jennifer Howard (DEM Greenways) and Shaun Bennett (MGLCT), as well as Andy Backman, Leigh Youngblood, and John O'Keefe. All became actively involved in the Partnership.

Support from the NPS Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program

Charlie Tracy, Massachusetts Director of the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program, first heard of the newly formed NQRLP in the fall of 1997, when he made his annual rounds of the conservation community to assess current Park Service projects and gather suggestions for future projects. The NQRLP was of interest to Rivers & Trails, says Tracy, “because we see a strong connection between our work to protect river corridors and establish trails and larger open space efforts. Often trails or river corridor preservation can help provide the rationale for larger open space protection, and build community support.” An additional factor arguing for NPS involvement was its commitment to providing assistance throughout Massachusetts evenhandedly, and Rivers & Trails had not worked extensively in the North Quabbin area.

Reflecting on his involvement in the NQRLP, Tracy observed that “nascent coalitions, groups of people who have a sense that there’s a benefit to working in partnership, often don’t have a clear idea of how to do that because typically these are groups that don’t work together. Rivers & Trails can help move a group from the initial stage of wanting to work together to actually working together. That’s where a lot of things get sorted out. What was this partnership going to be about? I remember trying to say at one of the first meetings that the NQRLP will be defined by what we do, not by what we just say we’re going to do. Part of the Rivers & Trails formula is ‘Ready, Fire, Aim.’ Everyone was ready. We had to get going. The aiming comes later, once we have done a few projects and know we can work together. Then we can ask what do we really want to do.”

Tracy met with Leigh Youngblood, MGLCT Director of Land Protection, who had taken a leadership role in the formation of the NQRLP, to discuss how Rivers & Trails could be helpful to the Partnership. Youngblood was working hard on the protection of 500 acres on and around Tully Mountain, an important regional landmark in North Orange, and NPS Rivers & Trails elected to support the NQRLP and the Tully Mountain Project, which would serve as an ideal signature project to help establish the NQRLP. Working

through NPS technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, Tracy began to scout out grants to fund a part-time staff person to support the Tully Mountain Project. Going public with NPS support, he spoke in behalf of the Project at an informational and fundraising meeting in December 1997, emphasizing Tully Mountain's location in the largest undeveloped area in Massachusetts and its potential for habitat protection, recreation, and trails.

The two primary goals of the Rivers & Trails Program are to establish new hiking trails and to assist conservation efforts. Protecting Tully Mountain met the second of those two goals, but Tracy was also obviously interested in a trail project. One possibility was the development of existing trails on Tully Mountain, which would be open to the public if the protection project succeeded, but it was not yet clear exactly how Rivers & Trails would be involved.

A Convergence of Interests

The January 1998 meeting of the NQRLP marked a significant point in the coalescence of the Partnership. Representatives of organizations holding, managing and/or acquiring land in the North Quabbin Region shared information about their interests and goals, each giving a ten minute presentation on the nature and mission of their organizations, identifying land owned or managed in the region, priorities in future land acquisition, and areas of particular interest. It became clear that several of the partners had contiguous property and a common interest in the Tully Mountain area.

Dick O'Brien's presentation for The Trustees of Reservations identified connecting Doane's Falls with Jacob's Hill along the ridgeline, developing a trail system around Tully Lake in collaboration with Army Corps of Engineers, and linking Royalston Falls and the interstate Metacomet-Monadnock Trail as primary goals of The Trustees in the North Quabbin Region. Speaking for the Army Corps of Engineers, Rick Magee noted that although its purpose in the North Quabbin Region is flood damage reduction and water resource projects, the Corps encourages recreational use of the land it manages, and supports organizations and programs which protect the area around Tully Lake, created in 1947 by construction

of the flood control dam across the East Branch of the Tully River, and Long Pond, a significant wildlife habitat upstream. Dave McGowan from the DEM Land Acquisition Program and Andy Backman emphasized DEM's commitment to quality recreation and its interest in bikeways, greenways and long distance trails, including the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, and the fact that two DEM state forests, Warwick and Royalston, are in the Tully Mountain area. Harvard Forest's Tall Timbers tract abuts The Trustees' property at Spirit Falls at the south end of Long Pond, and although the Forest is not interested in extending or managing this property for recreational use, said John O'Keefe, it is interested in protecting buffer sites.

Leigh Youngblood asked the group to consider endorsing projects worthy of the NQRLP mission statement, and offered Mount Grace's Protecting Tully Mountain as a signature project and an opportunity to set up guidelines for endorsement. The protection of Tully Mountain was enormously important to the goals of the NQRLP and presented strong arguments for endorsement, among them its connection to land already protected by other partners, including Tully Lake and The Trustees' properties in Royalston. Recreational use as a criterion for endorsement provoked considerable discussion, with arguments in favor of its inclusion and in opposition to it and no consensus, but it was at this meeting, says Charlie Tracy, that he put Dick O'Brien's description of The Trustees' interests together with what he knew about Tully Mountain and saw the connections for the Tully Trail.

