

A Guide to Land Stewardship



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
WHAT IS THE LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?.....	1
WHO OWNS THE LAND?	2
WHAT IS AN EASEMENT?.....	2
WHAT IS AN ECOGIFT?.....	3
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL CLUBS AND THE BTC?	3
TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT	4
LANDOWNER RELATIONS.....	4
BTC STAFF.....	4
FLOW OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	5
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LAND STEWARD?.....	6
WHO CAN BE A LAND STEWARD?.....	6
THE LAND STEWARD BINDER.....	6
THE LAND STEWARDSHIP PLAN.....	7
SITE VISITS	7
STEWARDSHIP PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS.....	8
BRUCE TRAIL CONSERVANCY POLICIES.....	8
HEALTH AND LIABILITY	8
LOCATING AND MARKING THE PROPERTY BOUNDARIES.....	8
SIGNAGE.....	10
THE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT	10
TRAINING REPLACEMENT LAND STEWARDS.....	10
PUBLIC RELATIONS.....	11
CONFIDENTIALITY.....	11
LIABILITY.....	12
LAND STEWARD GET-TOGETHERS.....	12
EXPENSES.....	12
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CLUB LAND STEWARD DIRECTOR?	12
TRACKING LAND STEWARDS' ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS	13
LAND STEWARD LIAISON	13
ASSISTING LAND STEWARDS.....	14
SIGNAGE.....	14
PROJECTS.....	14
RECRUITMENT & TRAINING.....	14
WORKSHOPS AND GET-TOGETHERS	16
CONFIDENTIALITY.....	16
THE LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE.....	16
EXPENSES.....	16
LAND STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION	17
ENCROACHMENT & INTRUSION.....	17
TREE CUTTING	17
RESTORATION	17
HUNTING.....	18
MOTORIZED VEHICLES	18
TRAIL ISSUES.....	18
DUMPING	18
WELLS.....	19
THE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT.....	19

FIGURES

FIGURE 1: COMMUNICATION FLOW WITHIN THE BTC LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM5
FIGURE 2: AN EXAMPLE OF A LAND STEWARD’S JOURNAL11
FIGURE 3: AN EXAMPLE OF A LAND STEWARD DIRECTOR’S JOURNAL15

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE SURVEY MAP
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM
APPENDIX D: SAMPLE POST-PROJECT REPORT
APPENDIX E: SIGN PLACEMENT AND INSTALLATION ON BTC-MANAGED LANDS
APPENDIX F: SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH LAND STEWARDSHIP INCIDENTENCES

Introduction

A Guide to Land Stewardship is intended to provide information to the Bruce Trail Conservancy's (BTC's) volunteer Land Stewards and Club Land Stewardship Directors in the care and management of BTC owned and managed lands. This guide is the basis for the training of new volunteer Land Stewards. It should be read by all Land Stewards and Club Land Stewardship Directors. Directors are strongly encouraged to meet with new Land Stewards on their properties and cover the items in this guide before new Land Stewards complete their first annual monitoring report.

What is the Land Stewardship Program?

As a part of its efforts to establish a permanent and secure route for the Bruce Trail, the BTC has been actively acquiring land along the Niagara Escarpment since the early 1970s. As of 2015, the BTC manages 234 parcels of land from Queenston to Tobermory, totaling over 8800 acres. More properties are in the process of acquisition.

In 1997, the BTC Land Stewardship Committee launched a new program to care for these lands. The *Land Stewardship Program* has three main components:

1. Biophysical Inventories
2. Land Stewardship Plans and Policy Formulation
3. Ongoing monitoring by volunteer Land Stewards

Biophysical Inventories are conducted by BTC Land Stewardship staff when a property or easement is acquired. The inventories include a list of the plant and animal species observed on site, a description of the vegetation communities and associated maps and a description of geological features. Cultural aspects of the property such as structures, uses, and safety concerns are also identified during the inventory.

Land Stewardship Plans are completed for every BTC-managed property and easement by Land Stewardship staff. For properties funded under the Natural Spaces Land Acquisition Stewardship Program (NSLASP), a qualified individual is contracted by the BTC to perform field work and write the management plan for that property. Land Stewardship Plans include information on wetlands, watercourses, vegetation, wildlife, property history, and so on. The Plans also list recommendations for the short and long-term care of the property. They are intended to guide property stewardship.

In addition to these Plans, the BTC Land Stewardship Committee and staff have developed **Land Stewardship Policies** to help direct the management of BTC lands. Policies address issues such as vegetation management, water quality protection, habitat management, property boundary marking, unauthorized uses, which pertain to most BTC-managed lands. New policies are prepared as the need arises.

Ongoing monitoring by volunteer Land Stewards - Beginning in January 1998, the BTC and the local Clubs began recruiting volunteers to act as the caretakers of BTC managed lands. In accordance with the information and recommendations in the Land Stewardship Plans, the volunteer Land Stewards are responsible for monitoring and caring for their assigned properties. Each local Club has a Land Stewardship Director to coordinate activities of the Land Stewards within the Club.

The purpose of this manual is to describe the responsibilities of volunteer Land Stewards and their Club Land Stewardship Directors.

Who Owns the Land?

