



P2025-4 - GHTA Trail Building & Maintenance Guidelines (April 26, 2025)

The Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association Inc. practices a “minimum impact” approach for the trail. This means as little change to the environment as possible. The trail should be safe and navigable but not necessarily obstacle free (for example, a downed tree across the trail that is easy to step over can be left in place as an option.) If an issue is discovered when doing the inspection of the trail, it must be attended to as soon as reasonably possible.

i. **Maintenance Schedule:** The GHTA will conduct annual maintenance along the entire length of the trail. A trail inspection needs to be done at a minimum of once per year and it is recommended to have more than 1 person do the activity per section of the trail. It will be at the discretion of the Trail Maintenance Director of each club, to determine when is the best season for the club to do the maintenance, due to the wide range of kilometers involved. After completing the Trail Maintenance & Status Form, it is to be sent to the GHTA Trail Director for follow-up and kept in the Archives.

ii. **Trail Markers:** Blazes should be clearly visible. Standing at one blaze, one should be able to see the next blaze. Blazes should be uniform in size. The ideal dimensions are 5 cm X 15 cm (2” X 6”). Blazes may be painted on vertical surfaces such as trees, rocks or posts. In the Wilderness Section, trail markers may also be rock cairns or paint on flat surfaces. In some areas, blazes may be made of metal or plastic strips, but should NEVER be nailed to trees on private land without permission of the landowner, and on Simcoe County Forest land. Metal screws and nails are acceptable to hang signs on trees. Where needed, scrapers are used on trees to prepare for the painted blazes.

iii. **Color of Blazes:** Main trail blazes are always white. Some have black borders to improve visibility in hard to see places. Side trail blazes are blue and a further side trail is marked with yellow blazes. An access trail that touches both a main trail and a side trail should be marked with yellow blazes.

iv. **Use of Power Tools:** Always read and understand the instruction manual of any power tool. Wear proper protective clothing, steel toed safety boots, close fitting safety glasses, and heavy - duty work gloves. Proper training from a reliable source is essential before using any power

tool. Make sure the equipment is in good working order. Also, check the Chainsaw Policy on the use of chainsaws.

v. **Protection of Fences (Stiles):** Where a trail encounters a fence and there is no gate in the fence, a stile should be constructed to facilitate crossing the fence to protect the fence from damage. The landowner needs to be notified. Stiles should be easily visible and built well away from gates. Refer to the “Bruce Trail Guide for Trail Workers” re: construction guidelines for stiles. Remove any stiles when no longer necessary.

vi. **Crossing Water:** Some trails encounter a water course which cannot be crossed because of the depth of the water. In this case, the GHTA allows the building of bridges and boardwalks. Observation of the area is necessary for a year in order to find out flood levels, erosion, etc. Any construction on private land should be consulted with the landowner and approved by the GHTA Executive before building. For larger projects contact your local Conservation Authority for correct construction. Another possible solution is a slightly raised treadway of wood chips, if these are available. These should be restrained along the edges by logs or rocks. When this is not enough, boardwalks or bridges will have to be built. The construction of these will depend on the specific local situation adhering to the water levels for all seasons, topography, decision on whether to use metal or wooden structures, etc. Also, check, available budget, resources, landowner approval and if needed approval from the local Watershed Management Authority in the area.

vii **Bridges/Boardwalks:**

A wooden bridge or boardwalk to be made of cedar or hemlock. A bridge consists of five basic components: Foundation, Sleepers, Stringers, Deck and Handrails. Foundations are to be made of rocks, poles and/or logs with a safe entry & exit grading. Other materials are acceptable if they are durable and sustainable.

A steel bridge comes in 2 main designs, steel girders & steel trusts. Girders can be made of welded and/or riveted steel plate. Steel trusses are usually used in the larger trail bridges. Experts need to be consulted for this type of bridge.

All completed structures must be approved by the Executive before building and checked for proper maintenance at regular intervals. We recommend applying "Best Practices" such as those outlined in the Bruce Trail Conservancy's Guide for Trail Workers. The current edition is posted at www.brucetrail.org.

Pictures of GHTA built and maintained bridges, stiles and boardwalks are to be sent to the GHTA Trails Director (trails@gha.ca) for filing in the “Manmade Structures” files (required for insurance purposes).