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Trail Worker's News

June, 2008 Issue

Contents:

Page 1

- The purpose of this newsletter
- What's in a name? Looking for suggestions
- Your Regional Representatives
- Trail Work Reporting
 - Why reporting is important
 - New reporting schedule
 - Use the correct form
 - Who do you send your report to?

Page 2

- Important Information
 - If you are injured while doing trail work
 - Who supplies tools and equipment for trail work?
 - Chain sawyers certification

Page 3

- Blaze where you must, not where you can

Page 4

- Trail building information
 - Using creosote soaked wood in NY
 - Trail Layout and Design graduates available
- Noteworthy numbers

Purpose

This newsletter is to provide regular, biannual communication tool for all Trail Conference trail work volunteers, including maintainers, crew members, crew chiefs and leaders, trail supervisors, and trail chairs. It will be published twice a year approximately one month before the maintainer reporting due date for each trail reporting period and will serve as a reminder of the impending due date. It will be means of communicating about new rules and regulations, new forms to be used, and most importantly, a forum for trail workers to relate their experiences to other trail workers. Please send to the editor questions and suggestions which you think may be of help to others and which might improve this voice. This newsletter will be sent via email to those who have working email addresses. Supervisors and Trail Chairs, please consider sending paper copies to those who do not have email.

What's In a Name?

Since this newsletter is meant to be a voice for the Trail Conference trail maintainers and builders, its name should reflect its purpose. What comes to your mind when you think of a newsletter published to communicate suggestions, experiences, hints and essentials to assist with your volunteer tasks? Please send your suggestions to the editor at the address listed at the end of this newsletter.

Your Regional Representatives

As part of the Trail Conference reorganization, three regional representatives are now in place.

- Brenda Holzinger - New Jersey
- Christie Ferguson - New York East Hudson
- Larry Wheelock - New York West Hudson

Brenda, Christie, and Larry will work with the regional trails chairs, the Trails Council and with our agency partners to reduce the number of vacant volunteer positions, develop more training opportunities, and assist with trail planning and development projects. Additionally, they will be the point person for all other Trail Conference activities in their region, including advocacy, policy development, open space protection, publications, communications, membership, and fundraising.

While the Trail Conference has not added staff, a single point of contact for all Trail Conference activities in each of the regions will make it simpler and faster for volunteers to get the support they need.

Trail Work Reporting

Why? Biannual trail crew and maintainer reports and the summary reports made from them by trail supervisors and chairs, serve a number of valuable functions. In addition to tallying the hours spent traveling to and working on trails, reports are an important tool to communicate problems and accomplishments

during the previous season. For instance, if there is an ongoing problem with a stream crossing your supervisor needs to know about, then this report will provide you with way of documenting the problem. This information, when combined with the other maintainer's reports in your supervisor's sub-region, provides the summary data they need to make a report to the regional chair. The chair is then able to see where the problems are, prioritize them, and work to find the resources and support for fixing them. The crew summary reports are a way for the chairs to see what was completed and can be removed from that season's list of projects and what needs to be carried over to the next. Also, this combined information helps create our annual budget.

In addition, a record of the time you spend traveling and working on your trails is needed by many of the land managing agencies for their records. These numbers add up and can provide considerable influence when we seek funding and other resource support for the work we do.

New Reporting Schedule: The biannual reporting schedule has recently changed: the Winter/Spring period now ends on June 30th (to provide the maintainer with adequate time to complete their spring maintenance duties), and the Summer/Fall period, as it has been all along, on November 30, (works well as most maintainers are not likely to be working in December and are able to report before the holidays set in). So, mark your calendars for **June 30 and November 30** for submitting your biannual maintenance reports. Supervisors and Crew Chiefs reports are due to their Chairs by the fifteenth of July and December. The Chairs reports are due by the first of August and January.

Use the Correct Form: Reporting forms have minor and sometimes major changes. The two page *Trail Maintenance Report* form is included with this newsletter. All forms are on the web site at: <http://www.nynjtc.org/volunteers/vforms.html>, or by contacting your supervisor or chair.

Where do I send my report and when?

Maintainers and maintaining club trails chairs should send in their reports, at the end of June and November, to their Supervisors. To find out who your Supervisor is, contact your regional representative. Trail crew chiefs and

supervisors send their reports to their regional Chair; the Chairs send to reports to their Regional Representatives.

