

LOCAL NEWS

Trails caucus to be re-launched in state Legislature



From left, Katherine Shea, 16, and her mother Cheryl Shea of Groton, and their longhaired German shepherd, Holly, and their friends Caroline Keegan, 15, and her mother Nancy Keegan of Groton, with their European retriever, Bella, head out for a walk on the Nashua River Rail Trail in Groton. (SUN/Julia Malakie)

By **STAFF REPORT** |

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BOSTON — The Trails Caucus is being revived following a several year hiatus, state Sen. John Cronin, D-Fitchburg said this week.

The caucus will focus on educating legislators and the public on the value of rail trails, advocate for legislation and policies that support trail creation and maintenance. State Sen. Brendan Crighton, D-Lynn, and state Rep. Michelle Ciccolo, D-Lexington will serve as chairs.

“Rail Trails can be transformative investments for our cities in towns, especially here in North Central Mass, which is home to some of the most scenic locations in the commonwealth,” Cronin said in a statement. “We are lucky to have



Cronin said The Trails Caucus has not been active since before the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was last chaired by former state Rep. Chris Walsh of Framingham, who died in May 2018.

The Trails Caucus's efforts will be supported by MassTrails, an inter-agency initiative to support, expand and connect the state's trails. MassTrails provides funding, technical assistance and resources to municipalities and organizations who develop and maintain trails. The initiative is headed by the Governor's Office in collaboration with the Executive Office of Environmental and Energy Affairs, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

North Central has seen the construction and expansion of two new trails in recent years. The Squannacook River Rail Trail, which Cronin secured \$150,000 in funding for in his first term, will run from Townsend into Groton, while the Twin City Rail Trail extends between Fitchburg and Leominster. The Squannacook River and Twin City Rail Trails are complemented by the Nashua River Rail Trail, which extends through Groton and ends approximately a mile past the New Hampshire border.

The Trails Caucus will begin their official work at the start of the 2023 legislative session after a formal sign-on process is conducted.

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