The Tully Trail Partners

In March representatives of the organizations and agencies which held or managed land in the Tully Mountain area and Charlie Tracy met to brainstorm possibilities for a trail collaboration. The idea of a great and a small walking trail loop in the North Quabbin region emerged from this discussion: the small loop would extend north from Tully Lake along Jacob's Ridge in Royalston to the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, west along the M-M Trail to Warwick State Forest, south along the State Forest roads, and southeast across Tully Mountain back to Tully Lake. The great loop would con-

tinue along the M-M Trail into Wendell, east to the Quabbin and the Swift River, north along the Swift River to DFW Popple Camp Wildlife Management Area in Phillipston, the MGLCT Fox Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Bearsden Conservation Area, and then to Tully Lake.

The Tully Trail partners agree that Rivers & Trails participation and support was a central element in moving the project forward. Jennifer Howard, DEM Greenways Coordinator, knew that Dick O'Brien and Rick Magee had had the trail in mind for years, but "what really made it a project," she says, "was when Rivers & Trails and Charlie Tracy became involved. Everyone started to sit together and talk about the trail, and we realized that it really was feasible." Unlike the other trail partners, NPS does not own or manage land in the North Quabbin region; Tracy sees his role in the trail partnership as that of a catalyst, working to bring the different organizations together, pointing out the convergence of interests and building confidence through the Rivers & Trails perspective that the trail was a good idea.

The partners agreed that it made sense to focus on the small loop first. After they had gathered some preliminary information on trail protection requirements for the area and the extent of the work that would probably be required to build the trail, it was clear that an organized approach and some kind of leadership responsibility were needed in order for the project to succeed. It is worth noting, however, that the group never abandoned its shoot-the-breeze informality. In fact, a certain looseness in approach and the willingness to move forward before all of the potential problems were addressed may have been a key ingredient of the project's success.

Not all of the trail partners were initially convinced that a trail project was compatible with land protection efforts. Mount Grace had a very limited history of being involved with trails. It had applied for and received grant funds to establish signs and trail heads for existing trails on some of its property, but its primary mission is to protect land, and in its twelve year history it had not been involved with the formation of trails. It clearly would not itself have been interested in taking on the Tully Trail as a land protection project. Furthermore, the issue of what constituted appropriate recre-

ational use as a criterion for NQRLP endorsement had not been resolved, and other trail partners may have also had their doubts about how working together on a trail project would work out. Nonetheless, Charlie Tracy was persistent in his assurance that trails were not problematic in this regard and that the Tully trail would support and further land protection efforts.

A key partner, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, has had a somewhat less active role in creating the Tully Trail. Ralph Taylor, Supervisor for the DFW Connecticut Valley Wildlife District, sees DFW as “one cog in the wheel, but having a high profile in the trail as owner of the top of Tully Mountain.” DFW has had a long-standing interest in the North Quabbin region but joined Mount Grace in its Tully Mountain land acquisition effort largely as a result of the wildlife habitat analysis and inventory which biologist Sara Greisemer undertook for MGLCT through a grant from the Sweet Water Trust. DFW’s primary interest and mission is in wildlife habitat, and there are very few named trails in DFW Management Areas. The Tully Trail and its spur to the top of Tully Mountain are mainly of benefit to DFW in what they don’t do; that is, they do not have a negative impact on the land or the wildlife habitat. Rivers & Trails involvement was the most significant factor in the decision to give permission for the Tully Trail, says Taylor, as he knew that under NPS standards the trail would be low impact and carefully done.

Charlie Tracy presented the Tully Trail to the NQRLP for preliminary endorsement in May 1998, and the members agreed that it was an excellent project for the Partnership. The trail would link the Tully summit and USACE recreation facilities at Tully Lake and tie in with the Tully Mountain Project, and about thirty per cent of the estimated 17 miles (the actual length of the trail turned out to be just over twenty miles) was located on protected land, giving the project high feasibility. The project would also link the organizations which owned and managed these protected areas, although each Tully Trail partner would take the lead for the sections in which it held the primary interest. The AMC was likely to be involved through trail building volunteers.

At the NQRLP January 1999 meeting Dick O'Brien presented the formal proposal for endorsement of the Tully Trail. Now an ongoing project sponsored by The Trustees of Reservations and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the proposal noted that it was a true partnership, involving the National Park Service, The Trustees of Reservations, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Appalachian Mountain Club. The proposal crystallized the central ideal of the Tully Trail as it had been developed by the trail partners over the past year. Linking several significant protected areas as well as the organizations that protect them, the Tully Trail would not only provide "an exceptional recreational opportunity to the public but also an equally exceptional educational opportunity to present and promote the important and varied benefits of land conservation." The NQRLP voted unanimously in favor of endorsing the Tully Trail.

The Tully Mountain Loop and Tully Summit to Tully Lake

In March 1998 MGLCT signed an option-to-buy agreement with the landowners, Roy and Marjorie Wetmore's heirs, and in July DFW completed the purchase of 330 acres of Tully Mountain, including the summit. The completion of the first phase of the Protecting Tully Mountain Project was announced on July 29 at a public ceremony attended by State Secretary of Environmental Affairs Trudy Coxe, DFW Commissioner John C. Phillips, DEM Commissioner Peter Webber, former state Senator Robert D. Wetmore, and other notables. The celebration also heralded the acquisition of Tully Mountain as an important first step in the Tully Trail, which was publicly announced as a NQRLP and NPS project. About fifty people, including seventy-eight year-old Robert Stone, a local resident who has walked up and down Tully Mountain almost daily for the past thirty-eight years, marked the occasion by climbing to the top.

