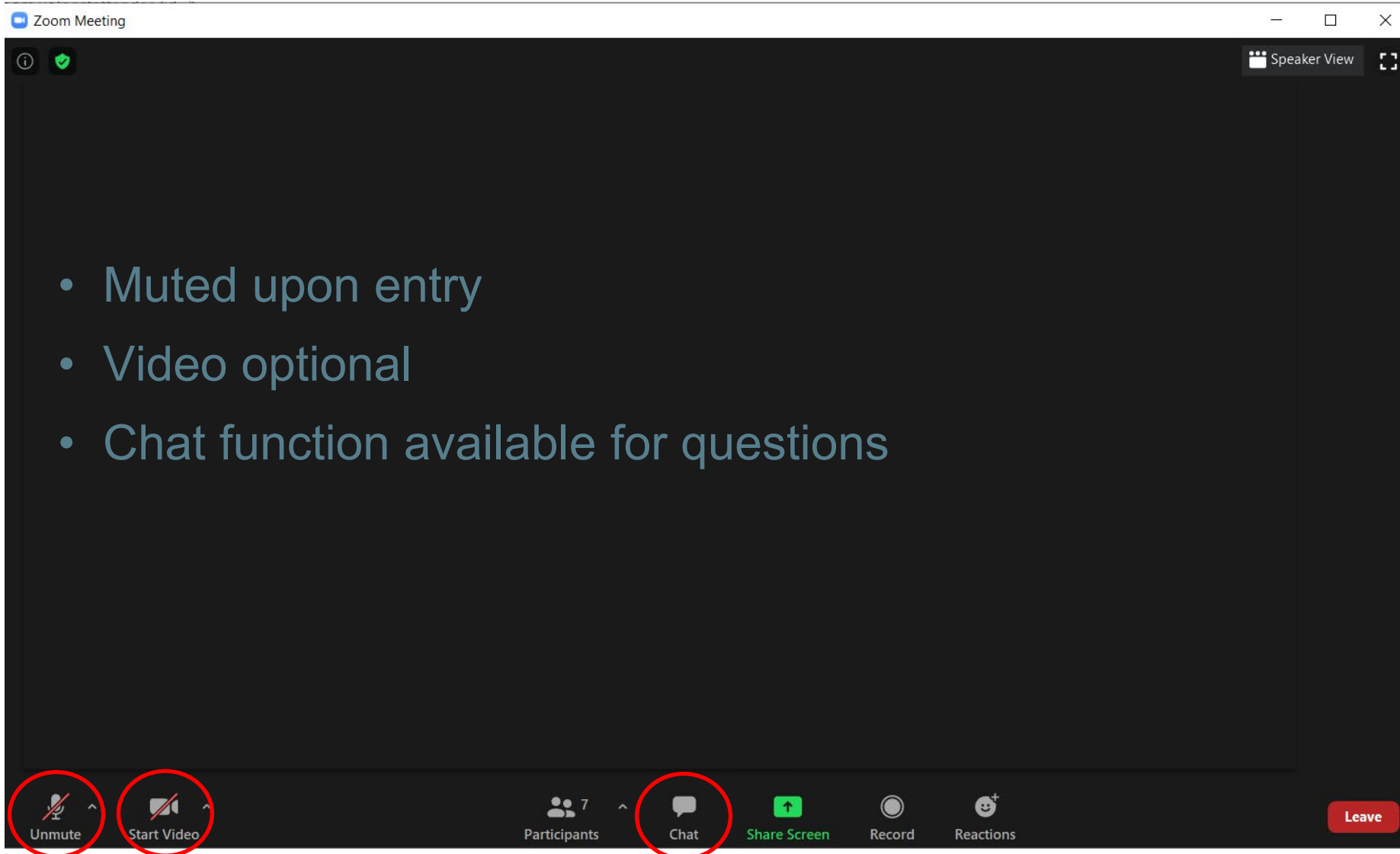


# Making Room

Managing Parks and Open Space  
During a Pandemic

# Zoom Meeting Guidelines



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting window with a dark background. In the top-left corner, there is a status bar with a microphone icon and a green checkmark. In the top-right corner, there is a "Speaker View" button and a full-screen icon. The main area of the window displays a list of guidelines. At the bottom, there is a toolbar with several icons: "Unmute", "Start Video", "Participants" (with a count of 7), "Chat", "Share Screen", "Record", "Reactions", and a red "Leave" button. The "Unmute", "Start Video", and "Chat" icons are circled in red.

