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## TRAIL CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES AND PROTOCOLS IN THE CATSKILLS

### Volunteer Activities Under DEC

Permitted:

- Trail maintenance, which includes: patrolling, brushing, removing blowdowns, cleaning water-bars as described in the Appendix
- Lean-to maintenance, including: patrolling, cleaning, maintaining drainage away from site, maintaining the outhouse, brushing and blowdown removal from lean-to site and side trails as described in the Appendix

Permitted but FIRST require DEC approval and assistance:

- Heavy construction
- Trail reroutes

NOT Permitted:

- Blazing (with the exception of the official Long Path markers at intersections and trail heads)
- Signage
- Removal of large blowdowns
- Felling trees/Vista maintenance

### Notifying DEC Before Volunteering

**All volunteers must provide DEC 48-hour notice before performing any volunteer work.** If you do not notify DEC prior to each volunteer outing, you put yourself at risk of being ticketed by DEC.

To notify DEC each time you intend to go out, simply send an email to the appropriate forester and let them know when you will be volunteering, where you will be working, and who will be out with you. Forester contacts are:

- DEC Region 3: Ian Thompson, [ian.thompson@dec.ny.gov](mailto:ian.thompson@dec.ny.gov)
- DEC Region 4 Greene County: Alicia van der Veur; [Alicia.Vanderveur@dec.ny.gov](mailto:Alicia.Vanderveur@dec.ny.gov)
- DEC Region 4 Delaware Wild Forest and Dry Brook Ridge Wild Forest: Helena (Lena) Mueller  
[Helena.Mueller@dec.ny.gov](mailto:Helena.Mueller@dec.ny.gov)

If you're not sure who to notify please check with your Trail Supervisor, Trail Chair, or [volunteer@nynjtc.org](mailto:volunteer@nynjtc.org).

### Volunteer Positions and Opportunities

- Trail:
  - Trail Maintainer
  - Trail Supervisor
  - Trail Chair
  - Trail Crew
  - Roving Trail Team
- Lean-to:
  - Lean-to/Shelter Caretaker

- Lean-to Chair

## APPENDIX

*The following is directly copied from the NY-NJ Trail Conference's agreement with NYDEC and details sanctioned volunteer activities:*

### 13) CATSKILL FOREST PRESERVE TRAIL MAINTENANCE STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Some trail maintainers find it useful to keep a trail diary or notebook with notes, dates, trail conditions, work done, and work that needs doing, in their pack. This method is a good memory-jogger, especially when you need to relay information to your supervisor, and when it's time to enter your volunteer hours into the online reporting form.

Look objectively at your trail section on every trip, trying to see it with the eyes of the person using it for the first time. Use not only the standards in this document but your experience and good judgment to find ways to improve the trail.

#### Volunteer trail maintainers in the Catskill Park are responsible for the following

- A. **PATROLLING:** Trails vary in their need for patrolling trips but all require a minimum of three annual visits. Additional trips are required according to factors such as the amount of usage, litter on the trail and general trail condition. Neglected trails will need additional work trips to bring them up to standard. In general, patrols are needed:
- (a) As soon as possible in the early spring when weather conditions permit.
  - (b) In midsummer, particularly if your trail section has areas of high grass or heavy undergrowth. Trails open to the sky will require more attention than those in a mature forest with high upper coverage. Check that markers are not obscured by foliage.
  - (c) At regular intervals if your trail section is on private land or if heavy litter seems to be a problem.
  - (d) As soon as possible after severe storms, fires, or at times when you anticipate heavy use.
- B. **BRUSHING:** Brushing means the cutting of tree limbs, shrubs, small saplings, briars and other vegetation directly in or encroaching on the trail. Limbs on trees should be cut flush with the trunk, even if the tree is several feet from the trail. Small saplings growing in or immediately adjacent to the trail should be cut off at ground level. A sapling is defined as a young tree whose diameter at breast height (dbh) (4½ feet above ground level) is equal or less than three inches (3m). Standing trees greater than three inches (3") dbh are not to be cut by a volunteer trail maintainer under any circumstances. Clippings, branches and other cuttings should be thrown off the trail, out of sight if possible. The tread should be kept clearly visible (unobstructed by vegetation). Hiking trails should be brushed/cleared to a minimum width of three (3) feet but no wider than six (6) feet, and a height of (8) feet. Consult with the Forester for the appropriate clearing width for your trail. In general, trails in wilderness areas are not to be cleared wider than four (4) feet, whereas wild forest trails, especially old roads, should be maintained closer to the six (6) foot maximum width.
- C. **REMOVING BLOWDOWNS:** Trees and limbs that have fallen in or across the trail are called blowdowns. In general, all blowdowns should be removed from the trail. In instances where cutting is required, the use of hand tools, such as a bow saw is recommended and preferred. Chainsaws can only be used in Wild Forest and Intensive Use areas and may only be used by those volunteers who have completed training and have received prior authorization by the Department. Large blowdowns may need to be cut in one or two places according to the standards on trail width and height (see para. 2). Very large blowdowns, or growth such as leaner or widowmakers, which may prove difficult or dangerous to handle should be reported to your supervisor. As a temporary measure these large blowdowns should at least be delimbed to encourage the hiker to step or climb over the obstacle rather than walk around it. Use discretion. Some small blowdowns act as natural waterbars and may occasionally be left in place.
- D. **CLEANING OF WATERBARS:** Waterbars are logs or rocks placed across a sloping trail to control erosion from water. Clean them of debris on each trip, especially after leaves have fallen. Standing trees must not be cut for

waterbar maintenance. Waterbar construction is not the responsibility of the individual maintainer. The need for waterbars should be reported.

