

April 1, 2009



Untangle Your Boots
And...Work!

TRAIL TENDERS' NEWS

A publication from the Trail Management Committee's Training Team
Lynda Rummel (Editor/lead writer), Bill and Mary Coffin, Irene Szabo

Finger Lakes Trail Conference

Warning: This issue contains *some* stories that are written as if they are *completely* true. Some stories are only partially true, while others are completely fabricated; however, the questions raised by these hoaxes are important, the points made are valid, and the standards and policies mentioned are legitimate. See if you can sort the wheat from the chaff; please allow yourself to laugh, or at least chuckle, once or twice; and please forgive everything that's in questionable taste.

Points to Ponder

- What do I have to do to get one of those 3x5" Rite-in-the-Rain trail maintainer's field notebooks?
- "Mountain Unicycling?" Rogue, irresponsible muni riders? You can't be serious!
- Overall, is the FLT supposed to be a single- or a multiple-use trail?
- Whom do I complain to or go to for help on my section of trail?

No Joke – Please Ask for Your Trail Maintainer's RITR Pocket Notebook Again!

The idiot (me) handling your orders for Trail Maintainer's Notebooks – those 3x5" Rite-in-the-Rain (RITR) yellow-covered pocket notebooks that I distribute for free, to encourage trail maintainers to take good notes – has lost the names and addresses of three people who requested the notebooks. If you want a notebook, please be so kind as to email your request (whether repeated or new!) to me at ljrassoc@roadrunner.com, and include your name and USPS mailing address in your email message so I can mail the notebook (and pencil) to you when the new shipment comes in this spring.

Thank you for your patience!

Lynda Rummel

SHOCKING NEWS! Only Half-Joking, Marsh Proposes Paving Marsh

At the suggestion of Travelin' Training Team and Board of Managers member, Bill Coffin, President David Marsh will initiate discussions with the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation for the purpose of securing the skilled labor, equipment, and funding necessary to pave the Finger Lakes Trail through all state forests and wildlife management areas. Marsh told the *TTN* that he will propose starting the project by paving the trail across Beye's Bog, a fictional marsh where one or two hikers were reported lost last April.

This stunning move was motivated by the sudden appearance of lug-tired unicycle traffic on the FLT on several public lands. Until now, "mountain unicycling" (or "muni riding") seems to have been confined to the western states. The *TTN* wonders whether the offending unicyclists may have been inspired by Tom Holub, a UC-Berkeley employee and "muni" promoter who travels the internet widely. Some of Holub's "rebellious" unicycle outings have been publicized; Holub's illegal ride (with 11 other muni riders) through UC-Berkeley's sensitive ecological study area assured his status within the outlaw segment of the muni community. (Holub's response to criticism was: "Something has to be done about these reckless Sierra Club hike leaders!") Unfortunately, Holub isn't the only aggressive x-treme muni rider – a group in Oregon (self-named the "Unicycle Bastards") describe themselves as "Portland's Premier Unicycle Gang" (see <http://www.unicyclebastards.com>). We have to hope that some of this is spoke in cheek (ouch!) and should not be taken literally; but some do appear to thrive on riding trails where they are forbidden, and, in their own words, they present a pretty callous attitude towards others who might be on the trail they are riding ("Don't let them stand in your way!").

Coincidentally, the FLTC's BOM recently reaffirmed the general "bikes are not allowed" policy. But Coffin says he proposed this extreme solution out of frustration: "Some cyclists seem incapable of appreciating the fact that *volunteers*, not the government, build and maintain the FLT and do so *because* it's supposed to be a footpath. These same irresponsible few do not respect the landowner's right to determine how his property is used and don't mind ruining the experience of others."

Trail builders have long known that riding mountain bikes on dirt trails (such as we have here in NY) destroys the path's surface and tread,

Paving story continued on p. 3, lower left



Partial cover, Vol. 24, #4, April 1999, issue, *On One Wheel*. Entire issue "dedicated to Mountain Unicycling, a relatively new sport within unicycling that is growing in popularity."

Not Really Foolin', Just a Little Goofy: If the Boot Fits...

