

The Mt. Pisgah complex of lands is a region including parts of Boylson, Berlin, Bolton, and Northborough. The land is wild, rural, and quiet, with few roads through the surrounding area. Along with an extensive trail system, several beautiful vistas provide looks at the surrounding landscape. The Linden Street access point offers sweeping views across the hay fields to the rising woodlands of Mt. Pisgah. Along the trails, a brook tumbles down the ridge, giving the impression of places farther north.

TRAIL HIGHLIGHTS

From the Smith Road parking area, the Mentzer trail is the main nature path. Follow it through wooded areas and notice a wide variety of tree species. The Mentzer trail crosses the Berlin Road Trail, an old cart path that is evidenced by its greater width.

At the Tyler trail junction, cross over bare rocks to the North View from which you can see in the distance Bear Hill in Waltham and the Prudential and Hancock buildings in Boston. The North View sits atop the face of the ridge, the steepest rock face in the area; the highest point is marked with a USGS marker embedded in a small boulder, just before signs pointing to the summit.

From the North View, follow the Tyler Trail to the South View which faces more southeast, and overlooks Hudson; the Marlboro water tower is in the distance.

From Linden Street, the Devine trail passes through a privately owned conservation restriction via a trail easement and provides access to the conservation land and trails in the town of Berlin. A brook follows closely along the North Gorge Trail and a bridge made of stone slabs crosses the brook near a stand of pine trees.

ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE/HABITAT

The Mt. Pisgah area is one of the largest conservation areas in the state and provides connectivity to a wildlife corridor that stretches west to the Wachussett reservoir watershed protection area, and north all the way to the New Hampshire border and beyond. With this large an area providing wildlife habitat, animals are seen here that are not usually seen in other conservation areas, includ-

ing bobcat, black bear, and moose. Howard Brook, which flows through the area, is home to native Brook trout.

Much of Mt. Pisgah is forested. Within the Devine property, habitats also include wetlands, uplands, hay fields, and large open meadows.

LAND USE HISTORY

Much of the Mt. Pisgah region was farm land. The Sparrow trail and the Mentzer trail are named for two families who were dairy farmers here for many generations. Both owned parts of the hill. The Mentzer farmhouse still stands on Green Street, not far from Northborough center. The surrounding land was and continues to be primarily agricultural. Other trails are named for past residents of the area including Tyler and Bennett.

The Bennett trail is named for the Bennett family, also farmers. Where the brook crosses the trail the remains of an old farm wagon can be seen. The iron rims of the wheels are about four feet in diameter.

The Tetreault family also farmed the area, and knew of a hermit who lived in the woods. The remains of the stone foundation of his house can be seen along the Mentzer trail. Betty Tetreault, whose father farmed the land, is a longtime member of the Northborough Conservation Commission Trails Committee which builds and maintains many of the trails in town.

ACQUISITION AND CONSERVATION

The Mt. Pisgah area comprises four pieces of conservation land; the two central properties are managed by the conservation commissions in the towns of Berlin and Northborough. To the south is Mass Dept. of Fish & Game property, and to the north is the Devine Conservation Restriction (CR), privately owned property, with a CR retained by SVT and the Town of Berlin.

Part of the Berlin town land as well as the entire Devine CR had been in the Devine family for generations and was operated as a farm. The owners needed to sell, and commissioned an appraisal which was based on a subdivision of five lots, with possible further development. SVT

was able to put together a conservation deal between SVT, the town of Berlin, and a private buyer to protect this property. The Devine family generously agreed to a bargain price, and the private buyer agreed to purchase 35 acres, subject to a conservation restriction. The town of Berlin, working through SVT, purchased the remaining 48 acres, including co-holdershship of the CR, and a parking area/trail easement to access the rear of the property. The project was completed in December, 2004.


FORESTRY

Mt. Pisgah supports a high diversity trees. Over 30 different species have been identified, including White pine, Red oak, American beech, Sugar maple, Red maple, Black birch, White pine White oak, American chestnut and hophornbeam, named for its fruit’s similar appearance to hops. Dead standing trees provide nesting and sleeping cover for wildlife. Beechnuts and acorns provide food for white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, squirrels and several songbirds. The Chestnut blight, an introduced fungus, killed the large old chestnut trees that grew in this area. From the roots and stumps, new trees sprout and re-grow, some reaching a height of 20 to 30 feet before succumbing to the blight. Many small chestnut trees can be seen throughout the area, recognized by their deeply serrated leaves.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Mt. Pisgah is comprised of bedrock with a layer of glacial till. As you progress to the top of Mt. Pisgah the soils become shallow and are much closer to bedrock at the highest points of the property. At the South View, glacial striations can be seen in the bedrock; these deep scratches show the direction of the glacier’s path as it scoured its way through the area.

