



TRAILWORKER

News, information & resources for our trail volunteers

November 2011



The Lowdown on Blowdowns

The blowdown in this image would be too big to clear with a handsaw, but it has been left in place as a barrier.

Blowdowns are inevitable, but a weather event like Tropical Storm Irene can really exacerbate the problem. Maintainers have a responsibility to remove blowdowns whenever possible, to request assistance when removal is not possible and to keep supervisors informed.

The Trail Maintenance Manual states that all fallen trees be removed unless they are being used as a waterbar, checkdam or a barrier to illegal use. If you are not sure if the tree has one of these purposes check with your supervisor.

The manual suggests that most blowdowns can be handled by a 24" bow saw. Be sure to always carry your bow saw every time you go out to maintain your trail. A couple of inexpensive, lightweight, plastic wood cutting wedges are also a good idea to keep your saw blade from binding. Follow the techniques in the manual to make the job easier and safer. Depending on the size of the blowdown you may need some help. If you can enlist a helper get the tree cut and moved, go for it. However if the tree is too large to hand cut you will need to report the situation to your supervisor who can arrange to have the certified chain sawyers cut and clear the blowdown. Do not under any circumstances attempt to use any kind of powered saw to cut a blowdown yourself. Sometimes too, a blowdown that looks like it may require a chainsaw can be dragged off the trail by you and a helper or two.

Reporting blowdowns is extremely important. Let your supervisor know that you have cleared blowdowns as well as reporting ones you cannot clear or have questions or concerns about. Note location as accurately as possible. A pocket-size digital camera or your phone camera is a perfect way to document a tree you are unsure about. It will help your supervisor and sawyer properly assess the situation. For their part, supervisors should be sure to acknowledge receipt of such reports and keep the maintainer apprised of any actions or remedies.

When weather events such as Irene happen, make a point to get out on trail as soon as it is safe to do so. Be ready to address problems like blowdowns and report the condition of your trail to your supervisor. Working as a team we can do the best possible job of keeping our trails clear and safe. 🌿

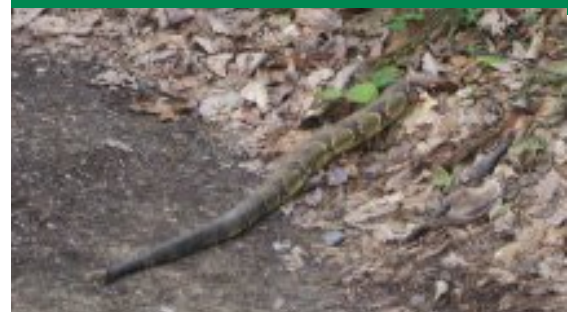
Trail Reports Coming Due!

It's that time again. One of our duties here at the TRAILWORKER is to remind everyone to submit their biannual maintenance reports. Maintainer reports are due **November 30th**. Supervisor and Crew Chiefs reports are due to their Chairs by **December 15th**. The Chair reports are due by **January 1st**.

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: www.nynjtc.org/pform/trail-maintainer-report-form, or by contacting your supervisor or chair.

To find out who your Supervisor is, contact your regional representative or find them at www.nynjtc.org/content/staff. Trail crew chiefs and supervisors send their reports to their regional Chair; the Chairs send to reports to their Regional Program Coordinators. The information contained in these reports is crucial to operations, planning and analysis. Please don't neglect this very important responsibility.

Close Encounters of the Wild Kind



TRAILWORKER reader Rudy Templin sent us this item: "Thought you might be interested in this photo of a timber rattler I saw on the AT near Dunnfield Creek near the Delaware Water Gap on May 21 of this year. His rattles were busy when I took this picture."

To Cut or To Pull?



“That is the question.”

Controlling vegetation on the trail is an essential, repetitive task for maintainers. For some reason the stuff keeps growing back! Trail maintainer Gary Willick wondered whether cutting back or just ripping the stuff out of the ground was best. He posed these interesting questions:

“When it is better to pull a plant as opposed to cut one? I rarely pull plants while maintaining, but do try to cut down as close to a node as possible. The manual says – cut as close to the base of a trunk as possible, because it is less likely to reroot then.

Why would it be less likely then, if the larger, cut piece, has more axillary nodes that might resprout? It said *reroot* – what part of the cut plant would grow roots?

Is it plant specific regarding what should be pulled and what should be cut? It seems to me that pulling would expose some roots and they would likely reroot. Or you may not even get out the roots, leaving resprouting a good possibility.”