Properties managed by the BTC through the Land Stewardship Program were purchased starting in the mid-1970's with funds raised by the BTC and money provided by various provincial government programs, starting with the Niagara Escarpment Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program (NELASP). In 1997-98, title to these lands was transferred from the BTC to the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT), a provincial government agency with a mandate to protect cultural and natural heritage in Ontario. This was done to address concerns about property taxes and litigation. As part of the agreement with the OHT, the BTC retains management responsibility for the properties. Whenever possible, the BTC retains title of all newly acquired properties. Currently (March 2015), of the 234 parcels of land managed by the BTC 128 are owned by the OHT, 80 are owned by the BTC, 24 are easements held by the BTC on privately or publicly owned land and 2 are owned by Ontario Nature. It should be noted that when discussing BTC managed land there is a distinction between the terms 'parcel' and 'property'. A parcel is a distinct piece of land that is provincially recognized as having its own unique identification number (this is called an Assessment Role Number). In some cases multiple 'parcels' of land that are adjacent to each-other and have been acquired and combined to create a single BTC managed 'property'. Therefore it is possible that a single BTC managed property may be composed of multiple parcels of land. This does not change the way in which a property is managed.

What is an Easement?

A trail corridor easement is essentially a right-of-way, just like a hydro easement or a pipeline easement. The landowner retains ownership of the property but the BTC is granted the right to maintain a trail across it *in perpetuity* (i.e. the agreement is automatically binding to all future landowners as it is registered on title of the property). Landowners are usually restricted from disturbing the natural character of the portion of their property covered by the easement. A copy of the Easement Agreement for such properties should be included in the Land Steward Binder for the particular property, so the Land Stewards will know their responsibilities as representatives of the BTC.

Easement Agreements require representatives of the BTC to notify the landowner before entering the easement, be it for trail work or stewardship. For Land Stewards that means providing *written notice* to the landowner *24 hours* before visiting the easement for a site inspection. *Ten days written notice* is required if a project is

Remember, an easement is still private property, so permission of the landowner must be obtained before any project or Trail change is undertaken on site by any representative of the BTC.

to be undertaken on an easement. A form letter for this purpose is available from your Land Stewardship Director. Copies of this written notice must also be forwarded to BTC Land Stewardship staff and the Club Land Stewardship Director. They may be sent either by post or electronically but do not need to be received by these individuals before the visit takes place, just by the landowner. If there is an emergency or other circumstance which does not make it feasible to give notice of the intent to enter the easement, written notice will not be required, but a follow-up letter should be provided.

Signage stating *The Bruce Trail Conservancy Managed Land* must be erected on all easements. A *Private Land Sign* may also be erected at the landowner's request.

What is an Ecogift?

An Ecogift is a property or easement that is donated to a qualified recipient under Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts (Ecogifts) Program. This program allows landowners with certified ecologically sensitive land to conserve nature by donating their land, or a portion of their land, to a charitable environmental organization. The recipient's role is to protect the land in perpetuity by providing long-term management of the land and ecologically sensitive features. Lands donated under this program, for management by the BTC, are done so with the understanding that they will be used for the Trail, but will otherwise remain in a natural, unaltered state. The BTC is a qualified recipient under the Ecogifts Program as indicated on the Ecological Gifts website.

Ecogift donors are entitled to income tax benefits and special tax treatment, similar to that of other charitable donations. As an Ecogift, the property is subject to the penalty provisions of the *Income Tax Act* relating to unapproved disposition or change of use of an Ecogift. The BTC is required to seek authorization from Environment Canada prior to any proposed change in land use. Plans to construct the Trail (in instances where no Trail currently exists), a major reroute of the Trail, construction of structures (i.e. boardwalks, bridges, ladders), or any other activity that may alter the natural state of the land, must first be approved by Environment Canada. Detailed plans for such a "*change of use*" must be submitted to Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office.

What is the Role of the Local Clubs and the BTC?

The BTC supports the Niagara Escarpment in three ways; as Trail Workers we enable citizens to access and enjoy the Escarpment, through our Landowner Relations work we partner with private landowners to secure the Trail route and spread the conservation message, and, through the Land Stewardship Program, we work towards protecting and managing ecologically significant lands. None of these three components of the BTC's mission can function independently. The Land Stewardship Program must work closely with Trail Maintenance, Trail Development, and Landowner Relations volunteers in order to be a success. It is the role of the Club Land Stewardship Director to keep these lines of communication open.

Trail Maintenance and Development

The Land Stewardship Program is not about Trail work. We already have volunteers who do this job and do it very well. However; if a Land Steward spots a downed tree blocking the Trail, erosion damage, or other issues pertaining to the portion of the Trail that crosses the BTC managed property for which they are responsible, they should report it to their Club Land Stewardship Director. He/she will then inform the Trail Director and it will be up to the Trail Director to take action. The Land Stewardship Director is responsible for reporting back to the Land Steward about any actions taken or not taken.

By identifying sensitive areas or species on the property, the Land Steward may also be involved in Trail-related activities including re-routing the Trail and closing sections of the Trail that may have a negative impact on the environment.

In the case of new properties onto which the Trail has not yet been routed, BTC Land Stewardship staff along with the Land Steward, Land Stewardship Director and Trail Director will work together to select a route that best suits both the objectives of the Trail and the ecological significance of the property.