Work on the Tully Trail began on Tully Mountain. It was an obvious place to start, both because of its high visibility in the community and because the idea for the Tully Trail had grown out of the vision of linking Tully Mountain with Tully Lake and The Trustees property at Doane's Falls and Jacob's Hill. An informal, "heard" trail—an unmarked, unpublicized trail on privately owned land—already existed on the mountain and had been well known and well used by many local residents for years. With the land now a DFW Management Area, it was possible to have a trail that went from Mountain Road to the summit entirely on public land.

The first approximation of the trail between Tully Mountain and Tully Lake was underway, and Rick Magee and Charlie Tracy were looking at the link to Jacob's Hill and Route 68 in South Royalston. In August the trail partners field scouted the trail with Peter Jensen, a trail designer funded by NPS, Sara Griesemer, who had done the wildlife habitat analysis and inventory, and Glenn Freden, who for fifteen years had been the consulting forester to Roy Wetmore, the former landowner. Charlie Tracy began organizing a volunteer trail workday with the AMC for October 24, NPS Trail Day. In addition, The Trustees and USACE started to investigate reopening of the primitive camping area at Tully Lake, which had been closed since 1992. Community support was growing. Then, for a variety of reasons, the trail partners decided to wait until spring to begin trail construction. This decision resulted in an amazing validation of the trail. "We found this mother lode of community interest and volunteer effort," says Shaun Bennett. "The first workday we scheduled [October 24] was a tough time; things hadn't come together, so we canceled it. People called up and said, 'What do you mean, you're not going to do it? I was looking forward to that. How could you cancel it?' So we rescheduled for December. If this had happened midway through the project I would say that you get things going and people won't let you stop. Actually, they wouldn't let us not start."

The weather on the December 6 workday was summer-like, and over thirty volunteers from MGLCT, The Trustees, USACE, AMC, the Pioneer Junior Women's Club, the Athol Bird and Nature Club, and the Athol Boy Scout Troop 72 showed

up at the DFW parking area on Mountain Road to clear the entire two-mile loop trail to the summit of Tully Mountain and put up the trail markers donated by the National Park Service. The first segment of the Tully Trail was officially on the ground.

NPS Rivers & Trails would continue to support the project in 1999, including funding for Peter Jensen to do the Tully summit to Tully Lake trail layout on DFW land. The Trustees were seeking help from an Americorps trail crew, and MGLCT was working on a proposal for a DEM Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant to fund a coordinator of volunteers. Another trail day was planned for the spring, followed by an NPS sponsored Tully Ramble over the completed trail in early June. On the second workday, Earth Day, April 24, 1999, volunteers cleared the two miles of trail between Tully Mountain and Tully Lake, and as Tracy pointed out, “there was a trail where there wasn’t any trail before.” Leigh Youngblood expressed everyone’s astonishment and satisfaction. “I thought it was extremely optimistic when Charlie talked about announcing the inaugural trail hike in June. I thought it was a fantasy. But thanks to the very hard labor of the volunteers, look what we did. We had the trail in place from the mountain to the lake. Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” The first Tully Ramble, on June 5, 1999, was a National Trails Day event. Over thirty enthusiastic hikers—members of the trail partner organizations, trail volunteers, and a number of people who responded to the Athol Memorial Hospital’s endorsement of the Ramble as a healthy activity—climbed to the summit of Tully Mountain and down the east side to Tully Lake and the Tully Lake Campground. The hardest continued on to the top of Jacob’s Ridge, a strenuous climb, while others followed the trail up Doane’s Falls. It was a major success.

The DEM Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant

It had become evident in the early phases of constructing Tully Trail that there was a tremendous amount of community and volunteer interest in working on the trail, but it was also evident, as Shaun Bennett observed, that the volunteer effort required a fair amount of preparation, administrative work and leadership. The first volunteer workdays relied heavily on NPS Rivers & Trails organiza-

tion and planning support, which was committed only to the start-up phase, and although all of the partners were actively working on their own sections, overall organization and supervision of trail volunteers was beyond the capacity of any of the trail partners' budgets or staff. "There was a tremendous resource out there in the form of people who would volunteer," says Bennett, "but we needed another ingredient in order to tap it. That's what DEM provided."

MGLCT was supportive of the idea of the Tully Trail, but its active involvement, according to Bennett, stemmed from the combination of seeing that the trail would promote actual land protection and the availability of a DEM Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant. Indirect support for the trail work came from the Sudbury Foundation grant to the Protecting Tully Mountain Project and the organizational development of the NQRLP and from the Fields Pond Foundation which funded a set of trail building tools; the DEM grant would make it possible to hire someone specifically for the job of organizing the volunteers, to create a map, and to document the trail project as a model or case study for other trail efforts.

In January 1999 Bennett submitted a proposal for a DEM Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grant to fund "a Coordinator of Volunteers to manage the preparation, recruitment, supervision and follow-up necessary for the volunteer effort." Perceived as a major element in the project's success, the coordinator would be responsible for the organization of workdays, outreach to local communities, summer camps and youth groups, and general maintenance of the project's momentum. In March DEM Greenways notified MGLCT that it had been awarded the grant, and Mount Grace advertised the full-time four-month position. Review of applications began in April, and Gary Culver was hired to begin work at the end of May.

