

The West Barnstable Conservation Area (WBCA) --why it is so special

Not every town has the advantage of two square miles of contiguous conservation and public open space located in an accessible area near a major highway. The WBCA is not only a major open space, but also an important showcase of geological features that are particularly uncommon locally. Among these are the following glacial and fluvial (water-made) features, and the trails that follow them:

- **Multiple stream terraces (Big Ring Trail)--These are very easy to note with the recent LiDAR imagery for the WBCA and adjacent areas. LiDAR is obtained by flyovers (not satellites, as it might appear)**
- **Colluvial ramparts (Stonehenge Trail)--These rugged, rambling ridges are enjoyed by many bikers and hikers. They represent linear piles of debris that tumbled down slope to the toe of the rapidly melting glacier.**
- **Moraine cut-through valleys (Crooked Cartway, Carwash Bypass, and others)--These valleys represent water releases from high-level temporary glacial lakes that formed behind still-intact ice masses during retreat of the glacier.**
- **Thrust moraine ridges (North Ridge Trail and others)--These are piles of outwash or lake deposits thrust up by the glacier to an impressive height, allowing views of Nantucket and the Vineyard.**
- **In summary, the WBCA has protected delicate glacial features that could have easily have been eliminated by the bulldozer in the name of progress. Some of the features noted herein no doubt provide ecological niches in an environment little changed since the last ice age. This should be of interest to trail users and earth or life scientists as well as students at nearby schools and colleges.**