Good boots are an essential part of the trail maintainer's kit. Getting just one pair of boots that fit has been a lifelong mission, and I have yet to really succeed. But then, that's because I just had my second foot surgically fixed, and I won't know how that really affects the size or shape of my boots for another year or so. But along the way, I've picked up a few tips that I'd like to pass on to you others who are as boot-obsessive and pain-phobic as I:

For trail work, invest in a well-made, waterproof, breathable boot that provides good support but is as lightweight as you can find. For trail maintenance work, the boot needs to protect your ankles from sharp sticks and briars (or else you should wear gaiters). And we don't call the FLT "the GoreTex® Trail" for nothin'!

After so many years of brutalizing my toes against the ends and sides of various boots, my toes are so tender that I really cannot wear steel-toed boots. So I have bought slip-on steel toes that fit over the ends of my boots (got mine from Ben Meadows -- not an endorsement!) For "tenderfoots" like me, Kevlar® boots might be an alternative, but I haven't tried them, yet, so if any of you readers have suggestions, please send them in.

Following are some tips for buying the best-fitting boot you can and for "fixing" a boot that is irritating one or more spots on your foot. I'm serious!

To Get a Good Boot Fit:

- Because sizes vary among manufacturers, start with a size range and go from there.
- Have both feet measured every time you shop for boots. Measure length, width, and arch length.
- Select a boot that matches your feet. See *below, right*.
- Judge boots by how they fit your feet. If the boot is too tight, too loose, or it irritates a part of your foot, try a different style or type.
- The boots should be as wide as your widest foot, and longer than your longest foot. Remember that your feet elongate when walking and will swell after awhile. Try boots on late in the day and allow 3/8th to 1/2 inch at the end of your boot for your longest toe. Buy a roomier boot if you going to add insoles and the boot does not come with *removable, replaceable* insoles.
- Make sure the widest part of your foot (the "ball") fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe. This may be tricky if your feet really vary in size; but some boots have more space than others.
- Heels should fit comfortably into the boots.
- Hike around the store; use the incline/decline ramp if available.



This "shoe stretcher" has "adjustable pressure relief pods." (Sounds pretty fancy!) Available from FootSmart (not an endorsement!) for around \$20.

Adapted with permission from a handout available at Finger Lakes Podiatry, Geneva, NY.

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IF your feet are two different lengths or widths and/or you have two different arch lengths, buy for your longest foot and your widest foot, and furnish the inside of your boots with two differently-sized insoles. These insoles will replace the thin, removable ones that usually come with the boots. (If your boots don't come with *removable* insoles, buy a slightly larger pair of boots to accommodate the insoles you'll be adding.)

Obviously, customized orthotics will work very well; but if you don't have access to an orthotics maker, you can probably afford to buy two differently sized insoles off the shelf (cheaper than buying two pairs of boots!), use one of each size, and trim them to fit the boot. (Then find a friend who has the same problems but with opposite feet!) I have had very good luck with Super-Feet insoles; but I understand that there are other good retail insoles that work well. (SuperFeet used to keep a supply of loners, just for the purpose of being able to provide customers with a "pair" of different sized insoles. Call SuperFeet Customer Service to see if this service is still available.)

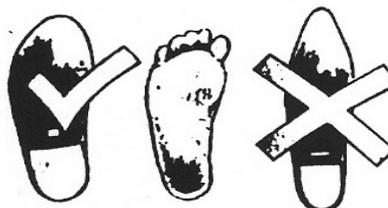
Rummel's Bunion Buster Buster:

The "shoe stretcher" (at left), old-fashioned shoe sellers, and shoe repair stores *may* be able to do this for you. But if they can't, here's how you can fix that place on your *leather* boot that's irritating the bones at the widest part of your foot, using common household "ingredients":

Ingredients

- ✓ 1 ping pong ball
- ✓ 1 large hand clamp
- ✓ 1 pair of kitchen tongs, with one end reshaped -- enlarge one end, using a bench clamp and pliers, so it will hold (cup under) the ping pong ball
- ✓ rubbing alcohol
- ✓ a piece of cloth or sponge, sized just larger than the reshaped end of the tongs

Instructions: With the cloth, rub a good amount of alcohol on the outside of your boot where it's busting your bunion. Put the ping-pong ball in the reshaped end of the tongs and carefully insert that arm of the tongs into the boot. Hold the ball and end of the tongs against the inner wall of the boot; carefully place the other end of the tongs on the piece of cloth on the alcohol-soaked area of the outside of the boot. (The end of the tongs will mark the outside of your boot; use a thin piece of sponge if you want the mark to be less.) Clamp the handles of the tongs so that the tongs are held in position. Let the alcohol-soaked spot dry for at least a day. Repeat the process several times, to make sure the spot stays stretched. (As you might surmise, the alcohol is the critical ingredient in this stretching process.)



