

**Wentworth Town Forest**  
**Wentworth, New Hampshire**  
**Recreational Trail Network and Management Plan**  
**Proposal**  
**July 2023**



## **Background:**

The Wentworth Town Forest (WTF) is located off Buffalo Road in southeastern Wentworth and is comprised of 3 parcels of land totaling approximately 181 acres. The Plummer Forest consists of 130.57 acres, the Van Deusen parcel 35.5 acres, and the Turner parcel of 15.31 acres---all within the Baker River Watershed.

The bulk of the Town Forest, the Plummer Forest, was granted to Wentworth by George Plummer in 1942 “for the benefit of the Town,” and that the property may “best be converted into a town forest.” In 2022, the Town of Wentworth voted to establish these parcels as an official Town Forest under RSA 31:110.

The forest has its own history---including damage from the 1938 hurricane and significant logging in the 1950’s---but the first written reports describing forest conditions were prepared by the UNH Cooperative Extension in 1964 and the NH Division of Forests and Lands in 1977. One of the Extension recommendations emphasized “enhancing recreational utility of the property.”

In 1989, Northam (Nory) Parr, our County Forester for 26 years, updated the Wentworth Town Forest Management Plan in 1989. Regarding objectives of ownership, he recommended that the “Town Forest is to be utilized to provide the greatest benefit to the community, such as a recreational area and education/demonstration of natural resource conservation, and sustainable timber management.

“The Town Forest at present is an underutilized asset to town residents.....contributing only to the visual quality and rural character of the town----in a passive sense.

“Recreational utility, currently, low, could be rather easily expanded to encourage day hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, and other low-impact uses. Visible trail-head access points, internal trail maintenance/improvement, would encourage increased use at minimal effort, cost, or impact on the forest environment.

“Self-guiding trails, using appropriate brochure and signage to point out significant natural features such as tree species, soil type change, rock out-crops, wildlife trails, etc. would have an educational benefit and encourage appreciation of the forest.”

Recommendations from our former Grafton County Forester Northam Parr:

The WTF should be actively managed under the multiple-use concept, to increase the flow of benefits and utility to the community. Particular emphasis should be placed on developing recreational resource potential, enhancing forest wildlife habitat, maintaining an attractive and visible public

forest in the community, and providing a sustainable return of periodic revenue through sound timber production.

In the recent (2018) Forest Stewardship Plan for the Wentworth Town Forests, created by forester Jordan King, he states that "sustainable long-term management that takes all uses of the land into account is the goal of this plan and of these forests," identifying several primary goals including enhancing recreational opportunities for the public. In the Town Annual Report of 2020, one of the Select Board's goals was "to increase recreational access with walking trails."

The Wentworth Conservation Commission (WCC) recognizes recreation as an important use that should be considered integral to forest management decisions. This was confirmed by the recent completion of the Wentworth Master Plan, created by the Wentworth Planning Board and adopted March 6, 2023. The Plan was based on the Community Survey Results, a comprehensive project focusing on the opinions and concerns of the citizens of Wentworth and addressing multiple issues, including natural resources and recreation.

The Wentworth Town Forest is cared for and managed by the Conservation Commission "to encourage wise and sustainable forest stewardship, protect wildlife habitat improve recreational access, and provide natural resource education," as stated in our mission statement. "We will strive to help preserve the rural character of Wentworth and encourage our townsfolk to enjoy nature and work together in maintaining the beautiful surroundings in which we are so fortunate to live."

The top four reasons why respondents live in Wentworth, according to the Master Plan, were "the small-town atmosphere, natural resources and open land, privacy, and recreation opportunities." Our mission statement supports the Master Plan. Respondents indicate they would like more non-motorized trails in the Town Forest. Answering question #29: "Should the town allow non-motorized trails and other park amenities within the Town-owned land of the Plummer Forest, 73% responded 'yes.' One of the overall goals of the Master Plan is to "work with the Conservation Commission to develop a trail system in the Wentworth Town Forest." We are ready and hope to engage many town residents who are able and willing to help, as it is your Town Forest.

