

Accessible Trail Standards



**Policy & Implementation
Committee**

November 21, 2025

CMP Amendment

- Background
- Current Standards
- Standards for Consideration
- Committee Discussion of Highlighted Issues
- Schedule

Why Accessible Trails?

- Three recent proposals to make existing trails more accessible have not been able to meet CMP minimum environmental standards
- Commission has approved two deviation MOAs and continues to work on a third – process intensive!
- Provide more equitable access to Pinelands recreational resources



	Pemberton Lake	Stafford Forecastle Lake
<i>Material</i>	Gravel/Boardwalk	Paving
<i>Width</i>	4 feet	6 feet
<i>Wetlands (sq ft)</i>	1,656 sq ft	n/a
<i>Wetland buffers (sq ft)</i>	12,894 sq ft	14,510 sq ft
<i>Paved parking</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Signs and barriers to limit use to pedestrians only</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Revegetation (offset)</i>	Yes	Yes

Permanent Land Preservation Summit: April 2025

- **Presentations**

- Funding and Resources for Creating Accessible Trails (Green Acres)
 - “The Pinelands is for Everyone” Initiative (Pinelands Preservation Alliance)
 - Trail Construction Guidance (NY-NJ Trail Conference)
 - Stafford Township Forecastle Basin Accessible Trail (Stafford Township)
- Round table: Accessible Trail Standards in the Pinelands

Summit Feedback: Trail Materials and Construction

- Gravel, crushed stone/shell, rake and blaze
 - Less intensive implementation, more maintenance
- Boardwalks, pavement
 - More intensive implementation, less maintenance
- Could the Commission provide a matrix with a menu of options?
- Should consider if the trail is existing or new
- Should consider site-specific conditions

Summit Feedback: Impacts to Natural Resources

- No new trails in wetlands
- T&E habitat should not be visible from trails
- Equal height inlet and outlet for culverts
- Consider the watershed - upstream and downstream
- NJ Barrier-Free Subcode American Association of State Highways Transit officials- trails minimum of 10ft width to be funded

Summit Feedback: Accessibility Documentation

- Outreach opportunities: surveys, billboards, social media, municipal websites
- Design based on the local feedback
- Refer to census data for overburdened communities and senior population
- Document barriers removed
- Different requirements for public, nonprofit and private applicants

Research from Other Agencies

- NJ Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines
- NJ Department of Transportation 2015 Roadway Design Manual
- 2017 NJ Complete Streets Design Guide
- NYNJ Trail Conference Trail Construction Guidance
- NY Association of State Wetland Managers
- Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources webinar
- American Trails

Current CMP Standards

Only low intensity recreation trails in wetlands and wetland buffers

No fill

No grading

No paving

Boardwalks allowed in wetlands

Existing constraints on trails elsewhere in CMP

Current CMP Standards

Low intensity recreation use limitations

Not permitted in Special Ag. Production Area

Permitted in Preservation Area District, Ag. Production Area, and Forest Area, provided that:

- Parcel > 50 acres
- No motorized vehicle use except for necessary transportation
- Access to bodies of water limited to 15 linear feet of frontage per 1,000 ft of water body frontage
- Clearing < 5% of parcel
- Impervious surfaces < 1% parcel coverage

Scope of Standards for Consideration

Would apply only to accessible trails in wetlands and wetland buffers

- Linear projects only
- Stormwater management is not required if the improved trail is entirely within the footprint of the existing trail
- Parking areas and restrooms are not included
- Low intensity recreation use limitations in the PAD, FA, APA, and SAPA are maintained
- Conversion of existing unimproved trails

Potential Rule Standards



Add definitions for “accessible trail,” “boardwalk,” “mobility device,” and “unimproved trail”



Permit accessible trails in wetlands and wetlands transition areas, provided that:

Proposed trail aligns with existing unimproved trail

Maximum width 4 ft, with bump-outs for passing

Maximum length 1.5 miles

Trail constructed of boardwalk in wetlands



Accessible trails would be exempt from stormwater management in wetlands and wetland buffers but subject to addressing T&E

Highlighted Issues

1. Trail width
2. Distance boardwalk extends beyond delineated wetland
3. Trail material in wetland transition areas
4. Application fees

Highlighted Issue #1

Trail Width

- 4 feet/5 feet with bump-outs for passing?
- 6 feet to allow for passing throughout trail?



Highlighted Issue #2

Distance Boardwalk Extends Beyond Delineated Wetland

- Site specific considerations dictate distance
- We don't have data on environmental impacts of a larger versus smaller distance
- Larger distance → more expensive
- Smaller distance → paving closer to wetlands



Highlighted Issue #3

Trail Material Outside Wetlands

- As suggested, there would be no restrictions on trail material outside wetlands
- Paving allowed in wetland buffers?
- Alternatives?

Highlighted Issue #4

Application Fees

- Currently \$187.50/acre of disturbed land (\$250 minimum application fee)
- Same system?
- Instead, fees based on length, construction costs, flat fee, etc.?

Rule Amendment Calendar – Next Steps



1. Nov 2025: P&I discussion of standards
2. Early 2026: Full rule package (all amendments) to P&I
3. Following P&I meeting: Commission authorization to propose
4. Mid-late 2026: Rule proposal publication
5. Late 2026: Public hearing

Questions?

A photograph of a paved trail winding through a forest. The trees are mostly deciduous, with some showing autumn foliage in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The ground is covered in fallen leaves. The trail is paved and leads into the distance. The overall scene is a peaceful forest setting.

Pemberton Lake Trail – October 2025