

Your Adventure
Starts Nearby.



Adopter Handbook

Second Edition

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Contents

Introduction	5
Basic Adopter Responsibilities	5
Blazing	7
Blazing Record	12
Signing	12
Carsonite Posts and Decals	13
Main Trail	13
Side Trails	15
End of Certified Segment.....	15
NCT Emblems	16
Destination and Identity Signs	17
Private Property Courtesy Signs	18
Carsonite Post and Decal Installation	19
Removing Carsonite Posts	20
Clearing and Pruning	20
Mowing	21
Trail Tread	22
Bridges and Other Trail Structures	24
Support Facilities	25
Campsites	25
Benches	26
Trailheads, Register Boxes	27
Vista Maintenance	28
Conflicting Uses	28
Litter	29
Landowner Appreciation	29
Calling for Help	30
Summary	30



Vision Statement

Our vision for the North Country National Scenic Trail is that of a premier footpath of national significance, offering a superb experience for hikers in a permanently protected corridor, traversing and interpreting the richly diverse environmental, cultural, and historic features of the northern United States.

Introduction

This booklet is designed to assist Trail Adopters in understanding their responsibilities when they agree to adopt a particular section of trail. It includes maintenance standards and guidelines that will assist the adopter to make sure that his or her section of trail is a pleasure to walk.

As an adopter, what you do locally affects the national scope of the trail. Imagine for a moment a first time visitor to the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) walking the segment of trail that you are responsible for maintaining. Will their experience be positive or negative? If it is negative, their reaction may be to discount the entire NCNST thinking that it is all in the same poor condition that gave them the negative feelings. On the other hand, if their experience is positive, they will most likely be encouraged to again hike your section of trail or better yet, they will be encouraged to seek out another section and hopefully to learn about the entire 4,600-mile long trail. A good trail experience is what gains support for the trail and ultimately increases membership.

Basic Adopter Responsibilities

As an adopter of a segment of the NCNST, your responsibility is to ensure that the trail is in good condition and a pleasure to walk. Because you will become very familiar with your segment of trail, the common tendency is to see things in such a familiar light that you tend to overlook shortcomings. Always try to see your segment through the eyes of a stranger.

Your routine responsibilities include:

- Walking the trail a minimum of three times per year and hopefully monthly to check its condition and take care of problems as they develop.
- Insuring that the blue blazes marking the trail are fresh and crisp. Typically, you will have to repaint the blazes about every four years.
- Insuring that all trail signs including nail-up emblems and Carsonite emblems and decals are in place and in good condition.
- Insuring that the trail is clear of branches or brush growing in from the sides or drooping from above.
- Promptly removing fallen trees or limbs.
- Mowing the trail a minimum of two times per summer season. In areas of rapid growth such as openings or where there are vigorous bracken ferns, you may have to mow monthly during the active growing season.
- Performing minor tread repair to insure that the trail remains dry and smooth.
- Visually inspecting every bridge or other trail structure to make sure it is in sound and safe condition.
- Promptly removing any litter.
- If formally designated campsites are present, making sure that they are clean, mowed, and in good condition. Be sure to check the tent pads and latrine areas.
- If vistas are present, keeping them open or call for help if it is more than you can handle.

- Inspecting any register boxes and repairing them if needed. Making sure that the notebook is not full and that it is in a waterproof container. Be sure that pens or pencils are present.
- Knowing when to call for help.
- Maintaining relations with agency managers and landowners.

Blazing

Blazes are critical. The NCNST should be continuously and neatly marked so that the hiker who is unfamiliar with the area can easily discern the route and the side trails to water, campsites, trailheads, etc. Blazes are the workhorses of the trail sign family—there are more of them than all other types of signs combined. Rectangular blue blazes provide continuous marking of the trail from New York to North Dakota. They are the primary and most important method of unmistakably and permanently marking the trail route. Rectangular white blazes mark the side trails to the NCT.

Blazes should be:

- **2 x 6-inch vertical blue rectangles on the main trail.**

The correct paint to use is Nelson Boundary Paint-blue. Your local chapter officers may have a supply on hand. If not, it is available from the National Park Service, 608-441-5610, or check the NCTA website for the current order form. You can also purchase it from Nelson Paint Company, P.O. Box 2040, Iron Mountain, MI 49802. Their telephone number is 800-236-9278 or you can shop online at www.nelsonpaint.com.

