

Early Autumn 2011



Tie Up Your Laces
And...Work!

Points to ponder:

- How do you keep the interior of a register box dry?
- Can your blazes be found and your trail followed in all seasons of the year, especially by novice or color blind hikers?
- Why do we have trail standards?

Crisp Up Your Blazes

Again this season, several hikers reported problems finding trail blazes, especially after the leaves were on and were obscuring part of the blaze or when the blaze looked tired and less like a blaze and more like a natural blob than it should.

So again we're asking that you please help those of us who are color blind or who just can't see so well anymore find and stay on the trail. Please (1) paint over old, faded or flaked blazes with fresh new paint; (2) use gloss or high-gloss exterior latex paint; (3) blaze big trees rather than spindly saplings *when you can*; (4) *make your blazes to the standard size of 2" x 6" with straight, crisp lines and 90-degree corners*; (5) outline critical blazes and paint over paint-blaze dribbles with black or dark camo; (6) check that your next blaze can be seen from the previous blaze, in both directions; and (7) make sure your blaze can be picked out by people both taller and shorter than you are.

To remove flakes or smooth rough bark, remember to use a smooth scraper (no wire brushes) and take care not to scrape down to the inner bark layer.

TRAIL TENDERS' NEWS

A publication from the Trail Quality Training Team

Finger Lakes Trail Conference



NOTICE!

Please Mark Your Calendars!

NOTICE!

Springville and Bath Area Meetings Coming Up in Late October & Early November

Hooray! To make all of our lives easier, Trail Maintenance has combined two meetings that were held separately previously and thereby reduced the number of area meetings for trail maintainers to four overall. As previously, two areas will meet every other year.

Meetings are designed for you to get to know your neighboring fellow trail maintainers, learn what's expected and what's new in trail maintenance, and bring your ideas and suggestions (frustrations and complaints, too!) directly to members of Trail Management and the Travelin' Training Team.

Trail maintainers are key to keeping landowners enthusiastic about the trail, to providing hikers with good hiking experiences, and to attracting new members to the FLTC. Here's your opportunity to get your voice heard...*and* pick up a few trail freebies while breakfasting on donuts and cider.

If you work on or host the trail in one of the two following areas, you are invited to attend this year's meetings for trail maintainers and other interested parties:

Area 1 – If you work on **FLTC Maps M1/CT1 to M6 and CT12**, please meet **October 29, 10-3**, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 591 E. Main St. (NYS 39), **Springville**. Area 1 was not changed and includes **all of the Conservation Trail**.

Area 2 – If you work on **FLTC Maps M7 to M14 plus L1, L2, B1-B3 and CH1-3**, please meet **November 5, 10-3**, somewhere in the **Bath area**. The exact location will be announced in an email sent to you from Steve Catherman, VP for Trail Maintenance and head of the FLTC's trail maintenance organization. Area 2 has been combined with what was Area 3 and now includes the **main trail from south of Portageville east to Watkins Glen plus the Letchworth, Bristol Hills, and Crystal Hills Branches**.

Topics likely to be discussed include:

- how to prevent big (and little) bridges from floating downstream after a downpour
- how to get trail off road
- trail specifications ("standards") that will extend the life of your trail segment and make for happier hikers and easier maintenance; especially, how to improve old trail;
- how to get your bigger trail maintenance/improvement projects paid for and get out of doing all the work yourself; and
- your topics, questions, and suggestions that are not on this list

Area 3 (M15 to M22 plus 01, O2, I1, QC, MF) and Area 4 (M23 – M33) are scheduled to meet next year. *However, if you have recently become a trail sponsor or have questions or ideas about trail maintenance, the FLT System, the FLT/NCT, or the FLTC organization that you want to discuss with others sooner rather than later, please feel free to attend either of this year's meetings.*

BRING YOUR LUNCH, YOUR QUESTIONS, AND YOUR IDEAS!

42 Trail Register Boxes Looking for Good Homes

Our Executive Director, Gene “Wheeler Dealer” Bavis, has purchased 42 ammo boxes that can be used for trail registers in place of any wood or container registers that have deteriorated beyond repair (see photo at right) or that can be put at a new location.

It is recommended that you put the register some distance in from the nearest road, to reduce vandalism and rude entries scrawled in the register journal by passersby.

The ammunition boxes are 11" long x 5.5" wide x 7" high. They have been painted and stenciled by the gentleman we purchased them from (Steve Clements), whom we wish to thank for his generosity. Gene has assured us that they do not come with ammunition.

Along with mail boxes and wooden boxes, ammo containers have been used as register boxes on trails in the FLT System for some time (see photo at right). Mail boxes and wooden boxes remain fine choices; however, there's now some overlap between the mailbox registers and the mailboxes used for the Passport program, and the wooden register boxes do take time and skill to construct, plus they must be roofed and, if made out of plywood, armored as well. Ammo boxes should help eliminate confusion and should last for a long time if mounted well, but feel free to stick with something else if you prefer.

