

Running in Wompatuck State Park

By Alma Ramos-McDermott

When you take the turn onto Union Street, enter the Park and begin the long ascent towards the Administration Building, the trials and tribulations of your day begin to slip away. The sound of birds twittering, scampering squirrels, and the rustling of tree branches will greet you.

Park and lock your car in either the lower or upper parking lots, (making sure to leave valuables at home). Make sure to pick up a trail map at the Administration Building before beginning your run. Wompatuck offers both cross country and road running but, since the Park is over 4000 acres, it is wise to bring along a trail map before beginning any run. The trails are marked with small blue directional and numbered signs placed onto trees, which are also marked on the trail map. Remember, safety should be foremost on your mind when attempting any kind of State Park run. For future runs, cut the map down to size, put in a small baggie to keep it dry, and pin to the inside of your running shorts so you don't have to carry it.

Your run can either be done completely on trails, partly on trails and paved bicycle paths, or all on paved bicycle paths. The choice is yours. As with all cross country running footing is precarious so, if you choose this type of run, be sure to keep your eyes on or near your feet as rocks and fallen branches may prove hazardous to your balance. Certain portions of the trail run over and near marshy land. When your running shoes begin to squelch in endless mud, even after weeks of sunny weather, then you'll know you've found those particular areas of the park.

It would be wise to map out an area you'd like to run before you actually begin running so you have an idea of which trail markers to look for while running. This way you don't have to stop at every crossing wondering which trail you'd next like to follow, but can seamlessly continue onto the trail which you were seeking. Don't worry about mileage, as that's difficult to measure in the Park, but concentrate on the actual time you've spent running.

A good introduction to running in Wompatuck is the annual Melanoma Education Foundation (MEF) 5-mile run, which takes place every September. The race follows 5 miles of paved bicycle paths but while running; scout out various trails, paths, and their markings to get a mental idea of where you'd next like to run.

If you want lots of hills, and but don't want to run bicycle paths or cross country trails, then run Union Street – the main road into and out of the Park. The distance from the main entrance as soon as you enter Wompatuck to the very end of Union Street is 2.5 miles one way, and is very hilly. As you run, you could choose to go off the road to a short path that's not too far from the Administration Building and view the newly restored World War II Bunker on your right. As you continue onwards, you will pass the entrance to the Campgrounds, stop to get a quick drink of water at Mount Blue Spring on your right, or view the Transfer Station on your left. There is a bench by a lovely lake near the top where you can take in a bit of the scenery before reaching the top of Union Street, turning and beginning the return trip to your car.

As you can see, Wompatuck is a delightful jewel for the recreational and hard-core runner. It shines in the summer, but doesn't lose its luster with winter running. Lace up those running shoes and come to Wompatuck to see what you're missing.