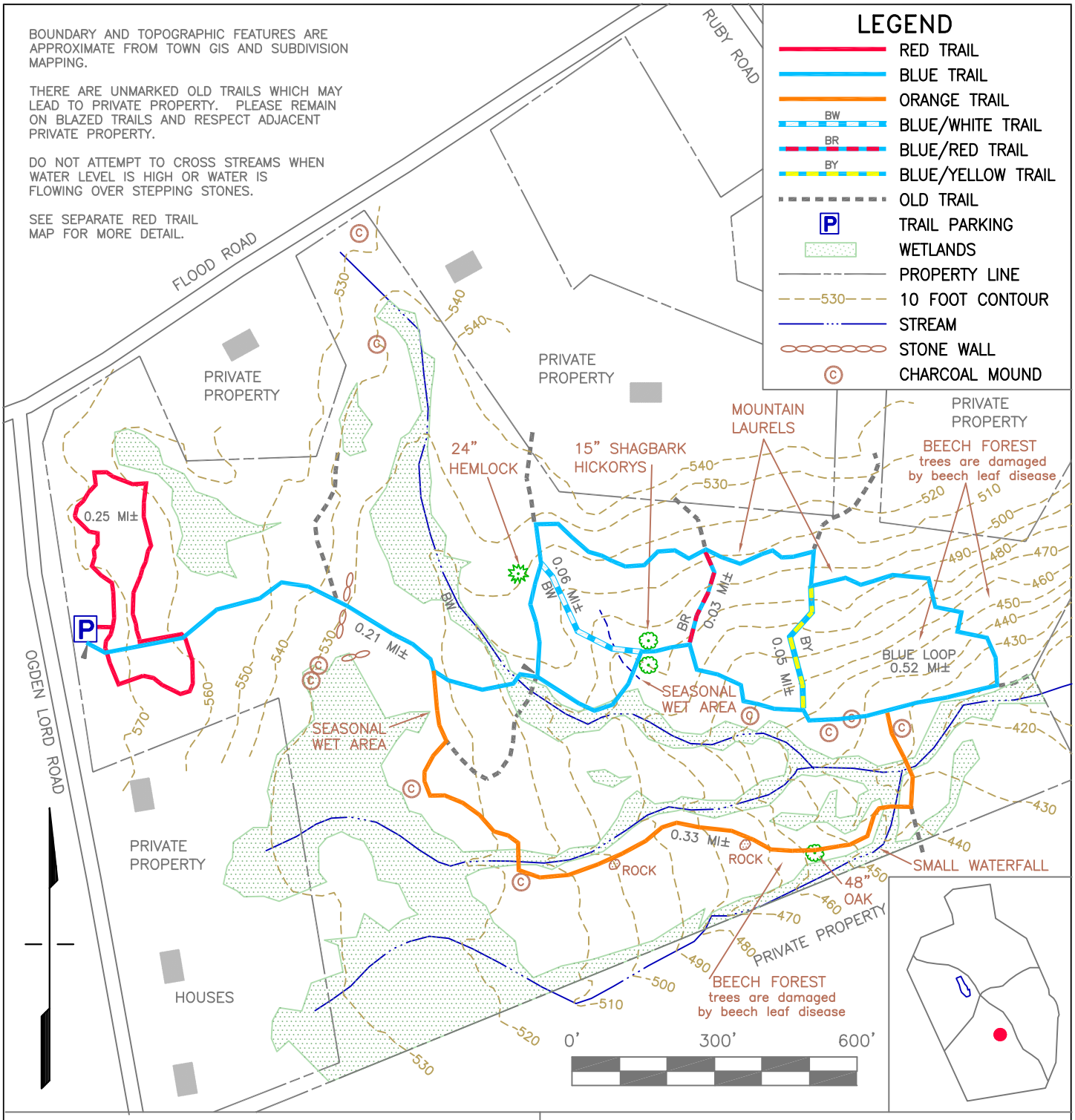



## TRAIL COURTESY

- > TRAIL HOURS: DAWN TO DUSK (NO LOITERING)
- > PLEASE STAY ON TRAILS AND RESPECT ADJACENT PRIVATE PROPERTY.
- > NO MOTORIZED VEHICLES
- > NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES
- > NO HORSES OR ANIMALS (OTHER THAN DOGS)
- > DOGS MUST BE ON A LEASH, CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR PET.
- > TAKE OUT WHAT YOU BRING IN

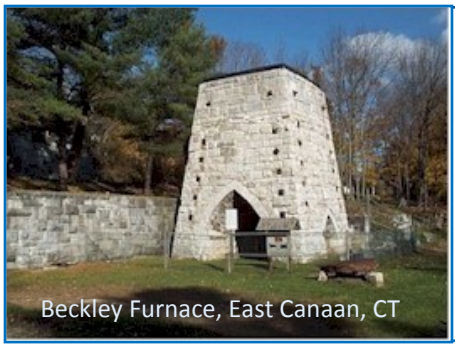
# TRAIL MAP
# OGDEN LORD ROAD OPEN SPACE

OGDEN LORD ROAD AND FLOOD ROAD
MARLBOROUGH, CONNECTICUT
10–27–2025

MAP IS APPROXIMATE FOR RECREATIONAL USE ONLY.
MARLBOROUGH NATURE TRAILS AND SIDEWALK COMMISSION

# Charcoal Mounds at the Ogden Lord Road Open Space Trails

There are several charcoal mounds located within the Ogden Lord Road Open Space, including two that are immediately adjacent to the blue trail. This sheet has been prepared to provide some basic information about what charcoal mounds are and their historical significance to Connecticut's forests.



