

Board, police chief warn against ATV use

By Leslie H. Dixon / Daily News Staff

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MILFORD -- A walk down woodland trails, past sparkling lakeside parks, scenic vistas and wildlife habitat with the noise of all-terrain vehicles in the background simply don't mix.

That's the problem officials are trying to head off as more and more people find and use Milford's Upper Charles Trail.

Once completed, Milford's 6.4-mile stretch will run through town from the Holliston town line to the Hopkinton town line, providing access to Milford Pond, Louisa Lake and the town forest.

The first phase, which runs from the municipal parking lot across from Sacred Heart Church on Main Street to Dilla Street, has been completed. Funding for the second phase will be sought at the fall special Town Meeting.

The trail is unfinished, but enthusiasts from as far away from Florida have been spotted using it.

"It's a great use of their tax dollars," said Christine Pepin, a Florida resident who is visiting friends in Milford and took her first ride on the trail Thursday. Pepin, who has bicycled in the United States and across Europe called Milford's trail "wonderful" and said if the greenery is kept along the trail, it will rival some of those she has traveled on in Europe.

But Upper Charles Trail Committee Chairman Reno DeLuzio said people on unauthorized vehicles are beginning to show up on the trail and that is causing problems.

"There was a young fella zipping down the trail behind the Milford Water Company," said DeLuzio.

An all-terrain vehicle was spotted recently on an unpaved portion of the trail where construction equipment was being used.

The trail was built to accommodate bicycling, walking, skating, cross-country skiing but motorized vehicles, with exceptions such as public safety vehicles and electric motor scooters used by people with physical handicaps, are prohibited.

"It's dangerous," said DeLuzio said of the activity, which is also illegal.

Bylaws were developed with the assistance of Police Chief Thomas O'Loughlin, who is also an attorney, and have been approved by both town meeting and the attorney general's office.

O'Loughlin said the bylaw specifically prohibits motorized vehicles such as all-terrain vehicles from the Upper Charles Trail, but his officers will have to patrol the trail on motorized vehicles.

"It's the only way I can patrol the trail," said O'Loughlin.

O'Loughlin said he has had no first-hand complaints of illegal use of the trail but did receive a call from DeLuzio about ATVs.

"I passed it on to patrol," said O'Loughlin.

O'Loughlin said ATV riders using the trail, whether on the paved section or where it is under construction, are breaking the law.

"It's trespassing. Don't," he said.

Officials say the illegal use is not only dangerous, but results in more work costing additional money. Each time someone crosses the trail where the dirt has been graded but not paved, it means the area has to be re-graded.

"People should just hold off and let it be built and everyone will be able to enjoy it," said O'Loughlin.

DeLuzio said a key to successful monitoring is the formation of the Friends of the Upper Charles River Trail. Close to 30 people have joined so far. Anyone interested in helping maintain and preserve the trail is welcome to join, he said. DeLuzio can be contacted at 36 Asylum Street, Milford, MA 01757, calling him at 508-473-7790 or e-mailing him at reno@110.net.

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month beginning at 7 p.m at the Senior Center on North Bow Street.

Once completed, the Upper Charles Trail will be approximately 27 miles and run from the downtown Framingham commuter rail station, through Sherborn, Holliston, Milford, Hopkinton and Ashland and back to Framingham.

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