



ESSEX NATIONAL
HERITAGE AREA

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***Free Guide* to Exploring the Great Outdoors along the
North Shore and Merrimack Valley**

**GUIDE TO THE REGION'S BEST
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

June 11, 2008 (Salem, MA) ... Just in time for summer, the Essex National Heritage Commission has published a new free brochure - ***Guide to the Great Outdoors*** - highlighting fifty-two of the Essex National Heritage Area's greatest recreational sites. With high gas prices and summer temperatures soaring, these are great escapes that are practically in your backyard. The guide is targeted towards local residents and designed to help them enjoy and explore the National Heritage Area from the North Shore to the Merrimack River Valley.

Both well known and lesser know outdoor sites are included. Readers will discover how to find the mysterious Dogtown Common in Gloucester, enjoy the commanding view of three states atop Old Town Hill in Newbury, and jump into the fresh water swimming lake at Saugus's Breakheart Reservation. The guide is designed to make it easy to go out and explore. It is organized as a collection of themed lists, from family-friendly destinations to the best photography spots and kayak drop-in sites. There are ten categories: walks & rambles; bring the kids; wildlife preserves; historic routes; scenic farms; vistas; wooded landscapes; beaches & marshlands; urban parks & reservations; and lakes, ponds & rivers.

Twenty-eight of these sites have descriptions, visitor information, and driving directions. Another twenty-four are included in the map and noted in the ‘sidebars’. Locations highlighted in the guide are open to the public - some year round and others only seasonally – and a few (so noted) charge an admission or parking fee.

The free guide is available at the Institution for Savings, Hunt’s Photo and Video, REI, EMS, and at the ten affiliated Essex National Heritage Area visitor centers in Gloucester, Haverhill, Ipswich, Lawrence, Lynn, Newburyport, Peabody, Salem and Saugus. The guide is also available on-line at www.essexheritage.org.

Guide to the Great Outdoors in the Essex National Heritage Area includes parks, forests, reservations, waterways, and trails - where to hike, bike, kayak, bird, photograph, or just ramble -- spotlighting both the sites and the stewards that protect them. These local-knowledge-inspired-lists will help residents and visitors truly *experience* the diverse natural resources of Essex County’s great outdoors.

The guide is part of a larger initiative by Essex Heritage to raise awareness of the significant natural landscapes that still exist within the Essex National Heritage Area. It is Essex Heritage’s wish to encourage residents to explore the Area so that they gain a greater understanding of the remarkable open spaces that are here and become more involved in their preservation and conservation.

For more information about the Essex National Heritage Area’s preserved landscapes, or to download a copy of ***The Guide to the Great Outdoors***, visit www.essexheritage.org.

The Guide to the Great Outdoors was funded, in part, by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Business and Technology/Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. This guide was made possible by a grant administered by the North of Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau. Additional funding was provided by Hunt’s Photo and Video and Institution for Savings.

ABOUT ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA AND THE COMMISSION

The Essex National Heritage Area is comprised of the 34 communities of Essex County, and it is a designation made by US Congress in recognition of the important role that this region played in American history and the significant heritage sites are still extant in the region. The Commission is the non-profit management entity for the Area., and works, in collaboration with the National Park Service, to promote public/private partnerships and develop programs that enhance, preserve and encourage regional awareness of the Area's unique historic, cultural and natural resources. For more information, visit Essex Heritage at www.essexheritage.org or call (978) 740-0444.