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New Trails Approved In Mashpee River Woodlands

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Mashpee Conservation Commission chairman Paul Colombo (right) and vice chairwoman Alexandra Zollo consider a plan to build a new trail section in the Mashpee River Woodlands last Thursday. The commission eventually voted 5-1 to approve the trail, which the New England Mountain Bike Association hopes to finish by the end of April.

ALEX MEGERLE/ENTERPRISE

The New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) was cleared last week to construct two

new trails for bikers and pedestrians in the Mashpee River Woodlands. NEMBA hopes to complete the new trail sections by the end of April.

The longer trail encountered repeated opposition from a pair of nearby residents and sparked a healthy discussion at the Mashpee Conservation Commission meeting last Thursday, February 15, but the commission eventually approved both trails by a vote of 5-1.

The commission's vote cleared NEMBA to build the trails in the woodlands, an area of town conservation land south of Route 28 that spans both sides of the Mashpee River. NEMBA is a nonprofit organization that promotes mountain biking and stewards trails and open space throughout New England. The organization has 34 chapters in the region and around 10,000 members, including a chapter of roughly 200 members on the Cape.

NEMBA proposed the two trail sections last November. Both are west of the Mashpee River and would create loops to let users traverse areas without doubling back. The longer section will be roughly a mile, located in the John Austin Forest parcel and will create a loop with the existing Byrnzie Trail. NEMBA plans to offer access to the new trail section via the same point on River Road where the Byrnzie Trail currently branches off. Essentially, users starting at River Road will be able to go left to stay on the Byrnzie Trail or go right to take the new trail, said Lev Malakhoff, a vice president of NEMBA's Cape Cod chapter.

The shorter new trail, in the Grotzke Grove area, will be about 650 feet long and located to the southwest of an existing dead-end trail.

Mr. Malakhoff said the group would try to finish the trails by the end of April and could possibly begin construction as soon as March, depending on the weather.

To build each trail, NEMBA will remove sections from fallen logs, trim vegetation and mow the trail's path. No material will be brought in during the process, Mr. Malakhoff said, and NEMBA will not remove any trees during construction, save for possibly the occasional small sapling. For the most part, everything will be dealt with using loppers or a mower, he said.

Mr. Malakhoff guessed the trails would be roughly four feet wide when completed, although the compacted tread path will narrow over time, since people walk in the middle and not the edges. As the trail is established, it will look identical to the existing Byrnzie Trail in many ways, he said. NEMBA will also add trail signage to help user navigation.

“I just think it’s going to be a great asset for the community and the neighborhood,” Mr. Malakhoff said, adding the trails would help people disperse and find more solitude instead of being concentrated on fewer trails.

Conservation commissioners considered the project three times and conducted two separate site visits during the review process. The longer trail drew repeated public opposition from Oyster Way residents John S. Clark and his wife, Tara M. Galvin, who argued for leaving the parcel preserved.

Last Thursday, some commission members had hesitations—vice chairwoman Alexandra B. Zollo suggested tabling the matter until Mashpee had a better inventory of its properties and understanding of where more trails would be best, but chairman Paul D. Colombo ended up being the lone dissenter of the approval.