Jennifer Howard, DEM Greenways Coordinator, discussed the decision to fund the Coordinator position. "DEM provided a grant to the Tully Trail project not as a player but as an outside entity which receives grant proposals from across the state. The Tully Trail Project met all the criteria in terms of advancing the creation of greenways and trails, broad-based community support, grass roots

effort, feasible project—all the basic criteria for our grants program. This year we made additional money available specifically for multi-town or regional projects in an effort to promote partnerships and crosstown linkages, so the [Tully Trail project] rang all the bells. From our grant giving perspective we thought it was a great project. The proposal came in, it was reviewed by our seven member committee, and it rated really high.” Its endorsement by NQRLP was also a factor. “The Partnership,” says Howard, “is unique, and this project, which reflects and involves so many of the partners, is definitely unique. We thought that supporting the volunteer coordinator could make a real difference, that it could help the trail partners take a giant step toward realizing their vision. That’s what the Greenways and Trails Grants Program is all about.”

The Coordinator of Volunteers and Volunteer Work

Gary Culver’s responsibilities as Coordinator of Volunteers fell roughly into three main areas: on-the-ground trail layout; community outreach and volunteer recruitment; and organization and supervision of volunteer workdays. Work in all three areas went on simultaneously. It was a big job, and the trail partners were appreciative. “It’s all the work that no one else is doing and that’s why there is so much to be done,” said Leigh Youngblood. “There are a lot of unknowns to be uncovered and reconciled. We did some preliminary work on what it would take to build the trail, but the details are still being discovered.”

Locating the Trail

The Trail Partners had laid out the approximate trail location on a USGS map, using existing trails and woods roads where possible and connecting them with new sections based on their knowledge of the area and map information. Culver field scouted each new section of the trail and flagged it before the workdays, adjusting the trail location to on-the-ground conditions. Although he was an experienced hiker, he had not previously built trails, and initially he worked with Dick O’Brien and Charlie Tracy out on the trail, learning from their advice and expertise.

Obtaining permission from all private landowners—including those who actively support the trail—whose property the trail

will cross or pass by is obviously a critical part of trail planning and layout. This task fell within the trail partners' broad perspective of what lay within the purview of the Coordinator of Volunteers, but both Culver and the trail partners probably underestimated the amount of time and attention it required. The trail partners' familiarity with the area and local landowners was enormously helpful, and in most cases one of the trail partners had made the initial contact with the landowner and Culver followed up to confirm the agreement. Although he encountered little resistance from landowners, Culver found that it was time-consuming to determine ownership, consult town assessors' maps when necessary, make phone contact with the owners and set up at least one, usually more than one, meeting to review and discuss the proposed trail location. In some cases landowners' concerns led to relocation of the trail, which lengthened the process, and negotiations to clarify and conclude permission from landowners have been incomplete.

“Keeping landowners happy is one of the most important things you can do for the sake of the trail,” says Culver. “It is extremely important to get permissions and some kind of formal confirmation as early as possible in the trail project. Definitely beforehand. It’s a good idea to have access, permissions and the trail location in place before you start to build a trail.” But not always possible, Youngblood observes. “I’ve learned that these long distance trails are long term projects. You want to establish as much as you can in a short period of time, but it’s a work in progress. To expect to make a twenty-mile trail in one summer and have it sewed up is unrealistic. We do as much as we can, and let people know which segments are completed, which segments are secure, and which ones we’re going to continue to work on.” [Note: The AMC’s [Complete Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance](#) has an excellent chapter on Trails on Private Land.]

A minor unanticipated complication occurred in seeking permission for the trail to cross the high voltage transmission line corridor north of Long Pond. The power company has an easement from the USACE, which owns the land, but no established policy for granting trail access, and in this case the result is that it is difficult for the Corps of Engineers to obtain permission to clear a trail on land it owns. Determining whether or not

an abandoned or discontinued road is a public right of way is also a complex issue. “Thinking you have a public right of way is a very different thing from having a public right of way, and having a legal right of way is a very different thing from establishing use along a dormant public right of way,” observes Leigh Youngblood. Ultimately a contested right of way may be resolved only in land court, and it is generally better to reroute the trail if a compromise can not be reached.

Culver conferred with Joe Iagallo, Region IV Trails Coordinator for DEM Forests and Parks, on the location of the trail through Warwick State Forest, which for the most part follows the old roads and skidder trails DEM keeps open for recreation, fire suppression, and timber management access. Culver and Iagallo also laid out a tentative route for a foot trail to Bliss Hill, from which it is possible to see Mount Grace. “You’ll be able to look from Bliss to Grace,” says Culver. “It’s our little metaphor.” Iagallo’s guidelines for clearing new trail are to follow AMC standards for foot trails and US Forest Service standards for equestrian, bicycle, snowmobile and cross-country skier use. Location depends on actual conditions on the ground and overhead. “No overhangs, no widow-makers,” says Iagallo.

