

December 2010



Tie Up Your Laces  
And...Work!

# TRAIL TENDERS' NEWS


A publication from the Trail Quality Training Team


## Finger Lakes Trail Conference

### Points to ponder:

- Geeez, which Trail Mgt. Form(s) am I supposed to fill out this year?
- How can I make the surface of my puncheon less slippery?
- Who is retiring in January and deserves our thanks and fondest best wishes?

### News Items

 The **Trail Management Council** will hold its second annual meeting on **APRIL 9, 2011, from 10-3**. Any change in the *anticipated* location (the First Congregational-United Church of Christ, 58 North Main St. (NY 332) in Canandaigua) will be announced. (The year-old Trail Mgt. Council replaces Howard Beye's Trail Mgt. Committee which held its annual meeting in February.) Key topics will include checking property boundaries against tax maps, posting trail management signs to increase appreciation for the fact that trails in the FLT System are hiking trails, and talking points for when attending land management meetings.

 Ask Gene to send you a pdf file of the '09 revised and expanded **FLTC Field Maintenance Manual**. The revised manual includes much **new** material and should answer many of your questions. You will not want to carry the new manual in your pack; but you *will* want to read it. The Manual should be up on the website soon; but contact Lynda at [ljrassoc@roadrunner.com](mailto:ljrassoc@roadrunner.com) if you can't get a copy.

### Trail Census Forms to be Distributed SOON!

**Why bother turning in your trail work and administrative hours?** Although we've put 50 years of sweat into building and maintaining the trails in our Finger Lakes Trail System so that the public (as well as we) can have long-distance foot trails to hike, other users who are usually louder and better organized than we sometimes clamor to use our trail. When we answer, we need the strongest possible evidence that we are not a wimpy, silent minority of souls, and some of the best and most persuasive evidence is the large number of hours we spend building and maintaining the trails in the FLT System. Sure, our trail was **founded as a footpath and still is built as a footpath, and so simply by definition is not a multiple use trail. But what often really grabs attention is the number of hours of work put in year after year by volunteers who are devoted to traveling on foot.**

If you fill out a grant application to help fund a project on the FLT, you may well be asked, "How many people use the trail every year?" Of course, many funders do not realize that this is an impossible question to answer; but if we use **a surrogate measure** and explain that FLT volunteers *report* spending around 15,000 hours each year just on building and maintaining trail, we think they may be impressed.

In addition, the hours we volunteers spend working on the North Country National Scenic Trail part of our trail system are used by retiring Superintendent Tom Gilbert and Interim Trail Manager Dean Gettinger to help support their annual requests for funds. Many of those hours went towards building new or replacing old structures. While, in this tough economy, it's going to be difficult to get the level of support we've gotten before, it's hard to turn down funding "shovel-ready" big jobs like our Alley Cat projects where, for all practical purposes, the labor is assured, or smaller projects that can be handled by a trails club or an individual sponsor and a couple of friends. And our track record for completing projects successfully is exceptional, *thanks to you!*

The FLTC also sends summaries of our "trail census data" to those who administer our parks and forests. The fact of the matter is, the *huge* number of volunteer hours spent building and maintaining the FLT each year helps demonstrate our on-going commitment to protecting and preserving the trails in the FLT System and often speaks louder than words.

**So, please report your trail hours just as soon as you get the form! Note: Forms have been revised and renumbered, so please don't use an old form !!! To find out how the process works this year, please go to p. 3**

### THANK YOU, trail workers!

**You reported\* working 11,302 hours out on the FLT in 2009, plus 4,681 related administrative hours. If combined and multiplied by the 2009 NPS/NCTA hourly labor rate, that's worth...\$311,828 !!! Not to mention the 3,586 hours you paid for, traveling to a trailhead....**

(\*does not include hours worked by the Cayuga Trails Club on their 95.3 miles of trail)

## Tools You Can Use – “Chainsaw Packs”

We realize not every trail maintainer wants or needs to carry a chainsaw or a big pack, so we’re reviewing modular and expandable packs that can be used for other purposes, too. Since many chainsaw packs are expensive, we’re also including some regular packs that colleagues have modified to suit their needs to carry different trail tools at different times.

**Let’s start cheap.** One of the older ways to carry a chainsaw is in a milk crate fixed to a shelf at the bottom of **an external frame backpack**. The preferred frame was the old Camp Trails McKinley or Cabella’s Alaskan Guide (~\$90) “freighter” style, which just might be hanging in a dark corner of your basement. The frame, with a fold down shelf, was designed for hauling big game out of the backcountry; it has since been used as the frame for the Knupac portaging system. As shown in the photo **below left**, an old rucksack can be lashed to the frame to carry helmet and chaps, while oil and gas can be stored in the milk crate along with the chainsaw and Pulaski or axe tied to the frame. Carefully cut a hole in the bottom of the milk crate for the handle to drop through, so the saw can be carried vertically. Take care to cool your saw so it doesn’t melt the crate or the pack material.



