



## TRAIL MAINTENANCE - PHILOSOPHY

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Trail maintenance is an ongoing, effort. For TATC during 2008:

- 75 volunteers contributed 1,094-hours in Local Trail Maintenance within the Tidewater area.
- 105 volunteers contributed 3,412-hours on National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service trails up in them thar hills.
- The above is equivalent to one trail maintainer working for 4.17-years.

That's a lot of dedicated people, and a lot of volunteer hours !

Trail maintenance, among other tasks, is trail trimming (weed whacking and lopping), blowdown removal, drainage tasks, dusty work, wet work, hot work, cold work, easy work and gosh-darn hard work. It's all volunteer work; it's all worthwhile. You might want to read TATC Education Handouts titled:

- "TRAIL MAINTENANCE - AN OVERVIEW," and
- "TRAIL MAINTENANCE - COMMON CHORES," and
- "A.T. DISTANCES AND ELEVATIONS PAUL WOLF SHELTER TO PRIEST SHELTER," and the sketch map
- "TATC A.T. SECTION - TRAIL HEADS, MARSHALING AREAS, AND LANDMARKS."

Trail maintenance includes both short and longer distance hiking. Some is done right at shelter areas. Work ranges from easy to difficult. There is something for everyone. Just remember, please, bring enough water. I seldom carry less than a whole gallon. Occasionally I bring some back, but I do not run out. In May 2000 a hiker was carried down from Three Ridges, possibly from heat/water related problems. One of our experienced maintainers in 1998 had the beginnings of heat/water problems. He had enough water, just was not drinking it. The same thing happened to another worker in the summer of 2005. Be prudent, be safe - it's your body.

For doing trail maintenance you receive some thanks, sore muscles, occasional poison ivy and insect bites, increased laundry, scratches, bruises, torn clothing, and a complete lack of understanding from your Monday to Friday workmates. Why do we volunteer and exert ourselves? There must be something else...

I find I can divide trail maintenance into two categories; i.e., that done by myself, and that done as part of a crew (two or more folks).

One-person trail maintenance is marvelous. Simply put, it is food for the soul. There is a certain satisfaction in what you can do, and sometimes a challenge in figuring out how you can do it **safely** with limited tools, without help. There is peace and quiet, and a thorough enjoyment of your environment. Alone your senses are more attuned, a bit sharper; you hear more, see more, and absorb more from your surroundings. The bird song up the hill, the towhee feeding its fledgling, a small snake or salamander found under a log or rock, a doe bounding away from your intrusion - each is an exclamation point in life's sojourn down the maintenance trail. You have time to smell the flowers, to relish and enjoy your time with the Man upstairs. You sweat and strain, and wipe the rain from your eyes and tools, and you get dirty. When your self-assigned task is finished, you know you have contributed to the health of a trail, you have enhanced your own mental and physical health, and have gained that little bit of self-satisfaction that comes from being on your own. Just remember - there is safety in numbers that you do not have when alone.

Crew work is just as rewarding. It's fun to become involved with others, to watch a team evolve and come alive, and to share. The banter, and "give and take" experienced during the life of a crew take on interesting personalities. Companionship and camaraderie ebb and flow around a crew like a living thing. Someone points out a flower; someone else splits an apple; everyone experiences the rain or the sun, and commiserates or enjoys life in the company of others who have volunteered on the trail. Ideas beget other ideas, and all learn and pass on how-to-do-it information. You can read a book, but you really learn and absorb from the actual "doing." When moving a rock, felling a tree, or clearing a blowdown, there's a trusting bond between crew members. You learn that you can and that you have to work together, and depend upon each other - the job and your safety depend upon it! You become part of the whole, a valuable and contributing part !

Perhaps the bumper sticker on the back of my truck says it best. Beside a picture of this planet we live on are the words:

### "LOVE OUR MOTHER"

Refer to TATC Educational Handouts Titled; "TRAIL MAINTENANCE - COMMON A.T. CHORES," and "TRAIL MAINTENANCE - AN A.T. OVERVIEW."

**See you (???) on the maintenance trail (???)**.