

# CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF TREADWAY 1989-2009

BRUCE TRAIL

# TREADWAY

MAY 2010

UPDATES  
EVENTS  
IDEAS  
NEWS

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## GETTING IT DONE with VOLUNTEERS

Many of our clubs have been very successful over the years; accomplishing great work, from negotiating hand-shake agreements with landowners to building and maintaining one of the most spectacular hiking trails in North America. I would like to see our clubs share some of these success stories. I think it would be gratifying to know just how much the BTC has contributed to our communities by helping to keep our planet liveable. Goodness knows, with what's happening around us, from oil spills to volcanic eruptions, planet earth can use the help. Stories can take any form; an article, pictures, or just random thoughts as I have chosen to do. So here goes, the first TREADWAY issue devoted to volunteers; where they come from, what they do and why they continue to work on the BT.

After 15 years of volunteer trail maintenance work with the Iroquoia Club, here's what comes to mind as the reasons why we have accomplished so much and at the same time, steadily increased our volunteer base.

We're blessed with **outstanding leaders**, totally dedicated to their work and unrelenting in their determination to accomplish trail maintenance objectives. Reporting systems have been designed to meet our needs, put into place and rigidly followed. Work parties are **highly organized**, always interesting and varied; twice per week, 52 weeks of the year, a minimum of 15-20 volunteers per work party. Our club has the support of our community; corporate sponsors, Conservation Authorities, municipalities, schools, service clubs and our own club's board of directors. We have the right equipment, much of it donated. **Safety precautions** are always taken, both for volunteers and users of the trail. **Work plans are prioritized**, laid out and explained. Individual work hours are recorded, collectively totalling up to 5000 hours per year.

**We always have time for fun**, camaraderie and coffee at Tim Hortons. We take time out to hike. Social events are included in our programme. **Recognition of volunteers** is taken seriously. We conduct regular training sessions for our volunteers. We wear safety equipment on the job. There's supervision on the work site. We conduct regular Trail Maintenance Committee meetings - once per month. We prepare budgets and there's accountability. **We communicate regularly** with our **team**; distribution of TREADWAY; details concerning work parties are sent out weekly by email -

the time, place, duration; we conduct informal meetings before each work session explaining what is to be done, responsibilities are assigned. We take care of our equipment. Members of our work party generously use their vehicles for the transportation of people, materials and tools. We have great **respect for the environment** - it's top of mind when planning our work. We have an historian and an official photographer. Once per year we conduct an 'open house' for the general public. We have an **effective 'monitor' system** in place - about 40 strong, they're our eyes and ears on the trail.



Lunch Break Photo by Richard Pomeroy

### Word of mouth is our strongest recruitment tool.

Our roster of Trail Captains is over 50 strong, each receive a cap, T-shirt and volunteer badge. Supplies are given to our TCs; paint, brushes, scrapers. **TSR compliance is 100 %**. We constantly update our volunteers on BTC policies and direction. We attend and participate in AGMs. We laugh and tell stories. We eat lunch while sitting on a log. We go home tired and muddy but **happy**.

I'm certain I've missed a few things; I'm also certain that I'll hear about it from some of my cohorts, but it's all in good fun. On a personal note, I can't think of any other volunteer organization that I have been associated with since my retirement that has achieved so much by so many willing people. It's therapeutic; it's **wellness** at its best.

## **TRAIL MAINTENANCE VOLUNTEERS**

By Ross McLean

Some ideas for a club to consider...

1. One key to retaining a trail captain is to get him or her off to a good start. NEVER assign a rookie alone to a section that is in bad shape. There is an old story of a new Blue Mountains trail captain who was assigned such a section. He picked up some tools on an early Saturday morning and headed out eagerly on the job. Six hours later he was back with the tools, and his only comment was "Take this job and stuff it!" The task had overwhelmed him. If the trail director knows that a section to be assigned is in poor quality, start with an organized work party; then the rookie's task will be really just to keep it in good shape.

2. Also, at the outset, have a veteran trail captain go out at least once with a newcomer. He or she plays the role of mentor, explaining procedures and approaches. Too often a rookie finds the Trail Workers' Manual an intimidating document; instead, show them on the ground what is expected and how to achieve that goal.

3. One club uses assistant trail captains when there are enough volunteers. Sometimes they are assigned to a veteran who will play the role of mentor. Several years ago, Caledon did that with a mentor who had 20 years of service. He and the rookie had one visit to the trail section, and shortly afterwards he died of a sudden heart attack. But it was a smooth transition on the trail; the rookie simply took over and within a week was working alone of "her trail." Today she remains a loyal volunteer. (An assistant can also be assigned to a section where the work is too much for one person, or where the trail captain alone has allowed the trail to deteriorate.)

4. But the real key (as always) is communication. The Trail Director if he/she has not received a trail report must be aggressive in chasing down the information. Sometimes an older trail captain is losing the ability to do the job well but too embarrassed to admit to personal limitations. Be supportive but encourage an honesty as to why the trail captain has not been reporting. To ignore such communication inevitably leads to more major problems on the Trail.

5. Communicate your successes to everyone on your volunteer list (or perhaps everyone in the club.) Just last night I received an email from Earl Cowan about the first Dufferin Hi-Lands work party of the year. It was so enthusiastic and so proud of its day's success that I want

to join the next work party! Do not be humble about what you achieve. A volunteer spirit is contagious!

## **PROJECTS THAT MAKE OUR VOLUNTEERS FEEL GOOD**

By Earl Cowan

In an amazing feat of skill and determination, twenty five members of our Elite Trail Building Team, built and completed a new section of Main Trail on Slope Three in the Boyne Valley Ravines, in one day, on Saturday, April 17, 2010. The new trail consists of 265 feet of side-logging, that climbs 65 feet vertical up the slope, the height of a six story building. It climbs at a steady, gentle rate of 14 degrees, replacing the old trail that had several sections as steep as 40 degrees, that sent hikers pitching and sliding down the hill whenever the surface was slippery.

The Team at the top of the hill enjoyed lots of fresh air from a 25 km. per hour north wind that drove snow and sleet at them, while the Team at the bottom got to dodge boulders that rolled down from the top. Most of the Team got to hold on to the 45 degree hillside with their toes while they swung mattocks and carried ten foot maple logs down the hill. The project would never have been finished without the help of seven students brought out by Robert Wray and Matt Reid, four mountain bikers brought out by John Yeaman, and a total of 15 new members.

In particular we want to thank and congratulate: Team Leader Tony Hopkins and his crew, who designed and built the lower trail, John Yeaman, Ralph Sugg, Chris Svirkllys, and Judi Martin. Team Leader Norman Wingrove, who builds the best steps on the Bruce Trail, and his crew, Martin Butcher, Jill Kelsall and son, and Keith McEwan. Team Leader Marlis Butcher, and her crew, who designed and built the upper trail, Wade Striebel, Jasmyn Meehan, Dean Bell, Matt Reid, Dillon Sterling, Josh Garfield, Zack Genest, and Taso Mino. The chain saw crews who produced 300 linear feet of dead, sound, maple logs, Andrew Costley, James Griffin, Don Kovacs, and Robert Wray. We expect the new trail will provide safe pleasant hiking for hikers of all ages for the next forty years, and we hope the students will bring back their grandchildren to show them their achievement.

Clubs are invited to share some of their success stories in the next issue of Treadway.