

The New England Trail:

An 800+ mile footpath through New England.

WWW.NETRAIL.ORG

Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

What is the New England Trail?

- **The New England Trail (NET)** is a proposal for an **800+ mile long hiking trail** through the center of New England (north-south) from Long Island Sound to southern Quebec at Mount Megantic. It passes through Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and connects to Maine and Vermont via its intersection with the Appalachian Trail and the East Coast Greenway.

What is the route of the New England Trail?

- The **New England Trail (NET)** has **three branches**: its "**West Branch**" begins at Long Island Sound in Connecticut and continues north through the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts to Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire; its "**East Branch**" begins at Long Island Sound in Rhode Island and continues north through central Massachusetts to Mount Monadnock; and its "**North Branch**" begins at Mount Megantic in Quebec and continues south through New Hampshire to Mount Monadnock. Mount Monadnock is the central nexus of all three trail branches. See [Trail Tour](http://www.netrail.org/tour/tour.html) for a detailed description of routes. <http://www.netrail.org/tour/tour.html>

What is the purpose of the New England Trail proposal?

- It has several. **First**, to encourage the creation of the **New England Trail (NET)** route as described in this proposal; more broadly to encourage trail building throughout New England in general. **Second**, to provide recreational hiking opportunities for the widest diversity of New England residents possible. **Third**, to promote land conservation through outdoor recreation. **Fourth**, to help complete the full scope of Appalachian Trail founder Benton MacKaye's vision outlined in his proposal "[The Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning](#)"

Can I hike the New England Trail now?

- Yes. Although the **New England Trail (NET)** is not an officially designated trail, you can hike almost all of it now. More than 80% of the proposed route follows existing trails. The remaining 20% may be hiked by detouring on other nearby trails, by walking roads, or by off trail map and compass navigation. See [Can I Hike It?](#) for more details. <http://www.netrail.org/hikeit/hikeit.html>

Is there a trail map of the New England Trail?

- Some maps have been produced specifically for this proposal. A list of those maps can be found at: <http://www.netrail.org/maps/New%20England%20Trail%20Maps.html> Those who plan on hiking part or all of the proposed route will also want to pick up maps and guide books produced by government and non-profit sources for specific parts of the trail. Lists of these resources can be found at: <http://www.netrail.org/hikeit/hikeit.html> and also on the specific trail tour pages at: <http://www.netrail.org/tour/tour.html>

What major trails does the New England Trail use?

- The **New England Trail (NET)** would use *portions* of the following long distance trails: **Regicides Trail, Quinnipiac Trail, Mattabessett Trail, Metacomet Trail, Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, Robert Frost Trail, Tully Trail, North-South Trail, Tippecanett Trail, Narragansett Trail, Walkabout Trail, Midstate Trail, Wapack Trail, Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway, Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway, Mount Cardigan trails, Squam Range trails, White Mountains National Forest** trail system, **Appalachian Trail, Cohos Trail, North Country Trail** (a proposed extension of the Cohos Trail), trails of the **Sentiers Frontaliers** in Quebec, as well as many shorter paths. The **NET** does not always directly coincide with the routes of existing trails; it occasionally wanders a bit from those routes to capture interesting scenic features. The **NET** is intended to compliment, not erase or rename, the routes of existing trails.

Has anyone hiked the New England Trail end-to-end?

- Long distance hiker **Ryan Linn** hiked most of the **West Branch** and **North Branch of the New England Trail** in 2009 in one trip, approximately 600 miles. **Gene Tivnan** of Worcester, Massachusetts has hiked most of the East Branch, West Branch and over half of the North Branch. Other hikers have completed substantial portions of the entire route, but no one has end-to-end hiked the entire proposed route.

How old is the New England Trail proposal?

- The **New England Trail (NET)**, researched in **1996**, was originally published in **1998** under a text document entitled "The Great New England Trail" and was distributed to various trail and conservation groups including The Appalachian Mountain Club and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy from 1998 through 2000. The proposal was slightly modified based on feedback and re-named "The New England Trail" in 1999 and was published to the web in 1999 under the domain name of **www.netrail.org**

Has the proposed route changed any since 1997?

- Most of the route has remained the same, with a few minor exceptions. Most notably the southern terminus of the **West Branch of the New England Trail** was relocated from West Haven, Connecticut to New Haven to capture a more scenic and more viable trail route. Part of

the **East Branch of the New England Trail** route in Rhode Island was moved a few miles west in 2010 to include the scenic Tiptecansett Trail system. Further north, the proposed route was slightly modified to best utilize trails that had been built subsequent to the proposal's inception (for instance the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Trail).

What is the relationship between the New England Trail and the New England National Scenic Trail?

- None. The **New England National Scenic Trail (NENST)**, which borrows its name from the original **New England Trail (NET)** proposal, is a product of the National Park Service and covers less than 200 miles of the 800+ mile route outlined here in the **NET** proposal. Of those 200 miles, much of the **NENST**, but not all of it, coincides with the proposed **NET** route. Other than the name duplication, the **NET** and the **NENST** are unrelated projects.

Why do the New England Trail and the New England National Scenic Trail share a similar name?

