

All-Persons Trail nears completion in Rumford Community Forest

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RUMFORD — Work on an all-access looped trail in the Rumford Community Forest is nearing completion, according to Travis Dustin, lands coordinator for Inland Woods + Trails.

The half-mile trail, called the All-Persons or Universal Trail, is built to accommodate wheelchairs, strollers and people using walkers and crutches. It's near the entrance to the 446-acre forest at 161 Isthmus Road.

"This trail actually crosses a bunch of different habitats. We're going to have a marshland area, where the stream coming down Scotty's Brook pretty much starts along the trail, so everyone can see that," Dustin said.

He pointed out one part of the trail where they cleared a corridor.

"A lot of people don't realize that when you build a trail, you actually pull the first 3 inches of soil off. We cut this corridor with chain saws, dragged all the trees out."

The trail goes past an area where a stream runs from Scotty's Brook in a gorge that runs along the trail, which makes a very tranquil sound that evokes a sense of peace and calmness to those going past it.

"I've been bringing my dogs up here after work and just walking around. It's just so nice. I work up here all day, leave and then come back," said Dustin, who lives in Mexico.

He pointed out one area where they had to bring it up 10 feet to maintain a grade, so a lot of material was brought in. Dustin pointed out one place with a rest area where there likely will be a bench for people to sit, and another place for a picnic table where they'll also plant a couple of trees.



Teens Tanner Henry and Catori Watson operate small equipment July 30 for a looped half-mile trail in the Rumford Community Forest. (Bruce Farrin/Staff Writer)

At another place beside the trail, they built a rock wall in an area where water might have run down. Dustin said the trail went pretty much to plan, without running into any ledge or large boulders. “We’ll be basically done (with the trail) in another week or two.”

Plans include new parking, trail connections and recreational improvements for hiking, biking, multiuse trails, and more.

“This is the first year Inland Trails has had enough staff that we can have two crews running at the same time (at the Rumford and Bethel community forests),” he added.

Four teens, two from Rumford and two from the Bethel area, have been a part of those work crews.

“The last couple of weeks, both crews have been working together in Rumford, getting a lot done to meet their goal in time for the grand opening on Sept. 20,” Dustin said.

He has been working closely with teens Tanner Henry and Catori Watson.

“They’re excited about this project,” Dustin said. “They worked in Bethel, too, which was great. But we’re all from this community. I’m from Mexico, Tanner and Catori are from Rumford. We really have a sense of pride in what we’re doing and want to make something to be proud of and shine out here.”

Karla Leandri Rider, development and communications coordinator with Inland Woods + Trails, said Sept. 20 that the Trust for Public Land and Inland Woods + Trails will host the Rumford Community Forest Celebration on Sept. 20 at 12:30 p.m. The celebration, remarks and refreshments will be followed by a guided trail walk from 2-3 p.m.

There is an optional volunteer trail work session from 9 a.m. to noon, led by Inland Woods + Trails.

“This trail will be completed by the grand opening,” Dustin said. “It will be fully landscaped, including a gravel, hard-packed crushed ledge stone, so it’ll be real firm so strollers and wheelchairs can wheel on it.”

Rider said the donors who made the construction of the All-Persons Trail possible include Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, Friends of the River Valley and Two for the Trails.

Dustin said, “People are welcome to come up after working hours and check it out” prior to the celebration. “We just don’t have any official trails open.”

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A section of the half-mile looped All-Persons Trail is seen in the Rumford Community Forest. The trail will be completed by the grand opening Sept. 20. It will be fully landscaped, including a gravel, hard-packed crushed ledge stone to make it firm so strollers and wheelchairs. (Bruce Farrin/Staff Writer)

Out in the forest

Not surprisingly, signs of wildlife are all along the trail.

“We’ve seen fresh moose tracks, deer tracks,” Dustin said. “They saw otters the other day down by the stream, which was surprising. There’s all sorts of fun stuff.”

They’re also finding some not-so-natural items. One was an old clear glass bottle from Mt. Zircon. “Probably from the ’50s, fully intact with the cap and everything,” Dustin said.

Last year, someone found a bottle called Bubble Up, which may be a reference to an old soda brand, but no one is sure.

Andy Bartleet, Inland Woods + Trails director, said there’s a suggestion to build a future trail on the other side and call it Bubble Up.

“For us, we’ve been building mountain bike trails, so we’ve been thinking about grades on those trails for sustainability, for speed and for fun. So this (All-Persons Trail) is different where we stick to tight criteria for the user experience,” he said.

Bartleet said they will have subsequent volunteer days to maintain this and future trails.

“From here, we’ll do a small hiking trail, then we’ll add biking trails and more hiking trails,” Dustin said. “The hiking and biking trails will be harder. They won’t be for everyone, but anyone can come and enjoy this.”

He noted that Inland Woods + Trails also built and maintained the trails behind Mountain Valley High School in Rumford.

The snowmobile trails that run through the community forest connect with the two networks, and nearby Black Mountain of Maine is looking to connect their Black & White Trail to the community forest.

Rider said that during the fall of 2024, Inland Woods + Trails staff scouted the Scotty Brook area of the property and mapped out a nearly half-mile All-Persons Trail as well as a proposed hiking trail, based on the recreation plan put together by the Outdoor Sports Institute.

Additional scouting and clearing of proposed trails resumed this past spring.

Prior to the first major snowfall, the reconstruction of a bridge over Scotty Brook was completed in December 2024, providing a critical access point to the forest and will be the main parking area at 161 Isthmus Road.

The Rumford Community Forest, located within five minutes of downtown Rumford, was permanently protected as of Feb. 27, 2024.

It was secured in partnership by Trust for Public Land, the town of Rumford, Inland Woods + Trails, and the Northern Forest Center, with funding from the state of Maine’s Land for Maine’s Future and the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Program. The project stemmed from the community’s desire to boost its economic vitality, strengthen its outdoor recreation assets, and protect a valuable tract of natural land close to town.

The project marks a significant change in course, conserving land that was formerly permitted for 257 residential and condominium lots. Plans call for 13 miles of trails permanently open to the public.

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