- E. **OBSERVING:** Watch for trail-related problems such as the following and report them to your supervisor
- (a) Private land development which may impact the trail
  - (b) Erosion problems.
  - (c) Illegal campsites/fire rings. Circles of stone left by campers and picnickers in unauthorized areas should be destroyed by throwing the stones into the woods in different directions and sweeping away the cold ashes. Disguise the area with leaves and sticks as removing all traces of the fire ring often discourages repeated use of the area.
  - (d) Illegal motor vehicle use, such as ATV's and other wheeled vehicles.
  - (e) Missing, vandalized or deteriorating signs.
  - (f) Grown-in viewpoints. The volunteer maintainer is NOT allowed to maintain viewpoints. The function of viewpoint-cutting belongs to the Department.
  - (g) Unauthorized trails.
- F. **REMOVING LITTER:** Remove all trash and garbage on and within sight of the trail by packing it out in heavy-duty garbage bags. Do not leave bags at trailheads. Take the garbage home for disposal. The best time to tackle garbage problems is probably in late summer before it is obscured by leaf-fall. Inform your supervisor of large items or unusually large piles of garbage which will need additional help to remove and for the Department's attention.
- G. **LONG PATH TRAIL MARKERS:** Official Long Path trail markers may only be placed at trailheads and intersections with other trails. Markers should not be nailed onto DEC signs, but may be nailed onto a conspicuous tree leading into the trail corridor. Nails should not be driven fully into the tree, but about ½ way, giving room for the tree to expand as it grows.
- H. **COMMUNICATING:** The New York New Jersey Trail Conference will supply the Department with maintainer's names, but you must inform the Forester in advance whenever you plan to work on your trail unless the two of you have agreed otherwise. Following your worktrip, any trip reports should go directly to the appropriate Trail Supervisor, Trail Chair, or Lean-to Chair, not the Forester.
- I. **REPORTING:** Trail maintainers are required to track their volunteer hours using the online reporting form, and communicate any issues immediately to their supervisor. Any problems encountered which you cannot solve, such as large blowdowns, should be reported to your Trail Supervisor, Trail Chair, or Lean-to Chair. If you have an urgent trail issues that require immediate attention, notify the Forester and your Trail Supervisor, Trail Chair, or Lean-to Chair. One measure of the success of the trail maintenance program is the quality of the information on the numbers and lengths of trails maintained. The project is not finished until the paperwork is done.
- J. **COOPERATING:** This Volunteer Stewardship Agreement between the New York New Jersey Trail Conference and the Department establishes a joint effort in maintaining trails in the Catskill Park. As a trail maintainer you have undertaken the routine maintenance of a particular trail. The Department's professional trail crew is responsible for major maintenance such as large blowdown removal (those which cannot be removed by the individual or by the volunteer Crew) waterbar construction, trail relocations, bridges, steps, embankments, etc. Do not attempt to take on work beyond your ability and/or responsibility, but report any problems to your supervisor.
- K. **EDUCATING:** Whenever possible educate others using the trail(s) on how to hike safely, encouraging them to value open spaces and to treat the land wisely.
- L. **RELINQUISHING YOUR RESPONSIBILITY:** Please notify your supervisor, if for any reason (including disinterest in the work) you cannot continue proper maintenance of your trail. It is important that the NYNJTC and the Department know when a trail is not being patrolled so that another worker can be assigned.
- M. **SAFETY:** Always think safety first. Consider bringing a friend along or teaming up with another maintainer in your section whenever possible, especially when using sharp tools and/or working in remote locations. Carry a small first-aid kit. Leave word with a friend or relative of your plans for the day, including where you will leave your car (parking lot location) where you will be working, and what time you expect to return home by.

#### **14) LEAN-TO MAINTENANCE STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES**

It is anticipated that a minimum of two trips (but hopefully at least three -- spring, summer and fall) to your lean-to will be made annually and that the following duties will be performed on each visit. Please call the appropriate DEC Forest Ranger to introduce yourself and to discuss your assignment.

- A. Check lean-to and outhouse:
  - 1. Clean
    - (a) Leaves and dirt away from contact with logs and roofs
    - (b) Fireplace
    - (c) Water supply
  - 2. Remove and/or replace any dangerous nails protruding from the structure.
  - 3. Sweep, pick up trash, and pack out unburnables.
  - 4. Maintain adequate drainage away from the site.
  - 5. Scatter layer of leaves or other organic material on waste in outhouse.
  - 6. Brush and remove blowdowns from leanto access trail (if access trail is separate from main trail). Only ONE access trail should be maintained to each lean-to and only ONE to each outhouse. Multiple trails should be discouraged by placing brush in the footway.
- B. Repair any damage within your capability.
- C. Report:
  - 1. Missing signs.
  - 2. When the outhouse needs moving (i.e. when the outhouse is full).
  - 3. Any major repairs required to foundations, floor or roof. Inform whether you can undertake the repairs if material is supplied. Do not make any purchases yourself for reimbursement.
- D. Supply.
  - 1. Small amount of dry firewood in a dry place for hikers arriving in a downpour or after dark.
- E. Complete
  - 1. Report form to be returned to the Lean-to Supervisor after each visit. A copy will be sent to DEC.

#### **Additional Information: Invasive Species Management**

The Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) is one of eight Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) in New York State. Catskills volunteers who are interested in learning about invasive species identification and management in the Catskills can visit the [CRISP website](#) for more information.