- Muted upon entry
- Video optional
- Chat function available for questions

Unmute Start Video Participants 7 Chat Share Screen Record Reactions Leave

# We Are Living In An Extraordinary Time

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- The COVID-19 pandemic, state lockdowns, and social distancing regulations have upended open space use throughout Connecticut
- Even as lockdowns are eased, the effects will be felt indefinitely
- Let's explore methods for managing open space facilities to accommodate social distancing regulations

# This Project's Origins



# Today's Panelists

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**Shawna Kitzman, AICP | Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.**

Deputy Project Manager, ActiveCT

Member, West Hartford Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

**Jim Wood | Aspetuck Land Trust**

Park Ranger, Fairfield Police Department (Retired)

**Dan Rosenthal | Town of Newtown**

First Selectman

**Stephanie Brooks | Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.**

Project Manager & ActiveCT Team Member





# Exploration

Open Space Management

Digital Communication Tools

Creative Campaigns

Best Practices



# 1

## Open Space Management

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“DO” rather than “DON’T”



Kassi Jackson, Hartford Courant



Dave Zajac, Record-Journal



Joe Amarante, Hearst CT Media

# Extraordinary Increase in Open Space Use During COVID-19

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- Parks, trails, and beaches are more popular than ever
- Unfortunately, overcrowding can lead to closures
- Latest studies indicate we are significantly less likely to get coronavirus while outside
- Adds pressure to reopen parks and beaches
- But...How to do it safely?





# Understanding and Compassion Go a Long Way

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- This is our “new normal”
- Right now, enforcement can seem scary
- Personal, empathetic approach
- Focus on the “DO” rather than the “DON’T”

# Establish Ground Rules

- Slower moving people to the right
- Groups in single file
- One way in/one way out
- Require signed agreement on open space guidelines
- Leverage existing trail etiquette
- Notifications at trailhead



Shoreline Greenway Trail trailhead

# Enforce with Friendliness and Creativity

- Hire staff or enlist volunteers to serve as ambassadors
- Post user-friendly signage throughout
- Collaborate with neighborhood groups or park beautification organizations
- Chicken poop (for real!)



Farmington Canal Heritage Trail



Swedish city of Lund used chicken manure to encourage social distancing



# 2

## Digital Communication Tools

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There is a lot out there!



# State Park and Forest Resources

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- CT DEEP “What’s Open Outdoors” [website](#) & [Twitter](#)
- Connecticut [Outdoor Recreation Alliance](#)
- CT Forest & Park Association [website](#), [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)
- CFPA Tips and Tools for [#CTTrailsLessTraveled](#)
- UConn CT Trail Census [website](#) & [Facebook](#)
- To come: CT Trail Finder!

# Get the Word Out

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- Website updates, social media, e-blasts, and press releases
- Text or automated call alerts
- Signage