Landowner Relations

Landowner Relations Directors support the BTC's goal of securing and maintaining the Trail along the Optimum Route by fostering a positive relationship between the BTC and private landowners. They are responsible for interacting with landowners who currently allow Trail on their property, as well as landowners whose land occurs on the Optimum Route but where Trail does not currently exist. They also help to identify landowners along the Trail and/or Optimum Route who are interested in selling or donating property. Landowner Relations Directors only become involved with the Land Stewardship program when a situation arises that involves a landowner along the Trail and/or Optimum Route.

BTC Staff

Land Stewardship staff are the main contacts at the BTC Head Office for the Land Stewardship Program. Land Stewardship staff are responsible for conducting biophysical inventories, developing Land Stewardship Plans, maintaining the Land Stewardship database, solving major encroachment issues, overseeing land use agreements and coordinating major stewardship projects with Land Stewardship Directors. They also provide support and training to volunteers within the program and attend meetings of the Land Stewardship Committee. Contact information for the Land Stewardship staff can be found in the Land Stewardship Binder or by calling 1-800-665-HIKE (4453).

Other members of the staff, including the Cartographer/Property Assistant, Membership Coordinator, Director of Volunteer Programs, and the Executive Director, are also involved with the Land Stewardship Program from time to time.

Cooperation between land stewards and directors, committees, BTC staff and other involved parties is necessary for the Land Stewardship Program to be a success. It is impossible to imagine all of the situations which may arise on our properties and easements. The most important thing to remember is to keep the lines of communication open, and this is largely the responsibility of the Club Land Stewardship Directors.

What is the Role of a Land Steward?

Land Stewards are the long-term caretakers of BTC lands. It is the Land Steward's responsibility to monitor their property on behalf of the BTC and the local Clubs.

Who Can Be a Land Steward?

Land Stewards are, ideally, local or seasonal residents of the area in which their property is situated, and members of the local Bruce Trail Club (although this is not required). Volunteers do not have to be expert ecologists or property managers; each individual's interests and experience will bring a valuable view point to observations made on their property. The job of the Land Steward is to act as the "eyes and ears" of the BTC and to carry out the recommendations in Land Stewardship Plans that are identified as their responsibility. Major issues identified by the Land Stewards may be discussed at Land Steward "get-togethers", or individually with the Club Land Stewardship Director, and should involve the local Club, Land Stewardship staff, and the Land Stewardship Committee.

The Land Steward Binder

As a Land Steward, you are provided with a Land Steward Binder for the property or easement to which you are assigned. These binders contain the following:

- Contact information
- Volunteer Orientation Booklet
- Job Descriptions
 - Who Does What?
 - Land Steward Volunteer Position Description
 - Health and Safety
- A Guide to Land Stewardship
- Blank forms to photocopy:
 - *Annual Monitoring Report*
 - *Signage Order Form*
 - *Project Proposal Form*
 - *Volunteer Expense Form*
- BTC Land Steward badge
- BTC Dashboard sign
- BTC brochures to hand out to landowners and Trail users

Property Information

- The Land Stewardship Plan:
 - Maps
 - Land Use Agreement (if applicable)
 - Easement Agreement (if applicable)
 - Other General Information

The Land Steward is responsible for keeping their binder in good shape, updating it every year with the latest *Annual Monitoring Report* and other relevant information, and passing it on to their replacement(s) when they leave the position of Land Steward.

The Land Stewardship Plan

For each property and easement managed by the BTC there is a *Land Stewardship Plan* prepared by Land Stewardship staff. The Plan contains all that is known about the property at the time of writing, including legal and environmental information, property history, archaeology, observed uses, biophysical information, rare species and community locations and recommendations for management. It is important to remember that the Plan is intended as a fluid document, meaning that as more is learned about the property or easement the Plan will be updated or amended. All Land Stewardship Plans are intended to be updated by Land Stewardship staff on a 10 year cycle. Since it is the Land Steward who is most familiar with the property, they are the primary source for new information, most of which is passed on through the *Annual Monitoring Report*. As changes take place on a property, recommended actions from the Plan are completed, or new problems arise, they should be communicated to your Land Stewardship Director and Land Stewardship staff. New management recommendations in particular can be initiated or heavily informed by the Land Steward.

Use the Plan as your guide to the property or easement. The Executive Summary, site maps, aerial photos and *Summary of Recommendations* are a good place to start. These will give you an idea of the size and composition of the property and the main issues in regards to management.

Site Visits

The main task of a Land Steward is to visit their property at least twice each year; once in the spring and once in the fall. Following the spring site visit, the Land Steward is to provide a verbal or email report to the Club Land Steward Director to inform them that the spring site visit has been completed and to notify them of any urgent issues that need to be addressed right away (i.e. safety issues, imminent encroachment, major erosion problems, etc.). Verbal reports may also be made when necessary after informal visits throughout the year. Following the fall site visit, the Land Steward is to fill out an *Annual Monitoring Report* and forward it to their Land Stewardship Director by December.

The length of time required to complete a site visit will vary depending on the size and complexity of the property and the time necessary to

Helpful Hint...

