**Trail Project and Maintenance Guidelines for Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Lands Trails**

***for Partners with Formal Trail Maintenance Agreements:***

These guidelines are intended for statewide and local trail partners (clubs, chapters, etc.) who have established cooperative agreements, memorandums of understanding, trail corridor management agreements or other formal mechanisms which assign trail maintenance responsibilities to the partner. All partners should be familiar with established trail standards (recommended standards can be found [here](http://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/Recreation/Learn_More/Library/List%20of%20Trail%20Resources.docx)) and the staff they should contact (staff listing [here](#Staff) and found on page 4). Please contact [Jessica Savage](mailto:jessica.savage@vermont.gov?subject=Trail%20Project%20and%20Maintenance%20for%20Partners) or call 802-249-1230 with any questions.

# Regular Trail Maintenance:

***Key Question:*** *Are we maintaining the existing trail corridor but not constructing anything?*

**\*\*Always** [**Notify District Stewardship Forester**](#Staff) **(email is fine)\*\***

Regular trail maintenance consists of assessment of structures, drainages, tread and related trail structures, as well as keeping the corridor clear of blow-downs and overhanging branches, clearing existing drainages (ditches, waterbars, etc.) and making minor repairs to structures.

It consists of work which occurs:

* **Within the existing trail footprint/corridor**
* **Anytime, as long as FPR is notified, and work is being done within the parameters of the agreement (for example: seasonal trail closures)**
* **With hand tools[[1]](#footnote-1), no machinery**

*Examples:*

* + Repairing existing structures
  + Removing blowdowns (dead or dying trees which have fallen into the trail corridor. NOTE: if the blowdown is too hazardous for your crew to handle, please leave it and contact the stewardship forester)
  + Replacing boards on bridges/boardwalks
  + Cleaning out existing drainages
  + Pruning overhanging or in-growing vegetation along the sides of the trail (clipping branches flush to the trunk of the trees, not whole tree removal)
  + Replacing trail signs

# Major Trail Maintenance: District Staff Review Needed

***Key Question:*** *Are we improving the trail by disturbing earth and/or constructing something new within the existing trail corridor?*

[Contact District Stewardship Forester](#Staff) with Work Plan in the Fall of Each Year so that these activities can be reviewed, and, if approved, included in the Annual Stewardship Plan (see page 4 for definitions).

Major trail maintenance consists of any activity within the existing trail corridor that requires any of the following actions:

* Utilizing heavy equipment such as bulldozers and/or excavators
* Building new structures such as:
  + Bridges\*
  + Boardwalks\*
  + Steps
  + Drainage structures\* (including armoring)
  + New trail signs or kiosks
* Removing, replacing or changing more than 50% of existing structures such as those listed above

*\*may require stream alteration and/or wetlands permit from DEC*

# Trail Re-Routes: Pre-Proposal Form Needed (form found [**here**](http://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/Recreation/Using_State_Lands/Library/VTFPR%20Pre-Proposal%20Form.FINAL%20DRAFT.pdf))

***Key Question:*** *Are we attempting to mitigate or avoid a problem on an existing trail by constructing any length of new trail?*

Trail-Reroutes are projects that begin and end on existing trail(s), and are meant to address incorrect trail placement issues such as fall-line trails, poor drainage, sensitive areas or other resource concerns.

Because trail re-route projects need to be vetted thru and included in the Annual Stewardship Plan, they should be submitted at least 1 year before projected construction, and as early in the spring as possible to facilitate field reviews. It is best to discuss your ideas with the district stewardship forester first. To locate your district stewardship forester, click [HERE](#Staff) or see the list below.

* **Project begins and ends on existing trail(s)**
* **Re-routes are essentially new trail construction in terms of needed review which can include but is not limited to**:
  + Archaeological and historical resources
  + Water resources
  + Ecological and wildlife resources
  + Existing use and management

# New Trail Construction: Pre-Proposal Form Needed (form found [**here**](http://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/Recreation/Using_State_Lands/Library/VTFPR%20Pre-Proposal%20Form.FINAL%20DRAFT.pdf))

***Key Question:*** *Are we hoping to construct a new trail or set of trails that will increase recreational opportunities?*

**New trails are subject to the highest scrutiny as they have the most potential to impact state land resources.** Proper design, placement and standards are required for all new trails on FPR lands. See t[his link](http://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/Recreation/Learn_More/Library/List%20of%20Trail%20Resources.docx) for recommended trail standards.

Because new trail construction projects need to be vetted through and included in the Annual Stewardship Plan, they should be submitted at least 1 year before projected construction, and as early in the spring as possible to facilitate field reviews. It is best to discuss your ideas with the district stewardship forester first. To locate your district stewardship forester, click [HERE](#Staff) or see the list below.

* **New trail projects are more likely to succeed if they are aligned with an updated Long Range Management Plan. Click** [HERE](http://fpr.vermont.gov/state_lands/management_planning/documents) **for these planning documents.**
* **New trails on state land may need to be shared with other compatible uses.**

**Definitions**

**Annual Stewardship Plan:** describes all planned stewardship activities for Agency lands in the District for the upcoming year. The annual stewardship plans are developed by the District Stewardship Team which includes staff from the Departments of Fish and Wildlife; Forests, Parks and Recreation; and Environmental Conservation. The main purpose of the annual stewardship plans is to document progress on implementing Agency long range management plans. The annual stewardship plans undergo a thorough review within the Agency and are ultimately approved by the Agency Lands Stewardship Team.

**Blowdowns:** dead or dyingtrees or branches which have fallen into or adjacent to the trail corridor and are impeding passage.

**Drainages:** waterbars, swales, ditches, culverts and other structures which remove water from the trail. All drainages should prevent discharges into water sources and streams (do not send the water to a stream etc.).

**Long Range Management Plan**: comprehensive management plans which involve the collection and analysis of information including scientific assessments and input from the public.   The plans include the following components:

* resource inventories
* goal setting
* public involvement
* implementation strategies and actions
* monitoring and evaluation

**Trail Corridor**: The trail tread plus additional horizontal and vertical space for vegetation maintenance. Width varies by trail type.

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**Statewide or General Inquiries**:

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1. Hand Tools consist of loppers, hand saws, chainsaws (with proper training and protective equipment), shovels, rakes, pulaskis, McCleods, grub hoes, pick mattocks, rock bars, sledgehammers, carpentry tools and more. See <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/info/tools1.html> for examples of trail tools and their applications. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)