



Trail Volunteer Handbook

Version 1 (June 15 2016)

Introduction

Welcome to the Bruce County Trail Crew! We hope that you will enjoy volunteering with us and that you gain a sense of satisfaction through your role in the Bruce County Trails Program.

This handbook includes information you need to get started as a volunteer and will be updated on a yearly basis, so if you come across something you think needs to be included, please let us know.

Please feel free to bring any questions or concerns to the staff. We are grateful to have your time and energy on our team and hope that you will have a positive and meaningful volunteer experience!

Background

The County of Bruce is blessed with over 12,000 acres of some of the most spectacular forests in the Province. The year 2000 was a landmark year for the County when they first assumed management of their own forest tracts (previously managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources). When the County assumed management of the Bruce County Forests, the following principles were adopted:

- *The Bruce County forest lands are a public resource belonging to all residents of the County. They hold value not only for their commercial timber production, but also for their natural heritage features. The County forestry program will strike a balance between the pursuit of commercial revenues and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.*
- *The Bruce County forests will be evaluated, managed and subsequently promoted as multipurpose resources, using the principles of long term and sustained development, for the benefit of local residents and the tourism public.*

Some specific goals, relevant to trail volunteers, are as follows:

- *To build, market and then maintain an integrated multi-use trail system in Bruce County that provides direct and measurable benefits to County of Bruce Residents and the Province of Ontario;*
- *To provide a tourism product (trails) that add to the existing inventory, and subsequently market and promote the trail system, thereby enhancing Bruce County as a tourism destination;*
- *To increase opportunities for outdoor fitness for Bruce Country residents in general, and specifically to assist in reducing escalating rates of heart disease and juvenile obesity in the County; and*
- *To increase the “outdoor lifestyle” choices within the County, with the goal of providing yet more reasons why people will move here to make Bruce County their permanent home.*

The County has undertaken and successfully completed several trail construction venues. These projects have obvious recreational benefits for Bruce County residents, and are also serving to provide much needed tourism activities in the “shoulder seasons”. The direct capital value of these projects, including in-kind contributions, volunteer effort and capital contributions is in excess of two million dollars.

Staff members have undertaken formalized training in multi-use trail construction, trail maintenance, and safety, as well as proper liability and risk management protocols, and have become recognized leaders in sustainable trail construction. Through our association with the “International Mountain Bicycling Association”, and other training bodies, we have also provided workshops for trail staff outside of our organization on building sustainable trails.

Why we Value Volunteers

Over the past 12 years the County has been actively building and marketing multi-use trails. The County has been blessed to receive core funding and external grant funding to develop and maintain trails, but at the same time, many trail enthusiasts have come forward over the years and have asked to volunteer. Until 2016, with the development of this manual, we did not have in place a formal process needed to promote and attract volunteer efforts.

Although the County staff shall continue to build and maintain trails, there is also a desire on behalf of the County to promote volunteer efforts in the area of trail maintenance and inspections.

Common activities would include brushing back trail growth, installing signage, raking and clearing tread surfaces in the spring and fall, and communicating with County staff on potential trail closures.

The County is vast in size, and we seek volunteers with a wide range of motivations. Some people have a passion for a certain type of trail activity (such as cycling or nature appreciation), and simply wish to help out in a meaningful way. Other residents live close to one our forest tracts, visit it often, and have a sense that they would like to “adopt” a property on a longer term basis.

How to Get Involved

The first step is to complete a Volunteer Information Form. This information is essential, as it provides your contact information, geographic location, area of interest and skills. If you have a medical condition, please indicate this on the form.

The second step will be to contact you once your information has been reviewed and determine your availability, interests and scope of work.

The third step is for you to review the Trail Volunteer Handbook, which details information and guidelines to volunteering on the trails.

The fourth step is to meet with county staff to receive on-site training of trail inspection and procedures. This will take approximately 1-3 hours. In addition, you will be asked to sign a waiver.

Volunteer Policies

Safety, Emergencies and Accidents

- The safety of our volunteers is of utmost concern to the County. Please follow these guidelines closely to ensure your health and safety during any and all volunteer activities with the Trails Program.
- Remember to consider your health and physical limitations when you are working on the trails and if an activity becomes too strenuous, please stop and consider your health and wellbeing first. We appreciate all the efforts of our volunteers, and want you to be comfortable and safe. If an accident or illness should occur, seek medical aid immediately. After medical aid is received, contact the County.
- Dress appropriately for the activity, especially outdoor activities (see below).