- **2 x 6-inch vertical white rectangles on side trails.** The correct paint to use is Nelson Boundary Paint-white. It is available at the same locations shown above.
- **Neatly painted with sharp corners and clean edges.** A 1-inch wide brush works well.
- **A little above head height**—generally about six feet high.
- **Painted on trees or rocks (in N.D., may have to install special posts) with a smooth surface that has been prepared prior to painting.** The spot where the blaze will be painted should be clean, smooth, and free of furrows or cracks.



This is necessary so that you will be able to paint a crisp, square- cornered blaze that is properly sized. Preparation also allows the paint to adhere better and remain longer.

Two tools facilitate surface preparation—a sharp hatchet and a wire brush with paint scraper on the end. The hatchet can be used to remove brush or branches that may grow and obstruct the blaze. It should also be used to prepare a smooth surface on rough-barked trees—but you should not flail away at the tree, because the hatchet is then difficult to control. Instead

hold the end of the handle in one hand and the back of the head in the other hand—with the blade facing up the bole of the tree. With both hands push the blade up the tree—cutting a little deeper into the bark with each stroke. Using this technique, you can easily control the depth so that you don't cut into the smooth, white inner layer and you will achieve a very smooth surface for the paint. Essentially you are using the hatchet as a plane.

The wire brush is used to clean lichens and other surface material from smooth-barked trees such as balsam and young red maple. The paint scraper works well on young ash or even young red pine.

- **Placed at intervisible intervals.** A common tendency is to over blaze (apply too many blazes). When walking the trail, a hiker should generally see only one blaze at a time—within a few steps of passing a blaze, the next one should become visible. Too often, over zealotness has led to four, five, or even six blazes visible at a time. This is tantamount to sign pollution.

The easiest way to obtain the correct blaze density is to paint only one way at a time and to paint backwards. See *Blazing Backwards Ensures Quality Not Quantity* by John Morgan on the NCTA web site guide to blazing.

As an example, while walking North on the trail, paint the first blaze on the North side of a tree where you begin. Progressing North on the trail, keep looking back over your shoulder at the

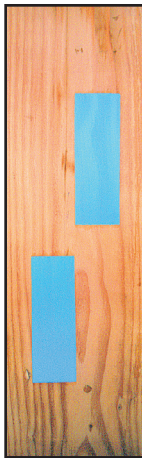
last blaze to judge when it is no longer clearly visible due to distance or trail alignment. At that point, choose the next prominent tree that is highly visible to a hiker coming South and again paint on the North side of the tree. Keep progressing in this manner until reaching a logical turn around point. Repeat the process of looking over your shoulder but now walking South and painting on the South side of the tree—selecting trees that are highly visible to Northbound hikers.

- **Placed on carefully selected trees.** One well-placed tree with a blaze is better than three poorly placed trees. A well-placed tree is one that comes into view quickly for a hiker. Most often, these trees occur on the outside of a curve, they are close to the trail, and not blocked by other trees or shrubs. Often, a tree that is highly visible from one direction is not as visible from the other direction. If it is highly visible from both directions, paint a blaze facing both directions. If it is not, choose another tree for the second blaze.

In this geographic area, some of the better trees to blaze, are Red Pine, Jack Pine, White Pine, Red Oak, Red Maple, Balsam Fir, Ash, and Hornbeam (musclewood). Aspen in general and particularly young Aspen are a poor choice because they grow so fast and because they do not hold paint for any length of time. When blazing through a young Aspen stand, look carefully for other species to paint. If no other species are available and painting young Aspen is necessary, recognize that you will have to repaint every one to two years.

Even older aspen should be avoided unless there is no other choice.

Paper Birch is another species that is mediocre for blazing. The blue blazes show up well against the white bark and it holds well, but it is difficult to clean the tree of loose bark without creating more loose bark.



Indicates a right turn.

