

Franklin Township Trails Advisory Committee's Adopt-a-trail Program

The Trails Advisory Committee's (TAC's) December 19, 2008 Pathways and Trails Plan includes a recommendation as follows:¹

An Adopt-a-Trail program should be implemented by the Township. This program would involve getting citizen volunteers and or volunteer organizations (scout troops, civic organizations, etc.) to adopt a specific trail and to thereby agree to periodically walk and inspect the trail and conduct litter clean-up, debris removal, minor pruning of bushes and to report any need for additional work, such as fallen tree removal, that may have to be performed by the Township's Public Works staff. Implementing this program could be done by utilizing the existing resources that are devoted to open space—the Township's Open Space Consultant, NJ Audubon Society and the Township's Public Works Department.

In order to implement the above recommendation, the TAC seeks volunteers who would be willing to spend a few hours of volunteer time walking a trail, inspecting it, perhaps doing some minor trimming of bushes and reporting to the Township any problems (such as fallen trees that might be blocking the path) or remediation that might be needed. Minor trail maintenance could be performed.

Volunteers will be given an orientation at the trail and given instruction on what to do as a member of the Adopt-A-Trail program.

The six trail systems that initially will be targeted for this program are:

1. Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve (Canal Road in Griggstown)
2. Ten Mile Run Greenway—upper woods trails (Griggstown)
3. Bunker Hill Natural Area and Franklin Park Farm and Natural Area (Bunker Hill Road, Griggstown and Old Vliet Road, Franklin Park)
4. Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve (Skillman Lane, Somerset)
5. Butler Road, North (Butler Road)
6. Butler Road, South (Butler Road)
7. Inman Park (Somerset)

Those interested in volunteering are encouraged to contact the Township's Open Space Coordinator, John Loos at saveland@jloos.com or 732 422-4326.

In order to implement the Adopt-a-Trail program, the Trails Advisory Committee, after consulting with the Open Space Advisory Committee, adopts the following Adopt-a-trail Goal and Guidelines.

¹ Franklin Township Trails Advisory Committee's Pathways and Trails Plan, p. 10.

Goal: To strengthen our communities through the formation of local Adopt-a-trail (AAT) groups that will operate according to the below guidelines.

Guidelines:

1. Each local AAT group will be comprised of volunteers who will periodically meet to discuss and make recommendations to the township on how a particular township-trail might be better managed. In effect, these AATs will be akin to Neighborhood-Watch groups, but will be looking out for their neighborhood's public-trails.
2. To participate in the local AAT, one must make application through signing the below application.
3. Each local AAT group will meet as a group at least annually to:
 - a. devise a schedule to: insure the periodic inspection of the adopted trail;
 - b. to discuss the results of their inspection;
 - c. to make any recommendations, to the township, that might come out of their discussions regarding management of the adopted trail.
4. Each local AAT group will select one or more group coordinators who will be responsible for planning and coordinating the periodic inspection and maintenance visits..
5. Each local AAT group will apply to the Township Manager to adopt a specific portion of the township's public-trails.
 - a. Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve (Canal Road in Griggstown)
 - b. Ten Mile Run Greenway—upper woods trails (Griggstown)
 - c. Bunker Hill Natural Area and Franklin Park Farm and Natural Area (Bunker Hill Road, Griggstown and Old Vliet Road, Franklin Park)
 - d. Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve (Skillman Lane, Somerset)
 - e. Butler Road, North (Butler Road)
 - f. Butler Road, South (Butler Road)
 - g. Inman Park (Somerset)
6. Recommendations of the AAT group shall always be guided by the following public-interest principles:
 - a. Public-land belongs to all the people of the township and in that sense the land is Our-Land;
 - b. Neighbors living nearby public-lands have a unique relationship with the public-land and the public interest includes minimizing conflicts between neighbors.
 - c. Public trails should respect the natural environment.
 - d. Species, other than our own, need places to live; where there are unique and special environments that exist or that can be created, planning the trails to respect these species is part of the public interest;
 - e. People need places for active and passive recreation: and
 - f. Public lands are not to be utilized by neighbors, or others, as places to discard unwanted debris—including grass clippings, tree stumps or any other vegetative material.
7. Whenever the township decides to implement any AAT recommendations or other land management practices that will affect the adopted trail, the township will communicate such practice to the AAT group and, when the township deems it appropriate, solicit volunteers from the AAT group to assist in

implementing the practice. Examples of this include: planting or re-planting of trees, bushes or flowers; litter removal; pruning; trail realignment or grading; and installation of trail markers or other minor improvements.

8. The township will maintain liability insurance that will cover AAT group member-volunteers.
9. Trail construction will be done in accordance with the attached "Guidelines for Trail Clearing and Marking."

I have reviewed the above Goal and the Guidelines and hereby apply to be a member of the _____ Adopt-a-trail group.

Insert Name of Public Land

I will exercise any duties in the AAT group in accordance with this goal and these guidelines.

Signature

Name

E-mail address

Street Address

Phone

City and Zip code

Guidelines for Trail Clearing and Marking

Clearing Trails

- Trails through forests should be ‘single-track’ trails, i.e., wide enough, whenever possible, for two individuals to walk side-by-side—approximately three-and one-half (3-1/2) to four (4) feet wide.
- Most leaf litter should be left on the trail to provide a bed to walk on. When clearing trails in very wet areas, some leaf litter must remain on the trail to help with water absorption.
- Vegetative debris (sticks, branches, rocks, etc.) accumulated during trail clearing should be scattered in the surrounding woods, giving the appearance of natural woodland debris. Other trash should be removed from the property.
- Saplings and stumps should be completely removed from the trail (cut saplings and stumps to soil level).
- When reasonable, exposed rocks that present a significant danger of tripping someone, should be removed from the trail. If holes are created by rock removal, the holes must be filled in with dirt for a level walking surface.
- Branches that extend into the trail should be cut back – this includes hanging branches.
- Be sure workers look up for exposed branches and dead branches that could fall onto the trail and remove same.
- Trail realignment should follow the flagging – if modifications are believed necessary, these must be approved by Township.
- Logs/rocks should not be used to “line” the trail – trails should appear as natural as possible.
- Under no circumstances should bridges be constructed to cross streams – use rocks if the stream is too wide for a single step. If rocks are used, place them in as natural a manner as possible and be sure not to block stream flow.
- Do not remove trail flagging – once your trail is complete (including blaze placement), Township will inspect the trail and remove the flagging at that time.

Marking Trails

- Blazes should be placed at eye level (roughly 5’ from ground surface).
- Blazes should only be placed on healthy trees that are roughly 3” or greater in diameter.
- When using metal or plastic markers, use two aluminum nails with big heads – drive nails in *only part way*, leaving roughly ¼ inch or more of the nail exposed (to allow for tree growth).
- Blazes should clearly mark the trail but not be over used – no more than one blaze should be seen at one time in either direction, but a blaze should always be visible.
- Be consistent in blaze intervals where possible – extreme variations may confuse the hiker.
- Look down the trail after placing one blaze and note the next tree that catches the eye and is at a suitable distance (and beside the trail) for the next blaze placement.
- Avoid placing blazes on both sides of the same tree, but be sure blazes are clearly seen from both directions.
- Turns should be done as follows:

A right turn blaze looks like this:  and a left turn like this: . The upper blaze indicates the direction of the turn.

- The end or beginning of the trail should have two blazes side-by-side or one directly above the other.