Application Form and Police Checks

- As with most volunteer programs, the County requires volunteers to fill out and sign an application form, and to provide a police security check.
- All volunteers under the age of 18 must have their parent or guardian sign a form permitting them to volunteer. Volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Waivers

- The County of Bruce protects itself legally from accidents and emergencies by requiring all volunteers to sign a liability release when they first become volunteers. If you have not signed a release, contact the Trails Manager in the contact information below.
- All volunteers under the age of 18 must have their parent or guardian sign a form permitting them to volunteer. Volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Liability Insurance

- Bruce County carries a liability insurance policy that provides some coverage to volunteers in an event of an injury. If you are injured while volunteering, seek medical aid, and then contact the County.

Preparing for Trail Activities

Trail activities such as inspections and trail work require some particular considerations. Please read the following guidelines carefully:

- Walking properties requires an adequate amount of physical energy and should not be attempted if you are not feeling well, or if you have health concerns.
- Dress appropriately for the weather/conditions and remember insect repellent and sunscreen. Long pants and sturdy work boots are also recommended when working on the trails. Safety items such as work gloves, safety glasses, hard hat, safety vest and tools will be supplied by the county. Open toed foot wear (i.e. sandals) are discouraged.
- Carry a small first aid kit and cell phone, especially when volunteering alone.
- Before embarking on trail activities, leave a message with a trusted contact person, detailing where you are, how long you will be out for, and what to do if you do not arrive home at the anticipated time/location.
- Bring plenty of drinking water, and food if you are going to be out for a long period of time.
- Poisonous plants and stinging/biting insects - Familiarize yourself with the identification of poison ivy. If you are unsure, please ask county staff help with identification.
- Avoiding Ticks – Ticks have become a concern over the past few years because they can transfer Lymes disease to humans, so it's important that you know how to identify the various species of ticks. Its best to wear light coloured pants and long sleeve shirts because it's easier to spot ticks and remember to do a full body check immediately after any time spent on the trails. For more information, see the following website on Ticks:
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/disease/lyme.aspx>
- Hot weather – When working in hot temperatures, prepare yourself by bringing lots of water and wearing lightweight clothing, a hat, and pace yourself while performing activities.

Your safety is the most important thing to the County of Bruce so please follow these guidelines whenever possible.

Hunting Season

- Hunting is permitted on most County Forest Tracts. Although it is rare to encounter hunters during the trail season it does happen, especially during deer season. The Brant Tract, Carrick Tract, Lindsay Tract, and MTB Park are open for deer to bow hunting and muzzle loading guns from November 30th-December 5th and for long rifle between November 2nd -7th. All trail properties are signed during deer season to inform visitors of hunting activities.
- For more information on hunting regulations in Ontario visit: <https://dr6j45jk9xcmk.cloudfront.net/documents/4795/mnr-hunting-eng-rev-accessible.pdf>
- The County of Bruce requires all volunteers to wear a protective (florescent) orange vest while monitoring trails and especially during hunting season. If you are not comfortable working on the trails during hunting season, then please do not undertake volunteer work during hunting season.

Illegal and Un-Authorized Activities

- While out volunteering, if you encounter or witness any urgent problems or threatening situations, (off road vehicles, fire, weapons, hunting/trapping, unknown hazardous material or pollutant) immediately remove yourself to a safe distance and contact a County staff person and the police if warranted. Your safety is the most important consideration, so do not try to confront anyone who is participating in illegal activities.

Use of Tools and Equipment

- The County of Bruce will provide tools necessary to conduct trail inspections including safety equipment.
- If you plan on using your own tools please note that the county is not responsible for damages that may occur.

Chainsaw Use Policy

- Volunteers are not authorized to use chainsaws on County forest lands unless they are a certified chainsaw operator and are accompanied by a spotter.
- If deadfall is not removable with handsaws, please notify county staff and close trail in accordance with the Bruce County Risk Management Policy.
- If you are certified Chainsaw Operator a copy of your certificate will be required before any chainsaw activities may commence.