The eastern half of the Tully Trail from Tully Mountain to Royalston Falls, which includes most of the new trail construction, is basically a single track wilderness foot trail. The four miles through the Warwick State Forest are open to equestrian, snowmobile, mountain bike, and cross-country skier use; access to the section of trail south from the Warwick State Forest will be determined by its final location. The trail partners held a lengthy and intense—but good-natured—meeting to discuss the question of access. “We have a lot of different user groups that want [trail access], and the different land owners have different policies they want enforced,” Culver explains. Ultimately, access was determined by topography and the policy of the major land owners. Culver also worked with Dick O’Brien and Vin Antil, The Trustees’ GIS expert, on the trail map and guide, helping to incorporate essential information from each of the trail partners into a comprehensive brochure useful to all user groups.

Community Outreach and Recruitment of Volunteers

Keeping the community informed about the status of the trail work and getting announcements and reports of workdays out to the volunteers was a large part of the coordinator's job. Culver regularly sent out press releases announcing workdays to local newspapers in Athol, Greenfield, and Barre, and to the Worcester and Springfield newspapers for trail events and general information. He had a very positive response from the newspapers, although it took him a while, he says, to get the timing right. Information for weekly calendars, for instance, has to be submitted a week to two and a half weeks in advance of publication and each newspaper had a different schedule. A news article could be submitted a day or two in advance. He was able to notify many volunteers by e-mail, and in fact he used e-mail as much as possible, which greatly simplified this task.

Culver also met with community groups. He talked about the trail with campers at Camp Wiyaka, the Athol YMCA camp in Richmond, NH, and with local Boy Scouts, and presented trail progress reports to the Orange Board of Selectmen (with Shaun Bennett) and the Athol Board of Selectmen. One of his outreach projects to encourage people to use the trail was initiating The Tully Trail Hiking Club, which became a popular Thursday evening gathering at the Tully Mill Pond Restaurant in North Orange. Each week the club hiked about three miles of the trail with the goal of completing the entire trail by the end of the summer, and afterwards most of the group convened for supper at the restaurant—a social event which also happened to support local business.

Volunteer Workdays

Trail construction advanced steadily throughout the summer in a series of volunteer workdays, each completing two or three miles. Culver's main goal in working with volunteers, he says, was not to clear a specific amount of the trail on any single workday but to clear what could be reasonably done and give everybody a sense of accomplishment. Careful and thorough preparation was absolutely essential, and with experience he developed a set of guidelines for organizing the workdays. He also met with Charlie Tracy at the Rivers & Trails office to talk about ways to avoid or solve specific issues and problems.

The basic guidelines are straightforward. The coordinator needs to be out on the trail and actively involved every workday. "It's not as if you can sit back and say O. K., I want you to go out next Saturday and cover this section. Let me know how it goes," Culver says. A group of eight or nine volunteers is a comfortable size to manage, to get people working efficiently. Many more and you need to have two groups and another crew leader, or volunteers with enough trail-building experience to work independently. Before the workday, flag the section of trail to be worked on with plenty of tags; the location of the trail should be absolutely clear to the volunteers. Know what tools you will need for the specific workday before you leave the parking lot. You always need pruners and bow saws. Culver did not use shovels and rakes much, as he had the volunteers do little or no duffing (preparation of the trail tread for foot traffic), partly because of ground conditions, partly because of time constraints, and partly because of his own preference. As important, if not more important than having people cutting out brush is having people who are willing to remove the cut pieces to the side of the trail and out of view. Some workdays were more demanding than others, depending on how wet or steep the area was and whether volunteers were constructing entirely new trail or brushing out an old trail.

Blazing proceeds at a different pace from trail clearing, so Culver did not consider it a good workday assignment and usually chose to do the blazing as a separate job after the trail was cleared. Choosing the color of the blaze, like many other decisions in this project, involved a long discussion, and the partners finally agreed on yellow rectangular (4" x 2") blazes, which were already used by the Corps of Engineers on the Tully Lake trails. Rivers & Trails had provided 500 Tully Trail markers, 3" aluminum squares with the Tully Mountain logo in blue-purple, which were used on the Tully Mountain to Tully Lake section and at turns and junctions. The Corps of Engineers has agreed to create some general directional and trail junction signs.

The volunteer effort extended beyond the Saturday workdays Culver organized. Dick O'Brien requested Americorps volunteers for The Trustees and was granted a week of a six person trail crew, who worked on the Royalston Falls section. A group of campers

from Green Mountain Camp in West Virginia swapped work on the bridge across Tully River for a night of camping at Tully Campground. By mid-August two thirds of the trail had been completed, and Culver reported that the next “volunteer workday effort will complete the majority of the trail work, leaving only bits and pieces to finish. The completion of Tully Trail is in sight!”

In fact, completion of the trail took longer than Culver anticipated. Changes in the proposed route precipitated additional changes in the final location of the trail, primarily along the southwestern quadrant of the loop. There were a variety of causes: complications in negotiating final agreements for trail access across private land, on-the-ground conditions and management concerns, and the fact that focus on this section occurred at the end of the planning process, after actual work had begun on the Tully Mountain loop and the southeastern quadrant of the trail. “It’s difficult to nail down every section of a trail of this length in a relatively short amount of time,” observes Howard. In order to complete the trail The Trustees sought and received additional funding from the Fields Pond Foundation and the National Recreation Trails Act, which in Massachusetts is administered by the state Department of Environmental Management. These grants provide for a Tully Trail Coordinator, who continues Culver’s job from The Trustees’ Central Regional Office, and cover final trail construction costs, including parking areas and informational signs and bulletin boards.