Mount Pisgah itself is a heterogeneous mixture of several different rock types. The most dominant type is mafic gneiss. Mixed in are marble, garnets, and white sillimanite crystals, indicating that the rocks surrounding Mount Pisgah were at one time buried nearly 15 km (that’s half the thickness of the crust!) and heated up to temperatures in excess of 600 degrees Celsius before returning to their present location at the surface in Northborough and Berlin.




LAND PROTECTION NEEDS


The greater Mt. Pisgah landscape is comprised of approximately 5,000 acres. Land here is still contained in fairly large tracts (many properties contain 50-100+ acres), and much of this is still managed woodland and farmland. The rural roads carry little traffic and hence lessen their barrier effect for wildlife. However, increasing development pressure, both in scale and pace, is rapidly fragmenting the ecological integrity of the landscape, and the window of opportunity to protect it is shrinking. The number of homes built in this region in the last five years has exploded, and the size of these homes has grown significantly. These factors have detrimental impacts on this rural economy; they drive the cost of land up, and, ultimately, tempt landowners to sell their properties for development.

Protecting properties at the landscape scale is the most efficient and ecologically sound approach to preserving biodiversity. SVT will continue working with landowners and municipalities in the Mt. Pisgah region to protect the area's important resources.

CURRENT LAND USE

Hiking and mountain biking are two of the primary activities on the extensive trail system through the Mt. Pisgah Conservation Area. Hunting is permitted on the Town of Northborough land, by permit only, and on the Mass Fish & Game property. For information on hunting season dates visit:
http://mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfwpdf/dfw_hunting_dates.pdf





RULES AND REGULATIONS

Please note that the Mount Pisgah Conservation Area is comprised of several different land owners and managers. They all welcome you to enjoy the trails for walking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, nature study, photography, and other quiet activities. Please carry out everything you carry in and respect all posted rules and regulations.

Town of Berlin Conservation Commission
Berlin Town Hall
23 Linden Street
Berlin, MA 01503

Town of Northborough Conservation Commission
Northborough Town Hall
63 Main Street
Northborough, MA 01532

Trails Subcommittee of the Northborough Open Space Committee
Northborough Town Hall
63 Main Street
Northborough, MA 01532

Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game
Central Wildlife District
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
211 Temple Street
West Boylston, MA 01583

Sudbury Valley Trustees
18 Wolbach Road
Sudbury, MA 01776
www.svtweb.org

DIRECTIONS

Linden Street, Berlin: From Route 495 take exit 26 to Route 62 West, toward Berlin/Clinton. Pass through the center of Berlin and bear left onto Linden Street at the flashing yellow light. Follow Linden Street for 1.1 miles to a small parking area on the left, approximately 250 feet past the intersection with Derby Road.

Smith Road, Northborough: From Route 495 take exit 26 to Route 62 West, toward Berlin/Clinton. Pass through the center of Berlin and bear left onto Linden Street at the flashing yellow light. Follow Linden Street for 1.6 miles and turn left onto Ball Hill Road. Follow the road, which becomes Smith Road, for 1.3 miles. A small parking lot will be on the left.