Personal Protective Equipment

- The County of Bruce requires all volunteers to use personal protective equipment including safety glasses and work gloves during trail maintenance activities. All safety equipment will be provided by the county.

Relations with the Public

- While volunteering you will come across trail users on a regular basis and in most cases the experience will be positive. If a negative situation (e.g. complaint) comes up take the person's information and tell them that you will have a County staff person contact them to address the situation. Do not approach anyone you feel may be threatening or dangerous. Move yourself away from the situation and call the local police and County staff.
- Remember that you are representing the County of Bruce, so bolstering the public's perception of our trail efforts is essential.

Confidentiality

- Volunteers may learn information that has not been released to the public or is not intended for the public. Volunteers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of that information.

Volunteer Feedback

- We welcome all feedback from our volunteers. It is important that we receive your input so we can make improvements in the future. Feel free to contact our staff at any time as questions or concerns may arise.

What are the responsibilities of a Trails Volunteer?

The range of activities depends on the abilities and available time of the volunteer. Some individuals may only wish to inspect trails and report issues to county staff, while others may want to be more involved in the trail maintenance function that includes pruning, erosion control methods, bridge repairs, etc.

Below are some of the activities that we require assistance with. By no means are volunteers required to perform all activities listed below, but rather select any of the options you are interested in assisting with. These options are listed on the application form where you will be required to select the activities you are interested in.

Option #1: Perform Trail Inspections and document/report problems that require immediate attention

- Condition of trail

- Bridges and boardwalks that are damaged or require immediate repairs
- Large blow down-needing of chain saw work
- Vandalism of signs, gates etc.
- Missing signage
- Fall zone issues (protruding sticks and stumps)
- Trail corridor overgrowth

Option #2: Corridor Maintenance

- Rake tread surface where required
- Pruning trees and shrubs
- Brush back weeds and raspberry bushes

Option #3: Trail Construction and Maintenance

- Assist with erosion control methods (de-berm outslope of trail)
- Repair bridges or close trails if wooden structures cannot be repaired or replaced
- Ensure fall zones are cleared of protruding sticks and stumps

Safe Practices and Common Sense

- Use the proper tools and learn to use them safely
- Keep adequate distance between yourself and others while working
- Know your limitations—take breaks and ask for help if needed
- If maintaining trails alone, please tell others where you are going and provide the contact numbers of Bruce County Trail's staff
- Be aware of health risks due to heat and cold
- Take plenty of water
- Take first aid kit, flashlight, and other critical gear
- Avoid poison ivy and stinging insects
- Check for ticks
- Dress appropriately for the weather and the task

Mandatory Training for Volunteers

All volunteers must complete a mandatory orientation training on the option(s) they select. Inspection reports, corridor maintenance operations and trail construction will be covered in detail during orientation. Training can take approximately 1-2 hours to complete depending on level of participation and will be performed in the location of choice (e.g. Brant Tract). This will be done when it is suitable to the volunteer.

Maintenance Procedures

Trail maintenance is a crucial element to the trail management function. All trails require a level of maintenance regardless how well they are built. It is important that once trails are built that they are inspected and maintained to ensure visitor safety, trail functionality, and that the visitor experience is a positive one. Level of maintenance and frequency of inspections depend on a number of factors. Trails that contain wooden structures such as bridges and boardwalks require a higher level of service and more frequent inspections than trails without. Other factors include forest canopy cover where debris is more common to fall on trails than in open areas.

The trail maintenance function falls on the Trails Manager, staff and volunteers of the trails program. These individuals are responsible for prioritizing maintenance based on the following:

The first priority for trail maintenance is to correct truly unsafe situations. This could mean repairing impassable washouts, removing tree blow-down across the corridor, repairing trail structures such as bridges and boardwalks or replacing missing signage.

The second priority is to correct things causing significant trail damage such as erosion, sedimentation loss, or off trail use.

The third priority is to restore the trail to its original design or to re-route the trail if necessary.

Level of Service

The level of service and the number of inspections is based on the volume of use and existing infrastructure available on a particular trail.

