



2026 Essex Heritage Photo Contest RULES & REQUIREMENTS

Deadline for Submission: Friday, December 18, 2026

Photographers Get Snapping!

All photographers are invited to submit images that capture the unique character of the Essex National Heritage Area and showcase the historic, cultural, and natural places of Essex County.

Photographs must be taken within the Heritage Area (Essex County) and represent one of the contest categories listed below. A list of communities in the Essex National Heritage Area can be found at:

<https://essexheritage.org/explore/cities-and-towns/>

2026 CONTEST CATEGORIES: Images will be judged in three categories:

<i>Contest Category</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
The Big Picture: Celebrating 30 Years of the Essex National Heritage Area	Celebrate 30 years by visiting the iconic places that define the Essex National Heritage Area! From historic landmarks to beloved public spaces, show us how you interact with the scenes that tell the story of this region and why it’s worth preserving for future generations. Winning photos may be featured in anniversary promotions.
Coast, Cobblestone, and Countryside	Whether the expansive ocean views of Nahant, the historic pavements of Newburyport, or the green pastures of Topsfield, Essex County has it all! Show us photos that capture the contrast and character of the Essex National Heritage Area’s beauty.
Always in Season	No matter what your favorite time of year is, Essex County has you covered! From summer sails to winter wonderlands, the Essex National Heritage Area is always at peak season for something. Show us pictures that highlight the year-round natural beauty of this place we call home.
Youth Category (Ages 5-17)	Young photographers of all skill levels are invited to submit photographs to the Essex Heritage Photo Contest! The theme for this year is <i>Like Nowhere Else</i> . Youth contestants should submit photos that show us what makes Essex County so unique.

HOW TO ENTER & SUBMIT PHOTOGRAPHS:

- ENTRY FORMS:** Entrants must complete and sign one Entry Form for their photographic submission(s). A Model Release may also be necessary. Both online and downloadable forms are available at EssexHeritage.org/Programs/Photo-Contest/. A maximum of **FOUR** (4) photographs per photographer is allowed. Entrants are encouraged to submit no more than **TWO** (2) photographs per contest category.
- ENTRY FEE:** Individuals must include a \$10 entry fee with their submission(s) to the contest. For Essex Heritage members, the discounted entry fee is \$5. Checks should be made payable to: Essex Heritage. Electronic payment options will also be available. **Please note: the entry fee is PER PERSON, not per image.**

Essex Heritage relies on your participation and active engagement to fulfill our mission, support our partners, and encourage stewardship of our treasured resources.



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JUDGING: Entries will be judged based on creativity, photographic quality, and effectiveness in conveying the beauty and/or unique character of the Essex National Heritage Area in one of the contest categories.

A panel of judges will select three winners from each category, in addition to an overall Grand Prize winner. The highest ranked eligible photographs will then be shared via Essex Heritage's social media for public voting of the People's Choice award (please contact Essex Heritage if you would like to have your photos omitted from public voting).

RIGHTS: Photos that violate or infringe upon another person's copyright are not eligible. For a photo in which a person is recognizable, you must provide a model release from the subject or, in the case of a minor, the subject's parent or guardian. A **Model Release** is printable from: EssexHeritage.org/Programs/Photo-Contest/

Photographers retain all rights to their work, but grant Essex Heritage and our partners, including but not limited to the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, the right to use, reproduce, distribute, publicly display and/or use submitted photographs in print or electronic publications, including promotional materials, websites, and social media. *Essex Heritage will always attempt to credit any reproduced photograph(s).*

WINNING IMAGES: Winners will be notified by staff and announced in February 2026. There will be up to twelve (14) prizes awarded, including the youth category winners. Photographers can only win one prize per contest.

Winning images will be displayed at the National Park Service Visitor Center in Salem (2 New Liberty Street, Salem, MA) for 6-8 weeks. Winning images will also be used in Essex Heritage publications as well as posted on the Essex Heritage website at EssexHeritage.org and other social media outlets.

HOW TO ENTER & SUBMIT PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. Fill out and sign ONE (1) Entry Form and sign a Model Release if necessary (see above). The entry form is available both as an online form and downloadable printable from: EssexHeritage.org/Programs/Photo-Contest/
2. Submit up to FOUR (4) photograph(s) one of three ways:
 - a. Via flash drive
 - i. Mail to Essex Heritage, 10 Federal Street Suite 12 Salem, MA 01970 (Attention: Photo Contest).
 - b. Via file sharing link
 - i. Email a link to your shared Dropbox or Google Drive folder (preferred) to PhotoContest@EssexHeritage.org
 - c. Via email
 - i. Email the image as an attachment to PhotoContest@EssexHeritage.org (we prefer to receive the highest quality version of your photo available, in which case, a file sharing link may be preferential depending on the file size of your submission.)

IMAGE GUIDELINES: Minor adjustments, including spotting, dodging, and burning, contrast and slight color adjustment or the digital equivalents, are acceptable. If judges believe that a photograph has been significantly altered, they reserve the right to disqualify it.

- Images must be submitted digitally, labeled with the title and photographer.
 - Photos should be taken and shared at the highest resolution possible.
 - We recommend digital image size set at a minimum of 300 ppi.
 - Photos must be in a .jpeg, .jpg, or .gif format.
 - All photos must have been captured between January 1, 2026, and December 17, 2026.
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