

CFPA established and maintains the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public. However CFPA does not, for the most part, own the land traversed by these trails. While some properties are public forests or parks, most are in private ownership. All trail landowners are owed respect and gratitude by CFPA and those who use the trails. It is not CFPA policy to protect the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails by pursuing adverse possession claims.

CFPA recognizes that the owner of a property crossed by a Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail has the ultimate control over what is allowed on his land and on that portion of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail. CFPA will strive to resolve any differences that may arise between a trail landowner and CFPA.

The purpose of this policy is to establish rules for the use of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails.

Use of Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails

I. State Lands

Approximately one-fourth of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System is on land owned by the State of Connecticut. On these properties the use of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails are subject to the Connecticut law and state departmental policy described below. This law and policy constitute CFPA policy for the use of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System on state land.

Section 23-10a of the Connecticut General Statutes states:

"Those portions of the Connecticut blue-blazed trail system which cross state property are hereby designated as state hiking trails."

The Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, State Parks Division, Policy/Procedure #310, dated September 12, 1995, entitled "Multiple Use Trail Policy for Park & Forest Recreation Areas - Existing Trails" states in "Trail Use" Section I.1:

Trail uses, other than hiking, shall be prohibited on the Appalachian Trail and Connecticut Forest & Park Association maintained trails except where these trails utilize maintained roads or, where DEP Authorized or Blazed trails supporting other uses, coincide. No motorized, off-road use will be allowed, except where permission for such use is specifically authorized.

II. Non-State Lands excluding CFPA Lands and Easements

A. Pedestrian Footpath

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System consists predominantly of a network of footpaths designed for hiking. Many of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails are situated on steep slopes and cliff edges and in densely wooded areas that pose serious hazards to those not traveling on foot. The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails are neither designed nor maintained to the standard necessary to accommodate hoof, bicycle, or motorized vehicle traffic. CFPA volunteers design and construct bridges, install waterbars and other erosion control measures, and trim vegetation with foot traffic in mind. Other modes of transportation may destroy the Trails, cause erosion or damage, or create hazardous and unsafe conditions. The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails are, in general, narrow, steep and winding enough that encounters between a hiker and a bicyclist or motorized vehicle could prove dangerous. For these reasons, it is the policy of CFPA that the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails not be used by persons on motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, bicycles, horses, llamas, and other hoofed animals or by persons using motorized vehicles, except as defined below.

B. Bicycle and Equestrian Traffic

Some portions of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System are suited to multiple uses, such as equestrian and non-motorized bicycle traffic. CFPA supports these uses of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails in areas where

the host landowner has granted permission and where CFPA has determined that the design of the trail is conducive to these uses (e.g. a woods road).

C. Motorized Vehicle Traffic

Motorized vehicles, including all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles and snowmobiles, may be used and enjoyed in a safe and responsible manner on certain trails with landowner permission and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. CFPA does not, however, support the use of motorized vehicles on any Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail except where the host landowner has granted permission for such use and has informed CFPA of such permission.

D. Other Motorized Vehicle Traffic

CFPA supports the use of motor vehicles (passenger cars, trucks, tractors, skidders, etc.) on the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails in the following circumstances only:

1. where the trail follows a public road;
2. where the trail follows a farm road and the landowner has granted permission;
3. where the trail follows a woods road, logging road or skid trail and the landowner has granted permission.

III. CFPA Lands and Easements

A. CFPA Lands

Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails on land owned by CFPA in fee shall be designated for foot traffic only. Other uses shall be permitted only with written permission from CFPA or as allowed by a property management plan. CFPA lands may include other trails that are designed for multiple uses. Permitted uses on such trails will be determined by a property management plan.

B. CFPA Conservation Restriction and Easements

The use of Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails on land over which CFPA holds a conservation restriction or easement shall be that permitted under the terms of the restriction or easement. On such properties, CFPA shall seek to limit the use of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails to foot traffic only.

C. CFPA Trail Easements

The use of a Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail on land over which CFPA holds a trail easement shall be that permitted under the terms of the easement.

IV. All Lands

A. Emergency Vehicle Use

CFPA accepts the use of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails by fire, police, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, or other emergency vehicle in emergencies or when needed for enforcement, fire suppression or other purposes of this nature.

B. Universal Access

CFPA will strive to make sections of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails accessible to those who use wheelchairs and those who have difficulty walking where the host landowner has granted permission and where site and trail conditions (distance from trailhead, slope, wetness, rocks, roots, etc.) permit.

C. Dogs

Dogs provide companionship for many hikers, but can be a source of fear or annoyance for others. Unleashed dogs can be dangerous, create safety hazards, and be harmful to wildlife and fragile vegetation.

To allow both dog-walkers and non-dog-walkers to enjoy the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails, CFPA requires that dogs accompany hikers only if dogs are leashed and if the landowner allows dogs.

D. Camping

Camping is not permitted along the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails except at designated sites with permission of the landowner.

E. Fires

Campfires are not permitted along the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails except at designated sites with permission of the landowner.

F. Hunting

Hunters and hikers both seek enjoyment of the outdoors and share many conservation interests. Hiking and hunting are compatible uses for conservation land. With proper precautions taken, hikers and hunters may safely enjoy their outdoor pursuits.

Hikers should be aware that hunting with bow and arrow and firearms occurs on public and private properties crossed by the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails, subject to all applicable laws and regulations. Hikers are strongly encouraged to wear blaze orange clothing during hunting seasons and to consult the State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection, for information about hunting seasons and hunting safety.

G. Passive Winter Recreation

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails are not designed with uses such as cross-country skiing in mind. However, CFPA accepts passive winter recreational uses, such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, on the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails except where prohibited by the landowner. Participants in passive winter recreational uses are urged to exercise good judgment and common sense.

H. General Behavior

Members of the public should behave in a decorous and courteous manner at all times while using the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails. Trail users should:

- obey all signs;
- stay on established trails;
- carry out everything carried in;
- wear appropriate clothing and shoes and be properly equipped and prepared;
- leave the trail in better condition;
- report problems or hazards to CFPA.
- not take flowers, vegetation, mushrooms, rocks, etc.;
- not disturb wildlife.

Trail users should use caution and good judgment while using and planning to use the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails. All trail users should consult the most recent edition of the Connecticut Walk Book (currently in its 19th edition) and the CFPA web site at <http://www.ctwoodlands.org>, for safety tips and more information.

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