Trail Management does not wish to stifle individual expression but does ask you to please limit the decorations you add to your ammo box to just the FLT decal (silver, exterior) or your trail club's decal, so as not to detract from the FLT already stenciled on the outside. The ammo box should contain a notebook (add safety contact info) and several pens and pencils that you provide. The FLTC's bright yellow trail cards and brochures can also fit in. Upon request, the office will mail FLT decals, yellow cards, and brochures to you.



The 42 new-to-us ammo boxes are **11" long** x **7" high** x **5.5" wide** (example above). The direction of the lettering obviously favors horizontal mounting. A big Thanks to Steve Clements for stenciling FLT in bold yellow letters!



Early Autumn,
2011

Photo at left:

Should this register box be repaired or is it time to replace it with a new one?

Photo by Joe Grasmick.

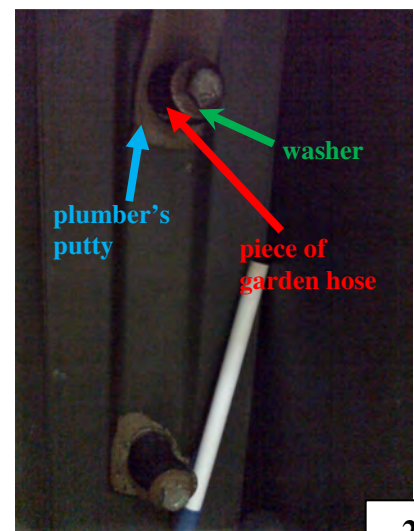


An ammo box mounted on seasoned boards under a roof (at left) should stay up and dry inside, with no special precautions needed.

The ammo box at left pre-dates the ones recently acquired so did not have the stenciled FLT on it and consequently was a little more decorated.

Photo by Don Kneipper.

To attach an ammo box to a living tree, Joe Dabes and Ray Kuzia have added (clockwise) a washer (green arrow), a 1" piece of garden hose (red arrow), and a glob of water proof plumber's putty (blue arrow) in between the head of each lag and the inside wall of the ammo box. As the tree grows, the hose will compress, assuring a tight seal that does not damage the tree.



To mount the ammo box horizontally on a standing tree, pre-drill the holes for the two lag bolts from the back, one hole several inches above the other; then put in the bottom bolt first.

Trail “Standards” Create Trail that Lasts

Like getting donations for unpopular but necessary causes, creating an interest in upgrading existing trail can be difficult. Understandably so – improving old trail is neither exciting nor “sexy,” and the improvement sometimes doesn’t even show, so few accolades may follow...

Except that, these days, your Trail Management Team would sing your praises from the highest hilltop in the FLT System (by the way, where is that?) if you did improve your section and surprised us with the news. Yes, we really would!

Improving old trail by filling spots that pool water with rocky dirt slightly crowned, adding gentle outward dips, removing berm on the outside edge that’s been created by years of boots hiking by, putting puncheon over soggy earth that can’t be circumvented, adding *big* hefty stepping stones or a causeway made of rocks you find at the edge of an old field nearby, putting in water bars to move water off the trail, or putting in a couple of switchbacks where the trail used to run straight down the hillside, is a drum that we’ve been beating since we’ve had trail old enough to be “old” and ever since we started building *new* trail to specifications (“standards”) that *preserve* the trail.

Until fairly recently, we did not always know what these specifications were, and sometimes we just didn’t follow them anyway. As Tom Gilbert, recently retired Superintendent of the North Country National Scenic Trail, has written, “The ‘art’ of laying out and designing a good trail – one that provides a satisfying experience and minimizes the amount of expense and work to maintain it – has really come of age only in the last couple of decades. Prior to that, trails often followed the most direct route, or the route that was initially explored that [succeeded in connecting] points A and B. Often times they went straight up and down the ‘fall line,’ or slope, of a hill.” (*The North Star*, January-June, 2009, p. 24)

We should add that the FLT was sometimes put on deer trails steep enough for mountain goats or on skid roads created by bulldozers that could climb like four-legged creatures or on the footprints of dirt roads initially built in the early 1800’s that had old dirt ditches between the side of the hill and the *inside* edge of the road.

Water is a trail’s worst enemy and “water will find its own way,” as the saying goes, if left unattended. The ditch between the side of the hill and the inside edge of the old road eventually clogs up and sends excess water across the road (and trail) that surely forms a soggy area that may turn into a cut across the trail when the clouds suddenly dump 4” of rain in a short period of time. The trail down the fall line or the steep skid road quickly starts to erode into a drainage that becomes rougher and rougher with each downpour. And water on level trail on poorly drained soil simply “ponds,” or collects, evaporating into a puddle of mud (because the water has no way of draining off) that expands as trail users try to go around it.

Agreed, improving existing trail is not always easy and in fact is often darn hard work. But our standards now apply everywhere across the FLT System, and there really is great satisfaction when the standards are met and you know the trail will last. After all, why build new trail that has to be rebuilt within a few short years (or less), and why not rebuild old trail into trail that needs much less work and convert a miserable hiking experience into a pleasant one at the same time?

