

Spring, 2016

April Fools' Issue



Untangle Your Boots And...Work!

Special Points to Ponder:

- Which state forest has the highest density of troll families?
- Do drones threaten the hiking experience?
- How can I learn the latest about blazing the FLT/NCNST in state forests?

Trail Council Meeting

► No Joke! Y'all are welcome & y'all please come! The FLTC's Trail Management Team will hold its annual **Trail Council meeting** on **April 9th, 2016**, from 10 – 3 at the First Congregational-United Church of Christ, 58 North Main Street (NY 332) in Canandaigua. Although primarily for our RTC's, Club Trail Chairs, and others who play key roles in *managing* trails in the FLT System, **any volunteer, public agency rep, or landowner is welcome to attend.** The agenda will include: New FLTC Exec Dir; Hike the Hill & Hike 100; Building a Comprehensive Database; the FLTC MOU with the NCTA; & Blazing the FLT/NCNST in State Forests. Coffee and donuts provided; but...bring your questions, ideas, & lunch!

TRAIL TENDERS' NEWS

A publication from Trail Quality's Travelin' Training Team

Finger Lakes Trail Conference

Warning: This issue contains *some* stories that are written *as if* they are true. Although the stories themselves are not true, *some* of the information in them is. The questions raised by these jokes, fabrications, hoaxes and satirical stories are (sometimes) important; the points made are (usually) valid; and the standards and policies mentioned are (occasionally) legitimate. **See if you can sort the wheat from the chaff**, please allow yourself to laugh, or at least chuckle, once or twice; and, this issue especially, please forgive everything that's in questionable taste.

Drones to Fly Over Trail...Tunnel Digging Begins

With the announcement that the US DEA and allied state drug enforcement agencies will fly drones into New York's backcountry by following the Finger Lakes Trail and then side trails leading to illicit crops, local marijuana growers are responding by digging tunnels under the trail, so they can get to their crops without being detected. The drones will still be able to spot dope patches by their light or heat signature, however, so law enforcement will know at least where the tunnels will surface. Drones will also inspect trail heads to look for "shake and bake" containers.

YUNEEC - Typhoon 4K Quadcopter, w/ video camera, at Best Buy, \$899.99



Trail Maintainers are advised to be alert to the drones, those raising the marijuana, and large plastic soda bottles left in the sun near trail heads. Do not pick up the soda bottles! Instead, call the Sheriff immediately with the location of the bottle. Please sign the start of unofficial side trails with FLT disks and arrows pointing in the direction of the FLT, so hikers can know which trail to follow.

Hunter side trails, often marked with reflective tacks, and heavily-used deer trails should be marked similarly, so hikers don't get lost or find themselves in an uncomfortable situation. Maintainers are also asked to report any tunnel entrances they find to local DEC law enforcement.

The man reputedly organizing the tunnelers is named Shorty Guzman. Hikers have reported hearing the roaring of motorcycles nearby at various possible tunnel locations, but the theory is that these are being played on commandeered boom boxes and are not real motorcycles.

FLTC trail management is discussing what to do if the tunneling persists and/or sections of tunnels start collapsing, taking with them the trail tread. One proposed fix is to build moveable walkways – the kind one finds in airport terminals – over the trail, with strong supports that extend beyond the sides of the tunnels, so sagging or collapsed tunnel tops would be irrelevant. These should not antagonize the tunnel builders, but neither should they be of much benefit to them, since tell-tale walkways could be spotted by surveillance drones. Trail management is looking into whether these could be powered independently by solar or wind or capture the energy generated by people walking on the tread. The latter solution would work like a crank on a crank powered flashlight, except walking would be utilized instead of cranking -- the energy from the first steps on the tread would be plowed back into the walkway to speed up the hiker's progress. This would dramatically reduce the cost of powering the walkways, of course; but the cost of building them in the first place would be considerable. Hiking backwards on the moving walkways should dial back time, too; however, time could be recovered by walking forward again.

DJI Phantom 3 Professional Drone
with camera & positioning



at Cabela's, \$1,259

Dyslexic Trail Maintainers?

Arrowhead points to dark spot where drainage pipe begins and runs at a 45° angle to the trail.



Analysis: First, the trail slopes to the inside, not the outside, so water naturally heads along the inner edge where the trail meets the hillside, eroding a ditch on the inside of the trail. Secondly, the ditch that was there is built up with growth. Third, despite there being a pipe set under the trail (at approximately a 45-degree downhill angle to the grade) that was perfectly capable of draining water off when water was directed to it, the maintainers positioned the sandbags so that water was diverted to the outside where it dug new channels on its way down the hill. Some of this run-off went around the outer end of the line of bags and flowed back to the original ditch, but some of it also went towards digging new ditches in the tread.