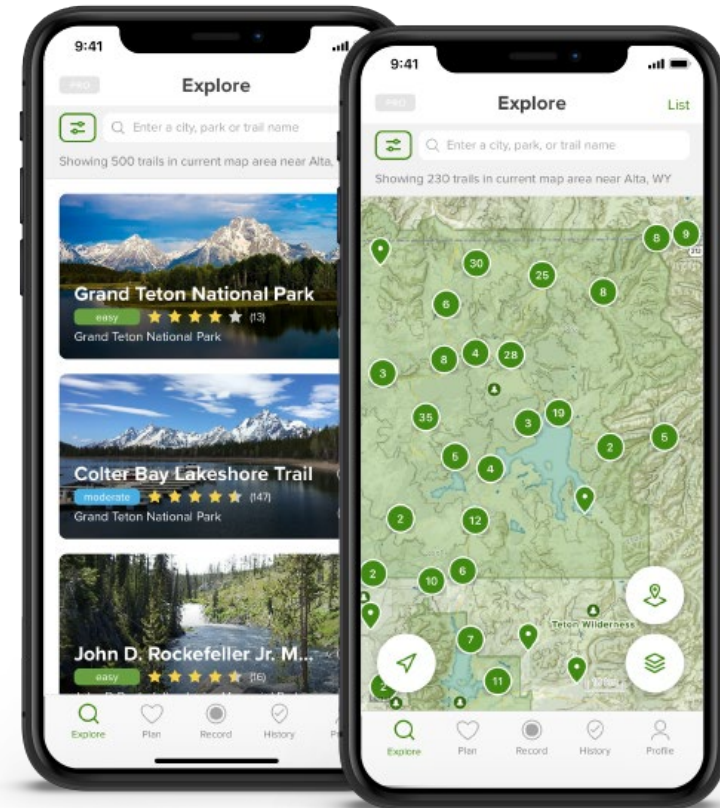


Image: [BayNature.org](https://www.baynature.org/)



# Trail Website and iOS/Android Mobile Applications (free)

- AllTrails [alltrails.com](https://alltrails.com)
- TrailForks [trailforks.com](https://trailforks.com)
- TrailLink [traillink.com](https://traillink.com)
- ViewRanger [viewranger.com](https://viewranger.com)
- MapMyHike [mapmyhike.com](https://mapmyhike.com)



From the AllTrails [website](https://alltrails.com)


# Crowdsourced Interactive (free) Mapping and Gamification Tools

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- Open Street Map [openstreetmap.org](https://openstreetmap.org)
- OsmAnd [osmand.net](https://osmand.net)
- Strava [strava.com](https://strava.com)
- Geocaching! [geocaching.com/play](https://geocaching.com/play)



From [Connecticut Weekender](#) (04/02/2018)

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white tank top, blue leggings, and sunglasses, is walking a German Shepherd dog on a leash along a dirt trail. The trail is surrounded by tall green grass and trees in the background.

# Best Use of Trail and Mapping Applications

## *For land managers*

- ***Criteria to identify a trail:*** start/end in a parking area (even a couple of spaces), must be on public property
- ***Get the word out:*** use these resources to get your park/trail data into a map (especially for municipal land trusts)

## *For the public*

- ***Find less crowded trails:*** use trail apps to sort according to popularity rating
- ***Try something new:*** geocaching, anyone?



# 3

## Creative Campaigns

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Think outside the box

# Focus on Wellness

- Visiting parks, trails, and open space helps people feel better
- Mental wellness campaigns
- Use art as a mental health PSA
- Alone, but together



Christchurch NZ post-2013 earthquake campaign

# Promote Local Community Exploration and Education

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- Promote hashtags (#InOurBackyard, #ExploringHome)
- Local tourism (my favorite neighborhood)
- Native plant challenge (all ages)





# Promote “Non-Park” Use

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Lakeview Cemetery, New Canaan, CT (source: [newcanaancemetery.com](http://newcanaancemetery.com))



# Highlight Local Farms and Unique Community Resources





# Use Creative Social Distance Tactics

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Social distancing circles in Domino Park, Brooklyn (Sarah Blesener, [The New York Times](#))