### **Proposed Recreational Trail Network:**

Our Town Forest has a comprehensive Forest Stewardship Plan with the intent of future timber harvests on this property. The proposed trail network includes the considerations for future logging while providing recreational opportunities for our town residents to enjoy--- with diverse forest types, interesting topography, and some quality ridgeline views to the east.

This proposal contains the following components: 1) Access Landing area, 2) primary loop trail, 3) secondary trail, 4) trail signs and markers; and 5) community volunteer engagement. Note that trail and place names are temporary place-holders and permanent names will be selected by the Town of Wentworth. The proposed primary loop trail is currently flagged with yellow tape, but does not represent the exact location---which will be determined during construction of the trail.

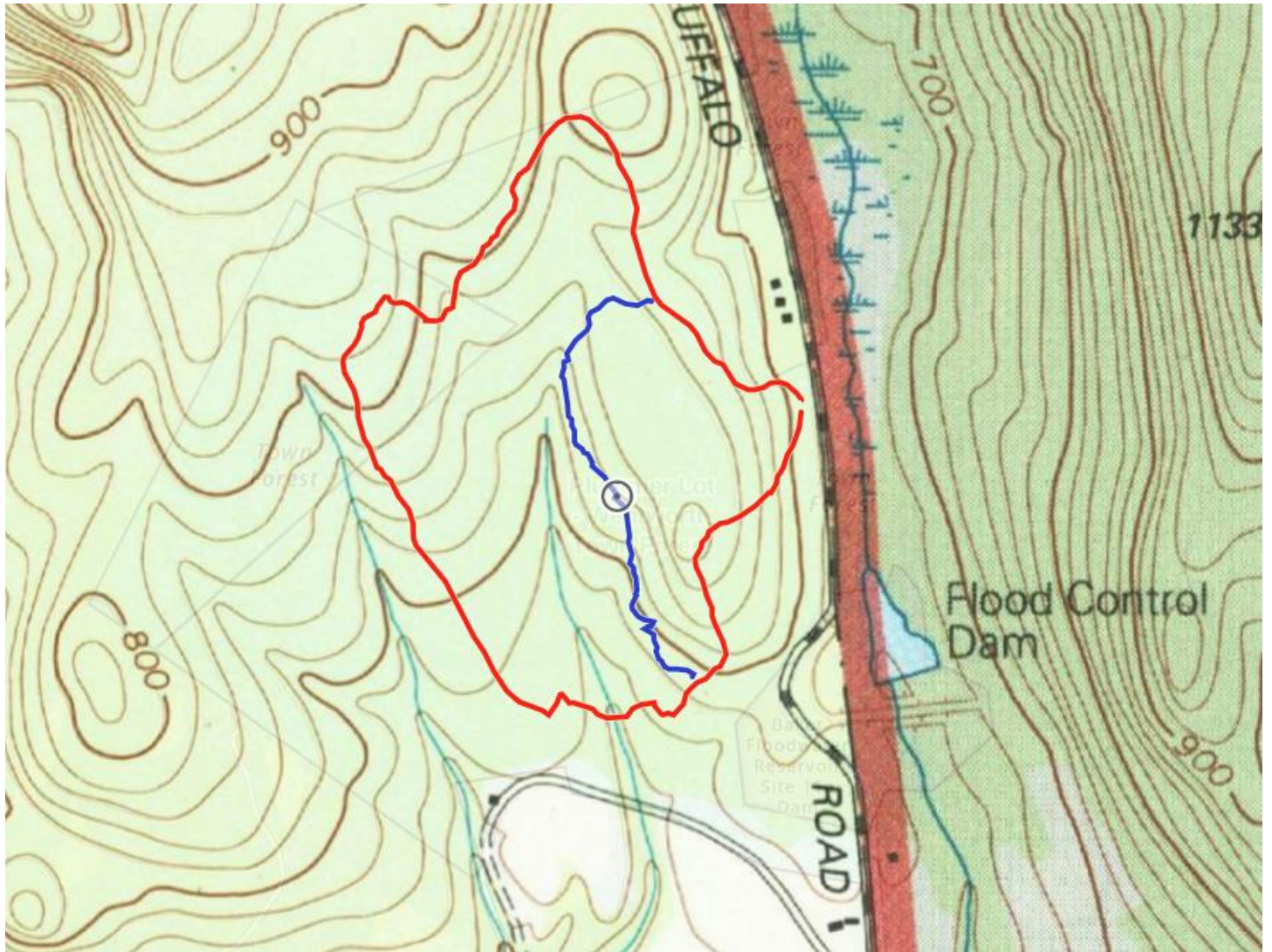
## Access Landing area:

