

Menu of Guiding Principles for Trail Planning & Design

Worksheet for a Workshop by John Monroe

National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program

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Intended (and Current) Types of Users, or Audiences

- Members only
- Neighborhood
- City, Town or Local
- Regional
- State-wide or national
- School groups on field trips
- Youth groups
- High school athletes
- Senior citizens
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Intended (and Current) Uses

- Walking
- Baby walking
- Dog walking
- Hiking
- Running
- Birding
- Plein-air* painting and drawing
- Mountain biking
- Horse riding
- Exercising or Parcourse
- Orienteering
- Letterboxing or Geo-caching
- ATVs
- Motorcycles
- BMX
- Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)
- Snowmobiling
- Cross-country skiing
- Other winter sports
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Intended (and Current) Levels and Types of Activity

- Passive recreation: walking etc
- Community gathering place
- Exuberant play
- Field sports
- Meditation & stillness
- Nature study (e.g., college research)
- Performance events
- Competitive events
- Authorized teen hang-out
- Illicit partying
- Swimming
- Fishing
- Hunting
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Intended (and Current) Impacts of People and Management Actions, or Conservation Values to Protect

- Zero
- Minimal
- Balance of multiple uses
- Restoration/mitigation of existing problems
- Elimination of invasive, exotic vegetation
- Restoration of riparian areas
- Restoration of habitat
- Reintroduction of species
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Intended (and Current) Design Standards

- Open year-round
- Seasonal closures
- Wilderness
- Conservation restrictions to follow: land trust; municipal; regional; state; national
- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban

- Home-made benches and improvements
- Low-end furniture & accessories
- High-end furniture & jewelry
- Historic paths, trails and roads
- Bootleg trails
- Locally designed
- Professionally engineered
- Native stone
- Cast block
- Timber
- Lumber
- Recycled plastic “wood”
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Intended (and Current) Network Design & Density

- Linear
- Spurs
- Looped
- Loop and spurs
- Web
- Sparse
- Widely spaced
- Dense
- Dense trails merge into open areas
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Intended (and Current) Drainage Patterns

- Maintain or restore sheet flow across trails
- Broad-based dips
- Waterbars
- Turnpikes
- Culverts
- Bridges
- Avoid watercourses whenever possible
- Accommodate watercourses and riparian areas
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Intended (and Current) Tread Surface(s)

- Natural, existing surface
- Mowed, grassy surface
- Wood chips (**eliminate as soon as possible!**)
- Hardened only when necessary
- Hardened throughout
- Stone dust
- Crushed stone
- Pavers or cobblestones
- Paved - impervious
- Paved - pervious
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Intended (and Current) Signage

- None, or vague
- Trail map available on-site
- Interpretive brochure available on-site
- Trail map and information on website
- Confidence markers
- Loops and routes identified by name, icon, or color
- Interpretive signs
- Interpretive location markers
- Trailhead(s)
- Fully integrated signage system
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Intended (and Current) Accessibility

- No improvements for accessibility
- Improvements made from parking area to first major trail obstacles
- Fully accessible trail loop
- Fully accessible trail system
- Interpretive trail for the sight-impaired
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Intended (and Current) Sources of Labor

- Exclusively by volunteers
- Volunteers and contractors (for big jobs)
- Contractors or paid staff primarily
- In-kind donation by company or institution
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Intended (and Current) Safety Standards

- Volunteer Trail Crews
 - Safety takes care of itself
 - Trail work is supervised unevenly and sometimes
 - Rigorous safety standards are part of every trail work event and celebration
- Police, fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
 - No provisions equipment and personnel
 - Pre-plans on file with police, fire and EMS
 - Physical access provided for police, fire and EMS
 - Search & Rescue drills held with public safety officials
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