MATCH YOUR FOOT TO THE SHAPE OF THE BOOT! (Duh!)

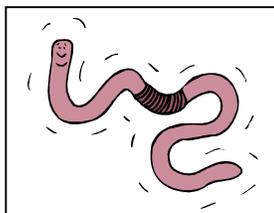
Giant Pneumatic Tubes Also Proposed

In an effort to reduce wear and tear on the trail, an international transportation consortium (Deutsche Über Pneumatic Engineering, or DUPE) has proposed developing a giant pneumatic tube that will lie atop the FLT and propel hikers towards their destinations. On April 1, '09, the consortium's head, Dagmar Stumblebum, told the *TTN* that his technicians have not yet solved the problems of pushing hikers simultaneously in two directions or letting them off at various stops without altering the tube's propulsion; but he is sure these problems *can* be fixed.

The price of consortium stock fell yesterday when two hikers hiking different directions in a demo tube collided; but Stumblebum believes this problem can be solved by installing two parallel tubes. He admits that the consortium's proposal suffers from "economic problems" – meaning, he explained, that funding two parallel tubes that cover 990 miles of trail will be expensive. "It's impossible," he said, "to estimate how many traditional hikers will use the pneumatic tubes or how many new travelers will be attracted to the new "service" and acknowledges that the tubes must be built first in order to really know market demand. Stumblebum suggests, however, that enclosed pneumatic tubes will make it much easier to document trail usage and could eliminate the need for the onerous trail census forms.

When asked whether the tubes would be approved for road-walks by the NYS DOT, Stumblebum said he just didn't know but that hitting the soft side of a flexible pneumatic tube – as long as a container capsule wasn't at that point – would be a lot easier on motorized vehicles than hitting some roadway potholes. Stumblebum also notes that the tubes will allow users to travel in inclement weather and promotes the idea that the tubes will shield users from mud and rocks sent flying by passing vehicles.

Stumblebum told the *TTN* that he hopes the FLTC's BOM will be open to this alternative and *RE*consider paving the trail. The pneumatic tubes, he says, are more expensive but are much less environmentally destructive than hardening the trail, and if built correctly, they can propel all sorts of passengers to various ends.



Above: Capsule traveling through tube along switchbacks

Paving, continued from p. 1.

especially when the pathway is single-track, or has a grade and an out-slope, or the dirt is wet; but all were shocked to learn that this same destruction could be caused by unicycles, since the number of tires pounding the trail was cut in half. However, investigators have now confirmed that the track from a single wide rugged tire of a mountain-unicycle can degrade the trail tread to the point that hikers find it nearly impossible to use – and sometimes even find -- the trail.

Paving story continued in right hand column, this page

Paving, continued from left hand column, this page

Experts now believe that the trail damage is caused by several factors: First, the unicycle concentrates the rider's weight over the single tire; secondly, the wide, aggressively rugged tire peels away root bark, ruins drainage ditches, creates trenches in causeways, and enlarges small puddles into mud ponds; third, because the machine itself is slow and gearless, the muni rider must sometimes rock his mount or the tire twists, which grind pits into the tread; fourth, riders eventually tire of the damage and seek to go around it, creating new rutted pathways and more mud puddles; and finally, many muni riders view roots, rocks and water spilling across the trail as challenges to be conquered, not avoided.

When faced with these awful trail conditions and the prospect of having to move to the side in order to avoid on-coming cyclists, some hikers simply turn back in disgust while others try to use the zigzags to get around the damage and then get lost.



Unicycle rider Mike Cobb on the Chaparral Trail, Joaquin Miller Park, Oakland, CA. About this shot, unicyclist Cobb posted this comment: "Although I do grab my crotch from time to time, this shot depicts the oh-so-common saddle grab of a Mountain Unicyclist. Not a lack of impulse control, but an attempt at unicycle control."

The rationale behind the proposed request to the DEC is that a much wider, 2-track trail with a hardened surface will make the trail actually *suitable* for multiple uses. However, those who oppose the proposal point out that paving the trail will ruin the backcountry experience and make the trail into just a "suburban walkway" and bike trail, completely inconsistent with the sport of back-country hiking. Those who support the proposal argue that unless rogue riders are penalized or blocked from using hiking trails, they will continue to use them, which will destroy the trail and ruin the hiking experience, anyway. Some say that better signage is needed; however, while cycling sophists may argue that the circle+slash no-bikes symbol just applies to two-wheeled cycles, it's impossible to doubt the meaning of the hiker icon on the FLT trailhead sign or the statement that is usually posted above the no-bike symbol on the same post: "OPEN TO HIKING And Other Foot Travel. CLOSED TO ALL OTHER USES."

