

Trails & Shelters Coordinator

Approved-September 12, 2000

1. The coordinator is elected by the Section at the annual meeting for a 1-year term.
2. The coordinator may be reelected twice in succession, as with the other section officers.
3. The Executive Committee fills a vacancy.
4. Serves as chairperson of the Section's Trails & Shelters Committee
5. Organizes a minimum of four work outings per year (two in the spring and two in the fall) on the Section's trails.
6. Works with the GMC Director of Field Programs on all Section trails and shelters related issues.
7. Is responsible for educating volunteers about trail and trail maintenance standards and about safe working practices.
8. Exercises custody of the Section's tool inventory
9. Writes two trails-related articles per year for Trail Talk.
10. Serves on the Section's Executive Committee

History

Details added in 2003

The above description is accurate and complete. I have taken the liberty of describing how I perform the job, expecting that successors will modify the details as they see fit. (It would be nice if they added their current views in a section, above, named Details added in 200x.)

Desirable attributes

Knowledge and skills:

1. Be familiar with the trails and shelters maintained by the section
2. Visit those trails and shelters at least once a year
3. Be familiar with many of the people who volunteer to maintain the trails and shelters
4. Be able to work with volunteers with varying degrees of commitment, skill, and goal orientation.
5. It is useful to lay out the work and completion criteria, even while recognizing that volunteers have the perfect freedom to lay down the tools at any time.
6. Be able to perform much the routine of the trail maintenance tasks
7. Commit to a 3-year strategy for trail maintenance and volunteer requirement. (Note that the term is actually for 1 year.)

Workload

The Coordinator should attend 5 meetings a year (executive committee and annual meeting); devote about 7 days a year to trail work (5 work outings and 2 scouting hikes). Also, the preparation of plans and reports for each work hike takes several hours. From November to April, the only work to be done is the plan for the next season's work. For the remainder of the year, expect to respond to a few emails a week concerning adopters' reports and trail conditions.

Expect that every few years there will be an "extraordinary" event requiring additional work. The ice storm of 1999 and Hurricane Hugo in 1992 are examples.

The coordinator may elect to learn trail work from GMC, LTP, or other hiking clubs.

Decisions:

The most critical role is to decide what maintenance projects to address immediately, what to defer, and what to refer to the Long Trail Patrol. It is helpful to maintain a photographic record of trouble spots. (Observers' reports can be expected to overstate the seriousness of a problem.) It is important to understand which conditions are transient (as springtime bogs) and which lead to trail widening or destruction.

Also, the coordinator must determine the least-intensive remediation.

The volunteer environment:

As one volunteer states: "I'm a volunteer; I can quit anytime."

Notwithstanding the above emphasis on trail work, the coordinator should always err on the side of getting volunteers to return, rather than completing a particular job.

Elaboration of the Job Description

Trails & Shelters Committee

1. The President, upon recommendation of the Coordinator, has appointed this committee.
2. The committee has been composed of all workers who attend 4 work hikes in the past 2 years. "Meetings" are generally held at lunch break on all work hikes. Most communication is conducted by email.
3. Executive Committee. Submit annually a summary report and post it on the website
4. Summary of work hikes
5. Tool inventory
6. Condition of the trails
7. Propose items for the annual budget

Outings:

The 'basic' four outings (work hikes) a year are mostly determined by the climate and holidays.

Spring work hikes must be complete by the weekend before Memorial Day is observed, as trail use is discouraged until then. Fall work hikes follow the Columbus Day weekend, in order to attract volunteers. Smugglers Notch is last in the spring (so the snow has melted) and first in the fall (before Vermont 108 is closed).

The sequence for a work hike:

March and July: set dates and submit them to the planning meeting and Trail Talk.

Submit the 'skeleton' trip report to the website. The skeleton report includes the Trail Talk description and adds the objectives and priorities.

(This is expanded after the hike takes place to include attendees, what was accomplished, and a narrative.)

Month before: Solicit needs from adopters in the area

Week before: scout the trail; update the trip report on the website

Day before: establish priorities for work crews so there are always tasks to be done, no matter how many people appear

Work hike: meet workers, explain the mission, assign tasks to crews, organize carpooling

Day after: submit trip report with all names to Vice President and narrative to the website.

Other events have been scheduled in recent years to accomplish specific objectives. Examples: ice storm cleanup in 1999, puncheon building on Elephants Head in 2002, bark mulch hauling in 2003. These are opportunities to include section members in the more skilled areas of trail work. Consider an event in connection with National Trails Day in June.

Special projects

1. The section performs shelter building and rebuilding. Although every project is different, my experience with the Bamforth Ridge Shelter construction in 2001-2002 may be helpful. The construction was organized by an ad hoc committee appointed by the Executive Committee. My role was to be sure the volunteers were available and the work organized.

2. Communication with section members

3. Knowledge of the website is useful but not required. The Coordinator should have access to email, as almost all of the section's business is now conducted by email.

4. Strategy. The coordinator should have a strategy for the work hikes and make it manifest via the hike descriptions. Hikes should appeal to new members, new workers, regular volunteers, and skilled trail workers.

GMC Relations:

The Section accepts responsibility for 2 sections of the Long Trail (see the 'Tour' link in the banner of this page). They are entirely within Camels Humps State Park and Mount Mansfield State Forest.

Vermont Forest, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) are the landowner and owner of all shelters.

FPR funds GMC to maintain shelters and trails and the summer caretakers.

Some of these funds go to the Long Trail Patrol, a seasonal crew that performs "heavy" work.

GMC maintains an adopter program, run by the Director of Field Programs and the Volunteer Coordinator. Adopters perform "light" maintenance. This means clearing blowdowns and drainage on trails and upkeep of shelters. Trails and Management has defined its role to be between the "light" and "heavy" maintenance, to back up adopters when the workload is heavy, and to fill adopter vacancies.

Construction projects, as the Bamforth Ridge Shelter, are performed by an ad-hoc committee with its own charter.

Trails and Shelters arranges the volunteer labor and advises on the implications for maintenance.

The coordinator receives communications from the GMC Trail Management Committee. Relevant items should be passed on to the Executive Committee and adopters.

Receive adopter's reports. In the absence of a report, communicate with the adopter. Be aware of adopter vacancies and suggest interested section members apply. (The actual assignment of adopters is done by GMC.)

Submit the annual summary to the GMC, including volunteer effort. (The GMC also gives 5- and 10-year service awards, but we won't have good records for this until 2011.)

Educating volunteers.

1. Accompany new adopters to their assignment and explain what is required of them.

2. New workers are generally instructed as part of a work hike. Commonly, they are assigned to an experienced worker.

3. Trail Talk articles. These are assigned by the editor.

John Buddington, Coordinator, 2001-2004