For your site visits remember to bring:

- Map copies
- Notebook
- Blank report form
- Clipboard
- Binoculars
- Field guides
- Bug spray
- Hiking boots
- Compass
- Camera
- First aid kit
- A friend!

drive to the site and to hike into it from the nearest Bruce Trail access point. On average this will not exceed one full day per visit (2 days each year).

Site visits involve walking off the Trail at times in order to cover the full extent of the property, so hiking boots and long pants are recommended. For safety reasons, you are encouraged to bring someone along during your site visits.

Beyond the two main site inspections, you are encouraged to visit your properties at other times throughout the year. Viewing a property in the winter when all of the foliage has fallen can give a completely different impression than in the spring or fall. You may also want to make a special trip to see migrant birds during the spring or fall, take photos of the fall foliage, or invite friends on a summer hike. The more often you are able to visit the property, the better understanding you will have of issues related to its management. Additional site visits may be required if issues arise that need to be addressed or recommendations need to be implemented.

Land Stewardship Plan Recommendations

Each Land Stewardship Plan contains a prioritized list of recommendations. Completed recommendations should be communicated to your Land Stewardship Director and Land Stewardship staff through the *Annual Monitoring Report*. Some recommendations can be completed by the Land Steward, others require the assistance of a work party, BTC staff, or experts. Recommendations that require a detailed plan (i.e. fencing, reforestation), and/or an organized work party, should be discussed with your Land Stewardship Director. Before any such project is undertaken, the Land Stewardship Director must submit a *Project Proposal* form (see *Appendix D*) to Land Stewardship staff.

Bruce Trail Conservancy Policies

All BTC managed properties are managed according to the BTC's *Land Stewardship Policies*. A copy of these policies can be obtained from your Land Stewardship Director or Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office.

Health and Liability

While inspecting the properties, Land Stewards should look for potential safety risks to Trail users (i.e. tripping hazards, hazardous trees, unstable slopes), or risks to neighbouring landowners (i.e. trees likely to fall onto neighbouring properties). If the issue is too large to be remedied by the Land Steward, or involves specialized help, the Land Stewardship Director should be informed.

Land Stewards should also be aware of their own safety while on the property and be familiar with the Health and Safety section provided in their Land Stewardship binder.

Locating and Marking the Property Boundaries

Locating the boundaries of a property is one of the Land Stewards' most difficult tasks. Many BTC properties are oddly shaped parcels of forest with no easily discernible edges. In some cases old

tree lines and fence lines are a reliable indication but there are many instances where these either do not exist or they are located several metres from the actual property line.

Prior to 2001, the BTC commissioned a survey only on properties for which a legal description did not already exist. Usually this happened when an acquired property was severed from a parent parcel. Currently surveys are typically only commissioned when a severance occurs. If one exists, Land Stewards should have a copy of the survey map for their property in their Land Stewardship Plan. An example is included in *Appendix C*. These maps indicate where survey stakes were set or found by the surveyor. Using a compass and a measuring tape, it is possible to approximate your way from survey stake to survey stake along the property boundary. The BTC Land Stewardship program also has several Magnetic Locators for locating iron survey bars available for use. To request the use of one contact your Club Land Stewardship Director.

If there is no survey for your property you will have to rely on fence lines, tree lines, roads, and other physical features to find your way around and to get a general idea of the property boundaries. The maps in Land Stewardship Plans will also help delineate the property boundaries.

Many of the Clubs now own a GPS (Global Positioning System) unit for Land Stewardship purposes. This system uses satellites to determine the coordinates of a particular point. The accuracy of these tools varies depending on the unit, the number of satellites the unit can connect to at any given time and overhead cover (some units work better under tree canopy than others). An outline of the property (or a property 'parcel'), can be downloaded onto a GPS and can be used in the field to determine your location in reference to property boundaries and corners. This can help guide Land Stewards in locating property stakes. The property parcel data can be obtained by contacting Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office. Additionally, many Land Stewards are finding it useful to GPS the survey stakes that they find and record this information in their Land Steward Binders. Having this information can make subsequent boundary searches much easier. If you would like to borrow a GPS unit your Land Stewardship Director will be able to tell you how to book it for site visits.

When a survey stake is located it is a good idea to tie a piece of flagging tape on the stake or on a nearby tree. However; try and keep flagging to a minimum. Do not tie flags along a property boundary which is already marked by a fence line or tree line, and make use of natural markers such as large rocks, Escarpment outcrops, and so on where possible. Flagging must not have a negative visual impact for Trail users or neighbouring landowners. Excessive use of flagging tape can also add to litter on a property. Be especially sparse with the flagging tape where there is uncertainty about the property line and always check with your Land Stewardship Director or Land Stewardship Staff if there is any doubt about the location of the property boundary.

It is important for Land Stewards to locate the boundaries of their properties to ensure no encroachments or intrusions are occurring. If severe encroachments or other boundary issues are suspected and there is no survey for the property or if a Land Steward is having trouble locating their property boundaries, your Land Stewardship Director and Land Stewardship staff can arrange to help delineate the property boundary.

