

## **Description of the Mahican-Mohawk Trail**

The Mahican-Mohawk (M-M) trail is a rough foot trail following the Deerfield River corridor and is dedicated to the native Mahican and Mohawk People who followed this corridor between the Connecticut and Hudson Rivers in their travels to fish, hunt, trade and fight. **As of this date, August, 2009, there is a half mile section of the trail in Shelburne which the owners have closed to hikers. Hikers must avoid this part of the trail.**

This description covers the southeastern most 8.25 miles of the trail in the towns of Deerfield, Conway and Shelburne, MA. The Deerfield River Watershed Association (DRWA) was part of an ad hoc committee which used ISTEAs money to reconstruct an earlier foot trail, after which the DRWA took on the maintenance of the trail as part of its outreach activities

### **Hoosac Road to Bardwells Ferry Bridge**

**To get to the trail head from Deerfield heading west:** At the south end of Main Street, go south on Mill Village Road for 1.7 miles to Stillwater Road. Go right 0.9 miles to Hoosac Road on right. Go 0.2 miles. The trailhead and parking are on the first dirt road on your right.

The first part of the route of the modern foot trail makes use of the abandoned railroad right of way of the New York New Haven & Hartford Railroad for 3.5 miles in Deerfield and Conway. In this section the Deerfield River has many streams entering its steep banks, so there are large cuts and fills with elaborate stone work to cross them. Between the ravines there are three woodland loop trails to the right. These make a pleasant change from the right of way.

The largest stream crossing the trail is the South River in Conway. There, in 1881, the New Haven built the tallest steel bridge in New England at the time, 175 feet high and 550 feet long. The bridge is long gone but its impressive stone abutments and four piers still exist in very good condition. The M-M trail now descends very steeply to 30 feet above the river level on wood and stone steps embedded in the earth. Using the stone piers of the original bridge, there is a 130 foot long fiberglass foot bridge crossing the South River. The trail leads up to the former railroad bed and the location of Conway Station where in 1895 the Conway Electric Street Railway came down from the mills and homes in Conway to unload its goods onto the railroad. (For more information about this historic area, visit the Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum in Shelburne Falls.)

There are two washouts of the road bed. The first is relatively recent and is possible to follow a foot trail down to cross on the headwall of the original culvert. The second washout is nearly 50 years in the making and should be avoided by using the detour to the left through the woods, under the power lines, into the woods and under the power lines again to join the original road bed. The detour makes an enjoyable change from the flat and straight trail.

Three and a quarter miles from the beginning at Hoosac Road, the trail climbs from the road bed up steps to the Bardwell Ferry Road and follows the road down to the bridge across the Deerfield River at Bardwell Ferry. This is an historic bridge of lenticular (shape of the lens of an eye)

truss design and is on the Historic Register.

### Bardwells Ferry Trail Head north-west.

Cars may be left on either side of the highway bridge. Cross the rail road track to the east side **only at the auto crossing**. The trail follows the Pan Am Southern Railway tracks north-westerly for about 300 yards. This is an active railroad with fast moving trains. It is important to stay well away from the tracks. Just before the tracks cross the River, the trail ducks down to the right on steep steps and for a while follows the alignment of an old railroad where you can see the abutments of the old bridge. From here the trail becomes rough, with lots of ups and downs as streams come into the main river. Our philosophy is to protect the land and let hikers scramble. There is access to the river in a few spots, and the trail crosses Dragon Brook on stepping stones. The trail also passes the TransCanada #2 dam and the impoundment behind it. **About a half a mile beyond the #2 dam, the trail is closed due to private property and hikers must return the way they came. No through hiking to Shelburne Falls.**

### From Route 2 Trail head south-east to trail closure

**The trail head is at a pull-off just east of the Shelburne State Police Barracks.**

The trail dips into land now owned by the Franklin Land Trust and what was a tree nursery with many exotic plants. The trail heads toward the Deerfield River on a very steep and eroding sand bank. (Keep away from the edge) The trail emerges from the forest to a field and the access road to Wilcox Hollow, a primitive, light boat launching area at the #2 impoundment, just below the Con Edison's Gardner Falls power house. The trail continues for about a mile with beautiful overlooks of the river. Please use stiles where provided to cross cattle fences. The trail continues about a mile until it climbs and crosses a high tension line. **Private property starts here. Please do not try to go through but turn around and go back the way you came.**

From the Route 2 trailhead west, the trail follows the Route 2 highway west to the Mohawk Trail State Park in Charlemont where it separates from the road, climbing a steep ridge to cross the Hoosac Range on its way to the Hudson River. (For maps of this area, visit the Mohawk Trail State Park)

For more information, to report trail problems or to offer assistance in maintaining the trail. please contact Polly Bartlett, DRWA, at 625-6628

### **Trail Use Etiquette:**

Continued public access to the trail depends on proper trail use etiquette.

Stay on the trail and respect the rights of private property owners.

Day use only. Camping and campfires are prohibited.

Leave the flowers, plants, trees and animals for the enjoyment of hikers who follow you. Take only photos; leave only footprints.

Help keep the trail clean. Carry in; carry out all food and trash.

Use steps wherever provided to lessen erosion.

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