


Richard T. Larkin Conservation Area

Property Overview/Highlights:

- 44.2 acres
- 0.83 total miles of trails
- Owned/maintained by the Northbridge Conservation Commission
- Parking available at Shining Rock Drive (paved, 8 spaces) and at School Street (unpaved, 2 to 3 spaces)

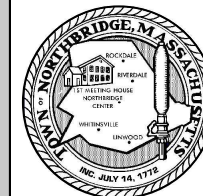
Trails:

-  Larkin Trail
0.33 miles from Church Street to summit
180 feet overall elevation gain
Difficulty - Hard
-  Shining Rock Trail
0.27 miles from Shining Rock Drive to Larkin Trail
30 feet overall elevation gain
Difficulty - Moderate
-  Bypass Trail
0.33 miles from Larkin Trail to Shining Rock Trail
110 feet overall elevation gain
Difficulty - Easy

 Parking

 Viewpoint/Landmark

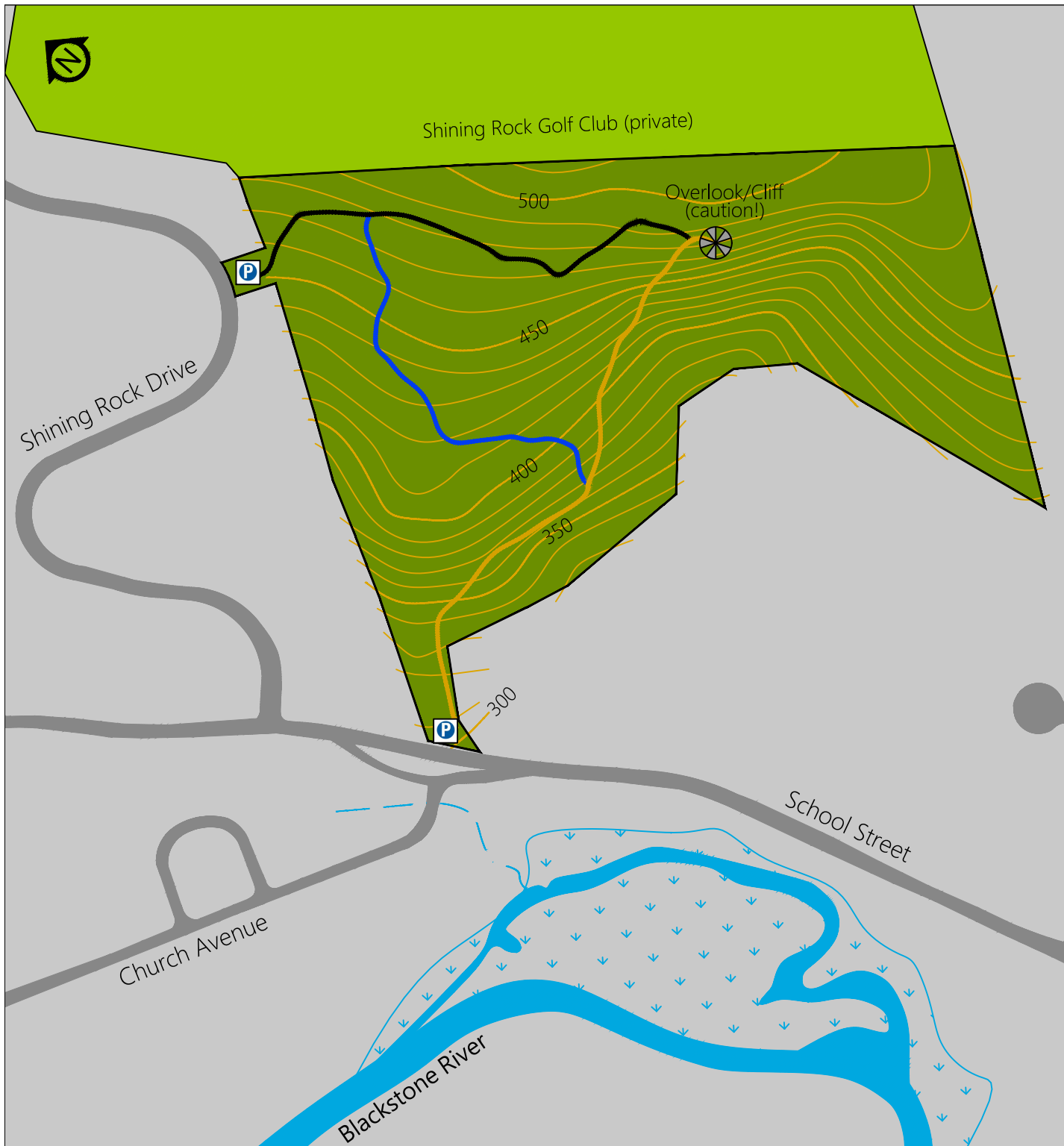
Scale: 1" = 400'



