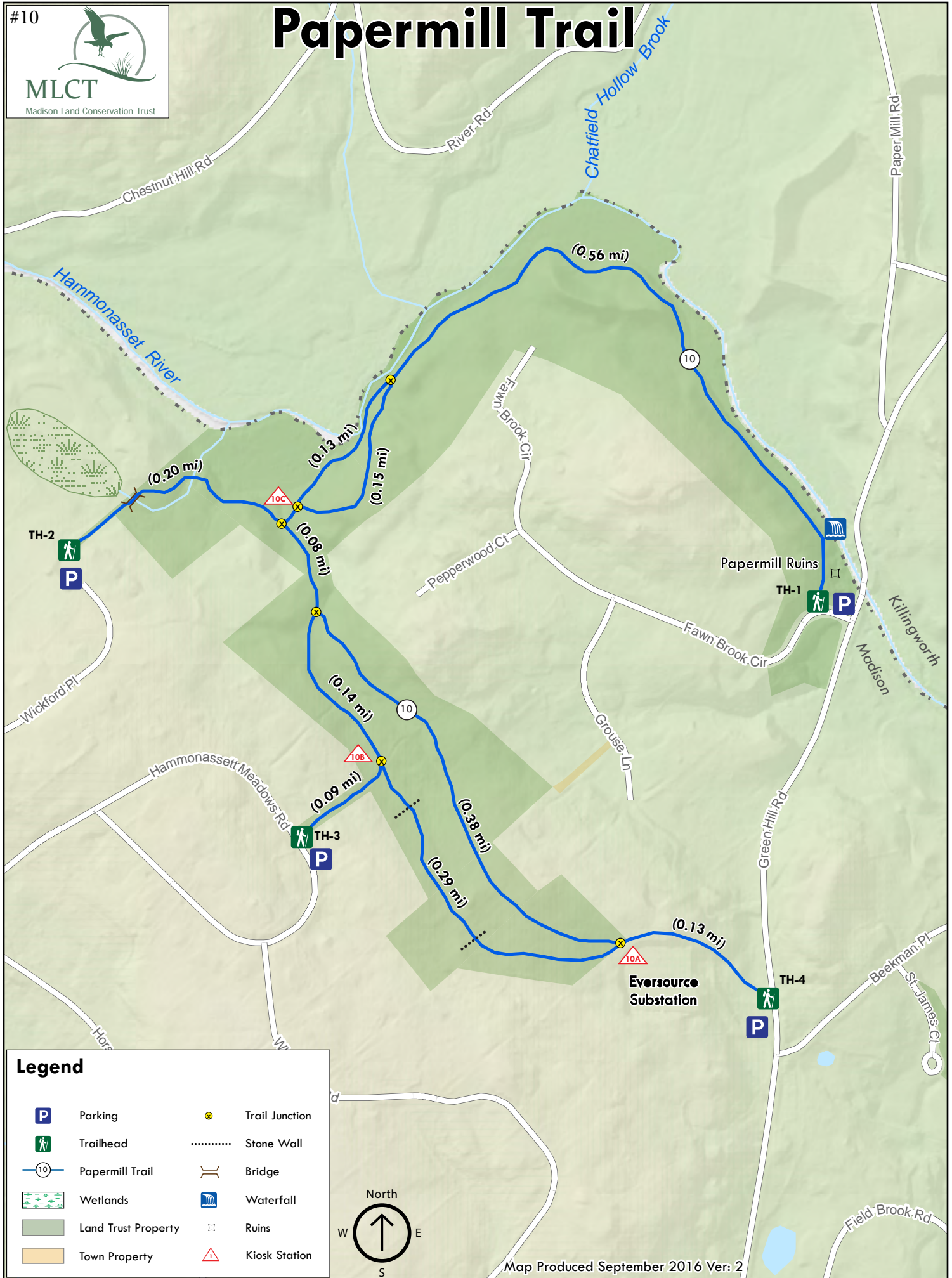


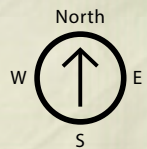


Papermill Trail



Legend

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Parking | Trail Junction |
| Trailhead | Stone Wall |
| Papermill Trail | Bridge |
| Wetlands | Waterfall |
| Land Trust Property | Ruins |
| Town Property | Kiosk Station |



Papermill Trail

What to look for on the Papermill Trail

Follow the dirt road south marked with the blue blazes. The hike is described as entering at Trailhead 1, continuing north along the river to Trailhead 2. The loop section is described in a counterclockwise direction heading south.

Almost immediately upon entering the trail, the foundation ruins of the historic Hammonasset paper mill and its dam system can be seen on the right next to the river. The mill and its history are described below. Once past the mill site, the trail leads north, close to the west bank of the river through second-growth forests typical of this region. Tree species commonly encountered are oaks (red, black, white and chestnut), beech, black and yellow birches, white ash, and red maple. A few sugar maples and sassafras occur and some large sycamores grow along the river banks. Occasional hemlock snags still stand—reminders of their vulnerability to the effects of the gypsy moth defoliation in the 1970s and '80s.

