



Trail Volunteer Handbook

Version 1 (August 2016)

Version 2 (January 2021)

Introduction

Welcome to the Bruce County Trail Crew! We hope that you will enjoy volunteering with us and that you gain a sense of satisfaction through your role in the Bruce County Trails Program.

This handbook includes information you need to get started as a volunteer and will be updated on a yearly basis, so if you come across something you think needs to be included, please let us know.

Please feel free to bring any questions or concerns to the staff. We are grateful to have your time and energy on our team and hope that you will have a positive and meaningful volunteer experience!

Background

The County of Bruce is blessed with over 12,000 acres of some of the most spectacular forests in the Province. The year 2000 was a landmark year for the County when they first assumed management of their own forest tracts (previously managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources). When the County assumed management of the Bruce County Forests, the following principles were adopted:

- *The Bruce County forest lands are a public resource belonging to all residents of the County. They hold value not only for their commercial timber production, but also for their natural heritage features. The County forestry program will strike a balance between the pursuit of commercial revenues and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.*
- *The Bruce County forests will be evaluated, managed, and subsequently promoted as multipurpose resources, using the principles of long term and sustained development, for the benefit of local residents and the tourism public.*

Some specific goals, adopted by Bruce County Council, are as follows:

- *To build, market and then maintain an integrated multi-use trail system in Bruce County that provides direct and measurable benefits to County of Bruce Residents and the Province of Ontario;*
- *To provide a tourism product (trails) that add to the existing inventory, and subsequently market and promote the trail system, thereby enhancing Bruce County as a tourism destination;*

- *To increase opportunities for outdoor fitness for Bruce County residents in general, and specifically to assist in reducing escalating rates of heart disease and juvenile obesity in the County; and*
- *To increase the “outdoor lifestyle” choices within the County, with the goal of providing yet more reasons why people will move here to make Bruce County their permanent home.*

The County has undertaken and successfully completed several trail construction venues. These projects have obvious recreational benefits for Bruce County residents and are also serving to provide much needed tourism activities in the “shoulder seasons”. The direct capital value of these projects, including in-kind contributions, volunteer effort and capital contributions is more than three million dollars.

Staff members have undertaken formalized training in multi-use trail construction, trail maintenance, and safety, as well as proper liability and risk management protocols, and have become recognized leaders in sustainable trail construction. Through our association with the “International Mountain Bicycling Association”, and other training bodies, we have also provided workshops for trail staff outside of our organization on building sustainable trails.

Why we Value Volunteers.

Over the past 20 years the County has been actively building and marketing multi-use trails. The County has been blessed to receive core funding and external grant funding to develop and maintain trails, but at the same time, many trail enthusiasts have come forward over the years and have asked to volunteer. Until 2016, with the development of this manual, we did not have in place a formal process needed to promote and attract volunteer efforts.

Although the County staff shall continue to build and maintain trails, there is also a desire on behalf of the County to promote volunteer efforts in the area of trail maintenance and inspections.

Common activities would include brushing back trail growth, installing signage, raking/blowing, and clearing tread surfaces in the spring and fall, and communicating with County staff on potential trail closures or trail repairs.

The County is vast in size, and we seek volunteers with a wide range of motivations. Some people have a passion for a certain type of trail activity (such as cycling or nature appreciation), and simply wish to help out in a

meaningful way. Other residents live close to one our forest tracts, visit it often, and have a sense that they would like to adopt a property on a longer-term basis.

Trail Properties:

- Brant Tract (Paisley)
- Carrick Tract (Mildmay area)
- MTB Park (Wiaraton)
- Lindsay Tract (Miller Lake)
- Kinloss Tract (Lucknow)

How to Get Involved

The first step is to complete a Volunteer Information Form. This information is essential, as it provides your contact information, geographic location, area of interest and skills.

The second step will be to contact you once your information has been reviewed and we can determine your availability, interests, and scope of work.

The third step is for you to review the Trail Volunteer Handbook, which details information and guidelines to volunteering on the trails.

The fourth step is to meet with county staff to receive on-site training of trail inspection and procedures. This will take approximately 1-3 hours.