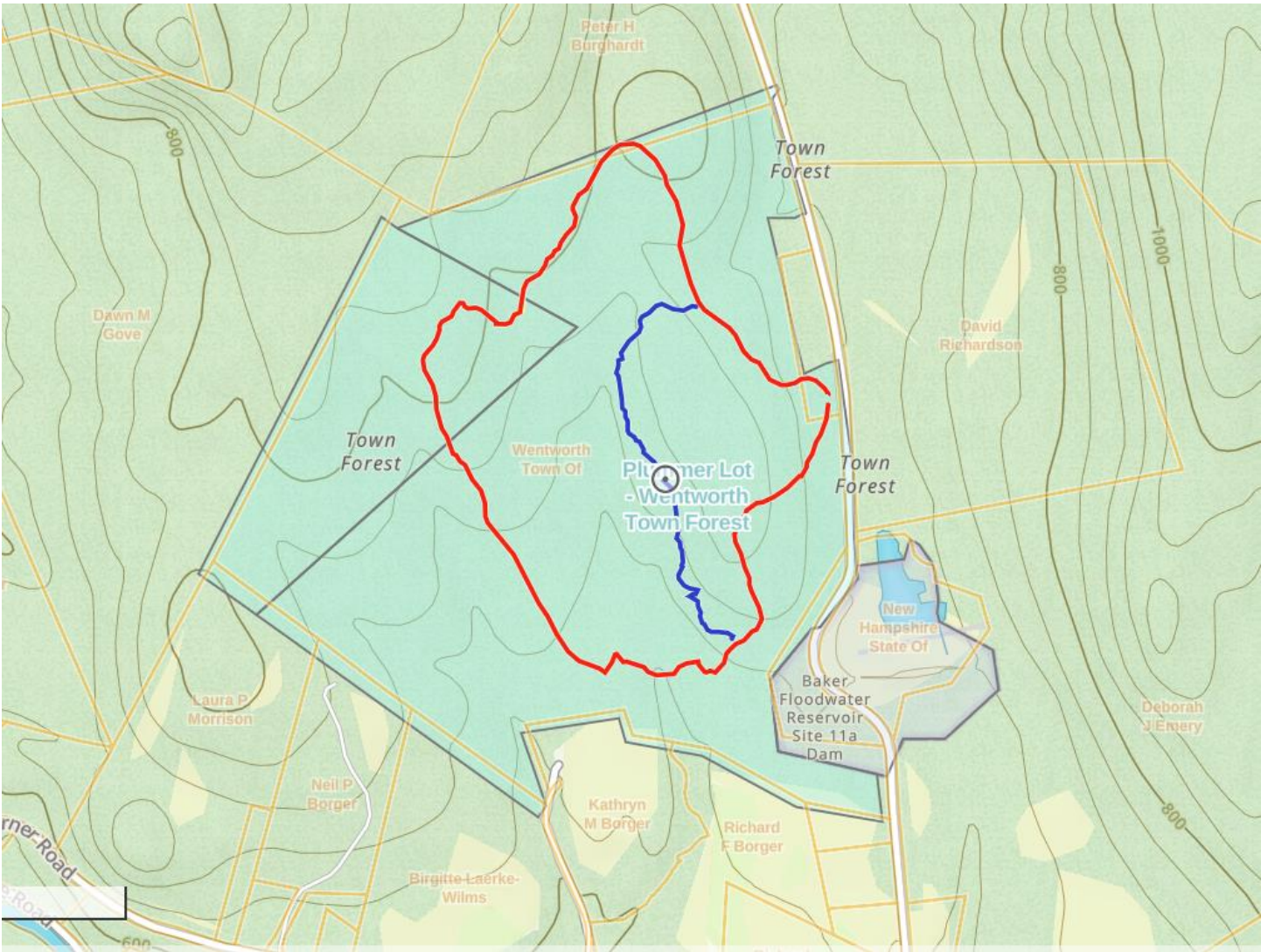
The access landing area is located along Buffalo Road and is leveled and cleared from previous logging activities. The short steep bank has been breached to allow a vehicle to approach the landing on a ramp-like entry. More work has to be done to allow water flow through a culvert at the bottom and to stabilize the ramp itself. The access landing can be created with minimal alterations to allow vehicle access to the area. The clearing can comfortably fit 6 to 8 vehicles and could be constrained by using logs to restrict each space. There is plenty of space there also for a couple picnic tables if wanted.

