

# TRAILS & SAILS

 ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

## 10 Tips for Hosting a Trails & Sails Event

We hope participating in Trails & Sails is rewarding and fun for you, your volunteers or staff, and your organization. Here are 10 tips for a successful Trails & Sails event.

### 1. KNOW YOUR MISSION

You are hosting an event as a part of Trails & Sails event to promote your site or initiative, increase awareness of your program(s), and access new audiences. Let your audience know these things – it is helpful to have informative materials available about who you are and what you do! This could include distributing program schedules, rack cards with QR codes, or membership brochures.

### 2. KNOW THE ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

You are participating in Trails & Sails to promote your organization and Essex Heritage is organizing Trails & Sails to promote the Essex National Heritage Area (Essex County, Massachusetts). Helping to encourage visitation to and cross promotion of the many wonderful historic, cultural, and natural resources located here fosters widespread community support for this special region. Here are a few things to know about us:

- Essex Heritage preserves and promotes the historic, natural, and cultural resources in Essex County, Massachusetts.
- The Essex National Heritage Area is one of 62 National Heritage Areas designated by the U.S. Congress that work in partnership with the National Park Service.
- More information on the Essex National Heritage Area, its resources, and our other programming including grant opportunities, youth jobs, and professional development for educators, can be found at [EssexHeritage.org](https://www.essexheritage.org).

### 3. REVIEW YOUR ONLINE LISTING

While the Trails & Sails printed guidebook is our most popular marketing piece, the [online schedule](#) is truly the best tool to keep participants informed. Be sure to review your online event listing for accuracy and submit any updates or changes needed to Essex Heritage staff as soon as you are aware of them. You may do this via email, please contact Heather Goss at [HeatherG@EssexHeritage.org](mailto:HeatherG@EssexHeritage.org).

### 4. PROMOTE, PROMOTE, PROMOTE!

As the series gets closer, Essex Heritage will act as a marketing engine to help get the word out about all the great activities taking place, but we strongly encourage you to promote your event(s) through your marketing channels as well. This could include:

- Plugging your event listing on your website, in emails, or newsletters. The most popular events are the ones that promote themselves.
- Adding your event to local online event calendars.
- Use social media to promote your event too – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, a blog post – whatever your organization already uses – and include **#TrailsAndSails** to connect with participants and partners!

## **5. STOCK UP ON COLLATERAL**

Have your brochures, calendar of events and/or membership forms on hand. You can also pick up Trails & Sails printed guidebooks to give out, these are available at local libraries and visitor centers across Essex County. Want to know the closest location where you can pick up some guides near you? Please feel free to reach out to us.

## **6. USE YARD SIGNS & LOOK OPEN**

We have Trails & Sails yard signs available for event hosts and we strongly encourage you to put them in a highly visible area on the day of your event. These are not intended to be disposable so please try to store them for re-use if you think you'll participate again. If you would like a new yard sign these are available for pick up at our office in Salem (10 Federal Street, Suite 12, Salem, MA) and in some cases can be dropped off – *but please contact us to coordinate as our office operates on a hybrid remote/in-office schedule.*

If you are a historic site conducting an “open doors” event, we recommend that you do your best to have the site appear open and inviting.

## **6. PREPARE AS BEST YOU CAN**

Hosting in-person events is exciting, engaging, and sometimes unpredictable! Trying to plan ahead for the unexpected can help ensure success even when things don't quite go as planned. This could include ensuring you have your cell phone on you for a guided walk/hike or having a back-up guide scheduled in case you're sick or otherwise unable to lead the event. Preparing yourself and your staff/volunteers for the possibility of the unforeseen can help mitigate any stress and keep the experience positive.

## **7. BE KNOWLEDGEABLE & SET EXPECTATIONS**

Hosts often get all kinds of questions, and some may not be directly tied to your program. It is helpful to know where participants can find a bathroom, a place to get water or food, their way back to the highway, etc.

We try to be very clear in print and online about accessibility and what amenities are available at your event. If you feel your online listing needs enhancements to help better prepare participants, please let us know, we are happy to set expectations as best we can ahead of time.

## **8. LEAD A GREAT EVENT!**

Be sure to introduce yourself, your staff, and your site/organization. Having a great “elevator pitch” lined up and ready to go makes this easy. If you have a scheduled event, try not to go over your listed time as this could cause participants to miss their next event. If your group is large, do your best to keep everyone together.

Don't forget to snap some photos of your event, compelling pictures will make your programming easier to market and promote in the future! If you're taking pictures on a smartphone, you may want to turn the phone horizontally unless you're planning to post it on platforms like Instagram – but most of the time, if you want to showcase a picture from an event later, you'll want it to be horizontal.

If you are requiring pre-registration for your event or asking attendees to sign in at the door, make sure you are collecting email addresses. This way, you can follow up with them by email with a “thank you for attending” message and continue plugging what you do and how they can stay involved.

## 9. MAKE NOTE OF PARTICIPATION & VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Essex Heritage will be in touch with you after Trails & Sails with a link to a simple online “match form” asking for the number of participants you had and the number of volunteer or staff hours that went into preparing for the event(s). We use this data in our federal reporting to help ensure we can offer this event series and keep it free for years to come!

## 10. HOW TO CANCEL

If you **MUST** cancel or reschedule your event, please take the following steps:

- Update your event date information or post the cancellation online by email Heather Goss at [HeatherG@EssexHeritage.org](mailto:HeatherG@EssexHeritage.org).
- Event hosts are responsible for reaching out to anyone who has signed up about cancellations or rescheduling if your event required reservations.
- You might consider designating a person to be at the event’s meeting place to advise people that the event is cancelled, or visibly posting a sign at the event location.

**Call or email Essex Heritage with any questions.**

**Phone:** (978) 740-0444 / **Email:** Heather at [HeatherG@EssexHeritage.org](mailto:HeatherG@EssexHeritage.org)



**ESSEX HERITAGE**

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