# 4

## Best Practices

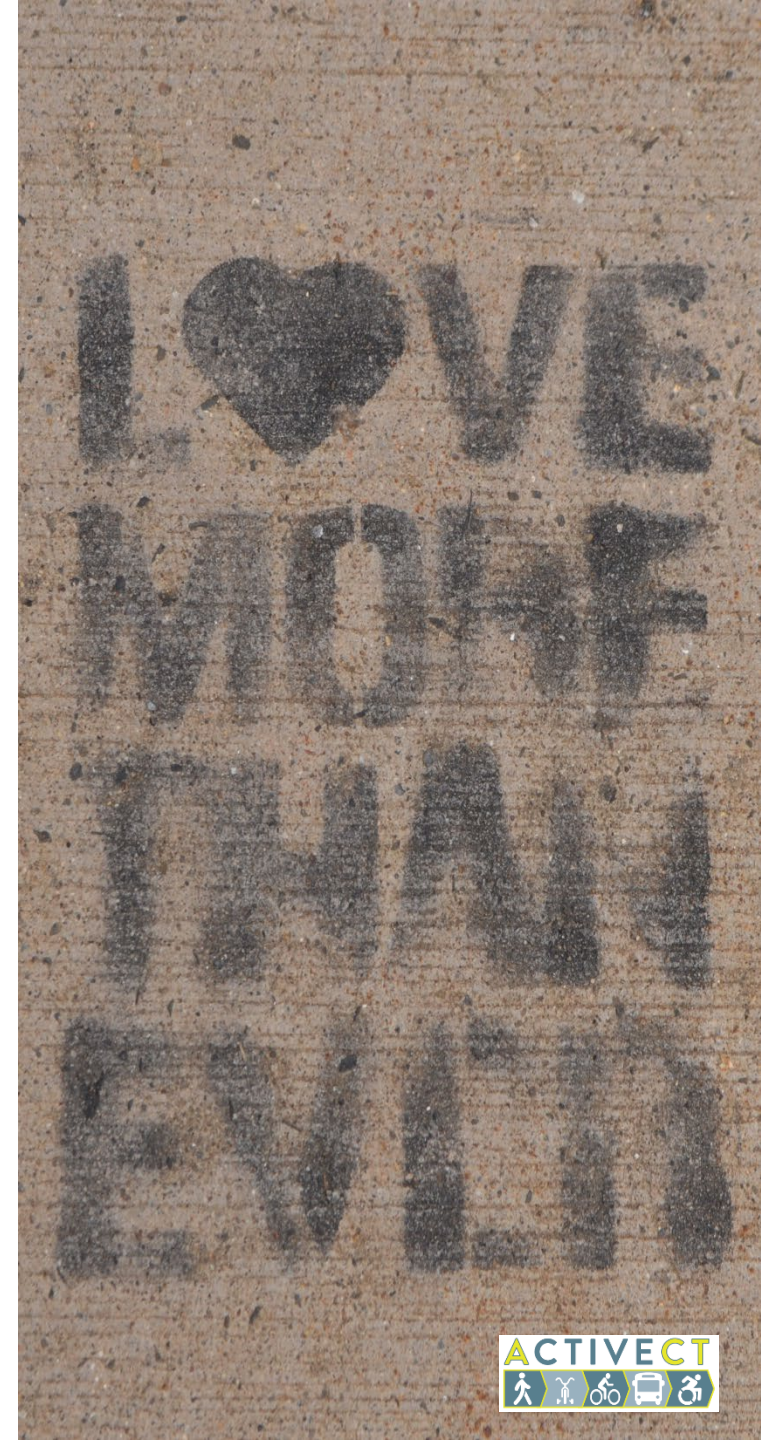
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Doing a lot with a little

# Case Studies (30,000-foot view)

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- Shared Streets Project | Burlington, Vermont
- “Code Red” System | Newtown, Connecticut
- Aspetuck Land Trust | Southwestern Connecticut



# Burlington, VT Shared Streets Project

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## Shared Street for Social Distancing Drive with Care



[burlingtonvt.gov/covid-19](https://burlingtonvt.gov/covid-19) | 802-755-7239

- Led by Burlington, VT Department of Public Works
- Designed some streets as local traffic only/others as shared streets
- Cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians share same street, slow, cautious driving
- Temporary parking restrictions to widen bike/ped corridors
- Developed “Shared Streets for Social Distancing” Campaign



# Rollout and Considerations

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- Used existing mayoral and gubernatorial executive orders
- Streets must have sidewalks on both sides and no transit route
- Used existing traffic plans to identify local road usage/best routes
- Volunteers checked on cones, lawn signs, conducted outreach
- Community feedback surveys used to adjust as needed

# Town of Newtown, CT

## CodeRED® System

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- Usually used solely for municipal alerts
- Adapted to notify people about social distancing in parks and on trails
- Worked with trail counting data sets to determine popular hours (2-4 pm)
- Encouraged users to explore during morning/evening outside of peak hours
- All parks stayed open

A vertical photograph on the left side of the slide shows a narrow stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding green foliage and trees. The banks are covered in lush green plants and moss.