The second line of sandbags did the same thing. Thus, both lines of sandbags kept the pipe from doing its job and allowed more ditches to be eroded in the trail tread. *Had Robert done this work?*

So, what could have been done differently? What might have been the outcome if the two rows of sandbags had been angled at 45 degrees to the trail, with the inside of the row pointed downhill? What if the cross slope had been slanted outwards in the first place?

The mistake of building the trail with an inside ditch around an inside curve on an incline is not an uncommon one. It seems counter-intuitive to build it with an out-slope: You want to build it like a highway so a speeding car can hug the highway countering the centrifugal force. But when you build a trail this way, you have to have a ditch on the inside of the curve, to drain the water that will collect and erode the trail if the ditch is not there. Not a problem if you have an excavator and lots of rip-rap, but a lot of work if you have to do it by hand. And then you have to have a way to get the water from the inside of the trail to the outside, so it can drain off, and this requires either an outward depression like a Coweeta Dip or a waterbar of some sort that will direct the water to the outer edge... or a pipe under the tread. So it's just much easier to build the trail with a slight out-slope to begin with.

A For-Real Photo: From a sustainability perspective, what was done wrong to the trail depicted in the picture at left?

The photo shows a section of trail looking downhill. You can see that water had been running along the inside edge of the trail, where the trail meets the hillside. The rain had been heavy. The primary work done by the maintainers was to put in the two lines of sandbags at a correct 45-55° angle to the drainage ditch. The lines of bags slant down and out from the inside of the hill. Downhill from the 2nd line is a drainage pipe intended to drain water from the inside of the trail to the outside, underneath the tread. The arrow's head marks the pipe's opening. I checked -- It's open and clear of debris. The trail's grade is ~10%; the in-slope is ~5%.

The work was done neatly. But, "what's wrong with this picture?"

HINT: When I worked in a wooden-boat building co-op on Cape Cod many, many years ago, there was a wonderful co-worker named Robert who was so dyslexic that we had to hover over him while he put in the curved groove to hold the end of planks in the stem of the boat lest he put it in backwards. Robert had attended the Landmark School, which had prepared him well for surviving the demands of society, and he had a wild but endearing sense of humor which included building plastic pipe devices to fire off spuds before work each morning. I don't know where he is now, but recently when I observed this trail maintenance work, *at left*, done to handle heavy run-off, I thought he might be nearby.

A Trail of Nickels...Trolls Volunteer to Inspect Trail

(Please note that this kind of **patrolling** pre-dates the Information Age by centuries.)

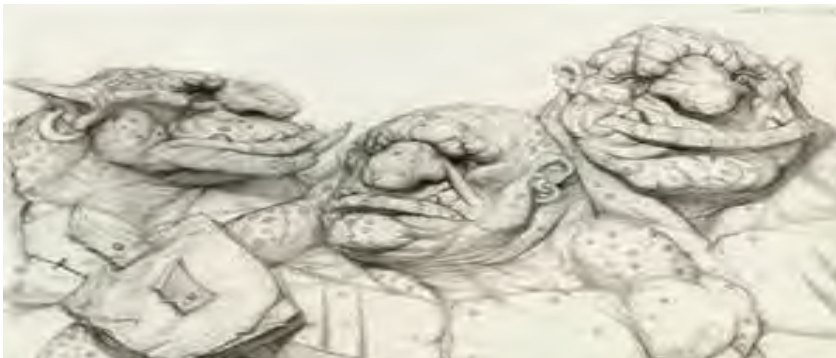
Several families of muscular woods trolls (like those **pictured below**) and a few of their gnomish kin have volunteered to inspect the quality of the trail. Being the kind folk that they are (despite the many stories to the contrary), the trolls have decided to make a game of it, hiding nickels in caches at various points along the trail to inspire maintainers to check and then correct the *out-slope* of the tread. To explain:

The general rules are for tread on level ground to be slightly crowned, while tread across a hillside should have an out-slope of about 5% -- or 3/4ths of an inch, **about the diameter of a nickel**, at 18" out -- so water runs across the trail, not down it.

Trust your eyes to determine whether the center of level tread is slightly crowned, but use a "tool" to assess whether the out-slope on hillside trail is acceptable. To do the nickel test using tools you would usually carry with you: Make a mark on your Pulaski, or some other long- and preferably flat-handled tool, 18" in from the end of the handle. Push the handle end in to the hillside edge of the trail and, grasping the head of the tool, have your companion eyeball the handle to determine when you are holding it level. When you are holding the handle level, insert a nickel, on edge, under the handle at the 18" mark. The nickel should fit snugly between the handle and the tread if the tread is sloped outward by 5%. If the nickel doesn't fit under the handle, the slope may be too little; if there's a lot of space between the nickel and the underside of the Pulaski, the slope may be too much. (If you are working by yourself, use a Bubble Level &/or Clinometer app downloaded to your smartphone and hold your smartphone on the flattened, smoothed surface of the tread about 18" out.)