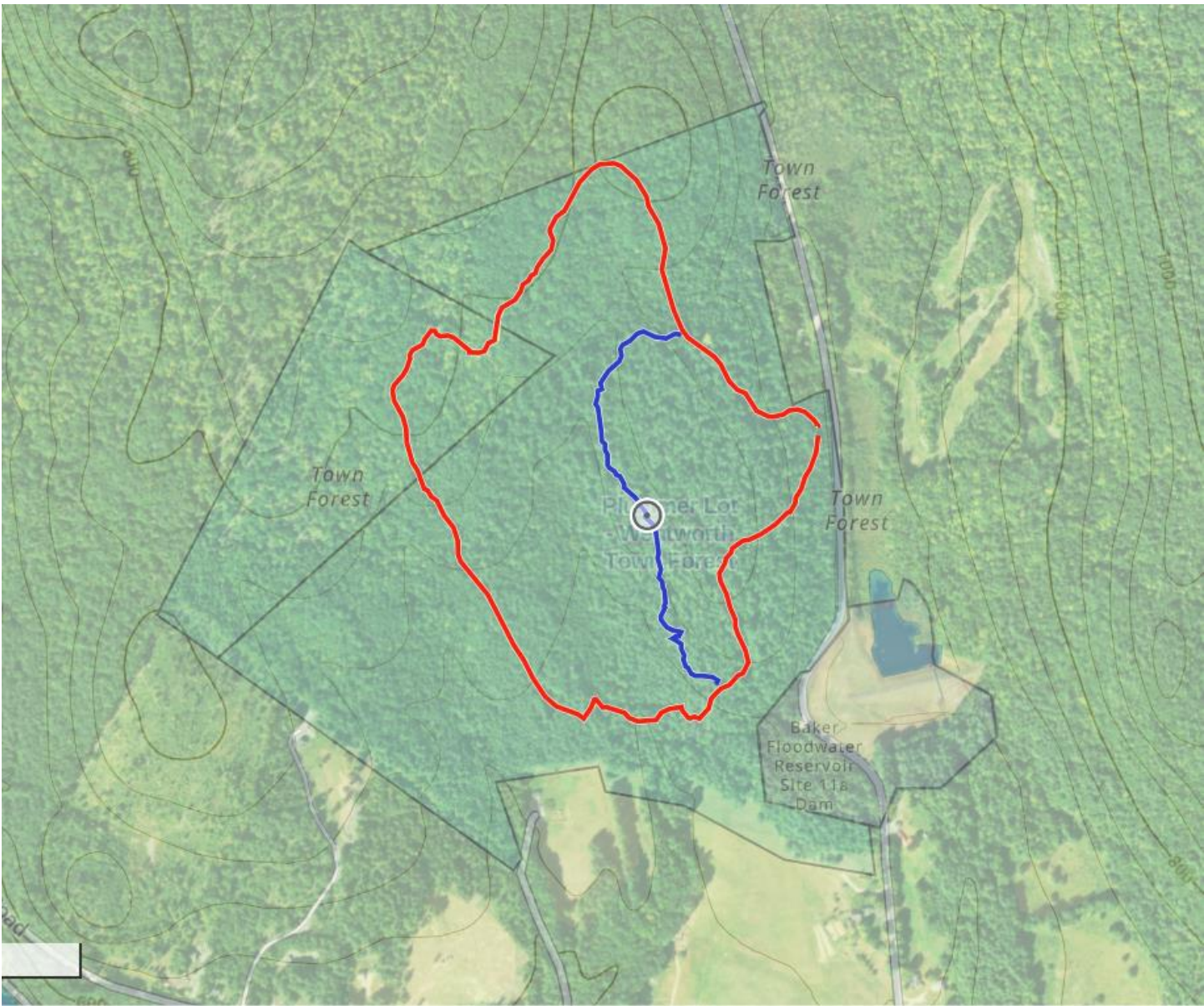
Visitor information can be posted on an information kiosk at the center of the landing near the tree line with a trail map, wildlife information, and notice of restricted uses. (See photo examples below) Wentworth has an abundance of wood working talent and no doubt can come up with a rustic, appropriate information kiosk for our forest. Information that should be offered includes:



