

# Rock, Root & Trail



June 2020

## COVID-19 EMERGENCY ISSUE

**You are needed. Your voice is important to us. You will receive CFPA's new Supporter Survey in a week or two. Share your thoughts – complete the survey and return it to us as soon as possible. Thank you!**

### Trail Use Explodes

You know where to find your oasis. It's your favorite Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail. You go there for fresh air, stress relief, and sometimes just to get a quick break from the people you live with and love.

Trails are so much more important during the COVID-19 crisis because you're stuck in the house. You can't easily go to your favorite restaurant/bar, the gym, the movies, REI, or the library. The places you go are the grocery store or pharmacy. And never has that simple task been so stressful, what with putting on a mask, washing your hands frequently ... and trying to remember to follow the arrows telling you what way to go up an aisle!

Trail use has skyrocketed. According to the Connecticut Trail Census, more than half of the trails inventoried this March recorded an increase of greater than 100% in use, compared to March, 2019. That's a lot of people using trails more than ever. Please be safe on trails, practice social distancing, and be courteous of others. Oh ... and ask your friends to support trails by giving to CFPA.



## Important Tips to Stay Safe Outdoors



At CFPA, we are encouraging people to get outdoors for the physical and mental health benefits of nature; however, we emphasize that outdoor activity should be done SAFELY by following these tips strictly:

- Use appropriate social distancing by staying at least 6 feet from others (when you are passing someone on a trail, make sure to yield and allow for plenty of space)
- Go outdoors as a solitary activity or with family (and if you get to a place that is already crowded, find another place to go)
- Keep your germs to yourself (cough or sneeze into your sleeve, wear a mask for extra protection for yourself and others, and if you are not feeling well, stay home)
- Be careful about what you touch (and don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth)
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as often as possible (at least before and after you go outdoors)
- "Go before you go" and limit the length of your trip (since most restroom facilities are closed)
- Take out what you take in (this is always good to do, but especially important now since you put others in jeopardy if you leave infected trash behind)

## Trail Work

The COVID-19 crisis impacts the Blue- Blazed Hiking Trails in a number of ways. Because of quarantine and group activity restrictions, all trail work parties were cancelled this spring, and that continues to be the case. Trail managers have faced more logistical challenges to get out on trails, get tools, and get work maintaining trails using best safety practices. At the same time, the extraordinary increased level of trail use is putting unprecedented pressure on the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail network.

Your support of trails makes a huge difference. So, if you donated recently to CFPA in support of the trails –THANK YOU.

If you didn't yet donate to support trails, and are in a position to do so, please use the enclosed envelope or go to [www.ctwoodlands.org](http://www.ctwoodlands.org) and [donate online](#).



Hikers and runners are not the only ones out on trails. Unfortunately, we are seeing more ATVs and other motorized vehicles in areas where they shouldn't be. This illegal activity severely damages trails and endangers hikers and runners. If you see illegal vehicles on the trail, please report the activity to the DEEP Enforcement hotline via 860/424-3333 – do not confront them. We encourage everyone to be safe on trails, practice social distancing, and be courteous of others.



## Data Proves What You Know: Trails are Critical...

Our understanding of who is using trails, as well as why, when, and how, is growing as a result of UConn's Connecticut Trail Census. The Trail Census collects data about statewide trail use to provide community leaders and decision makers a better understanding of the real impact of trails. The most recent Trail Census report reinforces the anecdotal information about trail use, and why trails are so important to the community during the COVID-19 Crisis. More than half of the trails participating in this study recorded an increase of greater than 100% in use, compared to March 2019. The Trail Census is more than just a user count. It also includes a new online trail user survey to better understand trail user demographics. Most of the work is on multi-use trails, but a new pilot effort includes one of CFPA's Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails.



### Connecticut Trail Census Statewide multi-use trail user study

## A Trail Innovator

Partnerships are critical to CFPA's success, and individual relationships are key to those partnerships. We want to recognize people, like Charlie Tracy, who partner with us to protect trails, forests, and recreational opportunities.

Charlie has been a good friend and partner to CFPA for over a decade. An avid hiker and former rock climber, Charlie earned a degree in landscape architecture at UMASS. While at school, he developed an interest in large landscape issues which led him to the National Park Service (NPS). He worked in the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program at NPS for 30 years and was the New England National Scenic Trail Administrator for 10 years. In partnership with CFPA, Charlie guided the launch and subsequent growth of the New England Trail's popularity. One of his most exciting initiatives was the NET Artist-in-Residence Program.

Charlie retired last year from the National Park Service. Not one to stay out of the action for long, he took on the Coordinator role at UConn's Connecticut Trail Census. This allows CFPA to work even more closely with him on

understanding and improving Connecticut Trails. "CFPA is one of the most agile and strategic organizations I have ever worked with--their impact on trails and conservation is tangible, statewide, and lasting."

Thanks, Charlie! CFPA supporters like you also have a big impact on Connecticut's land and CFPA could not thrive without supporters who care. CFPA supporters like you also have a big impact on Connecticut's land and CFPA could not thrive without supporters who care.



## CT Trails Day 2020

We wanted to extend a special thank you to all the CT Trails Day sponsors who continued their support during the COVID-19 crisis. Without their support, CT Trails Day would lack the resources to organize and promote the largest Trails Day event in the nation each year. Since we are social distancing – please give these dedicated supporters a virtual hug!



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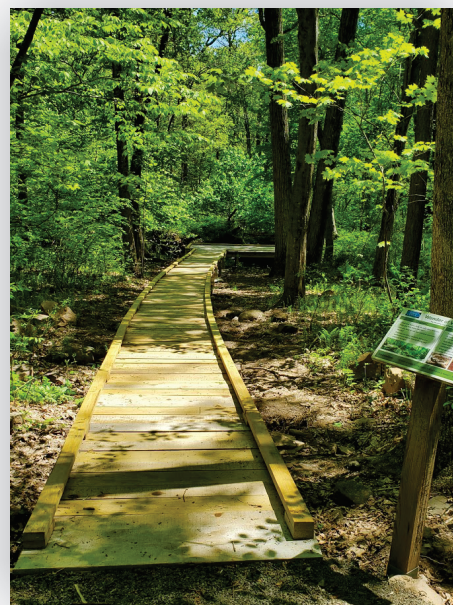
## The New and Improved Highlawn Forest

Two major projects in Highlawn Forest were completed during the COVID-19 crisis thanks to generous local supporters and lots of volunteers.

The first project completed was the Outdoor Education Classroom. This project will be a wonderful space for people of all ages to learn about forests and wildlife. It was funded by a grant from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County and a donor-advised grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Many thanks to all the project volunteers and to City Bench for its work.

The second project was the Vernal Pool Boardwalk Platform, which will be a great asset for educators and visitors. This project was funded through a grant from the Rockfall Foundation, a gift from Astrid and Fred Hanzalek, volunteer help and a donation of material from Burns & McDonnell, and a contribution of financial and volunteer support from NRG.

(photo Amanda Kenyon)



Visit us at [www.ctwoodlands.org](http://www.ctwoodlands.org)



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