Straps and nylon cloth “shelf” stabilize crate and support handle of saw hanging through hole in crate bottom. Gas, oil and leaky saw are completely outside the pack.



Saw body visible in red oval. Bar is slipped under pack. “Shelf” made of metal tubing supports saw body and other tools. Balanced and sturdy. Photo by Mark Cumnock.

As shown in the photo **above right**, almost any metal external frame pack can be converted into one for carrying your chainsaw.

**At right.** Tony Rodriguez carries his saw horizontally, on a board he attached to the frame and two aluminum supports of the kind typically found in hardware stores.

If you are hiking through a typical 3-ft. wide trail corridor, carrying the saw vertically is the better choice. But the saw *is* readily accessible and the pack stands fully upright. One of the two supports is within the red oval at right. Photo by Tony Rodriguez.



## Tools You Can Use – “Chainsaw Packs” *continued*

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**Another adaptation.** A large used **ALICE** (“Advanced Light Infantry Combat Equipment”) **pack** with metal frame and hip belt costs ~\$60 at <http://shop.vtarmynavy.com>. The lower compartment can be collapsed and the chainsaw blade *with guard on* stuffed vertically between the bag and the frame. Secure saw body and bar to frame with just three straps (not visible). Jim Ward, Gary Haff, and yours truly swear by this bag.



The lower compartment of the ALICE pack **at left** collapses against the floor of the upper compartment. The upper compartment is big enough to hold chaps, helmet, wedges, first aid kit, and water bottles. Gas bottles can fit into side pockets; 16oz. oil container fits in front pocket. Pack flap separates into a pocket that holds saw tools, small USFS trail construction manual, map, and other goodies. Multiple straps to cinch pack tight and lash Pulaski or axe to frame.

**Venerated (But Expensive!) Chainsaw Pack.** The **Mackenzie Chain Saw Pack**, or **Mack Pack**, **below**, carries the saw body in a nylon cloth bucket at the hips, with the bar (*with bar guard on!!!*) strapped against the back. Pouches on the sides hold fuel, bar oil, tools. At [www.firecache.com](http://www.firecache.com), \$295. For more storage capacity, add the Piggy Back Pack (\$86).



The USFS concluded that the Mack Pack was worth the money. Similar packs include True North’s Chainsaw Pack and Go-Pac add-on, which trail builder Steve Kinne reviewed for the NPS. His conclusion: Overkill for typical maintenance situations -- save your money!

**New Kid on the Block.** The **Dakine Builders Pack** (EMS, reg. \$170, sale \$136) features an expandable chainsaw pocket on the front (the saw handle drops through a slit in the bottom of the pocket). A special sleeve holds loppers. Lots of loops and pockets for hand tools, oil and gas containers, first aid, water, lunch, safety glasses and ear muffs, but not much room for a certified sawyer’s chaps and helmet.



Photo by Bob\_the\_Builder



## Trail Management ("Trail Census") Forms

**Trail Sponsors:** Regional Trail Coordinators will distribute forms to their Sponsors (individuals and groups who are responsible for overseeing a segment of trail) in December. The form for Trail Sponsors is now #1. Sponsors should mail their completed form to their Regional Trail Coordinator by January 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Trail Workers:** "Trail workers" (like the Director of Mapping and Facilities Inventory) should contact the FLTC office and should fill out form #2.

**If you hold more than one organizational position, fill out a separate form for each.**

### Regional Trail Coordinators, West to East:

Genesee West (M1-M6, CT1-CT12)  
Marty Howden  
[howser51@yahoo.com](mailto:howser51@yahoo.com) (585) 964-7331

Genesee East (M7-M11, L1 & L2)  
Irene Szabo  
[treeweenie@aol.com](mailto:treeweenie@aol.com) (585) 658-4321

Watkins Glen-West (M12-M14, I1 FLNF)  
Lynda Rummel  
[lirassoc@roadrunner.com](mailto:lirassoc@roadrunner.com) (315) 536-9484 H  
(315) 694 1244 C Jan thru Mar only

Watkins Glen-East (M15-M19, QCMT, MFHLT)  
Joe Dabes  
[kabind@msn.com](mailto:kabind@msn.com) (607) 844-3872

Chenango-West (M20-M22 NY26, O1 & O2)  
Anthony Rodriguez  
[boricua1037@verizon.net](mailto:boricua1037@verizon.net) (315) 446-3586

Chenango-East (M22 NY26-M26 Bainbridge)  
Ed Sidote  
[esidote@frontiernet.net](mailto:esidote@frontiernet.net) (607) 334-3872

Catskill-West (M26 Bainbridge-M27)  
Mike Gebhard  
[mvgebhard@hughes.net](mailto:mvgebhard@hughes.net) (607) 624-1231

Catskill-Central (M28-M30 NY206)  
Rick Roberts  
[hikerrick\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:hikerrick_2000@yahoo.com) (607) 746-9694

Catskill East (M30 NY206-M33)  
Kevin Millar  
[kjmilow@yahoo.com](mailto:kjmilow@yahoo.com) (607) 341-7842 H,  
(607) 687-3263 C