Of course, if you want to stick a 24" Smart Tool™ level in your pack, you can borrow one from the FLTC Office. This specialty level was given to several of us who went through Gold Star Certification Evaluator **training by** Fred Szarka, former Trail Manager of the NCNST, back in the **days when the NPS** could afford such things. The level is easy to calibrate, but **must be calibrated** before taking into the woods and it requires a fresh 9volt battery. **Call ahead to make sure** that no troll has it checked it. The reason for the nickels **should be obvious** – with a nickel in your pocket, you don't have to carry an **additional tool like** a Smart Tool™ into the woods.

Woods trolls, which, in our northern states, like in Norway, live in caves, under bridges, within the roots of huge trees, and under rocks (especially in Rock City SF), will inspect the tread **periodically**, report results to the VPs of Trail Quality and Trail Maintenance, and leave a few nickels in plastic mayonnaise jars or small pouches made of angle worm skin (trolls are especially fond of worms and grubs as well as goat meat flavored with sriracha-mayo) at various spots along the trail. The GPS'd locations of these containers will be listed on the FLTC website (once the trolls can be taught how to use a smart phone or GPS device) so maintainers can find the nickels more easily.



The trolls & their friends will report to the FLTC's VP-Trail Quality, pictured above.

The Drone Invasion, continued (from p. 1)

Tunneling is not the only consequence of the "drone invasion." The cost of drones is coming down while their sophistication and capabilities are rising. But most publically-available drones are still very noisy, and so are frightening pets, livestock, and wildlife. And, are they confusing birds? The loud buzz of a drone sounds like a **giant** insect and the drone looks like one, too, when it's unidentified and hovering overhead or coming at you. Even micro drones make a buzzing sound, at least on start up, and larger drones recall *Apocalypse Now* as they come into sight over the tops of trees.

Will non-agency drones be outlawed in state forests, wildlife management areas, and state parks? Stay tuned. But this much is clear: Drones should not be flown from the trail corridor without the explicit permission of the landowner/land manager. And as a matter of courtesy, drones flown by citizens should be restricted to designated public spaces, not places where folks go for quiet, contemplation, and alone-ness or for an outdoors experience with friends or family



For Your Smartphone

Clinometer& Bubble Level app by plaincode™, **left**; simpler Clinometer app by kittoworks™, **below**.



**Attention FLT/NCNST Trail Maintainers !
NO JOKE!**

Count your work miles towards hiking 100 miles in 2016 on the North Country National Scenic Trail! Earn (allegedly) cool prizes!

The National Park Service is the federal agency charged with managing the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). To acknowledge and honor the National Park Service's Centennial Birthday this year, the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) is sponsoring a challenge event called "Hike 100" on the NCNST. This challenge can be completed by hiking 100 different miles or the same miles you maintain multiple times. Note that only the ~423 miles of FLT shared with the NCNST (from Allegany State Park east to and up the Onondaga Branch) or other sections of the NCNST can be counted (in other words, miles on the main FLT trail in the Catskills or on the other branch trails don't qualify.) Go to www.northcountrytrail.org for details and to sign up.

**2016 Alley Cat Projects --
Serious Work but Lots of Fun**

Dates, housing, and some other details were not firmed up by the time of this printing, but planning for four Alley Cat projects this season is well underway. The four projects include:

- In early spring, repair of storm damage on map M3/CT3 (at access point 12, junction of SR 240 & Fancy Tract Rd.), led by Foothills Trails Chair, Dave Potzler.
- Construction of a new lean-to on M11, between the Kanakadea and Burt Hill Shelters.
- In late summer, construction of a new shelter in Hoxie Gorge and repair of a small bridge near the shelter (M20), led by Mike Ten Kate.
- Construction of a bridge on the rerouted section of trail in New Michigan State Forest, Chenango County (M23).

Contact Matt Branneman, FLTC VP Crews & Construction, at (607) 220-7812 or mattbranneman@gmail.com, for details. Sign up on line, at www.fingerlakestrail.org.

No bull! Improve your own skills and give back to the trail by teaching others how to care for it. Join the FLTC Travelin' Training Team. Interested? Questions? Email TTN editor/writer – Lynda "No Class" Rummel (ljrassoc@roadrunner.com). Irregular contributors: Bill Coffin (wmscoffin@twcny.rr.com); Mary Coffin (mcoffin1@twcny.rr.com); Irene Szabo (treeweenie@aol.com); Greg Farnham (greg@gfamham.com); Marty Howden (howser51@yahoo.com); Matt Branneman (mattbranneman@gmail.com); & Steve Catherman (stevec@roadrunner.com).

April Fools' Issue, 2016 4

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**Finger Lakes Trail Conference
6111 Visitor Center Road
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9th Annual April Fools' Issue...
and some serious stuff, too!**