



Town of Reading Massachusetts

Town Forest Committee

Town Forest Regulations
February 2025

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Reading Town Forest

A Carry-In, Carry-Out Facility

Mission Statement

The Town Forest is a multi-use resource created by the people of Reading in 1930 for the protection of plants, animals and the natural environment and for the enjoyment by individuals and groups for nature study, walking and camping. Users of the Town Forest must respect each other and the natural environment as they enjoy the Town Forest in their own way.

Rules and Regulations - Effective February 10, 2025

- 1 Everyone is welcome to enjoy the Reading Town Forest from dawn to dusk.
- 2 Any alteration, construction, or other work in the Town Forest is prohibited without prior approval by the Town Forest Committee.
- 3 Users of the Town Forest must stay on marked trails or roads. Creation of new trails is prohibited. Only trails shown on the official Town Forest map, posted on the Town of Reading website and various kiosks in the Town Forest, are approved for use. Trails displayed on any other map are not approved for use.
- 4 No person shall damage any structure, kiosk, sign or map, or remove them from the Town Forest.
- 5 No plants (including trees, bushes, grasses, or flowers) shall be defaced, cut, or removed without prior approval of the Town Forest Committee, with the exception of invasive species. Users are encouraged to assist with removal of invasive plants, such as Glossy Buckthorn, Black Swallow Wort, or other invasives that can be removed by hand pulling. The use of power tools or herbicides is prohibited without prior approval by the Town Forest Committee. Instructional videos and other information are available on the Town of Reading Website on the Town Forest and Conservation Commission pages. Planting of new plants is prohibited without prior approval by the Town Forest Committee.
- 6 Leave no trace. Users of the Town Forest must carry out what they carry in. Dumping, littering, filling or any other deposition of imported materials - including but not limited to garbage, debris, earth, leaves or brush - is prohibited in the Town Forest.
- 7 Pursuant to Town of Reading General Bylaw 8.9.1 the discharge of firearms or other weapons including BB guns, pellet guns, paintball guns, airsoft guns, or any similar weapons is prohibited.
- 8 Hunting is prohibited in the Town Forest. The installation of tree stands is prohibited.
- 9 Responsible bicycle use is allowed only on blazed trails and access roads in the Town Forest. The Town Forest Committee may close trails to bicycle use temporarily, seasonally, or permanently to prevent overuse or to protect natural resources. The use of any bicycle or other wheeled device with a motor, including an electric motor, is prohibited in the Reading Town Forest.
- 10 Alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Glass containers for any purpose are prohibited in the Town Forest.
- 11 Pursuant to Town of Reading General Bylaw 8.8.3.2.3 The maximum number of off-leash dogs shall not exceed two per handler in the Town Forest. Any dog that does not remain under effective voice control, as defined in Section 8.8.1.3, must be placed on a leash or removed from the Town Forest immediately. Dog waste must be removed in accordance with Section 8.8.3.3. Dogs must be leashed when entering or exiting the Town Forest. Visitors who do not abide by these rules may be required to leave the Town Forest, in addition to any enforcement action provided for under G. L.

c.40, §21D and Section 1.8 of the General Bylaw.

- 12 Pursuant to Town of Reading Bylaw 8.8.1.3, an animal shall be deemed to be “under effective voice control” if it is (i) within the handler’s sight, (ii) refrains from aggressive behavior, (iii) comes immediately when called by its handler, and (iv) the handler is carrying a leash per dog. Aggressive behavior is any behavior that would cause a reasonable person to believe the dog poses an unjustified imminent threat of physical injury to a person or another dog, including but not limited to jumping on, repeatedly barking at, or approaching any person without their consent.
- 13 The Town Forest Committee cannot assume liability for injuries, damage to property, or other loss to persons within the Town Forest or its vicinity; such visitors assume all associated risks.

The following activities require a permit. To apply for a permit, visit <https://www.readingma.gov/> and select “Online permitting”

- 14 Group use (organized events for 20 people or more). Any group use is allowed by non-commercial, Reading-based groups, or by groups authorized by the Reading Town Forest committee.
- 15 Camping: Designated areas for camping include Scrub Hill, the Old Council Ring, and the New Council Ring.
- 16 Entering before dawn or after dusk
- 17 Cooking or cook-outs
- 18 Fires: if approved by the Reading Fire Department as part of the permitting process. Firewood brought into the Town Forest must originate from within 20 miles of the Town Forest or be kiln dried.
- 19 Vehicle access. Approved vehicles shall follow designated roads only. Vehicle speed must not exceed 5 miles per hour. Vehicle parking shall be on one side of the road, leaving enough clearance for emergency vehicles at all times. A maximum number of 3 vehicles per event is allowed, unless authorized by the Reading Town Forest Committee in advance.