



# TRAILWORKER

News, information & resources for our trail volunteers

June 2011

## The Return of the TRAILWORKER

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the revamped **TRAILWORKER** newsletter! A single issue was initially published in 2008, but time constraints made it impossible to continue it until now. We are starting from scratch, and we welcome and encourage your suggestions, comments, ideas and input. Since it has been such a long time since the first issue, we'd like to let you know what the purpose and goals of this newsletter are.

The **TRAILWORKER** will provide regular, biannual communication 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 (June and November), and will serve as a reminder of the impending due date. We will let you know about new rules and regulations, new forms to be used and hopefully share some fun, interesting, useful and important stuff.

Our goal is to make the **TRAILWORKER** a forum for trail workers to relate their experiences to other trail workers. To do that, we need your help! Please send your questions and suggestions which you think may be of help to others and which might improve this voice. Stories, photos, tips are all welcome. E-mail the editor at [trailworkernews@nynjtc.org](mailto:trailworkernews@nynjtc.org). You can also let us know what you think by filling out our [online survey](#).



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.

Be sure to use the correct form. Reporting forms have minor and sometimes major changes. All forms, including the two page **Trail Maintenance Report** form, are on the web site at: <http://www.nynjtc.org/pform/trail-maintainer-report-form>, or by contacting your supervisor or chair.

Remember ... 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 Program Coordinators. 🌿

## Trail Reports Coming Due!

The work you do on the trail is invaluable, but the information you provide about that work via the Trail Maintainer Report, is also extremely important. 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.

Why is this so important? Well, 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

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## Taking ownership

*The trails belong to everyone, but when you work on a trail, a part of you says “this is mine.”*

It is a virtual certainty that every person who volunteers as a trailworker has spent countless hours in the woods nourishing their souls with the peace and bounty of the natural world. We want to give back and help sustain this precious gift – do our part – say thank you.

That was my motivation, and when retirement offered me the time to do it, I signed on as a trail maintainer and lucked out with a beautiful three mile section of the Appalachian Trail right near my home in Warwick, NY. It was very exciting and I could not wait to get started, even though winter had already fallen and there was not much I could do. Still I had to get out and walk that section. *My* section. Two words that changed my entire perception, as I hiked it for the first time. Everything looked and felt different. I was not just walking. I was observing, notating, taking inventory, planning, seeing details that certainly would be missed by the casual observer. There was nothing casual about this hike – because this was *my* trail, *my* responsibility, *my* work. That’s the way it feels, and it is a great feeling. I want my piece of nature to be the best it can be. I want to nurture it, watch over it, and do what I have to do keep it in shape.

I have been out a couple of times since that first day, doing the work – clipping overgrowth, picking up trash, sawing up blow downs. The work itself is so rewarding, but what a rush I got when two hikers were passing by while I was cutting a heavy limb that was leaning into the trail. I didn’t want them to think I was cutting up firewood, so I said, “just clearing the way here,” and one of the guys stopped and replied, “thank you.” Hey, I’m just taking care of *my* trail! How cool is that? 🍃 *Les Ferguson*

Tips on using, buying & maintaining our favorite trail toys!



**Tool Talk** is the place where we talk about tools, of course. Trail work requires loppers, clippers, shovels, all kinds of saws, bars, hammers, hatchets, weedwhacker and whatever. Using tools effectively and safely, keeping them working, making the right choices, comparing models and sharing experiences is the focus of this section. We need your input here. If you have knowledge to share, have tips to give, questions you would like answered, this is your forum. Please e-mail your ideas, submissions and photos to the editor, (Les Ferguson) at [trailworkernews@nynjtc.org](mailto:trailworkernews@nynjtc.org). To get things rolling, [here’s a tip about bow saws](#).

I’m a newbie trail maintainer. I was gathering the tools I thought I might need for my first maintenance excursion – folding hand saw, loppers, clippers, hatchet and, of course, my trusty old bow saw. Most of the stuff fit in my backpack, but the bow saw was way too big, and besides it had these really sharp, shark-like teeth that would chew up everything that got too close. Like my backpack – or even my back! I decided to attach it to the pack via a carabiner, but I still did not want those teeth swinging around behind me. I spotted an old piece of garden hose in the garage and inspiration struck. Cutting the hose to the length of the blade and slitting it down the middle, it made the perfect sheath. A twist tie holds it in place.



Probably not an original idea, but it works for me. 🐉

## What's the big idea?

**TRAILWORKER** is your newsletter. We are looking for content that interests you.

Some ideas for future sections include:

**Close Encounters of the Wild Kind**

tell us your stories of meetups with critters of all kinds (maybe even human critters).

**Trail Etiquette**

dealing with hikers, team members, unauthorized maintainers, neighbors, and more.

**Trail Techniques**

Waterbars, invasive plants, blazing, erosion, safety, etc.

**Photo Album**

Share your best shots!

Please e-mail your ideas, submissions and photos to the **TRAILWORKER** at [trailworker@nynjtc.org](mailto:trailworker@nynjtc.org).