a trail map with boundaries of the Town Forest, stewardship information (caring for the local environment), carry in-carry out message (leave no trace principles), basic rules, and contact information for the WCC.







### **Primary Loop (in RED):**

The majority of the Primary Loop (or named Plummer Loop?) utilizes existing skid roads to create a loop hike around the perimeter of the property that is nearly 1.5 miles long. With a trail in place, the loop can easily be completed in under 1 hour making this an attractive, relatively short hike without a substantial time commitment. The skid roads will have to be cleared most of the way with a need to create approximately 0.2 miles of new trail to create the loop. The path travels through a variety of forest types, navigates interesting terrain, provides sweeping easterly views, and offers a wider trail tread to walk side by side.

By utilizing the existing skid roads there are substantial efficiencies as opposed to new trail construction through forested land. When the time comes for the next timber harvest, the Primary Loop can be used once again as a skid road.

**Trail Specifications:** The Primary Loop would maintain the existing corridor width of approximately 8-10 ft. wide. The trail tread would remain as a natural surface trail. Vegetation will need to be weed whacked/brush cut to maintain a clear treadway. During the construction phase, existing slash, stumps, and other obtrusions will need to be removed. Native soils will be compacted to form the trail treadway. Drainage structures should be installed to prevent erosion. There are two locations along the Primary Loop that will require a wooden boardwalk over wet areas, but these are located in sections that will have newly constructed trails where logging skidders will not impact them.

Drainage structures, or waterbars, will be constructed of native earth or timber to shed water from the trail treadway. The two boardwalks should be constructed of pressure treated materials. An appropriate size and design will be determined at the time of construction. The Primary Loop is wide and will be suitable for recreation such as walking/hiking, and snowshoeing.

Current conditions of the Primary Loop are indicated in the color-coded maps below. This portion of the plan will help to determine the amount of time required to bring the trail up to the desired standard. Utilizing existing corridor for the majority of the Primary Loop will be a significant cost/labor saver compared to cutting a new trail.

Color-Coded Map:

**RED: High** - Total 2,458 feet (0.46 miles)

High indicates that a high degree of work is needed to meet the desired standards for the Primary Loop Trail. Existing conditions include large amounts of slash, stumps, and obstacles will need to be removed. The designation also indicates topography that is steeper than the rest of the trail and will need additional work to create a sustainable trail tread in these areas. Approximately 1/3 of the Primary Loop is categorized as "High."

**Yellow: Medium** - 2,138 feet (0.40 miles)



“Medium” indicates moderate needs to bring the existing skid road in-line with desired standards for the Primary Loop Trail. Moderate amounts of slash and obstacles will need to be moved and the overall slope is not very steep, requiring less effort to maintain sustainable trail conditions.

**Green:** Low - 360 feet

“Low” indicates very little needs to bring this section of trail up to the desired standard for the Primary Loop Trail.

**Blue:** Good to Go - 1,900 feet (0.35 miles)

“Good to Go’ indicates that no work is needed to bring this section of trail up to desired standards.

**Black:** New Trail Construction - 792 feet (0.15 miles)

“New Trail Construction” indicates the sections of trail where no skid road currently exists. New trail will need to be cut and cleared to link sections of existing skid roads. There are three areas of new trail identified, 2 on the northern half of the loop and one on the southern half of the loop. These sections are short, but will require a high degree of effort to reach the desired standard for the Primary Loop Trail.