If You Want Help: The Travelin’ Training Team consists of Bill Coffin, Mary Coffin, Lynda Rummel, and Irene Szabo. Why not do what Roy Dando, Trails Chair for the Triple Cities Hiking Club, did this year and invite one of us to teach some of his club members how to bench-in trail to standards while doing work that needed to be done anyway – that is, *replacing* an actual section of trail that had been “punched in,” much of it on a fall line or with 30-45% grades, with side-hilled trail built to a 10% grade and a 5% outslope?

Notice! Notice! Notice!

Early Autumn 2011

The Silent Trail Maintainer...

[A Notice posted on behalf of “Grumpy Irene”]



To Whom It May Concern:

“NEVER EVER do trail work on somebody else’s segment without prior permission, communication during, and follow-through communication afterwards! All that does is ‘trick’ the real caretaker into driving a long distance to do something that’s already done, and in many cases, this has pissed off the caretaker into quitting, and it’s understandable! ... you’d think nobody would need to be told this, but again and again it keeps happening.” Grump, grump.

And it keeps happening because of good intentions! It’s a very commendable impulse to help out the trail, and we know Irene doesn’t want to depress that impulse; but unless it’s coordinated with the section sponsor (and hopefully the Regional Trail Coordinator, too), it can be a real source of frustration and even irritation.

First and foremost, it can be taken as an insult to the sponsor to do it without consulting with the sponsor. The *sponsor* is the official caretaker for that segment of trail. The sponsoring individual or the group/club is supposed to oversee it and *tend* to it. So doing something without telling the sponsor is like doing something behind their back without acknowledging their responsibility for that segment. That hurts.

Further, here are some possible consequences that may not be foreseen:

- the “improvement” was done in a place where a relocation was planned,
- the “improvement” was different from what had been approved,
- the “improvement” was done but the sponsor wasn’t informed so, as Irene said, the sponsor *wasted* all his/her time driving and/or hiking to the site only to find it was unnecessary.

Many times the surprise work that is done by others is very nice and helpful, and again, the desire to help is very much welcomed; but it just has to be done in consultation with the sponsor and the consultation should happen before it’s done, if at all possible. If you do clear up a freshly fallen tree, just be sure to call the sponsor immediately after -- and hope the sponsor isn’t already on his/her way.

Yet Another Anti-Slip Method

Over the past few years, we've experimented with several methods for making the surfaces of puncheons, boardwalks and bridges less slippery, including using:

- ✓ Latex Paint with Grit – either regular latex to which sand is added or latex paint with pre-added man-made grit;
- ✓ Hot dipped (HD) galvanized hardware cloth (½" squares);
- ✓ Diamond-shaped wire mesh used to hold lath in place;
- ✓ Strips of rough asphalt shingles; and
- ✓ Marine epoxy paint with man-made grit added.

Each of these methods has advantages and disadvantages, which will be reviewed at another time. But before the end of the construction season passed us by completely, we wanted to add one more method for you to try: *Scuffing the surface of the plank.*

The idea was actually suggested by Gil Oswald, who works at Knapp and Schlappi Lumber in Penn Yan. He first proposed using a floor sander with heavy grit, but then we had to tell him that we often didn't have electricity available or a flat surface to sand the boards on. Then Charlie Warden, a first-rate problem-

Yet Another Anti-Slip Method, continued

solving construction guy who lives near me suggested trying a little King Arthur/Sir Lancelot brand disk with a modified circular chainsaw chain on it that's used mostly for wood carving. That worked, but it was slow and a single scuffed board did in an 18 volt battery.

We were already on-site for the West Corbett Hollow Rebuild Alley Cat project when Mark Musso, one of our certified sawyers, plopped a 2"x12" boards on a couple of sawhorses and, holding his chainsaw at an angle to the boards, roughed up the surface in what seemed to be less than the blink of an eye. Wearing all his PPE, Mark kept the chainsaw blade at an angle to the board and pulled the saw along the board. The rest of the team then set up a production line for him, and the boards needed for 18 puncheons were scuffed and loaded for transport in no time. How well does this work? We don't know yet. We'll let you know next year.

**Make plans now to attend a Trail
Maintainers' Area Meeting Oct. 29
or Nov. 5. Details on page 1!**

Please send questions, comments, complaints, corrections, suggestions, new information or tips about trail building or trail maintenance to: Editor/writer -- Lynda Rummel (lirassoc@roadrunner.com); or the conscripted volunteer contributors -- Bill Coffin (wmscoffin@twcny.rr.com); Mary Coffin (mcoffin1@twcny.rr.com); and Irene Szabo (treeweenie@aol.com). Training (trail maintenance, design and construction) *on your section* available upon request. Want to join the "Travelin' Training Team" or contribute to the *Trail Tenders' News*? Please contact Lynda Rummel at lirassoc@roadrunner.com.

**Upcoming Area Meetings
& Ways to Improve Old Trail**

**Finger Lakes Trail Conference
6111 Visitor Center Rd.
Mt. Morris, NY 14510**