# Aspetuck Land Trust

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- Developed policy using Federal and State requirements
- Stayed open when surrounding towns and land trusts closed
- Hired part-time workers and volunteers to address crowds/parking
- Requested visitors attend weekdays, explore other ALT properties
- Temporary ban on dogs; people are observing rule
- Bike use



# Rollout and Considerations

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- Parking logistics – managing and communicating
- Weston Office of Emergency Management and Weston Police
- Internet resources (DEEP) and trail apps
- Recovery
- Membership



# Changing the Parking Maps in Real Time

## Preserve Rules & Regulations

Enjoy:	Prohibited:
Hiking	No Smoking
Dog Walking	No Camping
Horseback Riding	No Fires
Mountain Biking	No Littering
Picnicking	No Motorized Vehicles
X-Country Skiing	No Alcoholic Beverages
Stay on Trails	No Plant/Wildlife removal
	No Fishing in reservoir
	No Drones

Closed Sunset to Sunrise  
Saugatuck Reservoir Dike is off limits

**Dogs:** Must be on hand-held leash at all times (except while on Blue/White trail). When on Blue/White, dogs must be on trail and under handler's voice and sight control and be leashed from parking areas to beginning of trail. Maximum 2 dogs per handler.

The leash requirement protects wildlife, plant populations, and their habitats. It is important to keep dogs out of vernal pools.

Please be considerate by not allowing dogs to roam, jump on, or disturb others. Leave no trace. Please remove dog waste. These rules are legally enforceable.

Connecticut General Statutes:  
Sec. 22-363. Nuisance, \$75.00 fine  
Sec. 22-364. Roaming, \$92.00 fine

**Bikes:** Not permitted Jan 1 – April 30. Biking allowed only on marked trails. Pedestrians/equestrians have right of way. No off-trail riding. No riding when wet.

**Hunting:** By permit only. Hunting seasons are mid-Sept. thru Dec. & in May. Hunting areas are posted. No hunting on Sundays.

**Horses:** Blue, green, orange and yellow/white trails.

**Orchard/Blueberries:** Our 1,000 blueberry bushes can be enjoyed by Land Trust members only. Members will be mailed membership cards and picking instructions. Dogs are prohibited from the orchard from April 15 – August 15 to protect ground nesting birds.

**Parking:** Please be sensitive to our neighbors. Don't block access to mail boxes and driveways, keep the noise level down, don't let dogs run onto neighboring yards, and please don't litter.