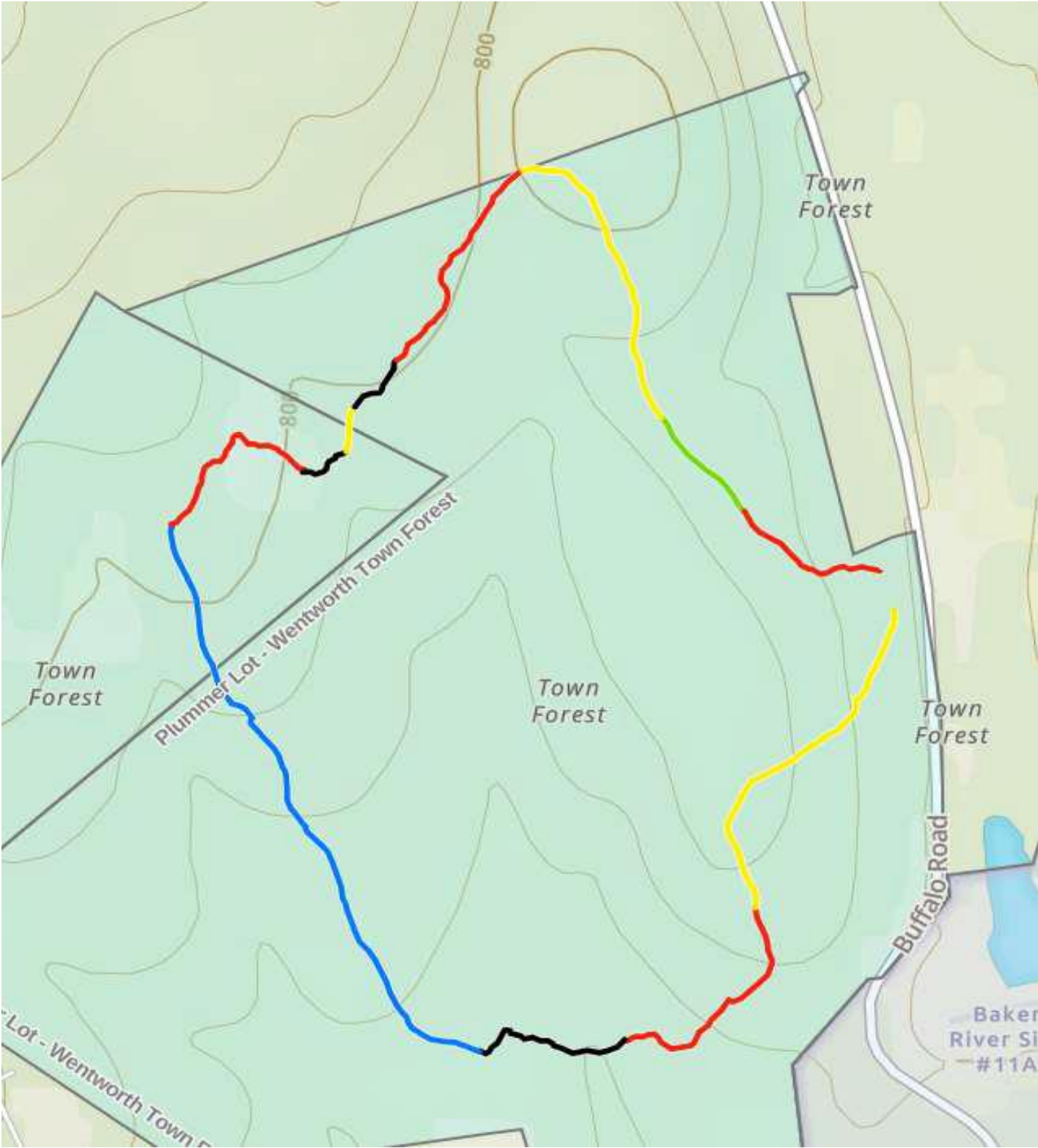




Photo of a "Good to Go" section of the Primary Loop Trail.