Bristol Hills Branch (B1-B3)  
Tom and Donna Noteware  
[noteware@empacc.net](mailto:noteware@empacc.net) (607) 868-4616

Crystal Hills Branch (C1-C3)  
Pat Monahan  
[pmonahan@stny.rr.com](mailto:pmonahan@stny.rr.com) (607) 936-8312

## Critique of Fiskars Telescoping Loppers

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Telescoping Power-Lever Bypass Lopper,  
\$29.99 at [www2.fiskars.com](http://www2.fiskars.com), \$26.99 at [www.target.com](http://www.target.com),  
\$24.99 at [www.landscaper.com](http://www.landscaper.com)



Tight-Lock "flips up to extend tool,  
Flips down to securely (???) lock  
Handles at desired length."

**Note:** Above is the only telescoping lopper that Fiskars advertises on its website, [www2.fiskars.com](http://www2.fiskars.com). The handles on this lopper extend by flipping the Tight Lock on each handle up and down. In the situation Frank describes below, it's not clear whether the locking mechanism on his loppers was the Tight-Lock or the grip/handle rotated to lock and unlock, or even whether the grip on the handle came off. On Epinions.com, "Trawma" gives a similar looking Fiskars tool, which may have had locking rings and not the Tight-Locks mechanism, just a 2-star rating, saying, "Imagine my surprise when the handles began rotating and sliding after just a few cuts."

Each December, we try to review tools that may be useful when doing trail work and that you might convince others to buy or make for you. Our reviews do not guarantee that the tools will be right for you or will work flawlessly; and **we really welcome feedback from you** when you have alternatives or your experience with a tool has been less than satisfactory. We also understand that your comments are your own opinions, and others who use the same tool may feel differently. Following are comments about the handle/grip on a pair of Fiskars Telescoping Loppers, sent in Dec 17 2009 by WF "Frank" Jones:

Hi Lynda

I am a GVC-ADK chapter member and just got around to looking at the latest "Trail Tenders' News". Good job! I have traveled to our section of the FLT around Hornell several times over the past few years with a maintenance crew. I would like to pass along my experience with Fiskar loppers.

Within the past two years, I bought the best pair of Fiskars that Home Depot carried in their nearest store. I think they cost about \$40. The first or second time the loppers were used proved to be my last. I was working on the side of a steep slope clearing shrub-like growth. I had a good grip on the loppers and was attempting to pull a vine entangled shrub loose (using the loppers) after it had been cut when a lopper hand grip completely slipped off the handle. I almost tumbled down the slope. I know that using loppers as 'pliers' isn't exactly the designers' intent but we all do it on occasion. Later, I examined other Fiskars in the store and they used the same technique for attaching grips to the handles. I contacted Fiskars Quality group and reported the experience. They did not seem very interested and I returned the loppers to Home Depot and received a refund. Since then I have checked out several loppers and found only one to be tough and durable enough to suit my needs and it is not a Fiskar....

**Below. Same Style, Different Surface Treatment. See [Puncheons](#) on p. 4**



Got muck? Got mud and standing pools of water? Got persistently wet areas that suck your boots into oblivion? Try putting in a few puncheons. Puncheons are relatively easy to build and are an excellent way to "harden" a trail. Puncheons consist of sills that sit across the trail and stringers that run parallel with the trail and sit atop the sills, just a few inches above the surface of the trail. There may or may not be a third layer of boards atop the stringers, either running with the stringers or perpendicular to them. Because they sit on the surface of the trail, puncheons do not damage the trail in any way.



The FLTC "standard" for trail tread width is 18 inches. Puncheons should be this wide or a bit wider, wherever possible. When the top side of the stringers is the walking surface, the 18" width can be achieved by adding more stringers and leaving about an inch between them. Otherwise, cut the cross planks to 20" or wider.

After a couple of years, treat the puncheon's surface for slipperiness. Even "rustic puncheons," which begin with a rough surface, need cleaning and scapping and possibly something more. Over the past five years, we've experimented with paint and grit, metal hardware cloth, and asphalt shingles on puncheons around the state. The lessons learned thus far are: (1) Apply paint only when the puncheon wood is dry. Artificial grit is a bit expensive but it is soooo much lighter than sand and just as durable. Use marine epoxy paint if you can afford it. (2) Cut strips of asphalt shingles to a little less than the width of the surface of the stringer or cross plank. Use gloves, a metal straightedge, and a heavyduty box cutter. Be sure to use hot-dipped galvanized roofing nails if working with ACQ pressure treated exterior wood. (3) It takes at least two to tangle with the hardware cloth. Wear gloves and cut the hardware cloth at home, remembering to add enough to the width of the strip to bend it over each side of the puncheon. (4) The optimum solution depends on how many people are working with you, how far you have to hike in, and the weather.

If you have a different affordable, lightweight method of reducing slipperiness, please email Lynda at [ljrassoc@roadrunner.com](mailto:ljrassoc@roadrunner.com).

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**Trail Census Data  
& Tools You Can Use!**

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