

TRAIL MANAGEMENT

Public Awareness. Both counties will design programs to inform residents and other interested parties about the Trail System Plan and the availability of facilities as they are constructed or improved. Strong public awareness will be important to the counties' efforts to budget resources, seek grants, and acquire property or easements. Strong public awareness will result in use of trails as they are made available by the two counties. Public education for the proper use of trails is also important, including basic concepts of trail use to minimize user conflicts. Each county will designate a point of contact to field questions, provide information and coordinate overall public awareness efforts.

Suggestions for consideration relative to trail user conflict:

- Recognize Conflict as Goal Interference - Do not treat conflict as an inherent incompatibility among different trail activities, but goal interference attributed to another's behavior.
- Provide Adequate Trail Opportunities - Offer adequate trail mileage and provide opportunities for a variety of trail experiences. This will help reduce congestion and allow users to choose the conditions that are best suited to the experiences they desire.
- Minimize Number of Contacts in Problem Areas - Each contact among trail users has the potential to result in conflict. So, as a general rule, reduce the number of user contacts whenever possible. This is especially true in congested areas and at trailheads. Disperse use and provide separate trails where necessary after careful consideration of the additional environmental impact and lost opportunities for positive interactions this may cause.
- Involve Users as Early as Possible - Identify the present and likely future users of each trail and involve them in the process of avoiding and resolving conflicts as early as possible, preferably before conflicts occur. For proposed trails, possible conflicts and their solutions should be addressed during the planning and design stage with the involvement of prospective users. New and emerging uses should be anticipated and addressed as early as possible with the involvement of participants. Likewise, existing and developing conflicts on present trails need to be faced quickly and addressed with the participation of those affected.
- Understand User Needs - Determine the motivations, desired experiences, norms, setting preferences, and other needs of the present and likely future users of each trail. This "customer" information is critical for anticipating and managing conflicts.
- Identify the Actual Sources of Conflict - Help users to identify the specific tangible causes of any conflicts they are experiencing. In other words, get beyond emotions and stereotypes as quickly as possible and get to the roots of any problems that exist.
- Work with Affected Users - Work with all parties involved to reach mutually agreeable solutions to these specific issues. Users who are not involved as part of the solution are more likely to be part of the problem now and in the future.
- Promote Trail Etiquette - Minimize the possibility that any particular trail contact will result in conflict by actively and aggressively promoting responsible trail behavior. Use existing educational materials or modify them to better meet specific needs. Target these educational efforts, get the information into users' hands as early as possible and present it in interesting and understandable ways.

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- Encourage Positive Interaction Among Different Users - Trail users are usually not as different from one another as they believe. Providing positive interactions both on and off the trail will help break down barriers and stereotypes, and build understanding, good will, and cooperation. This can be accomplished through a variety of strategies such as sponsoring "user swaps," trail-building or maintenance projects, filming trail-sharing videos, and forming Trail Advisory Councils.
- Favor "Light-Handed" Management - Use the most "light-handed approaches" that will achieve county objectives. This is essential in order to provide the freedom of choice and natural environments that are so important to trail-based recreation. Intrusive design and coercive management are not compatible with high-quality trail experiences.
- Plan and Act at the Lowest Level - Whenever possible, address issues regarding multiple-use trails at the location where the problem has occurred. This allows greater sensitivity to the needs of the specific area where the problem has occurred and provides better flexibility for addressing difficult issues on a case by case basis. Action taken at this level also facilitates involvement of the people who will be most affected by the decisions and most able to assist in their successful implementation.
- Monitor Progress - Monitor the ongoing effectiveness of decisions made and programs implemented. Conscious, deliberate monitoring is the only way to determine if conflicts are indeed being reduced and what changes in programs might be needed. This is only possible within the context of clearly understood and agreed upon objectives for each trail area.
- Trail managers recognize trail conflicts as a potentially serious threat. Many are optimistic, however, and feel that when trail conflict situations are tackled head on and openly they can become an opportunity to build and strengthen trail constituencies and enhance opportunities for all users.



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Trail program budget. A detailed budget should be created for the trails program and updated on an annual basis.

Volunteer coordination. The use of volunteers can help increase public awareness of trails and provide a good source of labor for the program. Sources of volunteers include Boy Scouts, school groups, church groups, trail users, or court workers. Understanding volunteers' concerns is important, as are possible incentives or recognition of work performed. Implementation of an "Adopt-a-Trail" program should also be considered.

Records. Good record-keeping techniques are essential to an organized program. Accurate logs should be kept on items such as daily activities, hazards found and action taken, maintenance needed and performed, etc. Records can also include surveys of the types and frequency of use of certain trail sections. This information can be used to set priorities on trail management needs.

Education and interpretation. Many segments of the trail system contain a wealth of opportunities for education and interpretation. Trails along waterways provide good opportunities to teach and study concepts about wildlife and ecology. Educational opportunities range from interpretive signage to educational tours.

Law enforcement. As the two counties develop their trail systems, security measures will be considered to ensure that users have a safe experience. Law enforcement agencies should be involved in the design of the system and involved in discussions on how law enforcement protection will be extended to the trail system.

Employee/Volunteer Training. Properly trained maintenance employees/volunteers are essential to the efficient operation of the trail maintenance program. All employees/volunteers should be thoroughly trained to understand trail maintenance issues and proper practices. Employees must also be aware of their need to present positive public contacts for users. A positive response to questions and concerns is important to build long term support for the trail system.