Tongue in cheek, Coffin noted that while paving the trail will be costly to taxpayers, it will make the FLTC's volunteer work *much* easier and should be viewed as an integral part of any economic stimulus initiative – i.e., it's one more way for the government to provide jobs for the private contractors that the DOT and DEC will have to hire.

Information and photo by
Tom Holub, posted at
www.flickr.com/photos/tholub

Four Trail Building Opportunities – Seriously! Sign Up NOW!

June 22 – 26. NCTA “Volunteer Adventure” on the Onondaga Trail. 4 days of trail construction, 1 day of recreation, led by NCTA staff. Base camp at Spruce Pond – BYO camping gear. Portapotty; no showers. Food provided. **\$50 deposit required; refunded upon arrival.** For **project** info, contact mcoffin1@twcny.rr.com. For more information and **registration**, call 866-445-3628 or email HQ@northcountrytrail.org.

July 20 – 24. Alley Cat Project: Sidehilling and building steps, stairs & foot bridges on 4 Holland ravines, Vermont St. - Savage Rd. (CT 6). BYO camper or tent to pitch at the Holland Community Center. Food provided; dinners prepared by Foothills Trails Club. Kitchen, flush toilets at HCC; showers at Holland Middle School nearby. For **project** details, contact project manager, Dave Potzler, at dpotzler@wildblue.net. To **sign up**, contact Quinn Wright at wrightquinn@hotmail.com or 716-826-1939.

August 5- 9. Alley Cat Project: Build new connector trail in Meads Creek SF, heading S toward PA (south M 13). Build from approved flagged trail line to finished trail bed. Incl some sidehilling. BYO gear to tent or trailer camp at Sugar Hill SF Recreation Area (by fire tower, M 14). Food provided. Water available; flush toilets or portapotties. No showers; but can swim in nearby pond. For **project** details, contact Pat Monahan at pmonahan@stny.rr.com. To **sign up**, contact Quinn Wright at wrightquinn@hotmail.com or call 716-826-1939.

Aug. 31 – Sept. 4. Alley Cat Project: Reconstruct trail on the W side of Mt. Washington (SE of Hammondsport, M 12). Sidehilling, switchbacks and steps. Stay at Scout House in Hammondsport – sleep inside (BYO sleeping bag & pad) or trailer camp in parking lot. Flush toilets; showers; kitchen. Can swim at nearby beach. For **project** details, email Lynda Rummel, at ljrassoc@roadrunner.com. To **sign up**, contact Quinn Wright at wrightquinn@hotmail.com or 716-826-1939.

Note: Alley Cat Crew workers must be current members of the FLTC, at least 16 years old and in good health ready for physically demanding work. If under 18, a parent or guardian will also need to be on the crew. All workers must sign a release.

Attention Trail Sponsors: Problems, questions or ideas about the trail section you're responsible for? Contact your Regional Coordinator! Genesee R. W (incl. CT): Marty Howden (howser51@yahoo.com). Genesee E to Bath (incl Letchworth): Irene Szabo (treeweenie@aol.com) Bristol Hills Br.: Tom & Donna Noteware (noteware@empacc.net). Bath to Watkins Glen + FLNF: Lynda Rummel (ljrassoc@roadrunner.com). GET-NY: Pat Monahan (pmonahan@stny.rr.com). Watkins Glen E (excl FLNF): Joe Dabes (kabjnd@msn.com). Chenango W (incl Onondaga Tr.): Tony Rodriguez (boricua1037@verizon.net). Chenango E: Ed Sidote (esidote@frontiernet.net). Catskill-W: Jim DeWan (goshawkbait@gmail.com). Catskill-Central: Mike Gebhard (mvgGebhard@hughes.net). Catskill-E: Dave DeForest (deforeda@delhi.edu). **Need Trail Building Training?** Contact Lynda Rummel (ljrassoc@roadrunner.com).

**2nd Annual
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**Finger Lakes Trail Conference
FLTC Office
6111 Visitor Center Road
Mt. Morris, NY 14510**