- The **New England National Scenic Trail (NENST)** was originally called the **Mattabessett-Metacomet-Monadnock (MMM) Trail**. Because the name was unwieldy, the scenic trail steering committee asked, through an anonymous public survey in **2006**, for a new trail name. Perhaps because the two proposals shared similar routes, the public returned the name "New England Trail." This name was subsequently applied to the **MMM Trail** in **2008**. The National Park Service maintains that the name similarities are entirely coincidental and do not conflict. **The New England Trail (NET)** began using the name in **1996**.

Does the idea for the New England National Scenic Trail come from the New England Trail proposal?

- The **New England National Scenic Trail (NENST)**, 200 miles long, is composed of the **Mattabessett Trail**, the **Metacomet Trail**, and the **Metacomet-Monadnock Trail**. The Mattabessett Trail and Metacomet Trail were built in the early 1900s as integral parts of the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association's greater network of "Blue Trails" built with the intention of creating a network of trails throughout the state. The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail was intentionally built in the 1950s as an extension of the Metacomet Trail through Massachusetts to Mount Monadnock. *The idea to link these three specific trails under the same name is new, however.* The National Park Service began studying linking the trails in **2002** under the name "Mattabessett-Metacomet-Monadnock Trail." The **New England Trail (NET)** proposal (800+ miles long) had already suggested linking the three trails (and other trails) under the same name by **1998**.

What are the key differences between the New England Trail and the New England National Scenic Trail?

- 1: Distance.** The **New England Trail (NET)** is *more than 600 miles longer* than the **New England National Scenic Trail (NENST)**. **2: Inclusivity.** The **NET** directly passes through *four* New England states and links to *one* Canadian province; it *indirectly connects to Maine and New Hampshire* through its junction with the **Appalachian Trail (AT)**. The **NENST** passes through only *two* New England states (MA and CT) and *does not* connect with the AT. **3: Completeness.** Percentage wise, the **NET** is more complete than the **NENST** and hence more walkable. **4: Policy.** While both trails exist as proposals and are incomplete, the **NENST** has been adopted by the National Park Service via legislation. Although such a designation brings federal support, it has also created problems: some key trail route landowners have been vocal in their resistance to federal involvement, complicating the completion of the route and forcing the National Park Service to re-route a large and scenic part of the **NENST** as it was originally proposed. Instead of a top-down approach, the **NET** proposal suggests a community-based and landowner-based, non-federal approach to long distance trail building and designation. **5: Route:** Although the route of the **NENST** approximates the West Branch section of the **NET** proposal, there are some key differences. The **West Branch of the NET** is about 50 miles longer than the **NENST** and includes more scenic features including East Rock, West Rock, Sleeping Giant, Mt. Orient, Mt. Toby, and Doane's Falls. Where the **NET** begins in urban New Haven, the **NENST** begins in upscale suburban Branford, CT. In Massachusetts, where the West Branch of the **NET** bears northwest to encompass Mt. Orient, Mt. Toby, and several waterfalls and ponds, the proposed **NENST** would bear north through a wooded buffer on the outskirts of the Quabbin Reservoir watershed (but not near the reservoir itself).

Why does the West Branch of the New England Trail begin in the city of New Haven, instead of a more rural setting?

- For several reasons. **First**, because residents of urban areas have been long underserved by access to long distance recreational trails. Locating a long distance trail terminus in New Haven, as opposed to one of its wealthy suburbs, would be a step toward addressing this inequity. (This would also further Benton MacKaye's Appalachian Trail vision). **Second**, the proposed route of **The New England Trail (NET)** through the New Haven area captures an astonishing wealth of scenic wonders, including a thriving river estuary, the cliff-top parks of East Rock, West Rock, and Sleeping Giant, and a lighthouse. There are no nearby rural options so scenic. **Third**, most of the **NET** route through New Haven can easily be located in parks and urban woodlands, keeping the trail off of streets. **Fourth**, by beginning the trail in an urban setting and ending the trail in the wilderness of northern New England and Quebec, hikers of the trail would be able to truly experience the scope of the New England landscape in all of its forms. The gradual transition from urban to wilderness and visa versa would be a symbolic experience as well as a recreational experience.

Has the New England Trail been endorsed by a non-profit organization or government agency?

- Not at this time.

Is the New England Trail a for-profit business or a non-profit organization?

- Neither. The **New England Trail** is a document and a proposal in regional planning only. It is not an organization, a company, or a product. Its authors have always worked on a volunteer basis, without compensation, and have even covered their own research expenses. Donations and other compensation are not accepted.

How can I support the creation of the New England Trail?

- Directly, by letting non-profit groups that you are a member of know that you would like to see the creation of the **New England Trail** (you may need to distinguish it from the [New England National Scenic Trail](#) project). Indirectly, by supporting land trusts and other conservation organizations in New England, by protecting land you yourself own; and by allowing recreational right-of-ways on land you own. If you would like to become more directly involved in the shaping of the proposal, please visit the website www.netrail.org, click on the "contact" link and email the proposal contact person.

How can I keep track of the New England Trail proposal?

- At this point we do not maintain a mailing list or put out mailings. The best way to keep track of the **New England Trail (NET)** is to monitor the website www.netrail.org for updates.

Who do I contact for more information about the New England Trail?

- Please visit the website www.netrail.org, click on the "contact" link and email the proposal contact person listed there. We always welcome your help and comments!

Support documents and other material available upon request.

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