Volunteer Policies

COVID 19 Health Measures and Safety Guidelines for The Bruce County Trail Volunteer Program

COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated changes to routines and practices to keep volunteers, safe and healthy during volunteering. Bruce County has implemented several guidelines outlined by the Grey Bruce Public Health that should be practiced before, during and after volunteering. Additional safety measures are also outlined to keep you safe while volunteering.

Covid-19 Health Measures

Are you fit to volunteer?

All volunteers should perform the self screening tool outlined by the Grey Bruce Health Service before leaving their home. Please refer to the link below to access this self screening tool.

<https://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Portals/0/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/COVID19/Screening%20in%20public%20Settings.pdf>

If you are feeling unwell, please refrain from volunteering and stay home until fully recovered.

Preparing for volunteering

- Avoid traveling in large groups to and from the site.
- Practice hand hygiene
- Come equipped with hand sanitizer.
- Nitro rubber gloves are provided by the County; you are encouraged to bring your own gloves.

Wear a face covering.

- Face coverings must be worn when volunteers are unable to be 6 feet in distance from one another.
- Face masks are provided if needed although we encourage you to bring your own.

Watch your distance.

- Plan your work in order for physical distancing measures to be in place.
- Be mindful of the public using the area.
- Bring a personal supply of food and drink, if needed, to avoid sharing dishes / food with others.

While you are volunteering:

- Wear a face covering when social distancing is not possible (6 feet)
- Wear your gloves whenever possible.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer following before and after activities when gloves are not used
- Be sure to keep a distance of at least 2 meters (6feet) between yourself and others.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand. Dispose of any tissues you have used as soon as possible and sanitize your hands afterwards.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

- Avoid shaking hands or any other physical contact.

Safety, Emergencies and Accidents

- The health and safety of our volunteers is of the utmost concern to the County. Please follow these guidelines closely to ensure you stay safe during any volunteer activities with the Trails Program.
- Remember to consider your health and physical limitations when you are working on the trails. If an activity becomes too strenuous, please stop, and consider your health and wellbeing first. We appreciate all the efforts of our volunteers and want you to be comfortable and safe. If an accident or illness should occur, seek medical aid immediately. After medical aid is received, contact the County for further instructions.
- Dress appropriately for the activity, especially outdoor activities (see below).

Application Form and Police Checks

- The County requires volunteers to fill out and sign an application form. Security checks are not required for volunteer positions related to this program.
- All volunteers under the age of 18 must have their parent or guardian sign a form permitting them to volunteer. Volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Liability Insurance

- Bruce County carries a liability insurance policy that provides some coverage to volunteers in an event of an injury. If you are injured while volunteering, seek medical aid, and then contact the County.

Preparing for Trail Activities

Trail activities such as inspections and trail work require some particular considerations. Please read the following guidelines carefully:

- Walking properties requires an adequate amount of physical energy and should not be attempted if you are not feeling well, or if you have health concerns.
- Dress appropriately for the weather/conditions and remember insect repellent and sunscreen. Long pants and sturdy work boots are also

recommended when working on the trails. Safety items such as work gloves, safety glasses, hard hat, safety vest and tools will be supplied by the county. Open toed footwear (i.e., sandals) are discouraged.

- Carry a small first aid kit and cell phone, especially when volunteering alone.
- Before embarking on trail activities, leave a message with a trusted contact person, detailing where you are, how long you will be out for, and what to do if you do not arrive home at the anticipated time/location.
- Bring plenty of drinking water, and food if you are going to be out for a long period of time.
- Poisonous plants and stinging/biting insects - Familiarize yourself with the identification of poison ivy. If you are unsure, please ask county staff help with identification.
- Avoiding Ticks – Ticks have become a concern over the past few years because they can transfer Lyme disease to humans, so it is important that you know how to identify the various species of ticks. Its best to wear light-coloured pants and long sleeve shirts because it is easier to spot ticks. Remember to do a full body check immediately after any time spent on the trails. For more information, refer to the following website on Ticks:
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/disease/lyme.aspx>
- Hot weather – When working in hot temperatures, prepare yourself by bringing lots of water and wearing lightweight clothing, a hat, and pace yourself while performing activities.