- **Use offset blazes before important turns, junctions, or areas requiring hiker alertness.** In these areas, two blazes are placed on the same tree with the top one being offset in the direction of the turn. Use offset blazes sparingly and do not use them simply because the trail bends in the woods. Primarily use them at junctions, when following an old road or grade and diverting from it, or generally at 90-degree turns. An offset blaze before a junction should be reinforced by a single blaze that is easily visible just beyond the junction. Avoid developing alternate systems of marking major turns (i.e.: arrows, slanted blazes, etc.)
- **Clearly marked at all junctions, road crossings, and turns.**
- **Neutralized with flat, natural-colored paints on abandoned trail sections.** One particularly good neutralizing color is Sherwin Williams Yuma Green. When obliterating blazes, blend the edges unevenly into the rest of the tree.

Blazing Record—My Segment:

Date

Comment

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<hr/>	<hr/>
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Urban Blazes

The NPS developed the Urban Blazing System to be used within communities. This system includes special metal plates with mounting brackets and special decals in a variety of configurations. These signs/blazes are more attractive and thus better accepted in town.

Signing

Signs provide necessary information about appropriate trail uses, destinations, directions, private ownership courtesy, and distances. They also provide identity for the trail. A complete family of signs is shown in the National Park Service's *North Country Trail—A Handbook for Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*. Some of these signs, such as interpretive panels and the brown and white highway signs occur rather infrequently and will be placed by the trail builders or the chapter. Your responsibility for these signs is merely to be aware of their condition and to notify a chapter officer if they become faded, damaged, or need replacement. This Adopters Handbook focuses only on the more frequently used signs found along the trail. It is your responsibility to insure that

they are in place, well maintained, and free of obstructing vegetation.

Your local chapter officers may have a supply of signs. If not, they are available at no cost from the National Park Service (608-441-5610) or check the website for current order form.

Carsonite Posts and Decals:

On the NCNST, the signing system is heavily based on the Carsonite line of products. When the trail was built and certified, all signs should have been installed. If you note any discrepancies from what is shown below, replacements should be obtained.

Carsonite–Main NCT:

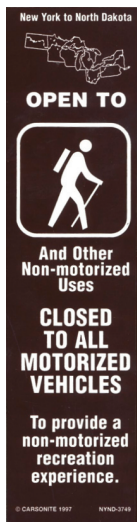
Along the main NCT, Carsonite posts with the appropriate decals should be installed at:

- Both sides of every road crossing—including any open two-track woods or prairie road. These should be located at or just inside the woods line so that they are not destroyed by road maintenance equipment.
- Both sides of every formal trail junction or other access locations.
- Where the trail leaves the trailhead parking lot.

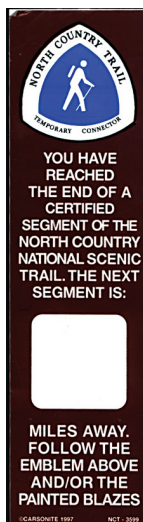




NCT-3595



NCT-3749



NCT-3599

Each post should include the following decals beginning ½-inch below the top of the post in the following order, facing the direction in which the trail is accessed:

- NCT Emblem (NCT-3597)
- Brown Regulatory Strip (NCT-3595). NOTE: in some rare cases an alternative brown strip (NYND-3749) that allows other non-motorized uses is used (approved bicycle or horse trail).
- Optional “No” Symbols. These 3 x 3-inch International

Recreation Symbols depict a wide variety of prohibited transportation modes such as bicycles, horses, snowmobiles, ATVs, etc. Each has a red slash through the symbol. “No” symbols should be installed only when a problem develops so as to avoid a proliferation of negative signing.

- NCTA Adopter Decal. This blue and white strip provides white space to insert your name or contact information with a permanent marker.
- Optional Agency Logo such as DNR or USFS.
- If the trail makes an abrupt turn on a road or another trail, the back of the post should include an arrow pointing in the direction of the turn. This arrow reinforces the offset blazes mentioned earlier.

Carsonite–Side Trails:

Side trails to campsites, water, parking, or other points of interest should be marked by installing a post at the junction with the main NCT. Decals on this post will be the appropriate International Recreation Symbol (tent, water, parking, etc.) and an arrow pointing down the side trail. If you feel it is necessary to indicate the distance, install the appropriate numbers.