Signage

Land Stewards are expected to erect and maintain *Bruce Trail Conservancy Managed Land* signs on their properties. These must be put up at **all** access points to a property (i.e. when the Trail or a BTC side trail enters the property). Instructions for proper installation of signs (taken from the *BTC Guide for Trail Workers*) can be found in *Appendix G* of this manual. Land Stewards are also encouraged to seek the assistance of Trail Maintenance Workers from their Club, as they are experienced at putting up BTC signs. During site inspections, the Land Steward is responsible for monitoring the *Bruce Trail Conservancy Managed Land* signs as well as any other Land Stewardship signs (i.e. No Bicycles, No Camping, No Horses and No Hunting) that are on the property. It is also highly encouraged that any erected signs are reported in your *Annual Monitoring Report*, giving special consideration to describing the location (using a GPS if possible) and the date. If signs have been damaged or removed, the Land Stewardship Director should be informed and new signs will be ordered. Trail related signs are the responsibility of the Club's Trail Maintenance Director.

Signage is one method of dealing with various problems that arise on BTC managed lands. The BTC has signs to address a wide variety of abuses to properties such as No Horses, No Motorized Vehicles, No Hunting and so on. Land Stewards can make recommendations for signage by contacting their Land Stewardship Director who can then order the needed signs through staff at the BTC Head Office. A copy of the *Bruce Trail Signage Order Form* in the Land Steward Binder illustrates the stock signs available for order at the BTC Head Office.

On a few properties there are interpretive signs, signs describing restoration projects, or commemorative plaques. The condition of these signs should be noted during site inspections. Damage to or removal of these should be reported in the *Annual Monitoring Report*.

The Annual Monitoring Report

Once each year following the fall site visit, each Land Steward is to fill out and submit an *Annual Monitoring Report* on their property. The Land Steward is to keep one copy of the completed report in their Land Steward Binder and forward one copy to their Land Steward Director. The Land Steward Director will keep a copy for his/her own records and send the original on to the BTC Head Office. A copy of the *Annual Monitoring Report* can be found in the Land Steward Binder and *Appendix A* of this guide.

In addition to *Annual Monitoring Reports*, Land Stewards are encouraged to send along any extra copies of photos, sketches, or journal records they may have taken during site visits.

Training Replacement Land Stewards

When a volunteer can no longer continue as a Land Steward, it is his/her responsibility to do the following:

- provide as much notice as possible to the Club Land Stewardship Director
- accompany their successor on their first site visit
- Pass on all information contained within the Land Stewardship Binder

Public Relations

The BTC wants to take full advantage of any opportunity to make face-to-face contact with Trail users. If Land Stewards meet neighbours and/or hikers while visiting their properties, they are encouraged to introduce themselves (if it is deemed safe to do so). Land Stewards are provided with a badge to wear during site visits, a sign to place on your car dashboard which identifies you as a Bruce Trail Land Steward and a variety of brochures to pass out. More are available from the BTC Head Office upon request.

If you meet someone using the property in an unauthorized manner during a site visit, approach them only if you feel comfortable doing so.

Figure 2: An example of a Land Steward's Journal

<p>April 24 Spring inspection. Finally found the survey stake at the northeast corner, still unsure about where the southern boundary is. Noticed a large tree down across the trail. Spoke to a local resident who was hiking the trail. He said he had seen hunters on the property three years ago but hadn't seen them since. Made notes for my report.</p> <p>April 28 Called LSD to make my verbal report. Notified her about the tree across the trail and she will notify the Trail Director. Recorded call details on my Site Inspection Report.</p> <p>May 24 Went on a Victoria Day weekend hike through a nearby Bruce Trail property with other Land Stewards in my club and my LSD.</p> <p>June 16 Met the Trail Director and LSD on the property to discuss a planned re-route. Took the opportunity to walk through an area that was too wet to inspect in the spring. Made notes for my report.</p> <p>June 30 Assisted with re-route on the property. Made notes for my report.</p> <p>Sept 15 Visited property with friends to look for migrant birds. Took notes for my report.</p> <p>October 20 Conducted fall inspection. Tree across trail had been removed and no evidence of people using the old trail route.</p> <p>October 24 Completed my report and sent it to my LSD.</p> <p>December 15 Cross-country skiing along the trail with friends.</p>
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Confidentiality

In the course of their duties, Land Stewards will come across various pieces of confidential information. Specifically, Land Stewardship Plans contain information about the location of rare/sensitive species, the location of the Bruce Trail Optimum Route (on BTC managed land as well as neighbouring properties on which the Trail may not already be routed) and possibly the contact

information of landowners or people with whom the BTC has a Land Use Agreement. Land Stewards are trusted not to share this information.

All BTC volunteers, Land Stewards included, will be expected to sign a Confidentiality Agreement located in the Volunteer Orientation Manual.. One copy of this agreement will go to the BTC Head Office and one will be kept by the Land Steward.

Liability

Land Stewards act on behalf of the BTC and therefore they are not personally liable for accidents that may occur on their properties. Like Trail Directors and other Bruce Trail volunteers, Land Stewards are covered under the BTC's comprehensive liability insurance and volunteer accidental injury insurance.

Land Steward Get-togethers

Land Stewards are encouraged to attend regular Land Steward “get-togethers” within their Club. Such meetings give Stewards a chance to meet fellow Land Stewards, share experiences and develop solutions to property issues. These events are organized by the Club Land Stewardship Directors.