Your safety is the most important thing to the County of Bruce so please follow these guidelines whenever possible.

Hunting Season

- Hunting is permitted on most County Forest Tracts. Although it is rare to encounter hunters during the trail season it does happen, especially during deer season. The Brant Tract, Carrick Tract, Lindsay Tract, MTB Park and Kinloss Tract are open for deer season to bow hunting and muzzle loading guns from November 30th-December 5th and for long rifle between November 2nd -7th. All trail properties are signed during deer season to inform visitors of hunting activities.

- For more information on hunting regulations in Ontario visit:
<https://dr6j45jk9xcmk.cloudfront.net/documents/4795/mnr-hunting-eng-rev-accessible.pdf>
- The County of Bruce requires all volunteers to wear a protective (florescent) orange vest while monitoring trails and especially during hunting season. If you are not comfortable working on the trails during hunting season, then please do not undertake volunteer work during hunting season.

Illegal and Un-Authorized Activities

- While out volunteering, if you encounter or witness any urgent problems or threatening situations, (off road vehicles, fire, weapons, hunting/trapping, unknown hazardous material, or pollutant) immediately remove yourself to a safe distance and contact a County staff person and the police if warranted. Your safety is the most important consideration, so do not try to confront anyone who is participating in illegal activities.

Use of Tools and Equipment

- The County of Bruce will provide tools necessary to conduct trail inspections including safety equipment.
- If you plan on using your own tools please note that the county is not responsible for damages that may occur.

Chainsaw Use Policy

- Volunteers are not authorized to use chainsaws on County forest lands unless they are a certified chainsaw operator and are accompanied by a spotter.
- If deadfall is not removable with handsaws, please notify county staff and close trail in accordance with the Bruce County Risk Management Policy.
- If you are certified Chainsaw Operator a copy of your certificate will be required before any chainsaw activities may commence.

Personal Protective Equipment

- The County of Bruce requires all volunteers to use personal protective equipment including safety glasses and work gloves during trail maintenance activities. All safety equipment will be provided by the county.

Relations with the Public

- While volunteering you will come across trail users on a regular basis and in most cases the experience will be positive. If a negative situation (e.g., complaint) comes up take the person's information and tell them that you will have a County staff person contact them to address the situation. Do not approach anyone you feel may be threatening or dangerous. Move yourself away from the situation and call the local police and County staff.
- Remember that you are representing the County of Bruce, so bolstering the public's perception of our trail efforts is essential.

Confidentiality

- Volunteers may learn information that has not been released to the public or is not intended for the public. Volunteers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of that information.

Volunteer Feedback

- We welcome all feedback from our volunteers. It is important that we receive your input so we can make improvements in the future. Feel free to contact our staff at any time as questions or concerns may arise.

What are the responsibilities of a Trails Volunteer?

The range of activities depends on the abilities and available time of the volunteer. Some individuals may only wish to inspect trails and report issues to county staff, while others may want to be more involved in the trail maintenance function that includes pruning, erosion control methods, bridge repairs, etc.

Below are some of the activities that we require assistance with. By no means are volunteers required to perform all activities listed below, but rather select any of the options you are interested in assisting with. These options are listed on the application form where you will be required to select the activities you are interested in.

Option #1: Perform Trail Inspections and document/report problems that require immediate attention.

- Condition of trail

- Bridges and boardwalks that are damaged or require immediate repairs.
- Large blow down-needing of chain saw work.
- Vandalism of signs, gates etc.
- Missing signage
- Fall zone issues (protruding sticks and stumps)
- Trail corridor overgrowth

Option #2: Corridor Maintenance

- Rake tread surface where required or sign out a backpack blower.
- Pruning trees and shrubs
- Brush back weeds and raspberry bushes
- Ensure fall zones are cleared of protruding sticks and stumps using handsaws and clipper.
- Cross County Ski Grooming (Lindsay Tract Trails)

Option #3: Trail Construction and Maintenance

- Assist with erosion control methods (de-berm out slope of trail)
- Repair bridges
- Assist with new trail construction.