End of Certified Segment Decals:

If there is a marked, temporary road walk (uncertified) within your area, the back of the post at the end of the certified segment should have an NCT Connector Strip (NCT-3599) installed. In the white space, use a permanent marker to indicate the distance to the next certified segment of trail.

NCT Emblems:

These familiar rounded triangle emblems are the official insignia for the NCNST. They are to be in place on all certified segments of the trail.



Conversely, they are not to be used on uncertified segments.

In addition to the already discussed Carsonite decal style emblems, rigid, nail-up emblems are available in a variety of sizes. The most common sizes are 3 ½-inch and 9-inch, but larger sizes are available for placement on large highway signs. The rigid emblems can be nailed or screwed to wooden posts, bulletin boards, shelter overhangs, bridges, and trees. On trees, always use aluminum nails.

Emblems should be:

- Located on each side of every access point (road crossing or side trail). In many areas, the extensive use of Carsonite posts and decals discussed above is sufficient.
- Facing both directions approximately every ½ to 1 mile along the trail. When road crossings or trail intersections are greater than 1-mile apart, this rule comes into play. Install 3 ½ inch nail-up emblems on highly visible trees at the ½ mile intervals. Place the emblem as high on the tree as possible to avoid vandalism; use aluminum nails.

Destination and Identity Signs

Destination signs indicate direction and distance to points of interest along the trail—such as the next road, a beautiful waterfall, etc. Identification signs are simple signs that merely mark a feature for hiker knowledge and interest—such as the name of a lake or creek, a CCC camp, or other interesting features.

Complete specifications for these signs can be found in the NPS Handbook. Before placing a sign, discuss your idea with the chapter to avoid over-signing and to discuss sources and specifications. When installed, Destination and Identity Signs should be:

- Routed, wooden signs with blue (blaze paint) letters on a natural colored board. Alternatively, leave letters unpainted. A coat of sealant can be used to protect the board from weathering.
- Sturdily mounted on a wooden post using appropriate hardware such as carriage bolts or lag screws. Do not affix wooden signs to trees.
- Posts pointed or slanted at the top to shed water.
- Treated 2 x 4-inch cleats nailed to the bottom sides of posts to prevent removal.
- Prepared in a neat, craftsman like manner.
- Easily legible but with letters as small as possible. Remember, these are intended for a slow-moving hiker so the letters can be as small as an inch in size.

As an adopter, your job is to insure that signs are in place, in good shape, and that they are securely hung. You should take care of routine maintenance but if a new, replacement sign is needed and you are not comfortable preparing it, you should contact a chapter officer.

Private Property Courtesy Signs:

When the NCNST crosses private property via a formal easement or handshake agreement, these special, yellow and black decals should be installed where the trail enters the property from both directions. This informs hikers that they are passing through private property and reminds them of common courtesy rules. Private property signs should be:

- Installed facing the hiker entering the property.
- Installed on Carsonite posts available from the NPS.

North Country National Scenic Trail

Private Property

**This footpath exists because of the
courtesy of private landowners.**

Please do not abuse it.

Please preserve the trail by:

- ◆ Traveling only by foot
- ◆ Staying on the trail
- ◆ Not hunting, fishing or trapping
- ◆ Not trespassing for other reasons
- ◆ Camping only in designated sites
- ◆ Building fires only at designated campsites
- ◆ Not damaging any vegetation
- ◆ Not walking on crops
- ◆ Closing any gates you open
- ◆ Packing out all trash

Trail maintained by volunteers

For information about the trail or to report problems contact the North

Country Trail Association at

1-866-HIKE-NCT or

www.northcountrytrail.org

Local Contact Number

Carsonite Post and Decal Installation

A special driver is needed to install Carsonite posts. Without it, you will damage the top of the post. The chapter should have drivers available for your use. Posts should be:

- Plumb in both directions.
- Installed to the black depth mark found on the lower part of the post—generally this is somewhere around 18-inches deep.
- Located where they are somewhat protected from vandalism. Rather than placing them in a wide open space, place them close to a tree or boulder so that a vandal will have to damage their vehicle if they intend to damage the post.
- Choose a protected but visible site. Often this is at the edge of the woods line—rather than within the road clearing.
- Scuff away the surface litter, small branches, etc, to insure that you don't inadvertently place the point on top of a small rock, branch, or other obstruction that could damage the point during the initial few taps.
- Place the toe of your shoe against the bottom of the post to help keep it vertical as you begin driving.
- Use light taps until the post is a few inches in the ground and you are confident that it will remain vertical. Then you can increase the vigor of the driving strokes if you want.
- In most areas, posts drive easily due to the soil make-up. If you do encounter an extremely rocky area, a special pilot hole driver or a rock bar may need to be used to make the initial hole.

- Use a clean rag to wipe the dust and film off of the post where you intend to mount the decal(s).
- Remove the top part of the decal backing and fold it down so that you can carefully align the decal on the post. Once you are satisfied that the top of the decal is centered, you can gradually peel down more of the backing while at the same time, pressing the decal in place.
- Use the blue plastic applicator tool to firmly press the decal(s) in place. Work from the center out to remove any air bubbles or small wrinkles. Pay particular attention to insure that the edges are firmly pressed in place.

Removing Carsonite Posts

If a Carsonite post needs to be removed, it will have to be dug up with a shovel. The barb on the bottom prevents pulling of the post.

If a post is damaged beyond re-using it, cut it off at the ground line. However, if there are 18 to 20-inch undamaged portions, cut these to size with a hacksaw, drill a screw hole at the top and bottom and save them for future use in affixing to an existing wooden post.

Clearing and Pruning

The NCNST should be kept clear of vegetation and obstructions, which impede foot travel or brush against the hiker from the sides or top. It shall be cleared so that a hiker with a pack can walk the trail without difficulty—branches and tall annual vegetation should not brush against either the hiker or their pack. Standards for trail clearing include:

- Blowdowns, brush, and limbs cleared annually to four feet in width and eight feet in height.
- An occasional, large log can be left across the trail near trailheads to discourage prohibited vehicles. In areas where ATVs are a problem, cut only a 30-inch chunk out of the logs. Keep in mind that a DR mower is about 30 inches wide and maintain sufficient space for its passage.
- All brush and trees cut flush with the ground, and all limbs cut flush with the tree.
- All dead or broken trees or limbs that are likely to fall into the trail should be cut and cleared.
- All cut trees, limbs, and brush should be removed completely from the trail and dispersed out of sight.

Mowing

Mowing is an important component of clearing. In most of the NCT states, there is vigorous growth of grass, forbs, ferns, briars, etc. throughout the growing season. This occurs even within densely forested areas but it is most problematic where the trail passes through old fields, frost pockets, clearcut areas, and other openings where sunlight is more intense.

Most chapters have large, walk-behind brush hog mowers available. These are available for scheduling and transferring from one adopter to the next. They are excellent at cutting all of the aforementioned vegetation, plus they will easily remove hazel brush, small trees up to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter, and briars.

Mowing standards include:

- Mow every four to six weeks between May 15 and August 15 or whenever the vegetation gets higher than 12 inches.
- Mow a minimum of twice per year with three or more times preferred in some locations.
- Normally, there is little regrowth after the trail is mowed in early August—except in extremely wet years.
- Mow the left side of the trail (this allows cutting closer to trailside trees) to a turn-around point and return on the other side—one pass in each direction is generally sufficient.
- When mowing the trail, also mow campsites and trailheads, and around benches, Carsonite posts and other signs.
- In areas where you can anticipate that the adjoining hazel brush or other brushy species will quickly grow or lean into the trail, mow wider.
- Schedule and coordinate with adjoining adopters to facilitate mower transfer.

Trail Tread

The trail tread is the actual walking surface of the trail. On the NCNST, the standards vary depending on which Recreation Opportunity Spectrum setting the segment is within. See Chapter 2 of the *North Country Trail: Handbook for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance* for more information. The vast majority of the trail is within the Roaded Natural/Rural setting. Within this setting, the tread width should be 24 inches wide with a 5% outslope (the downhill edge of the trail should be approximately one inch lower than the uphill edge). Maximum

sustained grade is to be 10% with up to 20% allowed for a distance of 100 feet.