Important Information for Volunteers:

If you are injured while doing trail work

If you should be injured when doing Trail Conference authorized trail work, in addition to any other reporting requirements, **report the injury to the Trail Conference within 24 hours.**

Make the report to our Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director. If they are not available make the report to your Regional Representative.

Who supplies tools and equipment for trail work?

It has not always been clear who is responsible for the purchase and maintenance of tools for trail work. The purchase and care of maintenance tools and blazing supplies have always been considered part of the volunteer maintainer's contribution. The one notable exception is for blaze paint colors which must be matched exactly and these are usually supplied by the Supervisor. In some cases such as for the Taconic State Park Commission trails, blaze tags are provided by the State.

All the tools used by the Trail Crews are supplied by the Trail Conference.

For chainsawyers who are certified and working on TC trails, their saws must be owned by the volunteer but the saw maintenance and any safety gear needed will be covered by the TC.

If you're not sure where your expense falls into this scheme, then contact your Supervisor or Chair.

Chain sawyer certification requirement

At the April, 2008 Trails Council meeting, supervisors, crew leaders and chairs voted to require all Trail Conference chain sawyers to be certified before doing any chainsaw work on TC maintained trails. This program will need to be phased in over an extended period to allow time for all our active sawyers to get their certifications up to date. This goal should be reached after three certification workshops have been completed over the next two years.

Blazing

Recently, the number of complaints about inadequate, faded and sloppy blazes has increased. This reprint from an article in the May/June 2002 *Trail Walker*, with some

additional comments, will help clarify how maintainers should blaze. The *Trail Maintenance (Manual)* is the authority on how to blaze.

Blaze Where You Must, Not Where You Can

Larry Wheelock, Trails Director (now NY West Hudson Representative)

This excellent advice to trail maintainers comes from member Bill Consiglio, who also sent some additional suggestions and photos (*sorry photos have been misplaced since this was first published*) to remind trail maintainers of basic principles for trail blazing. Though his letter referred primarily to the trails in a specific area, his comments can easily apply to trails throughout the region. And as the season warms up for maintaining work, the topic is timely.

Trail blazing and other maintenance procedures have been established by the NYNJTC Trails Council and published in the *Trail Maintenance Manual*. Little has changed with respect to blazing standards since this little book was first published in 1971, and hikers have become accustomed to seeing the ubiquitous two-inch by three inch colorful blazes along our trails.

Nevertheless, all blazes are not created equal. Mr. Consiglio made a number of comments that I will address here with suggested solutions. Among these are:

“On some stretches that I walked, the goal seems to be to utilize every possible tree (and often bush) and to return with an empty paint can. Even on well-defined portions of the trail, there’s a blaze every ten paces and often three or four blazes can be seen simultaneously.”

“I see double blazes for any slight deviation of the trail from straight.”

He also notes that some blazes “are very large and sloppy.”

SOLUTIONS

Frequency of Blazes (from the *Manual*):

Don’t overblaze. The hiker standing at or a few steps beyond a blaze should see the next blaze ahead, but not more than two. On straight trails, blazes every 100-250 feet are sufficient; on road sections, blaze every other utility pole.” If you think your trail is overblazed, bring along your scraper and remove a few or paint them out with a neutralizing paint. Blaze “pollution” can put a big dent in a hiker’s backwoods experience.

Underblazing can be a problem when the maintainers, very familiar with their trails, forget

that the first-time hiker may need some help across an open rock jumble or at a confusing intersection.

Alert or turn signals (from the *Manual*)

Indicate abrupt changes of direction (45 degrees or more), or points where hikers should be especially alert. Use two standard blazes, one above the other and 2 inches apart; the upper blaze should be clearly offset 1 to 2 inches in the direction of the turn.” Frequently, blazes are put one directly above the other which may lead to some confusion. (Correction from John Bleninger: At times such a blaze combination is necessary, i.e., when the only trees available do not have adequate width to indicate the turn direction or a single tree is available at a sharp switch-back with the same side visible from two directions. These should be interpreted as alerts to the hiker to look for a sudden change ahead in the trails.)