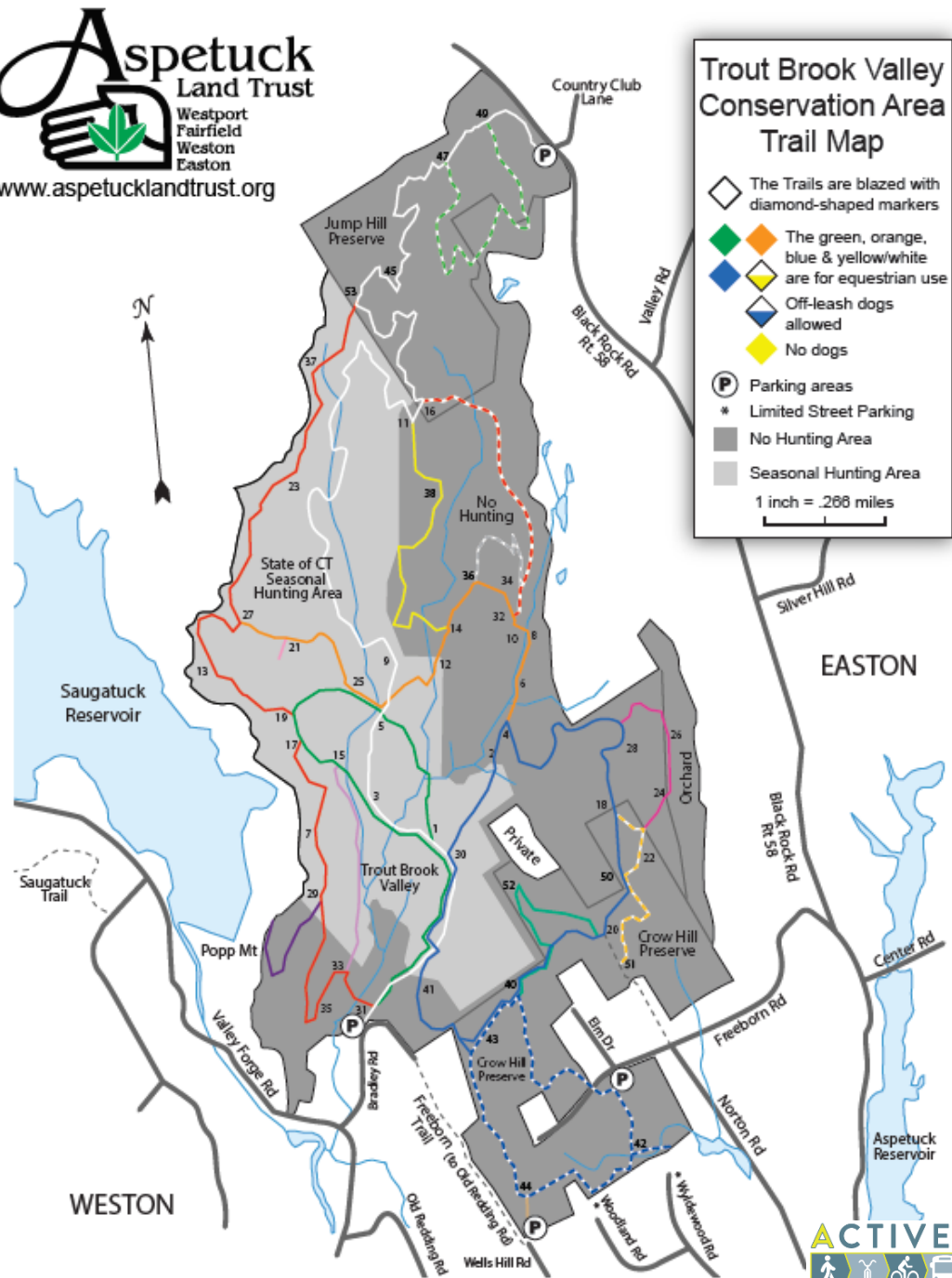
## Trails:

Color	Length*	Difficulty	Acres
<b>Trout Brook Valley</b>			
White	2.1	Easy	730
Red (Ornday Trail)	2.6	Hard	
Violet (Paul Busch Trail)	0.6	Medium	
Yellow (Ruth's Trail)	1.1	Hard	
Orange	1.2	Medium	
Green	1.5	Easy	
Blue	2.2	Medium	
Purple (Smith Richardson Trail)	0.4	Medium	
Magenta	0.7	Easy	
Grey/White	0.3	Hard	
Red/White	0.7	Medium	
Pink (Prince's Trail)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.4</b>		
<b>Crow Hill</b>			
Blue/White	2.5	Easy	162
Light Green	0.5	Easy	
Yellow/White	0.7	Medium	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.7</b>		
<b>Jump Hill</b>			
White	1.5	Medium	117
Green/White	1.2	Easy	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.7</b>		
<b>Total Miles &amp; Acreage</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>1,009</b>

\* Lengths are one way in miles  
No biking No Dogs

Aspetuck Land Trust is a member-supported, private non-profit organization. When you make a tax-deductible donation to support our work you help protect our local open spaces for future generations.

Contact: Box 444, Westport, CT 06881-0444  
request4info@aspetucklandtrust.org  
www.aspetucklandtrust.org  
203-331-1906







# Key Case Study Takeaways

- ***Use existing bike/ped and traffic plans:*** to help determine best routes to use or modify
- ***Phased approach:*** start small, and expand as people become accustomed to the changes
- ***Creative campaigns:*** use signage, murals, develop campaigns with advocacy groups
- ***Work quickly:*** use executive orders to bypass traditional processes





# Key Case Study Takeaways

- ***Engage advocacy groups & partner agencies:*** to volunteer and to help get the word out
- ***Feedback surveys:*** social media, emails, phone calls and/or texts, advocacy group mailing lists
- ***Consider the vulnerable:*** are any of the plans limiting access for some residents?
- ***Consider next steps:*** can some of these changes be permanent?



# Thank you!



# QUESTIONS?