As new trail is constructed or older trail relocated, it should be designed and built to meet the standards. Nevertheless, the condition of the tread should be continually monitored as problems needing corrective measures can develop over time.

- The tread should remain smooth, solid, and stable.
- Sidehill sections should retain their 5% outslope. Through use, the inner portion of the trail can wear down so that it is lower than the outer edge. If this happens, the tread is said to have a berm, which must be removed to prevent further damage.
- Observe if a small rivulet or erosion channel is developing near the toe of the backslope. If so, it indicates that water is not properly draining off of the trail and again corrective actions are necessary.
- If through use, wearing away of the outer edge, or slumping of the backslope the tread narrows to much less than 24 inches, it should be rebuilt.

Bridges and Other Trail Structures

Trail structures are defined as a part of the trail itself and include a variety of things that are built to facilitate ease of passage or to protect sensitive areas. The most commonly occurring structures include bridges, boardwalks, and puncheon. Other trail structures such as stiles, gates, and steps are more common in some areas.

As an Adopter, your job is to keep a very close eye on any structures that are present. Inspect them carefully for signs of

deterioration and report any discrepancies promptly to a chapter officer.

- Observe each structure every time you walk the trail and annually inspect it more carefully.
- Keep the structure free of large amounts of decaying vegetation (rotting leaves or grass) and soil. Use a broom or shovel to keep this material off of the structure.
- All structures should be level, firm, and stable. They should not tilt to one side or rock back and forth as you walk on them.
- Bridges are to be 36 inches wide and will have handrails if they cross any dry ravine deeper than five feet or if they cross swift or potentially dangerous water.
- Boardwalks look like elongated docks with the surface boards perpendicular to the direction of the trail—usually used in areas of standing water. They should be 36 inches in width.
- Puncheon is comprised of parallel planks running in the same direction as the trail—usually used in shallow, seasonally wet areas where the water level would not cause the structure to float. The planks rest on sill logs, which in turn rest on the surface of the ground. Until the standards are changed, puncheon should be built a minimum of two 2 x 10 planks wide plus a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch space between the planks for a total width of approximately 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Wider widths may be desirable in high use areas such as wetland demonstration areas or where mowed passage is desired. Then use Type III puncheon, which is also preferable because it is accessible.
- Type III Puncheon looks like a boardwalk in all respects except instead of resting on vertical posts, it rests on treated log sills.

Support Facilities

In contrast to trail structures, Support Facilities directly assist the hiker. Examples include: trailheads, benches, campsites, and register boxes. While integral components of the overall trail experience, support facilities are not part of the trail itself.

Campsites:

Many backpackers practice no-trace camping on public lands by: merely finding a suitable tent space at the end of the day, not building a fire, and the next morning leaving no-trace that anyone spent the night. This practice is legally appropriate only in those areas where dispersed camping is allowed—such as within most National, State, and County forests. In other areas such as within most parks, and on private lands, dispersed camping is not allowed. In these areas, the agencies or landowners are interested in controlling where hikers camp. For that reason, the NPS handbook suggests providing a campsite every five to eight miles along the route. Additionally, within many areas, good campsites are limited by the availability of water.

Because of the above, if your area lacks places to camp, you should watch for good, level locations that are close to a source of water and seek permission to establish a hiker only campsite. If formal campgrounds are in very close proximity to the trail, they should be considered as a component of the total camping opportunities. However, keep in mind that most backpackers will not hike more than about ½ mile off of the main trail unless there are no other possibilities. As a trail adopter, you do not have any responsibilities in these large campgrounds—you are responsible

for the backpacker campsites found along the trail:

- When mowing the trail, also mow the campsites including the tent pads, trail to the latrine, eating area, etc.
- Inspect the latrine to insure that it is in good repair and basically clean. Make sure that the pit is not full—when it is, the latrine will need to be moved.
- Make sure that only one fire pit is established. If more develop, obliterate them by widely scattering any rocks and ashes and spread leaf litter over the scar.
- Visually check nearby trees for “clothes hanging” nails and remove them.
- Remove any litter.