Beckley Furnace, East Canaan, CT

A charcoal mound is an historical artifact of a time when Connecticut woodlands were harvested to provide charcoal for use in the forges and blast furnaces of the iron industry of the 18th and 19th centuries. While most of these furnaces have been lost to history, some structures remain such as those at the Mine Hill Preserve of the Roxbury Land Trust or the Beckley Furnace Industrial Monument in East Canaan. Among the many iron items produced in area forges were cannons for the American Revolution and railroad freight car wheels.

The making of charcoal was the work of people called "Colliers," many of whom were immigrants. They would cut trees into 4 to 5 foot lengths and stack them in a specific manner to create a 15 foot high mound 30 or so feet in diameter. A tell-tale sign of a charcoal mound today is a 30 foot diameter circular flat shallow mound with a perimeter shallow trench. Another indication is that the soil is jet black with small bits of charcoal remaining.

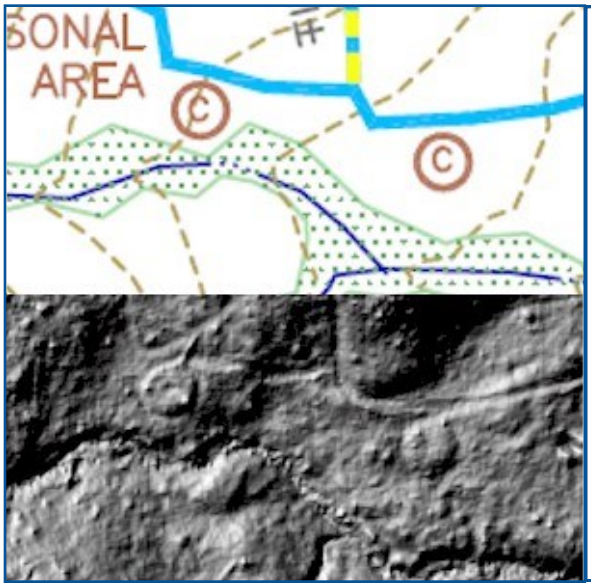
The colliers would then cover the mound with ferns, leaves and dirt and light the center on fire. The covered mound was designed to slowly smolder (rather than burn with flame) in order to create charcoal and not ash. The smoldering mound would need to be tended around the clock for several weeks until it was allowed to cool and the charcoal raked out. Because they needed to tend to the mounds, the colliers typically lived in temporary huts nearby. The finished charcoal would be bagged, loaded onto wagons and eventually delivered to the forges and furnaces.

To feed the charcoal needs of all these forges and furnaces, a staggering amount of wood was required. Every year, each forge and furnace would use the charcoal from hundreds of acres of forest. A typical charcoal mound consumed around 30 cords of wood. The colliers did this all with hand tools and horse drawn wagons. Charcoal use began to decline in the early 1900's as coal became the predominate fuel for iron making. Thus charcoal mounds found today are all at least 100 or more years old.

Image Credits
- Beckley Furnace photo: NTSC.
- All other photos: Collection of the Cornwall Historical Society, Cornwall, Connecticut.

# How to find a Charcoal Mound

Finding a charcoal mound is a three step process. Step One: Using LIDAR mapping to identify the possibility of a charcoal mound in a specific area. Step Two: Searching for and finding this location in the field. Step Three: Confirming that it is indeed a charcoal mound. This sheet has been prepared to provide some very basic guidance on each step.




The tool that was used to identify the charcoal mounds at the Ogden Lord Road Open Space is the LIDAR Elevation Viewer from CTECO. The viewer and information about LIDAR can be found at the CTECO website.

https://s.uconn.edu/elevationviewer

This is a "bare earth" viewer that shows elevation of the ground, after filtering out trees, vegetation, buildings and other structures. The top image is a portion of the trail map showing the two charcoal mounds adjacent to the blue trail. The bottom image is the same area on the elevation viewer. The charcoal mounds show up as the two circular areas, the trail appears as the lines above the mounds and the brook as the ragged line below the mounds.

Even knowing the approximate location, finding the actual mound in the woods can be a challenging task. From a distance it won't look much different than the surrounding forest. The most visible indicator will be the 30 foot or so circular shallow trench around the perimeter and a slightly raised central "mound". How pronounced the trench and mound are can vary greatly. Some mounds are very obvious, others are not. This is a photo of the left mound in the LIDAR image above. The yellow dashed line roughly follows the perimeter of the mound. The blue dashed line is the adjacent blue blazed trail.

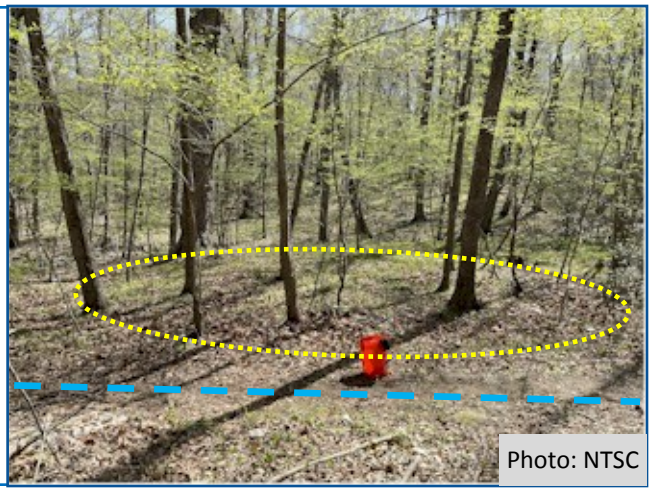


Photo: NTSC

Photo: NTSC

The final confirmation of the charcoal mound is finding jet black soil and bits of charcoal under the leaves. Because charcoal is nearly pure carbon, it is highly resistant to decomposition by soil microbes. This is why we can still find bits of charcoal even in mounds that are well over a hundred years old.

Photo: NTSC