Photo of a "Low" section of the Primary Loop Trail.



Photo of a "Medium" section of the Primary Loop Trail.

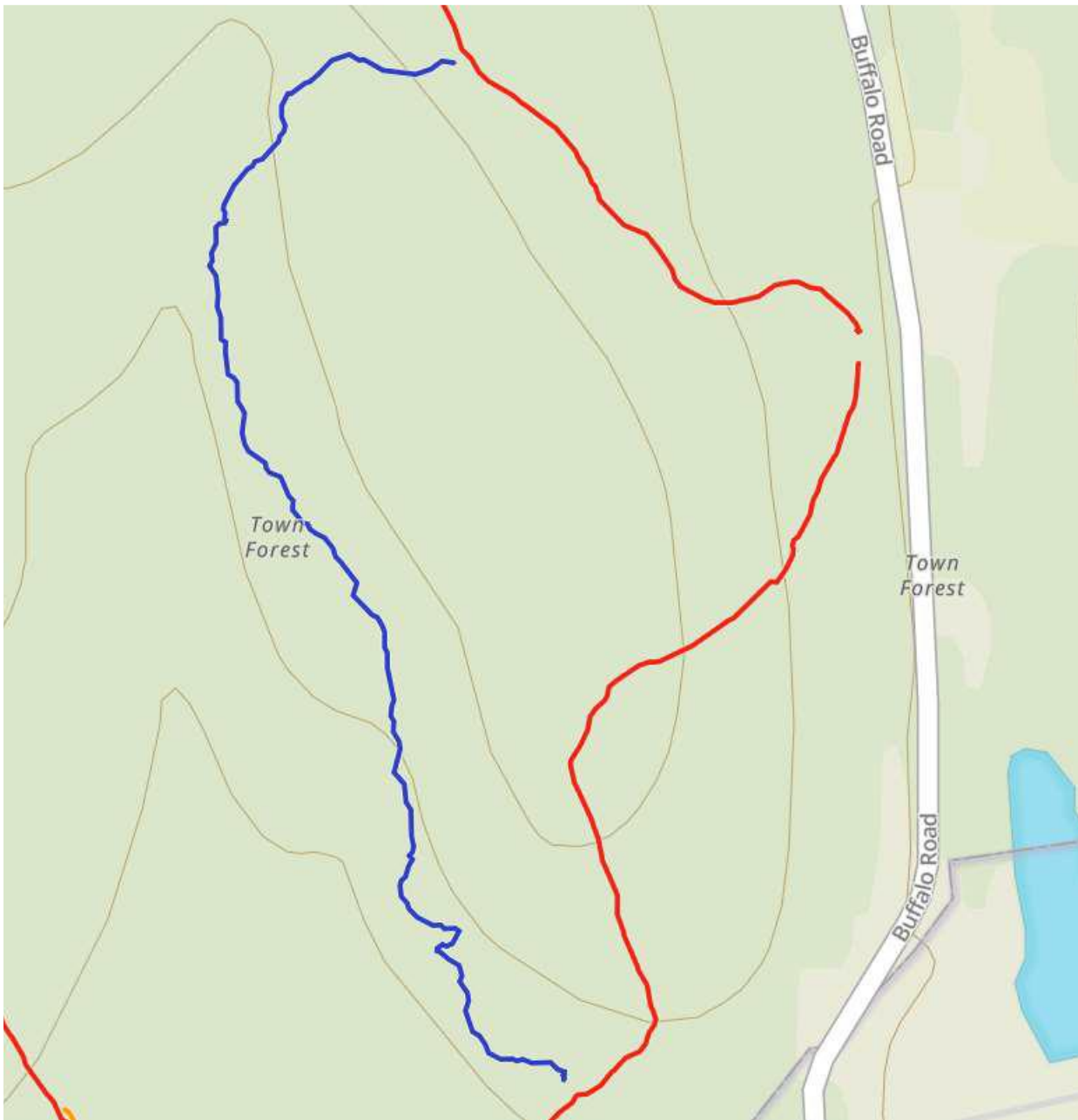


Photo of a "High" section of the Primary Loop Trail.

