

Open Space Management Amendments Conservation Ordinance

CHAPTER 18 CONSERVATION

Article V. Open Space Management

Sec. 18-5-1. Purpose. Open spaces managed by the Town of Cape Elizabeth are for the benefit and enjoyment of all citizens and visitors. Town policy is to impose as few restrictions on use of these properties as possible, consistent with the desire to promote user safety in a natural environment, minimize conflicting uses, protect the natural features and generally exercise proactive stewardship of a valuable and enduring town asset. This ordinance establishes Town open space management rules to safeguard the essential character of Cape Elizabeth public open spaces for public use now and in the future.

Sec. 18-5-2. Applicability. The provisions of this chapter apply to all Town-owned open space for which site-specific rules and/or management entities have not otherwise been approved by the Town Council. Town owned open space exempted from the chapter includes Fort Williams Park, Town athletic fields, Riverside Memorial Cemetery, and the school campus.

Sec. 18-5-3. Definitions. The following terms shall have the meanings given herein. All words not defined herein shall carry their customary and usual meanings.

Animal Trap: Any device that is made to catch undomesticated animals.

Encroachment: An alteration of open space by a private party without permission of the Town of Cape Elizabeth. Encroachments may include, but are not limited to:

1. Placement of structures, buildings, fences, landscape objects, and play equipment;
2. Placement of yard and leaf waste;
3. Placement of household trash;
4. Planting of trees and vegetation;
5. Removal of trees and vegetation;
6. Unauthorized clearing, mowing and landscaping.

Greenbelt: A network of public trails located on Town owned or easement held land. Most greenbelt trails are marked with Town greenbelt trails signs and are included on the Town Greenbelt Trails Map.

Open Space: Land owned in fee or held in easement by the Town of Cape Elizabeth where public access is permitted and is included in the Town inventory of open space.

Sec. 18-5-4. Open Space Management Regulations. The following regulations shall govern the use of open space subject to this chapter.

- a. Trail Closure. The Town Manager may close a trail on a temporary basis to preserve trail surface stability or for trail maintenance. Notification of a closed trail shall be posted on the Town website and at the trail, when conditions permit, and shall be provided electronically to the Conservation Commission.
- b. Hours of Operation. Open space subject to this chapter shall be open at all hours for the enjoyment of the public. From the hours of sunset to sunrise, trail users shall limit activities to the quiet enjoyment of trails and open space.
- c. Encroachments. Encroachments are prohibited. Open space is held for the benefit and enjoyment of public use, for its' own use, and within the context of local ordinances, deed restrictions, and usage easements which the Town has purchased or been granted. The Town is responsible for protecting the public interest in public property, now and for future generations, and has a fiduciary responsibility to protect these assets.

When a possible encroachment occurs, the following process shall be used:

1. Identification of an encroachment. A potential encroachment on open space may be reported to the Town Manager by a member of the public, a Town employee or official, or by the Conservation Commission.
2. Confirm encroachment. Following report of a potential encroachment, the potential encroachment shall be inspected by the Town and, if deemed necessary, a professional surveyor may be retained to confirm the property boundary

and prepare a sketch showing the extent of the encroachment. When applicable, the deed for the open space shall be reviewed for restrictions. If the Conservation Commission identifies a possible encroachment, it may gather information as described above and report its findings to the Town Manager.

3. Identification of party causing encroachment. The Town Manager shall attempt to identify who has caused the encroachment and initiate contact. If the responsible party cannot be determined, the Town may take action to remedy the encroachment under subsection 4 below. If the party can be identified, the Town Manager shall initiate contact and seek voluntary cooperation to remove, repair or replace as necessary.
 4. Remediation. If the Town Manager is unable to obtain voluntary cooperation, all legal remedies available to a property owner may be undertaken by the Town. Remedies may include but are not limited to removal of structures, replanting of vegetation, installation of fencing or other visually prominent boundary markers, and a recovery of any costs incurred by the town. Appeal of the Town Manager's determination that an encroachment has occurred may be made to the Town Council.
- d. Vegetation Damage or Removal. No vegetation shall be removed on open space without the permission of the Town, except for blockage of Town trails. When vegetation blocks a trail marked with greenbelt trail signs, vegetative barriers such as trees and branches may be removed, only where the trail is located, without Town permission.
 - e. Tree Stand. No tree stand shall be erected on open space without the permission of the Town. Permission to erect a tree stand for the purpose of hunting may be obtained in compliance with the following requirements:
 1. The tree stand must be installed in conformance with state law;
 2. The tree stand must be installed a minimum of 100 yards from any residential dwelling;

3. The tree stand must be installed a minimum of 10 yards from any Town of Cape Elizabeth greenbelt trail marked with greenbelt signs; and
 4. The tree stand must include the name of the owner on the tree stand.
- f. **Animal Traps.** The Town of Cape Elizabeth determines that all open space is located within one half (1/2) mile of the built-up section of the Town, as used in the State of Maine Trapping Rules, and therefore only “cage-type live traps and drowning sets” may be used in Cape Elizabeth. No traps may be set on open space without Town permission. Licensed trappers may be granted permission in order to remove animals causing damage to property or for wildlife survey and research purposes.
- g. **Motorized vehicles.** No motorized vehicles may operate on open space, except as follows:
1. Snowmobiles may be operated on open space designated on the Uses and Activities Chart in the Management of Greenbelt and Open Space Plan;
 2. Motorized vehicles performing construction and maintenance work authorized by the Town; and
 3. Emergency services vehicles.

Sec. 18-5-5. Penalties. The violation of any provision of this ordinance shall, in addition to any civil penalties available to the Town therefore, constitute a misdemeanor and be punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000.00 to be recovered upon complaint to the use to the Town. Each day that any violation of this ordinance shall continue following notification thereof by the Town Manager shall constitute a separate offense. [Per Tree Ordinance]