Expenses

Land Stewards are able to claim their mileage in getting to and from their property for their two mandatory site visits. A copy of the *BTC Volunteer Expense Form* can be found in the Land Steward Binder.

What is the Role of the Club Land Stewardship Director?

Each Bruce Trail Club has a Land Stewardship Director to oversee the Land Stewardship Program within that Club section. Below is a discussion of the main responsibilities of this position.

The Land Stewardship Director Binder

Every Land Stewardship Director should have a binder which contains the following:

- Land Stewardship Committee contact information
- Volunteer Orientation Booklet containing the Confidentiality Agreement
- Job Descriptions
 - Who Does What?
 - Land Steward Volunteer Position Description
 - Health and Safety
- A Guide to Land Stewardship
- Blank forms to photocopy:
 - *Annual Monitoring Report*

- *Signage Order Form*
- *Project Proposal Form*
- *Expense Form*
- BTC Land Steward badge
- BTC Dashboard sign
- BTC brochures to hand out to landowners and Trail users

Property Information

*All property information can be stored electronically if preferred

- Land Stewardship Plans
- Maps
- Land Use Agreement(s) for their club
- Easement Agreement (s) for their club
- Other General Information

Tracking Land Stewards' Annual Monitoring Reports

It is up to the Land Stewardship Director to make sure that Land Stewards complete their spring and fall site visits on time and that they submit their *Annual Monitoring Report* at the end of the year. If a Land Steward is not fulfilling the requirements of their volunteer tasks, it is necessary to discuss with the Land Steward any problems associated with the tasks and decide if a replacement is needed.

If a Land Stewardship Director has not heard from any of their Land Stewards by late spring, it is important for the Director to contact them to ensure that property visits have been completed. If there are issues it is important to help Land Stewards address them. Land Stewardship Directors are to contact the Land Stewards again after receiving the *Annual Monitoring Reports* in the fall to confirm that the reports have been received, follow-up on any issues, and thank them for their hard work. Once a Director has received and reviewed the reports for their Club they should keep copies for themselves and send copies to Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office. Land Stewards should always keep their own copy in their Land Stewardship binders or filed electronically.

Land Steward Liaison

Land Stewardship Directors sit on their BTC Club Board and act as a liaison for their Land Stewards. It is their responsibility to raise any issues identified by their Land Stewards at Club Board meetings. For example, Trail issues should be referred to the Trail Director and problems with neighbours should be referred to the Landowner Relations Director.

Remember, the role of liaison goes both ways. Land Stewardship Directors should keep Land Stewards informed of developments which may impact their properties, such as Trail re-routes, problems with neighbours and decisions to erect signs or plaques. It is the responsibility of the Director to ensure that the opinions of Land Stewards are sought and considered for any decisions which may affect their properties.

Assisting Land Stewards

The Land Stewardship Director may be called upon to help their Land Stewards. This may include helping them to locate property boundaries, lending a hand with garbage clean-ups, designing planting or ecological restoration plans and so on. Directors are not expected to provide expert advice on issues such as reforestation or erosion remediation, but should know where to go to find answers to these types of questions. Directors should keep a list of local experts such as foresters, land surveyors, and ecologists who can be called upon to help with specific issues. BTC staff and the Land Stewardship Committee can help in this regard.

Signage

Land Stewardship Directors are responsible for making sure their Land Stewards have the signs they need for their properties. Primarily these will be *Bruce Trail Conservancy Managed Land* signs, but occasionally other signs may be needed. When signs are needed a *Signs Order Form* must be filled out and sent to Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office. All signage will be paid for out of Stewardship Program funds. Arrangements for delivery will have to be made on an individual basis through BTC staff.

Projects

Some Land Stewardship Plan recommendations will require specialized equipment or a group of people. These may include large garbage clean-ups, well-capping or tree plantings. Often such projects also need funding. In these cases a *Project Proposal* form needs to be submitted. It is the responsibility of the Land Stewardship Director to complete and submit this form to Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office. It is also the responsibility of the Director to keep a record of the results of any project and to report back to Land Stewardship staff when a project has been completed. Having standardized records of projects helps to plan for future projects, attain future funding and promote the Land Stewardship Program.

Recruitment & Training

When new properties or easements are acquired or when Land Stewards step down it is up to the Land Stewardship Director to recruit and train new volunteers. A variety of recruiting methods including word-of-mouth, referrals/recommendations from current Stewards and notices in Club newsletters. Directors are encouraged to look for new recruits rather than overburdening existing volunteers already committed to other tasks within the Club. When a new Land Steward is recruited, it is the responsibility of the Club Land Stewardship Director to have the new Land Steward sign the Confidentiality Agreement and send a copy to the BTC Head Office, and to welcome the new Land Steward to the Land Stewardship Program.

Since the spring of 2002, there has been a Director of Volunteer Programs on staff at the BTC Head Office. This person contacts those members who have expressed an interest in volunteering and actively recruits volunteers both from within the membership and from outside sources. The Director of Volunteer Programs can be contacted directly if there are volunteer openings within the Land Stewardship Program, and will forward the names of interested individuals directly to the Land Stewardship Director of the appropriate club.