Close to the river's edge, especially in times of high water, the value of this large flood plain becomes clear. Here, potentially destructive torrents of water are slowed and spread. In a practical sense, the flood plain once stored large quantities of water in a "lake" behind the mill dam downstream. In spring, this area abounds with marsh-marigolds, columbine, and trillium.

Where the trail rises a few feet above river level and continues north it passes a group of chestnut oaks, a species common to dry sites. Several stone walls mark old field borders, indicating that the forest here developed on land formerly tilled or pastured.

The trail follows the river, and at about 0.6 mile, divides; the right branch follows the river, while the left proceeds uphill, and then rejoins the main trail. Continue along the river for more glimpses of the flood plain. Along the cool, moist base of the hill to the west, the trail passes through a stand of yellow birch, hemlock (now dead), beech and red oak.

The trail soon curves to the left, and then swings sharply right where, in about 100 feet, it crosses a stream (0.7 mile from Trailhead 1). At this point, the loop section trail (described below) heads south (left) the main trail continues right for another 0.2 mile to Trailhead 2 at Wickford Place. For a short distance, it follows an old logging road, then goes right along steep slopes, and crosses some temporary stream beds, before climbing upslope and along a narrow right-of-way between private residences to the Wickford Place cul-de-sac and Trailhead 2.

The loop trail often allows sightings of red-shouldered hawks and many woodpeckers. Barred owls also nest in this area. This section of trail (1.0 mile round trip) passes south along the small stream and then ascends a knoll past a group of white pines before it descends to the stream and the base of the loop. Take the trail to the right and ascend to mid-slope. At a point about 800 feet from the loop base, a spur trail to the right follows an old road bed up along a narrow right-of-way another 800 feet or so again to Trailhead 3 on Hammonasset Meadows Drive. The loop trail gradually ascends to slope crest and along a stone wall before swinging first east (left) and then sharply north (left). (Here, a short spur trail leads to Trailhead 4 on Greenhill Road over Northeast Utility property.) As the trail starts to descend, note the big oaks with large, low, wide-spreading branches. This "architecture" indicates that these trees developed when this area was open—probably at the back end of a field marked by stone walls. Continue back to the loop and on to the junction with the main trail.

Head back to Trailhead 1, keeping right to the red-cedar knoll. Red-cedars and black cherry trees were seeded here by birds when this was a grassy knob.

From the knoll crest just beyond the red cedars, great views exist of the river and its flood plain below, especially in fall, winter and early spring. Even on dull days, the nearly white upper crown branches of the large sycamores at the river's edge below stand out in striking contrast to the rest of the forest. Descend to the main trail and return to Trailhead 1. Approaching the old dam site from this direction affords a good view of the hills that form both sides of the river, narrow the flood plain, and provide an ideal site for the mill dam.

The Paper Mill

This mill is included in the National Register of Historic Places. It was built around 1865 to produce straw board, a product used for making boxes which was popular during an interim period between the heydays of rag-based and wood pulp-based papers. The mill was successful until its closing in 1890. In later years, the site was occupied by a lumber operation.

The site includes components on both sides of the river. On the east side, in Killingworth, are the remains of a stone dam 20 feet long, six feet wide, and 14 feet high; on the west side, in Madison, the remains of the mill.

The above-ground remains include the fieldstone ruins of the mill complex, stone-lined head and tailraces, the dam and at least two associated structures. Large fieldstone footings imbedded with threaded iron rods, presumably for machinery, are found in three areas. Deep pits in two buildings suggest possible vat locations. There is no wheel pit; the mill was powered by water-driven turbines, the exact locations of which are not apparent.

Permitted Activities:

The trail areas in the MLCT properties are for hiking only. Dogs are allowed, but must be leashed. Please pick up all animal waste.

The Papermill Trail includes the site of an historic mill, wonderful close and distant views of the Hammonasset River and its broad flood plain, and an upland loop that circumscribes the valley of a lovely tributary stream. Four access points allow walks of varying lengths and sections of the trail.

GPS Directions: 28 Fawn Brook Cir, Madison, CT 06443

Category: An easy walk with several moderate ups and downs

Start: Either of the four trailheads (Fawn Brook Circle, Hammonasset Meadows Drive, Wickford Place, or Green Hill Road)

Distance: From Trailhead 1 to Trailhead 2 and return: 1.9 miles; including the south loop adds another 1.0 mile

Approximate time: About 2 hours allowing a few minutes to explore the mill site ruins (Obs. Pt. A) and a stop to enjoy the river view from Cedar Knoll (Obs. Pt. B)

Parking: Trailhead 1: On Fawn Brook Circle near junction with Green Hill Road; Trailhead 2: at the cul-de-sac of Wickford Place; Trailhead 3: On Hammonasset Meadows Drive near the trailhead

Historical Features: Stone ruins of the Hammonasset Paper Mill, circa 1865-1890

For more information about this walk contact:

Madison Land Conservation Trust
www.madisonlandtrust.org