NORTHBRIDGE
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Conservation Commission

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www.northbridgemass.org/conservation-commission



Richard T. Larkin Conservation Area (Shining Rock)

Overview and History

The Richard T. Larkin Conservation Area (also known as Shining Rock) consists of a 44.2 acre parcel of land that can be accessed from Shining Rock Drive (formal paved parking area) and School Street (gravel turnout with room for 2 to 3 vehicles). In 1977, the land was gifted to the Town of Northbridge by Theodore and Sophie Picotte. The property is named after Richard T. Larkin who was a publisher of the Blackstone Valley Tribune and an avid conservationist. Beginning in the mid 1800's, several small quarries were developed/operated along the eastern flanks of Shining Rock. On the Conservation Land, evidence of past mining is still apparent along several of the lower rock outcrops and to the south of the main cliff face.

Ecology

The site is currently forested with a mixed canopy of needle-leaved evergreen and deciduous tree species, including white pine, red oak, American beech and sweet birch. Shrub species commonly found in forest include huckleberry, sassafras and lowbush blueberry. The Larkin Trail extends through patches of pitch pine/scrub oak forest just below the overlook. The forest floor is sparsely vegetated with several species of ferns, wild lily of the valley, Indian pipe, wild sarsaparilla, pink lady's slipper and starflower. Unlike many other areas in Northbridge, there are virtually no invasive plant species within the Richard T. Larkin Conservation Land. The exposures of bedrock within the property are gneissic granite that formed during the Proterozoic Eon of the Precambrian Era. This partially-metamorphosed, igneous rock was formed approximately 600 million years ago.



Slab of quarried rock near Larkin Trail

Trails/Use

As shown on the trail map, there are three different trails that total approximately 0.8 miles on the property. All listed trail lengths are for one-way only. Out and backs and loops provide opportunities for longer walks. Users should be aware that the upper section of the Larkin Trail is quite steep and can be extremely slippery during/after rains. At the top of the Larkin Trail is an exposed cliff face which provides expansive views of the Blackstone River valley and Riverdale Pond. Please stay away from the edge and do not attempt to climb down or up the face (unless you are an experienced rock climber). The rock exposures in this area are plastered with graffiti, some of which is lewd. The Conservation Commission has begun efforts to remove the graffiti. Users are asked to abide the rules posted at the parking areas and listed below.



View from the top of the main cliff face

- Use only established/marked trails
- Pack in/pack out or use designated waste receptacles
- No alcohol/recreational drug use
- No fires, camping or hunting
- No graffiti or defacing of rock outcrops and vegetation
- No off road/motorized vehicle use

The Conservation Commission has developed a Conservation Fund that is used to purchase trail-related materials (signs/markers, graffiti removal compounds, etc.). Donations to this fund are greatly appreciated. Call the Commission if interested in donating or if you wish to volunteer for trail cleanup/maintenance days.