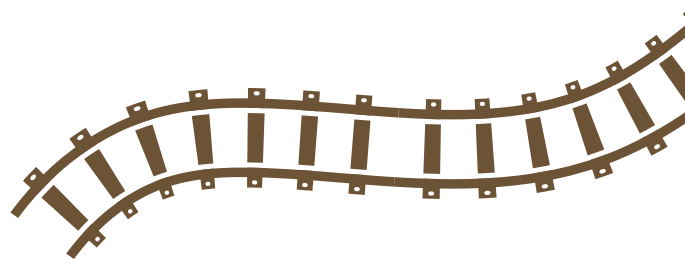


Off the Rails

BY LORI CAPONE,
CONSERVATION COORDINATOR



Over the last few months, I have gotten a few steps in watching the railroads transform from their former transportation existence, into their future, as recreational corridors through Sudbury.

Eversource Underground Transmission Line and the Mass Central Rail Trail

Work continued feverously throughout the winter. The countdown was on to complete as much earth work in areas within vernal pool protection zones (within 450 feet from the 15 vernal pools throughout the corridor) before March 1. From March 1 to June 1, no earthwork can occur within these areas and all vehicles that traverse these areas are guided by a monitor making sure no critter falls victim in its tracks. Syncopated erosion controls were installed in these areas to

allow passage, while preventing erosion. Following the conclusion of the Black Racer Hibernaculum restriction near the town line, the last few trees were removed in early April, in time to meet their obligation to refrain from work before the Whippoorwill breeding season began. Starting in April, turtle monitoring for wood and box turtle also commenced. These turtles will continue to be radio-tracked until they go into hibernation, to ensure they are not located within the construction site.

We have unearthed a couple of different surprises throughout the excavation process, but one of the more striking things to me was to find that much of the soil beneath the rails surface resembles beach sand, remnant of Sudbury's glacial landscape, long before the railroad. Rough grading has been completed in most areas within the corridor.

Off the Rails, Cont. I



Historic Cattle Crossing discovered during excavation



*Turbidity monitoring
for dewatering*

A previously unknown cattle crossing was discovered near the western bridge over Hop Brook (pictured above). This is currently being evaluated to determine how to work around this historic relic.

In May, a new phase of construction, installation of the underground transmission line commenced. Three vaults have been installed in the area near and between Horse Pond Road and Union Avenue. This work has required dewatering in every excavation so far, which has been closely monitored (shown left). Installation of manholes was quickly followed by conduit, which began between Peakham and Horse Pond Road. See photos of the project in progress on the following page:

Off the Rails, Cont. 2



Work on the Eversource underground transmission line project:

1) Excavation for a vault

2) Completed excavation

3) Vault bottom installation

4) Sealing the vault seam

5) Vault top installation

6 & 7) Completed vault installation

8) Conduit installation and cementing

Off the Rails, Cont. 3

Starting June 1, the vernal pool restriction will expire, and work will commence in these areas. The Whippoorwill breeding area restriction expires on August 1. People who walk dogs in this whippoorwill habitat area are asked to adhere to leash restrictions.

All work is proceeding in compliance with required permits. Environmental Compliance Reports and construction schedules are updated weekly and posted to the Conservation Commission [MCRT Page](#).

Rails being removed



After rail removal - ties remain in place



Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

Removal of the rails on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail took an entirely different approach. Special equipment was used that road the rails, giving these tracks one last hoorah, before being removed. This technique allowed the ties to remain in place, which now support the tree equipment that is working its way down the corridor.

The Pantry Brook Bridge was quickly removed, and none too soon. To think people casually walked over this crossing just a couple months ago. Tree removal is nearing completion, and Wildlife habitat piles (shown right) are being built along the trail with vegetation that was removed to mitigate for habitat loss.

Closely following the tree crew, the erosion controls are being installed. This work is making its way up the corridor from south the

north and is currently north of Morse Road. While corridor work is continuing, work on the ADA connections has commenced. The new Bruce Freeman Rail Trail parking area on Morse Road is starting to be constructed, as is the ADA connection from Parkinson Field.

You can follow the progress of the [Bruce Freeman Rail Trail](#) on the Conservation Commission's webpage, which includes construction schedules and photos.



Wildlife habitat pile