Blazing standards (from the *Manual*)

The standard Trail Conference blaze is a painted upright rectangle 2 inches wide by 3 inches high for all trails except the Long Path (2x4 inches) and the Appalachian Trail (2x6 inches). Some trails may have a smaller design in a contrasting color within the main rectangle. Such special shapes must be approved by the Trails Council. If your trail has a special blaze, you will be briefed by your supervisor. Some trails have ‘tags’ of a designated color and/or design rather than painted blazes. These substitutes are used when the local authority has specifically designated such a tag as the official blaze, or when there are generally only scrub trees on which to blaze (ridge tops, etc.). The tags may be either metal or plastic. Your supervisor will tell you how to obtain or make such tags if they are authorized for your trail. Tag blazes are installed as if they were painted blazes, using galvanized roofing nails (1½ inches), one at the top, one at the bottom.” The Trails Council recently approved the introduction of a Trail Conference plastic tag to be used in one park on a trial basis. We’ll let you know how this works out.

Preparing the surface for paint It is easy to either over- or under-scrape your tree in preparation for a blaze. If the surface is not adequately cleaned of loose material you will have to replace the blaze frequently. If you scrape the bark too deeply you may be opening up a sore where infections of various kinds can

penetrate the tree. **Never scrape through the bark.** On certain types of bark you will not be able to obtain a flat surface without damaging the tree, so your blaze will need to be a little 3-D.

In addition to these suggestions there are plenty of other guidelines in the *Trail Maintenance Manual* covering such matters as Patrolling, Reporting, Clearing, Educating Hikers, and additional details on Blazing. If you maintain a trail and do not have a copy of the *Trail Maintenance Manual*, contact your supervisor or Regional Representative through the Trail Conference office. The manual may also be found on our web site at: <http://www.nynjtc.org/committees/trailscouncil/index.html>

One final quote from our friend, Bill: "I realize the necessity of marking trails for the wide range of hikers that might use them, but I hope you'll see my point and retain as much of the wilderness experience and beauty as possible. Perhaps future trail maintenance will include an evaluation and removal of unnecessary blazes."

Trail building information

Using creosote treated wood In NY
Article 27, Title 25, (27-2501 through 27-2513), of N Y State Law, requires that after January 1, 2008::

Creosote or products containing creosote shall not be manufactured, sold or used in this state. Wood treated with creosote that is in use in this state as of such date may continue to be used in such use.

*Neither creosote nor any wood or other product treated with or containing creosote shall be disposed of in this state, except in a permitted facility, in a landfill permitted by the department and approved by the department to accept this material and properly lined to prevent groundwater contamination, or by any other method approved by the department.

*Neither creosote or any wood or other product treated with or containing creosote shall be burned in any manner in this state, including in fireplaces and stoves, except in a facility permitted to burn the specific type of creosote waste.

*After January 1, 2008 the law explicitly prohibits creosote or products containing creosote from being used or sold. Railroad ties, utility poles, or materials that are treated with or otherwise contain creosote cannot be reused for other purposes such as landscaping or

retaining walls, except as specifically provided for in the Title.

Trail Layout and Design Workshop graduates

Over the last couple of years, over 30 people have taken Trail Layout and Design (L&D) courses taught by Eddie Walsh and outside experts. These workshops are devoted to establishing guidelines for laying out safe, exciting and ecologically sound trails. They concentrate on dealing with sensitive environmental and archeological conditions, designing for single and multiple user groups and designing for a fulfilling hiking experience. Many of these graduates are available and willing to put their newly developed and/or enhanced skills to work for anyone who needs help. If you would like more information for accessing their help or would like to consider taking future L&D courses, let your Chair or Regional Representative know.

Fall 2008 Workshops

At this time we do not have specific trail workshops planned for this fall but a number are in the planning stages. Look for a Maintenance 101 workshop somewhere in the Kittatinnies and a Construction and Restoration in north Central N. J.

Chainsaw Certification and Trail Layout and Design courses will most likely be scheduled for late fall and mid winter. The on-going Bear Mountain AT project will continue to provide opportunities for learning more advanced techniques for trail construction. Check the TC web site for upcoming schedules.

Noteworthy numbers

1,178 volunteers contributed 40,000 hours in 2007.

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