**Secondary Trail (North-South (Blue Trail) - 0.42 miles:**

A secondary trail overall is more primitive and narrower similar to a traditional White Mountain hiking trail. The North-South Trail cuts along the contour just below a ridgeline looking down into the primary drainage on the Town Forest. The trail would be bench-cut tread that guides the hiker through tall trees, past exposed ledge and large boulders and offers wooded views of the lower wetland area. This would offer an alternate shorter loop hike from the landing area, or a way to add additional miles to the hike.

The Blue Trail will need substantial hand tool work as most of this trail travels along a side slope and a “bench” will need to be cut to create a walking surface. Bench-cutting or side-hilling is a common trail building technique that creates a very sustainable and easy to maintain trail. No trees over 6-inch diameter will need to be cut to create the corridor of the North/South Blue Trail.



Few drainage structures will be needed on this trail. Drainage is incorporated into bench-cut trail construction and are called reverse grade dips. There may be a few locations where an earthen waterbar or perhaps a native log waterbar will be needed to shed water off of the trail. This can be determined at the time of construction.

This secondary trail is intended for hikers during snow free times of year. The trail passes by areas on the Town Forest that can be utilized by overwintering deer. Winter use can be focused on the Primary Loop.



## Trail Signs and Trail Markers:

No trail network is complete without a consistent trail marking system and trail signs. We can develop our own trail marking system and signs that match the aesthetics desired by the Town of Wentworth. Markers are placed consistently along the trail in each direction to provide reassurance that the visitor is still on the correct path. Trail signs are placed at trail heads and at every trail junction.

Painted trail markers could be used to mark the trails at appropriate intervals, avoiding red or blue markings left over from logging activity or boundary marking. Plastic or metal markers could also be used, nailing them to trees using aluminum nails, leaving a gap to account for tree growth.

For trail signs, wooden routed trail signs are most common around the White Mountain region and look the most natural. With a local woodworking volunteer, wooden trail signs can be made and replaced over time. Painting or staining will help increase the lifespan of a wooden sign. One of our Committee members recently discovered a pile of natural edge small slabs in their barn that could be routed for trail signs.

Based on this proposed network, approximately 7 trail signs would be recommended: two at the Landing/parking area, two at each trail junction, and one larger Wentworth Town Forest sign for the trail head.

Examples of natural looking signage:



## **Community Volunteer Engagement:**

Building a trail network for our Town Forest will be no small task, but, hopefully, with the help of local volunteers and groups, it can be done. The more that people are involved in the implementation of this plan, the more use, interest, and respect the Town Forest will receive. Some volunteers may be able to offer a day's work, some more. Others may have equipment or tools to help move things along.

Importantly, trail building training will be available initially by two members of the North Country Volunteer Trails Program. The cost to us will be \$300 for a day of training, for a maximum of 12 participants. We should be able to learn enough from this session to continue implementing these practices going forward with any new volunteers.

Regular maintenance should happen a few times a year and would include clearing the paths of fallen limbs or trees, brushing back bothersome vegetation as needed, and keeping clear any drainage structures. Basic maintenance could be assigned to a volunteer, couple, or group, when it is convenient for them, such as an 'Adopt-a-Trail' practice. The WCC could also organize a 'volunteer event' once or twice a year to accomplish critical maintenance.

Access landing area maintenance is a way for volunteers that are not able to hike to lend a hand to ensure that area is free of any trash and checking on the condition of the informational material on the kiosk.

Long-term planning is another important role volunteers can assist with. Regular assessment of trail conditions, trail markers, trail signs, access landing, and kiosk will help stay ahead of any maintenance needs before they get out of hand. There is a role for every ability and every interest in caring for a recreational trail network. This can include boy and girl scouts as well as schoolchildren receiving outdoor education.

Town Forests are a tradition going back to Colonial times. Local public values drive the management of these properties and vary according to the community ---values such as conservation, recreation, wildlife habitat, and sustainable forestry. Here is where the value of a Town Master Plan comes in: to hear directly from the town residents about their priorities for its use. The Wentworth Conservation Commission welcomes all input on this proposed plan for your Town Forest as well as all offers for volunteer engagement!