According to Ryan Hasko, Land Manager for the Flat Rock Brook Nature Association, the answer is not clear cut (*sorry, could not resist the pun!*). Here is Ryan’s take on the subject.

“Cutting vs. pulling is completely dependent upon the plant. Some plants begin suckering when cut – resprouting shoots all along its major roots and on the cut trunk. Black Locust and Tree-of-Heaven are two trees that exhibit this property, just to name a few. Some plants, when pulled, may leave behind a small piece of root that can regrow an entire plant. This is usually seen with perennial herbaceous plants.

In regards to trail maintaining, I would suggest to stick with cutting. Pulling plants will risk disturbing the soil and a seed bank that may be present.

Usually cutting woody growth (shrubs, saplings, trees) should be enough to remove the plant or at least keep it in check for the year. If a single plant is causing problems with rapid, repeated regrowth after cutting, then digging out the root system may be in order.”

So for the most part, stick to the pruning tools and weed trimmers, but be ready to get out there on a regular basis to keep up with Mother Nature. When in doubt do as Gary did – ask questions. 🌿

TRAILWORKER Survey Results

Thanks to everyone who responded to the on-line survey attached to the re-launch of the **TRAILWORKER**.

Although we only got eight responses, all feedback is valuable! Here is what you had to say:

Question 1: Did you find this inaugural issue of **TRAILWORKER** useful, informative, and/or entertaining?

100% responded “Yes.”

Question 2: Would you look forward to future issues of **TRAILWORKER**?

100% responded “Yes.”

Question 3: What topics would you like to see addressed in future issues of **TRAILWORKER**?

Suggestions were: real life stories from various volunteer aspects (e.g. maintainers, corridor stewards, etc.)

Question 4: Would you be interested in contributing an article or photo(s) to future issues of **TRAILWORKER**?

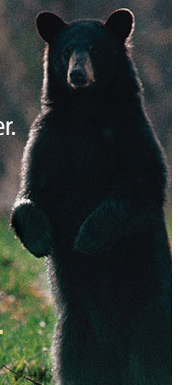
Four of you said “Yes” (*please do, we need your contributions!*), two said “No”, two had no response.

We also had some great feedback, contributions and positive reviews via email. Thanks to all of you folks too. Our readers’ input and participation will determine the success or failure of **TRAILWORKER** so we urge you to make your voices heard. 🐾

What's the big idea?

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

Please e-mail your ideas, submissions and photos to the **TRAILWORKER** at trailworkernews@nynjtc.org.



TRAILWORKER



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

This issue we received two excellent contributions from Paul Makus, Supervisor – Southern Wyanokies and the “Tool Guru”, Bob Jonas, Central North Jersey Trail Committee Chair. Thanks guys!

Essential Trail Tools

by Paul Makus

Whenever I get to meet with a new maintainer there are some tools that I show them for clearing fallen trees, branches and brush. After maintaining trails for a few years, I’ve determined three tools that I’ve found necessary to carry with me, in addition to hand clippers.

My main requirement when shopping for these tools was that they had to be as light as possible, and yet be able to perform most of the tasks necessary for clearing branches and small blowdowns from the trails. When clearing the trail, the first tool I already have in my hand is the ubiquitous hand clippers, of which there are many types and styles – and usually subject to personal preference. I use hand clippers which fit into a pouch on my belt.

Most of the branches overgrowing a trail can be cut using the hand clippers, but when a branch is too large for them, the next tool in my arsenal is the Fiskars loppers (Model 7972, about \$29). These loppers are only 15 inches long and weigh only 13 ounces but are geared to easily cut through branches up to an inch in diameter. You have to hold them in your hand to appreciate how light and compact they are.

The next tool I find almost indispensable is the 10 inch folding hand saw from Corona (Model RS7265D, about \$20) weighing in at only 10 ounces. The blade is extremely sharp and cuts quickly. I have cut fallen trees and branches up to 6 inches in diameter with this saw.

There have been times when I’ve had to clear larger trees and branches and then I’ve resorted to the larger 18 inch Fiskars pruning saw (Model 93646966J, about \$22) weighing 19 ounces. Although I have cleared a few trees 8 to 10 inches in diameter with this saw, once the fallen trees are that large it’s time to put in a request for a sawyer.