The Tully Lake Campground

The Tully Lake Campground was built by the USACE in the 1970’s and managed by DEM Forest and Parks, which leased the Tully Lake area from the Corps for recreational use. When budget constraints in the early 1990’s forced DEM to shut down their operation of the campground, the Corps kept it open for a year in the hope that The Trustees would take over its management. Both Rick Magee and Dick O’Brien wanted to see the campground continue. O’Brien saw that it would be a particular benefit to The Trustees; it would support The Trustees’ commitment to public recreation and provide a ranger shelter and a twenty-four hour presence at Doane’s Falls, which he calls “an attractive nuisance.” The Trustees were

unable to see their way clear to taking on the campground at that time, and it closed in 1992.

The Tully Trail connection with the three Trustees' properties in Royalston revived interest in the campground and tipped the balance in favor of O'Brien's argument. In 1998 The Trustees began negotiations to lease the campground from the USACE, and on June 14, 1999, after extensive renovation of the water and waste systems, The Trustees reopened the Tully Lake Campground for the season. It is the first and so far only campground operated by The Trustees, and The Trustees are committed to it on a trial basis. Initial costs will not be repaid for several years, but O'Brien anticipates breaking even on the cost of running the campground, and the increased ranger presence has greatly improved The Trustees's ability to supervise activity at Doane's Falls. The Tully Lake Campground is a major trailhead for the Tully Trail.

The Trustees are also planning a small, two campsite primitive camping area at Royalston Falls and DEM is considering developing the Sheomet Lake campground in Warwick State Forest, so that there would be camping areas at the north end and west side of the loop as well as on the east side. The Royalston Falls campsites would be especially attractive to hikers who want to do the entire loop at a leisurely pace and to through hikers on the Metacomet and Monadnock Trail. The Sheomet Lake campground, which was laid out in the 1960's but left uncompleted when funding was diverted to other projects, would serve as a major trailhead, and like the Tully Lake Campground, provide an attractive base for exploring the area.

The Tully Loop Trail Supports a Land Protection Project

After the completion of the first phase of Protecting Tully Mountain in July, 1998, Mount Grace began to concentrate on protecting two other Wetmore properties with high development risk, both of which were located between already protected segments of the trail. DEM, which had not been pursuing land on Tully Mountain, was definitely interested in these two properties, primarily

because of the trail. Jennifer Howard talked about that interest. “If there were no trail and someone came to me and said the land just south of Royalston State Forest is available, do you want it, I’d go out there and look at it to see if it met a number of criteria we use to evaluate parcels of land all over the state. We’d ask questions like what would DEM be getting that we don’t already have, or what critical resources would be conserved by protecting those 180 acres? Without the trail the answers to those questions are not particularly compelling. If we had all the money in the world, acquiring that land to add to the state forest would probably be nice, but in terms of its impact on public use of Royalston State Forest for recreation or resource protection, it wouldn’t get a particularly high rating. But when you start looking at it as part of this bigger picture, as part of the Tully Trail, then it becomes a critical link in something unique and provides great recreational benefit.”

A year later, on July 14, 1999, the Department of Environmental Management and the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust announced “the completion of a project that permanently protects 180 acres of land in Royalston through which the Tully Trail passes.” DEM’s outright purchase of 62 acres of the parcel secured almost a mile of trail, and was an important part of the project. Sharing the cost with a private conservation buyer, DEM also purchased a conservation restriction on the remaining 118 acres. DEM Commissioner Peter Webber called The Tully Trail “a significant regional resource,” and stated that DEM was “pleased to be part of the coalition working towards its completion.” Shaun Bennett also expressed his satisfaction with the project, pointing out that the parcel now owned by DEM is one of the most strategic parts of Tully Trail. “It reflects how much we can accomplish when we work together,” said Howard, and Leigh Youngblood remarked that “Everybody comes out of this one a winner.” It was a clear demonstration that a trail can support and further land protection efforts.

It is worth noting that the trail volunteers also contribute indirectly to the trail partners’ land protection efforts. It would not have been possible to build the Tully Trail in such a short period of time without the dedicated and enthusiastic participation of volunteers, and in building the trail the volunteers also invested in its future. After all their hard work, they expect the trail to last, and

they are strong advocates for land protection work that protects the trail. The volunteers are also effective publicists, and as with the old “heard” trail on Tully Mountain, word-of-mouth will undoubtedly account for a good part of local use and local interest in protecting the land the trail crosses.