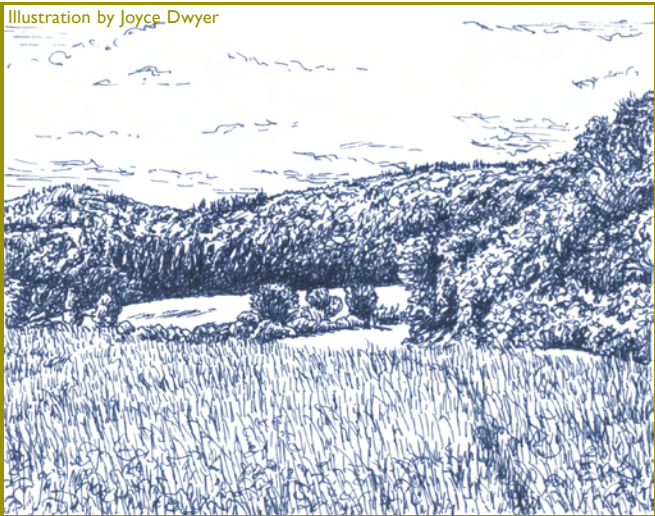



Illustration by Joyce Dwyer

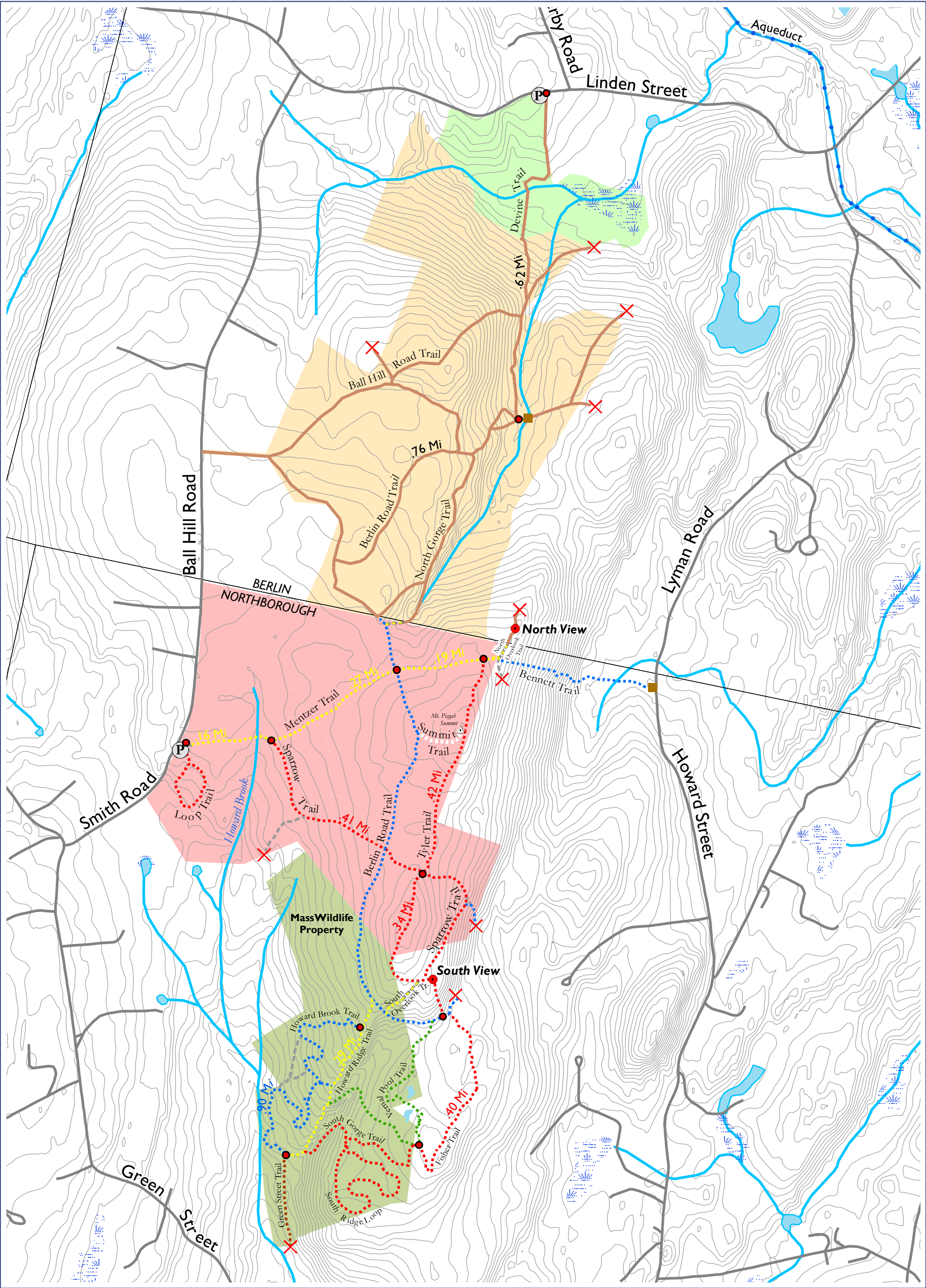


**MOUNT PISGAH
CONSERVATION AREA**



**SUDBURY
VALLEY
TRUSTEES**

18 Wolbach Road
Sudbury, MA 01776
978-443-5588
www.svtweb.org



Parking

Information

Bridge

Private Trail

Mileage Endpoint

Pond

Wetland

Stream

Aqueduct

Road

SVT Devine CR & Trail Easement

Town of Berlin

Town of Northborough

MassWildlife

Mount Pisgah Northborough & Berlin MA

