



# Beaver Brook North Reservation and Mackerel Hill

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 This map is provided free to the public solely for recreational use. Trails depicted are accessed at the user's own risk. The Waltham Land Trust is not responsible for damages or liability that may arise from the use of this map for any purpose. Consult the City of Waltham for official maps and data on properties in Waltham. Information for this map was obtained from Mass GIS. Created 2016-11-14. [www.walthamlandtrust.org](http://www.walthamlandtrust.org)

## History

Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop commissioned an exploration of Beaver Brook in the winter of 1631–32. Many of the Reservation's place names originated between 1632 and 1650: Rock Meadow, West Meadow, and Mackerel Hill. Though heavily wooded in the 17th century, by the mid-19th century most trees in the area had been cut down for tillage and pasture lands.

Between 1915 and 1930, the Commonwealth purchased this farmland and opened the Metropolitan State Hospital, which at its peak served almost 2,000 patients.

In 1992 Metropolitan State Hospital closed. After a lengthy disposition process, the 22.5 acre parcel containing the hospital buildings was set aside for a rental housing development. 254 acres were turned over to the Department of Conservation and Recreation, creating Beaver Brook North Reservation. Another 54 acres were transferred to the City of Waltham for conservation purposes. In 2005, the City purchased the 7.3 acre site of the Gaebler building, thus completing the preservation of most of the "Met State" land.

The **Waltham Land Trust** invites you to join in helping preserve, protect and maintain Waltham's open spaces. Volunteer trail stewards are always needed!

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## Site Facts

**Owner:** Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

**Acreage:** 254 acres and (Beaver Brook North) 54 acres (Met State Lawns) under conservation easement. Located mostly in Waltham, but crosses borders into Belmont and Lexington.

**Terrain:** Large wooded site with significant wetlands, groomed trails, cinder paths, and dirt roads.

**Trail rating and elevation gain:** Easy - Flat groomed trails. Insignificant elevation gain (about 50 ft) except for the Mackerel Hill.

**Highlights:** Largest contiguous woods in Waltham. Geological features purported to be glacial eskers. Good views from Mackerel Hill. Cultural remnants of former Metropolitan State Hospital, and patient cemetery.

**Hazards:** Unprotected access to waterways. Poison ivy in a few areas. Eroded paths on slopes.

**Special rules:** Dogs must be on leashes. Off limits to all motorized vehicles including ATVs.

**Access & Parking:** Entrances and trails are not marked. There is a new parking lot on Metropolitan Parkway, opposite the old Administration Building. Parking is also available at Elsie Turner Field, 421 Trapelo Rd., Waltham and at Rock Meadow, Mill St., Belmont.

**Handicapped accessibility:** No paved roads.

### Public transportation:

- Bus #73 (Harvard Station – Waverley Square) — get off at last stop in Waverley Square.
- Bus #554 (Downtown Boston via Newton Corner and Waverley Square) — get off at Waverley Oaks Rd opposite Brookfield Rd.
- Commuter Rail — Fitchburg/South Acton line (Waverley Station stop).

**Contact:** MA DCR, (617) 484-6357; [mass.parks@state.ma.us](mailto:mass.parks@state.ma.us)



# Waltham Land Trust Guide to Open Spaces

## Beaver Brook North Reservation

### Park Overview

Located between Trapelo Road in Waltham and Concord Avenue in Lexington and Belmont, Beaver Brook North Reservation covers 254 acres and crosses the borders of Waltham, Lexington and Belmont. The Reservation abuts over 60 acres of conservation land owned by the City of Waltham as well as the 70-acre Rock Meadow conservation area in Belmont.

The reservation features a variety of plant habitats, including meadows, new-growth forest, mature oak-hickory forest, red maple swamps and cattail marches. Among the wildlife are great horned owls, red-tailed hawks, mink, red foxes, and many migratory birds. From the top of Mackerel Hill, views of Boston and the Blue Hills can be seen.

The Reservation's numerous carriage roads and by-paths are conducive to passive recreation activities, such as hiking, birdwatching, and cross-country skiing.