Future Maintenance

“Whose trail it is in terms of management is a tough question,” says Jennifer Howard. “There either needs to be some group that’s willing to manage all or part of it, or each of the [partners] needs to take responsibility for segments. That’s a long-term issue.” In the immediate future, maintenance of the Tully Trail will be the responsibility of the trail partners, with each partner looking after the sections of the trail in which it has the primary interest. “Of course in this day and age we’re always looking for volunteers to help,” says Rick Magee. “Like every other agency, we’re short-staffed.” Dick O’Brien considers collaboration with the trail partners which have maintenance crews to be a good solution; a Trustees of Reservations crew, for example, would work on DEM land in exchange for DEM help on Trustees land. He also plans to submit another request for an Americorps trail crew. He does not foresee the need or the desirability of a central responsibility for the trail if each partner maintains its own sections and works together on the rest. This loose organization has worked well so far in the Tully Trail Project, but taking on a maintenance responsibility is more difficult for the trail partners whose primary mission does not include recreational use. Shaun Bennett sees that there will be a need for trail maintenance: “We’ll need somebody to step up and do it, and who knows who it’ll be.” He also sees that trail work is “a great way to get people out and make them aware of something, so if Mount Grace by chance did stay involved, personally I would use it to bring attention to our projects, not just the Tully Trail. It’s an opportunity to contact people and get them out, to get them involved, to tell them about land protection and solicit their support as members or just their good will toward land protection projects.” DFW does not now have staff or resources to maintain trails, but relinquishing control of its property to another agency or organiza-

tion for trail maintenance is not an option. Some kind of volunteer commitment is most feasible, possibly in an adopt-a-trail arrangement. Nevertheless, DFW Supervisor Ralph Taylor says that he does not consider maintenance of the Tully Mountain trail section to be a problem until it becomes a problem.

Volunteer work on the Tully Trail will continue to be essential. The combination of the length of the trail and the diversity of the organizations that manage the land through which it passes invites creative and as yet undetermined solutions to the question of how to monitor the entire trail and organize volunteers to maintain it. “How can we create and maintain a single, seamless trail for the benefit of the public and at the same time respect the policies, identities and roles of the individual partners?” asks Howard. Her experience with other regional trail efforts with similar issues has almost always been positive. “Partnerships can definitely be difficult,” she says, speaking generally about the way partnerships work, but her comments also relate specifically to the issue of how the trail will be managed in the future. “They’re more challenging, but I think they are much more rewarding. For the most part you get more done, and over the long run you end up with a broader base of support and probably a better product. The whole really does become a lot more than the sum of its parts.”

The Bigger Picture

The Tully Trail is complete within itself, a local gem, but its link with other trails makes it a part of a much larger trail network. The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, which the Tully Trail follows for about a mile just west of Royalston Falls, is a 117 mile interstate trail connecting Connecticut’s Metacomet Trail and “Blue Trail” system with New Hampshire’s Mount Monadnock and the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail; the M-M trail now also connects the Tully Trail with the Norwottuck Network, a designated Millennium Legacy Trail, in the Connecticut River Valley. The larger trail loop envisioned by the Tully Trail partners would connect Tully Mountain and Tully Lake at the south end of the loop with the Quabbin Reservation and proposed east-west trails across Massachusetts.

The Tully Trail is part of the trail network highlighted in DEM’s Statewide Greenways and Trails Plan, “an effort to create a vision

for the future of greenways that will serve as a framework for the many greenway and trail efforts underway in Massachusetts.” In turn the Statewide Greenways and Trails Plan connects the Tully Trail with the larger national greenways and trails movement. In the early part of the century the focus was on big national parks and state parks, and now, says Charlie Tracy, “the focus is on these community based initiatives to do trails. It’s a trend all over the country. Now we’re trying to connect town centers and other areas like that with the big places.” Jennifer Howard sees the Tully Trail “as one of the really good regional trail efforts in the state. There are a number of them, but when I think about all the projects that are happening, both in terms of what the project does and in terms of the underlying activity and organizational development making it happen, this one bubbles to the top.”

The Tully Trail is already a destination for people in other parts of the trail network, but when all is said and done, it is a trail that belongs to the North Quabbin. It attracts through travelers, but many hikers will continue to be neighbors—some of them the people who built the trail—out for a Saturday walk through a familiar and well-loved landscape. For them the trail is an unexpected, almost accidental benefit. “All the ingredients were here,” says Leigh Youngblood. “We just needed somebody to mix it up. A lot of the magic of this project came from suddenly being able to see that the pieces were all here and that the trail was possible.” “Things happen because people are interested in having them happen,” says Rick Magee. “The significance of the Tully Trail is that it happened. In such a big scale, twenty miles. That and the partnership. The trail partnership was dynamic, an offshoot of the larger North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, which gave it impetus to get going and get done. It’s what attracted NPS Rivers & Trails interest.”

Rivers & Trails’ Charlie Tracy also ties the success of the trail to “the collaboration, the partnership, all these groups contributing what they can to make it go. It was the partnership. In that way it’s a good story. Maybe it’s the same old story. Tully Mountain itself is really a nice symbol for the trail. It’s a beautiful resource, a beautiful landmark, and an important part of the community. So many people have gone up that mountain, and now they associate it

with the trail, with the whole loop. It's a good signature for it." The trail leads even local residents to new places. Gary Culver found that practically all the local people who worked or hiked on the trail said that they'd lived here all their lives and had no idea such spectacular areas were right here in the back yard. "That's the best part about the trail," he says. "Getting people in touch with the landscape that's right in their backyards," agrees Tracy. "It's great."

Local interest in the trail continues to grow. By September the trail partners had received so many inquiries about the trail that Shaun Bennett wrote an interim trail guide and narrative for the partners to distribute until The Trustees publishes the more complete Tully Trail Guide and Map. Somewhat to his surprise, within two or three weeks of the announcement of its availability he had received over two hundred requests—with self-addressed stamped envelopes—for the guide.