These three tools together weigh only 2.6 pounds. If you leave out the pruning saw, your total is still only 1.4 pounds, which is not a heavy burden, and you can handle almost all of your tree and branch clearing requirements. Now you have room in your backpack for carrying other necessary indispensable items such as lunch. 🌿



Tips for Installing Sign Posts

by Bob Jonas

Rather than carrying a Post Hole Digger (PHD) into the forest to install 4” x 4” sign/directional posts, I have found that a 16” Drain Spade to be the weapon of choice. It is lighter, able to excavate 24 to 30” deep holes without too much difficulty – unless, of course, you hit large rock, which I been able to avoid so far. However, if you do, it might be best to move the hole or employ a rock bar (heavy). On longish treks I duct-tape the shovel to the post and carry it on my backpack padded shoulder.



To prevent vandalism of the installed post, I drive four (4) 60d nails into the lower section of the post (see photo). I previously attached a cross member of 2 x 4 to the lower part of the post but have found that the nails seem to stand up to abuse better. Filling the hole with judiciously placed rocks and earth completes the job.

After erection, I top off the post with a PVC cap (as shown in photo) and naturalize the surrounding area as best as I can with leaves and tree litter. All of the listed items are available at Home Depot and Lowe’s and some other hardware supply outlets. 🌿

Got a Tool Tip you’d like to share?
Send it to: trailworkernews@nynjtc.org.

TrailTalk

Reader comments and suggestions from our June 2011 issue

I remember the first time I opened my shiny new Harriman trail map, and reading on the back that volunteers, not paid forestry workers, kept the trails clear. The warm fuzzy feeling of gratitude to these invisible beings was augmented by the slight surprise that the trails didn't merely "stay this way" on their own.

That little notice also prompted my first donation to the Conference, and unbeknownst to me at the time, dipped me into a hidden world of activity surrounding the preserved wildernesses around me. Little had I suspected that a multitude of meetings, worktrips, training workshops, entire livelihoods and organizations were behind the quiet little forest trail that I was following.

My first contact with a live maintainer was the astonishment of coming across a man in his sixties or seventies levering giant stones into place across a wet patch – on his own. That warm fuzzy feeling rose again as I admired his work and thanked him before skipping away across the line of stones that I now learned were not "naturally just there".

The final revelation occurred to me the other day, while cutting away overgrowth on the trail, that I was now one of these 'invisible ranks' keeping the ways clear and encouraging others to minimize their impact on the woodlands.

And what a rewarding journey it has been!

Soña Mason

What a great idea and wonderful publication. Thanks for doing this.

I agree with you wholeheartedly. I have been a trail maintainer for two years and it is one of the best decisions I ever made ... I love my trail!!

I will plan on contributing to one of your stories.

Rob Janssen

I read the article about the bow saw sheath, and would like to add some information. I also made a sheath out of a piece of hose, but instead of using a twist tie, that can break or get lost, I glued two lengths of double sided Velcro to the hose at either end. It stays with the sheath, and is a snap to fasten and unfasten!

Bob Randall

I'm a relative newbie – as I've now maintained MY trail twice (last fall and 2 weeks ago).

I fully concur with the story in the last edition, about it being MY TRAIL.

It's a 5.5 mile stretch of the Bear Mountain-Suffern trail, and the terrain is quite demanding.

I was deep in the woods, engrossed in my blueberry bush pruning, when out of nowhere – and I mean nowhere – a runner ran by!

Now this is rocky, hilly terrain. How he managed to do what he was doing without breaking an ankle is beyond me, but as he ran by, he shouted:

"Thanks for all your hard work!"

I was smiling for quite some time, until the next log removal.

Jack Bloom

I think my maintainers (NJ AT, some in the "corridor", very overgrown with grass/weeds/shrubs/briars; some in Stokes – lots of shrub oak which is tough to cut) would be interested in a discussion of weed-whackers. Line, or steel blade? Maintenance? Brand recommendations, if that's permitted. Electric: way easier to care for, but what battery life can one expect?

Jill Arbuckle

Loved the new newsletter. That tip about a sheath for the bowsaw is good.

Regarding future topics, could you do something about what to do when the snow melts or after heavy rain and your trail turns into a running stream, which is hard to walk through and causes erosion. Should you try to divert the water or just leave it to its own course?

Alison Feinberg

Thanks to everyone for their input and ideas. Keep it coming! Articles, photos and suggestions are all welcome. This is your newsletter. Send all items to: trailworkernews@nynjtc.org.