Property	Description	Total amount of trail	Frequency of inspections
Brant Tract- Paisley Ontario	The Brant is our busiest park and contains approximately 25 bridges and boardwalks. This	20km	All trails inspected once every 7 days on

	property is our top priority because of these wooden structures		trails with wooden infrastructure. Once every 14 days for trails without.
Lindsay Tract- Miller Lake Ontario	The Lindsay has no wooden structures but has a high volume of users throughout the summer because of its vicinity to the National Park	18km	All trails inspected once every 14 days
MTB Park (Albemarle Tract)-Wiarnton Ontario	The MTB Park has similar trails to and terrain to the Lindsay Tract. There are no wooden structures but there are technical sections created from rock. These sections require routine inspections	18km	All trails inspected once every 14 days
Carrick Tract	The Carrick is a unique property because of its soil and aggregate mixture creating a hard packed trail surface. This property contains no wooden structures.	15km	All trails inspected once every 14 days

Corridor Maintenance:

- In most cases trails should be trimmed narrow unless there are abrupt turns that require sufficient sightlines for oncoming users. This process will be covered in the orientation.
- If saplings are damaged outside the trail surface within corridor they can be cut flush with the ground
- Limbs should be cut back to the main trunk or branch whenever possible so as not to leave hazardous branch ends projecting near the trail above ground.
- Be sensitive to the environment --do not clear excessively
- Cut branches flush with the main stem or at a fork
- Branches should be dragged away from corridor and out of fall zone area

Pruning of Trees & Shrubs

The basic objective is to maintain suitable sightlines and to leave the area looking natural. It is important to know how to prune trees and shrubs correctly, to minimize injury to potential users and damage to the plants we are trying to preserve.

- Cuts must be made outside of the branch bark ridge and branch collar area, angling away from the trunk, but as close as possible to the collar.
- Do not cut into the collar to stimulate callus production and rapid closure; such a cut promotes decay and future hazards. Never put a pruning tool behind the branch bark ridge.

Fall Zones Management

- Fall zones are areas outside the tread surface usually 3-4 feet on either side and must be cleared of any hazardous materials. These hazards could be protruding sticks and stumps that can occur after heavy winds and blowdown.
- These areas should be inspected for limbs and rocks that could cause an injury to a user if they were to fall within the corridor.
- The root system of saplings should be removed if within the trail surface to avoid trip hazards.

Tree Blowdown

- Blowdowns should be removed as soon as possible from trail corridor. If the object is too big for a pruning saw, please notify the county immediately so arrangements can be made to remove the blowdown.
- All material should be removed away from the fall zone to minimize any potential hazards.

Tools of the Trade

For your personal safety and work activities use pruning and cutting tools only for their prescribed purposes, and keep them sharp and in good condition. All working joints or parts should be kept oiled and tools meant for digging should be kept sharp to cut with a minimum of effort.

Pruning Shears (One-Hand Shears)

Proper use: Pruning shears are useful for removing branches and stems up to ½-1 inch in diameter. These prescribed clippers can be used on most types of wood.

Lopping Shears (Two-Hand Shears)

Proper use: Lopping shears can remove stems and branches up to 1 ¾-2 inches in diameter. Lopping shears can be useful for those areas where you need to clear the corridor high.

Folding Pruning Saws

Proper use: Folding saws should be closed immediately after use and only engaged when you are about to cut. These saws are set to cut on the pull or push stroke and can cut moderate size timber if necessary.

Pulaski

Proper use: Used for loosening rock, soil or digging out small stumps and roots. The Pulaski resembles an axe with a digging blade on the opposite side. When using this tool, it's important that the tool moving motion is between both legs to minimize possible injury to the foot or leg. Steel toed shoes are mandatory with the use of this tool.

McLeod

Proper use: Used to smooth soil over the trail surface or remove large amounts of debris using the forked side.

Safety Equipment

As volunteers you will be required to wear safety equipment during trail inspections and work activities. This items will be provided by the county.

- Safety vests: Reflective vests are mandatory, which keep you visible on the trail to oncoming trail users.
- Safety glasses: Will protect your eyes while pruning trees or excavating soil or rock
- Work Gloves: Should be worn while removing brush, rocks or soil.

Contact Information

In case of an emergency or accident please contact a Bruce County Representative immediately.

First Person Contact: Andrew Beumer-Bruce County Trails Manager (519) 270-2023

Second Person Contact: Chris Sanderson Trails Technician (519) 270 0747

Third Person Contact: Chris LaForest Director of Planning (519) 270-0746