In cases where a Land Steward is being replaced, it is the responsibility of the previous Land Steward and the Land Stewardship Director to show the new Steward the property and explain the job. Directors should help the new Land Steward go through the *Annual Monitoring Report* and Land Stewardship Plan, show them the maps of the property and otherwise familiarise them with the Land Stewardship program.

When a new property is acquired in your Club section a Land Stewardship Plan will be prepared for it within 18 months of its acquisition. If you would like any information about the property in advance of the Plan being completed, such as a copy of the survey (if one is available), property information, maps or Land Use Agreements (if applicable), feel free to contact Land Stewardship staff for that information. It is also encouraged to tour the property with Land Stewardship staff before you assign a Land Steward. Feel free to contact Land Stewardship staff to arrange a joint visit or to get particulars of the new property over the phone.

Figure 3: An example of a Land Stewardship Director's Journal

March 10 Attended Club Board meeting.

May 3 Joined one of my Land Stewards for their spring inspection.

May 7-20 Received verbal reports from my Land Stewards. One mentioned a tree across the trail and I notified the Trail Director. Still had not heard from one of the Land Stewards so I called them. They informed me that they planned to visit their property next week.

May 24 Heard from last Land Steward. They indicated a serious erosion problem on their property.

June 10 Attended Club Board meeting.

June 30 Attended Land Stewardship Directors' meeting. Raised erosion issue and they gave me a contact at the local Conservation Authority.

July 15 Visited property with LS and expert from the local Conservation Authority. They suggested planting native dogwoods in the spring and gave us a contact at the local naturalists' club who could help.

August 9 Organized group hike for the Land Stewards and brought along a local naturalist to lead the hike and identify native wildflowers.

Sept. 10 Attended Club Board meeting.

Sept. 24 Went bird-watching on the Jones property.

Nov. 10-30 Received Land Stewards' Annual Monitoring Reports. Sent copies to the Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office. Called the Land Stewards to thank them for their hard work.

Workshops and Get-togethers

Directors are encouraged to organize get-togethers with their Land Stewards at least once a year. Such gatherings allow Land Stewards to meet one another, compare notes, and learn from the experiences of fellow Stewards. Inviting members of the Club Board is also a good idea and will help keep the lines of communication open.

Annual workshops are a good way to get together and learn new skills at the same time. The more knowledgeable Land Stewards are of stewardship issues, the more effective they will be as stewards. Local naturalists' clubs may be willing to lead a bird-watching seminar or field trip. Any opportunity to train Land Stewards (and the Directors) is a benefit to the Bruce Trail and a good way of maintaining the enthusiasm of Land Stewards.

Reforestation projects help restore the environment and offer an opportunity for stewards to get together and work as a team. All large projects should be approved by the Land Stewardship Committee and comply with BTC policy. A sense of teamwork will help to ensure a high level of dedication to the Land Stewardship program.

Confidentiality

Some of the information pertaining to the property, such as that found in the Land Stewardship Plans is confidential. Directors will sign the BTC Confidentiality *Agreement*, and make sure that all of their Land Stewards sign one as well (see the *BTC Volunteer Orientation Manual*).

The Land Stewardship Committee

The Land Stewardship Committee of the Bruce Trail Conservancy is the committee responsible for stewardship of BTC-managed lands. It is composed of the Land Stewardship Directors and Assistant Land Stewardship Directors from each of the nine clubs, Land Stewardship staff, a representative of the OHT and a representative of the BTC Environment Committee. At least twice a year, the Chair of this committee will host a meeting. These meetings provide an opportunity for Directors to compare notes, discuss common concerns, plan the long-term direction of the Land Stewardship Program, and be updated on pertinent issues at the BTC and the OHT.

The Land Stewardship Committee is also a good source of expertise on complex issues such as reforestation, boundary disputes and encroachment. Land Stewardship Directors are the liaisons between the Land Stewardship Committee, BTC staff, Local Clubs, and Land Stewards.

Expenses

Land Stewardship Directors are able to claim mileage and equipment purchased for various properties. All expenses must be approved by the Land Stewardship Committee Chair. A blank expense form can be found in the Land Stewardship Director Binder.

Land Stewardship in Action

It is impossible to anticipate every possible situation that might be encountered on a property. There is a suggested procedure for dealing with Land Stewardship issues; however there is no formal standard protocol due to the complexity of issues which may arise (a copy of the suggested procedure can be seen at the end of this document). The following examples will hopefully provide some guidance and helpful hints to Land Stewards and Land Stewardship Directors.

Encroachment & Intrusion

Encroachment is a common problem on BTC lands, especially in urban areas. Encroachments in the past have included neighbours extending their backyard onto a BTC managed property, dumping garbage or fill on BTC managed land, or building permanent structures beyond the property line.

The Land Steward's job is to keep an eye on the property over time to assess whether encroachment is taking place. The first step in identifying encroachment issues is to determine the property boundaries using the survey. If the property from which the encroachment is occurring is beside Bruce Trail managed land or on the Optimum Route, the Land Stewardship Director should contact the Club Landowner Relations Director to discuss the issue. If this property is not located along the Bruce Trail and/or Optimum Route, the Director should decide on the most appropriate way to address the issue with the encroaching landowner and resolve the issue. If the issue cannot be resolved, or the Director feels that the issue may warrant legal action, BTC staff should be contacted. As part of their inspections, Land Steward's are required to monitor the property to ensure that the encroachment does not continue.