"It has always struck me that the type of work that The Trustees do has a lasting effect," says Dick O'Brien, reflecting on the success of the Tully Trail Project. "We're protecting the land in perpetuity. I get great satisfaction from thinking that my grandkids or great grandkids will hike a trail I helped lay out, and that a hundred years from now people will still be experiencing the landscape that we know today and that we hoped to preserve. At the end of a workday when my back is killing me and I'm dirty and sweaty and in desperate need of a shower, knowing that we've pushed this trail forward a little and that it's going to be here for a long, long time is what makes it worthwhile. There's value beyond the immediate future, a long term impact. I think we all have that long term vision for this area."



Guide to Acronyms:

AMC - Appalachian Mountain Club

DEM - Department of Environmental Management

DFW - Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

MGLCT - Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

NPS - National Park Service

NQRLP - North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership

USACE - United States Army Corps of Engineers

Interviews with the Tully Trail Partners and the Coordinator of Volunteers

Shaun Bennett, Executive Director, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

Gary Culver, Coordinator of Volunteers, Tully Trail Project

Jennifer Howard, Greenways Coordinator,

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management

Joe Iagallo, Forests and Parks, Department of Environmental Management

Rick Magee, Interpretive Coordinator for New England District,

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers

Dick O'Brien, Director, Central Regional Office, The Trustees of Reservations

Ralph Taylor, District Fish and Wildlife

Supervisor for Connecticut Valley Wildlife District,

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Charles Tracy, Massachusetts Director,

National Park Service River & Trails and Conservation Assistance

Leigh Youngblood, Director of Land Protection,

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

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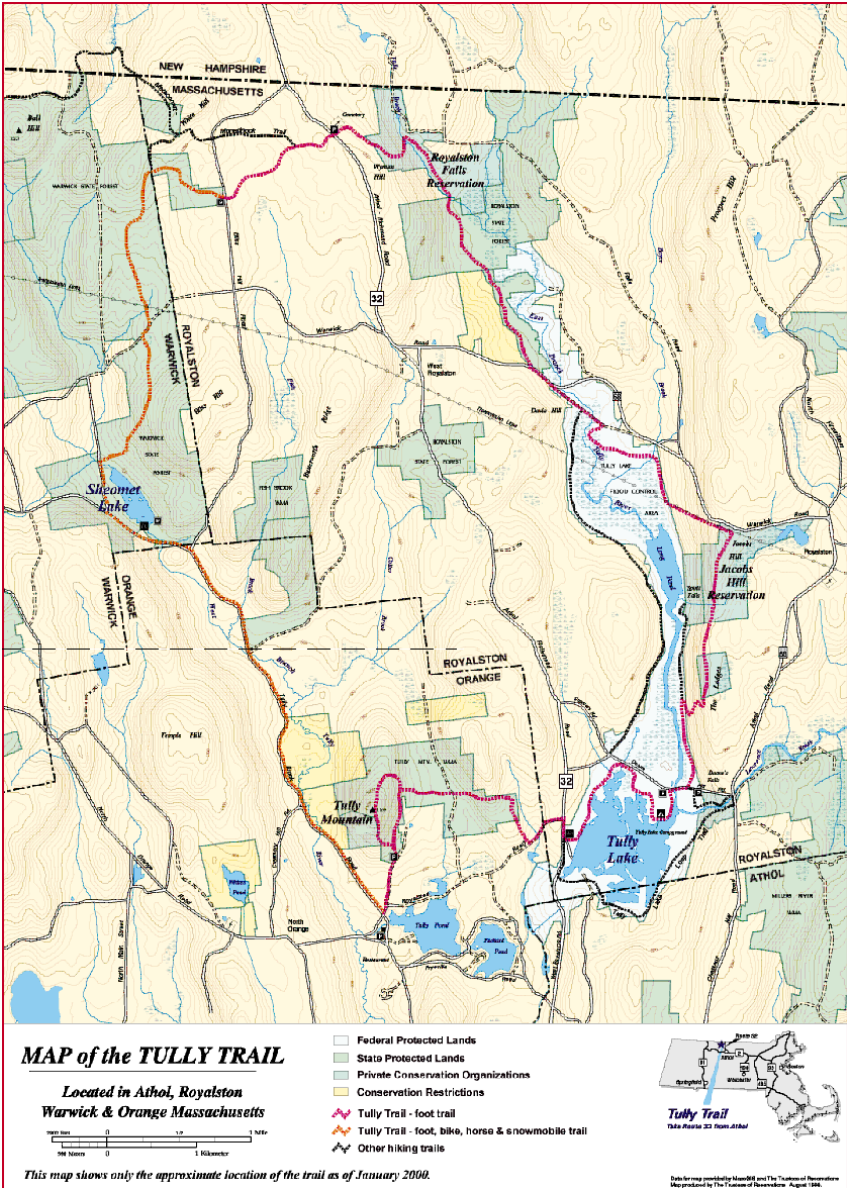
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Data for map provided by MassGIS and the Trustees of Reservations
Map produced by the Trustees of Reservations, August 1999