

Open Space Vandalism and Misuse

January, 2023

Over the past year there have been increased incidents of vandalism and misuse at various locations in the Town's open spaces.

At Turkey Hill Preserve, a wooden bridge installed and used for crossing wet areas was taken. The bridge was 16 ft. in length with an estimated weight of 600 lbs, so whoever removed it used the necessary equipment to take it.

A increasing number of unauthorized mountain bike trails have been created within Racebrook Tract, which has resulted in extensive erosion of the landscape and vegetation, as well as pollution of Race Brook. Use of such unauthorized trails presents safety issues as to ability to locate an injured user, and/or access by emergency apparatus.

At Racebrook Tract, numerous bicycling and trail signs have been repeatedly removed and discarded.

There is damaging evidence of the use of ATV or other motorized vehicles at Ewen Preserve and Housatonic Overlook. Not only is such activity prohibited by Town Code, these vehicles cause great desecration to the trails, natural landscape and vegetation.

In April of 2022 the plexiglass door panels of the kiosk at St. John's entry to the Ewen Preserve were broken in several places and had to be replaced. This required the efforts of volunteers to remove the door, purchase replacement panels, cut to fit then reinstall the doors for a cost of about \$200 per door.

Recently the wooden walkway in the Ewen Preserve had been damaged as well as several healthy trees that had been hacked with an ax.

The citizens of Orange are fortunate to have the use of over 1000 acres of open space. It is a resource that should be protected and preserved for future generations, and it is our responsibility to document and report acts of vandalism or misuse.

If you observe unauthorized activity or vandalism in or around any of the Town open spaces, please report it immediately to the Orange Police, 314 Lambert Road, Orange (203-891-2130).

Thank you, The Orange Conservation Commission