Tree Cutting

In rare cases neighbours or previous owners may have negotiated a right to cut trees on BTC lands. Therefore if Land Stewards witness evidence of tree removal they should consult the Land Stewardship Plan for the property to see if this is permitted and within what bounds. This is especially true on some of the BTC's conservation easements which sometimes include clauses permitting the landowner to remove trees for personal use. All tree cutting should be carefully recorded in the site inspection report. If tree removal is occurring illegally, notify the Land Stewardship Director immediately. In such cases, permitted uses signs should be erected and neighbours contacted by the Landowner Relations Director.

Restoration

In some cases, the BTC may want to actively manage certain properties to restore damaged ecosystems, reforest abandoned fields, and so on. Land Stewardship Plans will identify these areas. For the most part restoration projects will require a variety of input and manual labour from BTC staff, the Land Stewardship Committee, the Environment Committee, the Club Land Stewardship Director, the Land Steward and other volunteers. The local Clubs and the BTC, through Land Stewardship Directors and Land Stewardship Staff, will secure the funds, supplies, and the necessary expertise. The Land Steward's main responsibility is to monitor the progress of a project

over time. Countless things can go wrong in the first few years of any replanting initiative. Land Stewards must watch for damage by wildlife, vandalism, drought, flooding, poor growth rates, and so on. Land Stewards should be instructed on how to address these issues during the planning of the project. One case pointing to the need for such follow-up occurred in 1997. Several hundred trees were planted on a BTC property. The next year the site inspection revealed that most of the trees had been destroyed and that the culprit was a hungry goat on a neighbouring farm which had found a hole in the fence.

Hunting

Hunting is generally not permitted on any BTC properties, although in very rare instances it is permitted by special provision on BTC Easement Agreements. However; in some areas BTC properties abut lands where hunting is permitted and trespassing becomes a serious concern. If you witness hunters on your property, proceed with caution and avoid walking the property during the heavy hunting season in late fall. If you do, be sure to wear something orange. Make note of the hunting activity in your report and remove any illegal structures such as deer blinds or salt-licks (if you require help, contact your Land Stewardship Director).

Motorized Vehicles

Motorized vehicles are not permitted on BTC managed properties. If you see evidence of vehicle use on the property, immediately notify your Land Stewardship Director. The first step in a case such as this is to erect signage indicating that this is Bruce Trail managed land and that only pedestrian activities are permitted. It may be necessary for the Landowner Relations Director to speak with neighbours about the problem. If this is not sufficient, Land Stewardship Directors can raise the issue at their Club Board meeting and request that a gate and/or fencing be installed. Support for this type of work is available from the BTC Land Stewardship Committee and BTC Land Stewardship staff. The use of snowmobiles on BTC owned property may be permitted in special circumstances. In these circumstances a proposal must be put forth to the BTC Board of Directors. If the proposal is approved a Land Use Agreement must be drawn up by Land Stewardship staff and signed by the necessary parties. Such Land Use Agreements can be found in the Land Stewardship Plan for the property.

Trail Issues

As mentioned earlier, maintaining the Trail is not the responsibility of Land Stewards. If Land Stewards notice issues such as flooding or fallen trees on the Trail, or damage being done to sensitive areas because of the Trail, they should ask their Land Stewardship Director to notify the Club Trail Director. The Land Stewardship Director will keep the Land Steward informed about any actions taken by the Trail Director.

Dumping

Dumping and littering is a constant problem on many BTC lands, especially those with road frontage. Land Stewards should always bring a garbage bag with them on their site visits to pick up roadside litter. For more serious cases they will need help. On one BTC property, a large iron tank

and several concrete blocks were dumped prior to the BTC acquiring the site. In cases such as this, Land Stewards should ask their Land Stewardship Directors to organize a work party.

Wells

Abandoned water wells exist on some BTC-managed properties. They can be a hazard to hikers and wildlife and also present a possible route for contamination of groundwater. In light of these possibilities all abandoned wells should be capped according to Ontario guidelines. These are available from Land Stewardship staff upon request. Contact your Land Stewardship Director to organize a well capping.

The Annual Monitoring Report

As part of our partnership agreements with the OHT and in doing our due diligence on BTC owned land, we have a responsibility to monitor our properties on a regular basis. Completion of the *Annual Monitoring Report* contributes to the fulfillment of this responsibility.

Throughout the year Land Stewards should keep notes on their property and at the end of the year they can compile all of this information in their *Annual Monitoring Report*. They should keep one copy of their report in their Land Steward Binders or electronically and send one copy to their Land Stewardship Director, who will in turn send it to Land Stewardship staff at the BTC Head Office. The reports should be completed and sent to their Club Land Stewardship Director by the first of December each year. A verbal report should be given to your Land Stewardship Director following your spring visit to the property.

The *Annual Monitoring Report* is also available as a fillable online form through the Bruce Trail Conservancy website – www.brucetrail.org. Contact your Land Stewardship Director for further information if you would like to use this option for submitting your Report.