



GWLT FACTS

Low Impact in Urban Open Spaces

A Valued Resource

GWLT is fortunate to have thousands of acres preserved for wildlife habitat and passive recreation and we take pride in the fact that all our lands are accessible to the public. We appreciate that these conservation lands provide everyone with mental and physical benefits by connecting each of us with our natural environment. It is important to note that these conservation areas are impacted by natural and man-made concerns. The Asian Longhorned Beetle infestation has dramatically altered our forest, waterways are compromised due to runoff, motorized trail use erodes soils, and litter is an ongoing problem.

Though there are regulations and environmental programs to address some of these issues, we can all do our part to reduce our impact while we enjoy the outdoors.

What is Low Impact?

Simply, low impact is an attitude of sharing the land with the animals and plants that live on them as well as with future generations. That means leaving as little evidence as possible that you visited the area. Use common sense to remain aware of the effects you have when you are visiting open spaces. This fact sheet will help you to understand ways you can lower your impact so that habitat is preserved, and future generations can share the same enjoyment you have for the land.

Low Impact Hiking

When planning your visit, consider the suitability of your destination, keeping low impact in mind. If the trails are very wet, delay your visit or find a drier location. If you do encounter wet areas, please stay on the trail. Going around it widens the footpath unnecessarily and contributes to erosion.

Follow other Leave No Trace principles, some of which are described here.

Leave No Trace

Practicing Leave No Trace principles is an excellent way to minimize your impact when visiting GWLT lands. Some of these include:

Know Before You Go

- Be prepared with maps, water, food, and suitable clothing and footwear for any weather.
- Learn as much as you can before your visit by reading, checking online, and talking to others.

Trash Your Trash

- If you packed it in, remember to pack it out, including all food waste such as peels, crumbs, and cores. Go one step further and pick up litter you find along your route.
- Use bathrooms or outhouses where available. If there are none, bury human waste in a small hole 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 70 big steps away from water sources.
- Keep water clean. Do not put human or pet waste, food, soap or other contaminants in waterways.

Keep Wildlife Wild

- Observe wildlife from a distance; never approach or follow them.
- Human food is not healthy for wildlife; do not feed them or leave human food where it is easily available to them.

Stick To The Trails

- Walk only on designated trails so you do not damage trailside vegetation.
- Do not step on flowers or small trees. Once damaged, they may not recover.
- Be respectful of nearby private property by not trespassing without permission.

Leave It As You Find It

- Leave all plants, rocks and historic items as you find them.
- Treat living plants with respect and never carve, hack or peel them. These actions may kill them.
- Never transport or introduce non-native species.

Low Impact in the Front Country

Pet Responsibility

Many people enjoy being outdoors with their pets, and most would agree their pets enjoy it too. While their human companions can make conscious decisions to observe low impact practices, pets cannot. This means that owners need to take extra steps to ensure that their pets are not harming the environment or interfering with others' abilities to enjoy open spaces.

Be considerate when passing others on the trail and remember that others may not be as fond of your pets as you are. Keep your pets under control at all times so they do not frighten or harm children and adults.

Keep your pets leashed and under control so they do not damage sensitive areas such as vernal pools, meadows, or other sensitive areas. Make certain your pets do not disturb wildlife, especially in nesting areas or during mating season.

Responsible pet owners pack plastic bags for collecting animal waste. Leave no trace principles state that the waste should be carried out where it can be properly disposed of.

Asian Longhorned Beetle and Other Invasive Species

In Worcester county and nearby regions, the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) infestation has damaged or disrupted many of our residential and open space areas. As part of a low impact commitment, we must all follow regulations regarding the use and transport of plants and wood of the affected species. Laws prohibit the transport of live vegetation or cut wood outside the ALB infestation area. For more information on these regulations, the affected species and affected areas, visit the US Forest Service website at <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/alb/> or The City of Worcester ALB Information page at: <http://www.worcesterma.gov/city-manager/asian-longhorned-beetles>

Dumping

Unfortunately, dumping of litter and yard waste continues to be a problem here in Worcester County and all over Massachusetts. In addition to being unsightly and environmentally high impact, it can be a serious hazard to public health and safety. If you encounter dumping on any of the GWLT lands, please call us at (508) 795-3838 or email us at gwt@gwt.org so we can take necessary steps to remove it.

About GWLT

The Greater Worcester Land Trust is a small non-profit organization created in 1987 to purchase, hold, advocate for, preserve or transfer, critical open space parcels in the Greater Worcester area. The Land Trust is run by a volunteer board of trustees, volunteers, and a small office staff.

We endeavor to acquire and maintain land for preservation of wildlife and public access so that current and future generations can enjoy the mental and physical well-being wilderness and our natural environment provides. We accomplish this through land purchases, accepting gifts of land, securing grants, and other conservation practices.

For More Information

To learn more about how you can support GWLT through membership and volunteer opportunities, or for more information about low impact use, please call us at (508) 795-3838 or email us at gwt@gwt.org You may also visit the GWLT website at www.gwt.org