

WLT Steward Training Trail Maintenance & Safety

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Duties of a Steward

- Assess and report conditions to the land manager
- Communicate with users
- Do simple maintenance

When?

- During routine recreational visits

CONDITION ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

Reporting

- Procedures and forms for properties are on WLT website (walthamlandtrust.org)
 - under Projects > Volunteer Trail Stewards

What to Look For

- Presence of unusual wildlife
- Any changes in natural or manmade features
- Vandalism
- Precarious trees hanging over trails
- Damaged bridges
- Unsafe conditions
- Underage partying
- Fires

What to Look For

- Operation of motor vehicles
- Hunting, trapping, shooting
- Pollutants in water
- Improperly trimmed trees and brush
- Deposits of trash, junk, yard waste, hazmats
- Construction or digging
- Missing or damaged trails markers or signs
- Overgrown trails

What to Look For

- Trails that are becoming progressively eroded
- Trails that are wet or muddy outside of spring wet season (roughly March)
- New trails created by users

Accuracy

- Be specific, particularly about location
- Be objective, keep emotions out
- Stick to the facts
- Report the condition, not just solution ideas

Updates and Repetition Avoidance

- Be patient
- Some issues may never get fixed
- Don't keep reporting the same thing
- Reporting changes of status (better or worse) is useful

COMMUNICATING WITH USERS

Ambassadorial

- Explain the mission and objectives of stewardship
- Know online links
- Hand out maps, brochures, and personalized WLT Steward business cards
- Have a way to record contact info of potential helpers you meet
- You are there to inform, not police or lecture
- Listen to user concerns

Troublemakers

- Do not argue with or approach anyone who might be threatening or dangerous
- Report immediately to Police, DCR, WLT
- Don't try to photograph troublemakers

SIMPLE MAINTENANCE

Trash Removal

- No permission needed
- Bring trash bag or old knapsack

Hazardous Materials

- Familiar hazmats can be removed by volunteers
 - Household pesticides and fertilizers, paint, batteries, oil filters, oil containers, oil tanks, refrigerators, air conditioners
- Prevent new leaks
- Follow the governing municipality's guidelines for disposal
- Do not go near unfamiliar materials or containers. Inform the land owner.

Blown Down Trees and Branches

- Move aside if not too large
- Cut with hand saw if too large to move
- Report if too large to cut or move
 - WLT has a chain saw crew

Brushback

- Just enough to keep trail open
- Invasive versus native species
- Don't leave sharp sticks pointing up, dig stumps out
- Always remove slash from the trail
- Dispose of invasive slash properly
- Aesthetics matter
- If in doubt, leave it

Don't

- Don't do anything near vulnerable resources such as the riverbank or vernal pools
- Don't do tasks that are too big or dangerous
- Don't attempt substantial work without a buddy and phone
- Don't rake or blow trails
 - Leaves, pine needles, and other natural organic matter build forest soil, absorb water, prevent erosion
- Don't dump fill or wood chips on trails

Don't

- Don't open overgrown or blocked trails
 - Is it on the WLT map?
 - Confirm with the land owner that the trail is not slated for closure
- Don't build new trails, however small
 - Note new trail ideas in Field Report
- Don't mark trails unless instructed by the land owner
- Don't apply chemicals

WORK PARTY TIPS

Day of Support Items: Leader

- Phone with useful numbers programmed
- First aid kit
- Bug repellent
- Sunscreen
- Wasp/hornet spray
- Checklist to communicate safety issues to all present

Day of Support Items: Volunteer

- Bug repellent
- Sunscreen
- Water
- Food
- Work gloves
- Tools if leader is not supplying

Tools

- Minimal, less tools than people is OK
- Never more than 2 tools/person
- Recommended mix follows

Tools: Small loppers



Tools: Folding hand saw



Tools: Optional small pick mattock

...if you expect and are allowed to dig out stumps
and invasive plants



Tools: Optional weed wrench

...to pull invasive plants out by the root if you are allowed, but it's heavy



Volunteer Workday Safety Talk Checklist

Introduction

- Acknowledge sponsoring organization(s)
- Point out the crew leaders
- Ask for hand-showing of people who can identify poison ivy
- Mention upcoming events
- Explain how to get more involved
- Encourage ample breaks and swap jobs w/others

Safety

- Personal Health
 - Stay hydrated
 - Tick avoidance
 - Use bug spray and sunscreen

Safety

- Personal Health continued
 - Inform crew leaders privately of allergies and other health issues
 - Lift with your legs, not your back
- Poison Ivy
 - Ask if you don't know how to recognize poison ivy
 - Wash all clothes and self as soon as you return home with cloth to scrub off oils

- **Tools**

- Carry no more than 2 tools per person
- Carry tools with the dangerous end pointing down and away from your body, never over shoulder
- Throw away tools if you slip or stumble
- Lay tools off of trail with handle pointing towards trail, don't clutter trail or lean against trees
- Circle of death
- Ax is the only tool that needs to be swung overhead. With others use the weight, sharpness, and leverage of the tool to do work, not brute force and muscle

Have fun!

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