



FRIENDS OF THE WAPACK-TRAILS COMMITTEE

GENERAL TRAIL MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES – Friends of the Wapack

BLAZES:

Blazes are solid yellow triangles on the Wapack, 3-4" on a side, at or above eye level. Blazes on side trails vary by the trail, and are either light blue or white. Where the trail takes a sharp turn paint two blazes, one over the other. Many people ask me what paint to use. The AMC and Trailwrights recommend latex. A good choice is Benjamin Moore Impervex Latex High Gloss Enamel. It is available at Belletetes. Choose "Sun Yellow" for the Wapack Trail. For the blue blazed trails we are moving to the light blue "Utah Sky". You may need to get these colors mixed.

When painting blazes, bring along the following: empty plastic peanut butter jar containing the paint, a paint scraper, 1.5" brushes, plastic sandwich bags, and rags. The plastic jars are easier to carry than paint cans, and easier to close. The paint scraper is to clean the bark before painting. The sandwich bags keep the wet brushes from drying hard. Rags are for cleaning up. Loppers are also necessary for clearing brush that may be blocking the blazes.

Some find it convenient to put blazes on both sides of a tree at once. The problem with this method is that a tree that is visible going north is often screened by another tree or a bend in the trail when going south. Paint the northerly blazes when going north and the southerly blazes when going south. Ditto for east and west. It takes two people to blaze efficiently. One person (the one with the paint) spots the next blaze location ahead, which is marked by the person with the paint scraper. They then move ahead, spotting the next blaze location from the blaze just painted. Be careful not to over blaze.

BRUSHING:

Limb trees close to the trunk, not just back to the edge of the trail. Don't leave cut limbs on the trail. Drag these off of the trail, preferably to a low spot where they will rot more quickly. Cut saplings close to the ground. Dead stumps and tree limbs can become sharp "stickers" and are hazardous. Limb with a saw or lopper rather than an ax. Optimum trail clearance is 4' wide by 8' high. If a chain saw must be used to remove fallen trees, always use safety gear. We own chaps and helmets with face shields and ear protection. Please inform the Trails Committee Chair before planning any chain saw work.

DRAINAGE:

Poor drainage and the resulting trail erosion is the primary cause of trail maintenance problems. Cross drainage techniques, such as swails or waterbars, should be installed to divert water off of the trail as soon as possible.

Swails/Dips/Berms: A depression constructed across a slope, above and in conjunction with an earthen berm.

Conditions where appropriate:

- In areas where surface runoff might create erosion problems running across a trail.
- On slopes which have a trail grade less than 10%.

Guidelines:

- Install swails at the top of any slope and at proper spacing along sloping sections of the trail.
- The swail can be as shallow or as deep as necessary, taking into consideration the expected trail use and the conditions.
- Soil should be removed from the swale and transferred to the downhill side to form the berm.
- The swale should be constructed at a 30-45 degree angle downslope from a line perpendicular to the direction of the trail.
- The downhill end of the swale should extend far enough to disperse the water flow away from the trail.
- The uphill end of the swale should extend far enough beyond the trail to fully intercept the flow of water.
- Alternative water drainage techniques, such as waterbars, may be required if the swales are consistently becoming filled or breached.

Waterbars: A rock, earthen or log barrier angled across a trail to divert the runoff water off of the trail.

Conditions where appropriate:

The greater the slope and the higher the velocity or volume of water, the greater the need for waterbars as opposed to other drainage techniques.

Guidelines:

- Place each rock or log solidly into the ground, preferably using flat rocks or rot-resistant logs.
- Install waterbars at the top of slopes and at the steep sections of the trail as needed.
- The waterbar should be constructed at a 30-45 degree angle downslope from a line perpendicular to the direction of the trail.
- Construct the waterbar so that it extends at least 12 inches beyond both sides of the trail.
- As a minimum, the waterbar should drain at a 3% outslope.
- In a rock waterbar, each rock should overlap the rock below it and be overlapped by the rock directly above it.
- A log waterbar should be constructed with peeled logs at least 10" in diameter.
- Log waterbars should be held in place with large stones.
- The channel created by the water outlet and the waterbar itself can be lined with stones to reduce erosion.

The drainage information was adapted from Best Management Practices for Erosion Control during Trail Maintenance and Construction. This booklet is available from the:

Dept. of Resources and Economic Development
Division of Parks and Recreation
Trails Bureau
P.O. Box 1856
Concord, NH 03302-1856
(603) 271-3254