



## Essex Trail Caretakers Program

### About the Program:

The Trail Caretakers Program was created to empower community members to take an active role in preserving and improving Essex's trail network. This program allows volunteers to contribute to trail maintenance activities on their own schedule, without direct supervision, while following clear guidelines and best practices. By participating, Caretakers help ensure safe and enjoyable trails for all users, foster environmental stewardship, and strengthen community connections through shared responsibility for our natural spaces.

### Application Process:

Volunteers begin by completing the [Caretakers Program Application](#). After submitting it, they will meet with the Conservation and Trails Committee to confirm their role as a Caretaker. Next, volunteers will work with the Town Trails Coordinator to choose an assigned trail and review responsibilities. Once the Caretakers Agreement is signed, the volunteer will receive a welcome packet. Individuals, groups, and Scout Troops are all welcome to apply!

The Town Trails Coordinator will accompany the Caretaker on a trail visit to discuss the scope of work. Caretakers may volunteer for multiple trails per Town property. The scope of work will be determined by the location and the Caretaker's interest and capacity.

### Responsibilities of Caretakers:

*This list includes all the responsibilities Caretakers are permitted to perform. Not all tasks are required, and the specific responsibilities will be determined in conversation with the Town Trails Coordinator.*

#### 1. Encroaching Vegetation Management

Caretakers will be provided with resources on proper pruning techniques which should be reviewed before cutting back brush and branches. Trail corridors should be cleared to the width of four feet and a height of eight feet. Brush should be hauled away from the trails. Pruning is only permitted for live vegetation under three inches in diameter.

#### 2. Invasive Species Monitoring and Management

Caretakers may monitor for and manually remove invasive plant species from the trailside. Removal will be permitted after attending an invasive species management volunteer workday

and reviewing resources on identifying common invasive plant species in Vermont. Caretakers may upload observations of invasive plants to Essex Parks and Recreation's iMapInvasives project page to assist with Townwide invasive plant management.

3. Drainage Clearing

Dependent on the location, Trail Caretakers may clear culverts, ditches, water bars, and other drainage infrastructure to help manage water.

4. Litter Removal

Caretakers may pick up trash, dog waste, and small debris along the trail to keep the pathway clean and safe.

5. Reporting

Caretakers are expected to visit their assigned trail at least once a month during the growing season (May through October) and submit a brief reporting form after each visit. The reports should include updates on the tasks listed above as well as observations of larger trail issues such as hazardous trees, water management issues, bridge deterioration, and any other maintenance concerns.

More information about the responsibilities listed above will be included in the welcome packet. Trail Caretakers are encouraged to enlist the help of friends and family and neighbors to care for the trails.

Caretakers may select from the following parks and natural areas:

[Indian Brook Park](#)

[Mathieu Town Forest](#)

[Pearl Street Park](#)

[Shillingford Crossing Natural Area](#)

[Forestdale Natural Area](#)

[Pinewood Park](#)

[Lang Neighborhood Path](#)

[Myers Park Rec Path](#)

[Trowbridge Crossing Path](#)

[Saybrook Rec Path](#)

[Saxon Hill](#)

## Safety Precautions for Trail Caretakers:

Hazardous trail conditions: Hazardous trail conditions should be reported immediately to the Essex Parks and Recreation Department (878-1342).

Protective Clothing: Eye protection and work gloves are highly recommended for trail work.

Participation by Children: Children under the age of 18 must have permission of a parent or guardian to participate in the Trail Caretakers program. Children under the age of 13 must be supervised by an adult.

Powered equipment: Caretakers shall not operate powered equipment to maintain Town trails. Essex Parks and Recreation should be notified if powered equipment is required for trail maintenance. The Essex Recreation Department has professional workers providing this type of maintenance. If a Caretaker wishes to use powered equipment, they must obtain permission from the Town Trails Coordinator.

## What Caretakers Should NOT Do Without Town Direction

1. Cut live vegetation greater than three inches in diameter.
2. Reroute trails or create new trails.
3. Remove, replace, or install water bars or other trail structures.
4. Install or remove signage.
5. Close off sections of trail.
6. Apply pesticides or chemicals.
7. Perform work outside of assigned sections.

## Conditions for Trail Caretakers Program:

- 1) The Essex Department of Parks and Recreation will coordinate, approve, and monitor the work on the trails chosen for the Trail Caretakers Program, including periodic inspection of the work accomplished by the Caretaker participants.
- 2) The Essex Parks and Recreation Department reserves the right to revise or discontinue the Trail Caretakers Program at its discretion.
- 3) Participants agree to promptly notify the Trail Caretakers Program if any Town owned property, facility, or equipment is damaged, destroyed, or lost during maintenance of the trails.
- 5) All volunteers must apply to and be approved by The Essex Parks and Recreation Department and Conservation and Trails Committee. Applicants will be subject to a background check.

### **For more information contact:**

Hans Nedde, Trails Coordinator, Essex Parks and Recreation ([hnedde@essex.org](mailto:hnedde@essex.org) or 876-573)