Benches:

In some areas, resting benches have been installed—generally at vistas and other scenic areas. If any are located within your area, you should:

- Inspect them, like any other structure, to insure that they are in sound and safe condition.
- Mow around them when mowing the trail.
- Keep the area clean and neat.

Trailheads:

Formal trailheads are those areas where a parking lot and a kiosk are provided. Generally, these are found at major road crossings or near the boundaries of major blocks of public land.

If there is a trailhead within your adopted area, you are responsible to:

- Visually inspect it for signs of vandalism and report any problems.
- Make sure that the kiosk and any interpretive panels or signs are in good condition, not faded, and informative.
- Keep the area mowed and neat.
- Pick up any litter.

Register Boxes:

Along some portions of the trail, register boxes have been installed. They provide valuable information regarding the amount of use on various segments, visitor reactions and suggestions, and enjoyable comments.

To function properly, register boxes need to be maintained just like any other facility. As an adopter, you should make sure the box is:

- In good repair with functioning door and latch.
- Free of rodents, stinging insects, spiders, etc.
- Supplied with register book with adequate useable space, pens or pencils.
- The book is weatherproof and protected—generally inside a good heavy duty, freezer-type, zip lock bag.
- Review comments to see if you need to follow up on something.
- Kept clear by mowing.
- Replace the book when it gets close to full and deposit the old one in the chapter's historical records.

Vista Maintenance

In many areas, natural and created vistas occur along the trail. These “windows” provide long-distance views from the trail and enhance the hiking experience. As an adopter, you should be aware of all existing vistas and opportunities to easily create new ones. You should also insure that the view is maintained.

This is done by periodically cutting vegetation as it grows and begins to block the view. Possibilities include sawing or mowing, depending on the situation.

Conflicting Uses

The NCNST trail was designed and constructed as a hiking and backpacking trail. This is also its intended use in most areas. As an adopter you should:

- Watch for evidence of unauthorized users such as ATVs, mountain bikers or horseback riders.
- If spotted, report the evidence proper agency land managers.
- If the unauthorized use is flagrant or damaging the trail to any great degree, consider talking with local law enforcement officials.
- Install “no” decals in appropriate locations when abuses are anticipated or discovered.

Litter

You may still find occasional litter that requires clean-up. You may experience increased amounts of litter near road crossings and in the worst-case scenario, even unlawful dump loads of trash. Do what you can to clean these heavily impacted areas but if it is too much to handle, set up a special workday involving other chapter members.

The adopter's job regarding litter is pretty self-explanatory—carry it out with you and keep the trail in clean condition.

Landowner Appreciation

Without the cooperation and permission of both public agencies and private landowners, the trail could not exist. It is in place because of their goodwill. As a trail adopter, you are the most important and frequent contact with these hosts. Cultivating a relationship with them is time well spent. Use the following list as a starting point.

- Contact each landowner or agency manager at least annually or more frequently when you are in the area. This lets them know that someone is interested and actively maintaining the trail. This contact also provides an opportunity to discuss how things are going and bring up any potential conflicts or changes needed.
- Consider sending an annual note or Holiday card expressing your greetings and thanks.

- Check to make sure that they are receiving their complimentary copy of *The North Star* and new 1:100K maps as they are published.

Calling for Help

As a trail adopter, you are expected to handle many routine things regarding the trail's maintenance and appearance. On the other hand, you should not hesitate to "call for help" when situations develop that are beyond your capability. In some situations, it will be obvious that additional chapter or trail crew help is needed. Some examples are shown below but this list is not exhaustive:

- Many trees across the trail caused by a wind or ice storm.
- Unauthorized dumping of trash near the trail.
- A segment of trail that has become severely overgrown.
- Extensive erosion or tread damage.
- Bridges or other structures needing replacement.
- When major trail relocation is needed.
- Difficulty dealing with land manager or landowner.

Summary

Last but not least, remember that you are a vital part of the North Country Trail team. Your efforts ensure a safe and enjoyable hiking experience for all and a legacy for future generations. Take pride in your section and enjoy!



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