Safe Practices and Common Sense

- Use the proper tools and learn to use them safely.
- Keep adequate distance between yourself and others while working.
- Know your limitations—take breaks and ask for help if needed.
- If maintaining trails alone, please tell others where you are going and provide the contact numbers of Bruce County Trail's staff
- Be aware of health risks due to heat and cold.

- Take plenty of water.
- Take first aid kit, flashlight, and other critical gear.
- Avoid poison ivy and stinging insects.
- Check for ticks.
- Dress appropriately for the weather and the task

Mandatory Training for Volunteers

All volunteers must complete a mandatory orientation training on the option(s) they select. Inspection reports, corridor maintenance operations and trail construction will be covered in detail during orientation. Training can take approximately 1-2 hours to complete depending on level of participation and will be performed in the location of choice (i.e., Brant Tract). This will be done when it is suitable to the volunteer.

Maintenance Procedures

Trail maintenance is a crucial element to the trail management function. All trails require a level of maintenance regardless how well they are built. It is important that once trails are built that they are inspected and maintained to ensure visitor safety, trail functionality, and that the visitor experience is a positive one. Level of maintenance and frequency of inspections depend on a number of factors. Trails that contain wooden structures such as bridges and boardwalks require a higher level of service and more frequent inspections than trails without. Other factors include forest canopy cover where debris is more common to fall on trails than in open areas.

The trail maintenance function falls on the Trails Manager, staff, and volunteers of the trails program. These individuals are responsible for prioritizing maintenance based on the following:

The first priority for trail maintenance is to correct truly unsafe situations. This could mean repairing impassable washouts, removing tree blow-down across the corridor, repairing trail structures such as bridges and boardwalks or replacing missing signage.

The second priority is to correct things causing significant trail damage such as erosion, sedimentation loss, or off trail use.

The third priority is to restore the trail to its original design or to re-route the trail if necessary.

Tools of the Trade

Tools should only be used for their prescribed purpose and in good working condition. All working joints or parts should be kept oiled and tools meant for digging should be kept sharp to cut with a minimum of effort.

Pruning Shears (One-Hand Shears)

Proper use: Pruning shears are useful for removing branches and stems up to ½-1 inch in diameter. These prescribed clippers can be used on most types of wood.

Lopping Shears (Two-Hand Shears)

Proper use: Lopping shears can remove stems and branches up to 1 ¾-2 inches in diameter. Lopping shears can be useful for those areas where you need to clear the corridor high.

Folding Pruning Saws

Proper use: Folding saws should be closed immediately after use and only engaged when you are about to cut. These saws are set to cut on the pull or push stroke and can cut moderate size timber if necessary.

Pulaski

Proper use: Used for loosening rock, soil or digging out small stumps and roots. The Pulaski resembles an axe with a digging blade on the opposite side. When using this tool, it is important that the tool moving motion is between both legs to minimize possible injury to the foot or leg. Steel toed shoes are mandatory with the use of this tool.

McLeod

Proper use: Used to smooth soil over the trail surface or remove large amounts of debris using the forked side. Steel toed shoes are mandatory with the use of this tool.

Backpack Blower

Proper use: Blowers resemble a backpack and have adequate support and straps that are adjustable to ensure a proper fit. These blowers make the job go much quicker than raking and provide a great finish to the trail surface, especially in the fall. The county has two of these units available for sign out.

Safety Equipment

As volunteers you will be required to wear safety equipment during trail inspections and work activities. These items can be provided by the county or you can use your own.

- Safety vests: Reflective vests are mandatory, which keep you visible on the trail to oncoming trail users.
- Safety glasses: Will protect your eyes while pruning trees or excavating soil or rock.
- Work Gloves: Should be worn while removing brush, rocks, or soil.
- Hard hats (if applicable): Should be worn during trail construction if machinery is being used or when felling trees.

Contact Information

In case of an emergency or accident please contact a Bruce County Representative immediately.

First Person Contact:

Andrew Beumer
Bruce County Trails Manager (519) 270-2023

Second Person Contact:

Chris Sanderson
Trails Technician (519) 270-0747

Third Person Contact:

Miguel Pelletier
Director of Transportation (519) 881-2400