

Stewardship

The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

From COTA's inception, there has been a core motivation to be stewards of the land. To give freely to future generations what was freely given to us. COTA has opposed recreations fees because we believe that stewardship is a more ethical and fulfilling way to maintain our trail systems. Where the community collectively "owns" and therefore respects and contributes to the trail system. It is the People's trail system! It is not something to be paid for and thus given the right to trash!

Becoming a COTA Trail Steward is an opportunity to give back to the community. However, those who have become trail stewards know that it is much more than that. Trail stewardship develops into a personal connection with the land; an understanding of the natural forces and the seasons takes place over time. It is a unique outlet to be creative for the good of others and is for many a deeply satisfying form of volunteerism.

Prior to and after becoming a Trail Steward, please do not alter any trail without prior communication with the trail's designated Steward or in the case of non-adopted trails the Trail Maintenance Coordinator. Many hours have been spent by Trail Stewards to maintain their trail in a specific style and to a specific difficulty designation, please respect their hard work by not doing unauthorized trail work.

COTA Trail Steward Adopt-a-trail Guidelines:

To the best of his or her ability, the Trail Steward agrees to follow the COTA Trail Standards and the below suggested guidelines. Documentation of all work and inspections is essential to ensure COTAs compliance with land and insurance authorities.

1. A minimum two-year commitment.
2. Catalog the most applicable COTA trail type, trail difficulty and TTF difficulty level as per COTA Trail Standards: This helps to keep the trail system cohesive and correctly identified. Notify the Trail Maintenance Coordinator (TMC) with type and difficulty results or consult with TMC or senior Stewards for guidance.
3. Open and inspect the trail in spring: As early in the year as possible for safe access, arrange a trail crew including a Certified Chain Saw Operator to clear logs, brush and sight lines from the trail in accordance with the designated trail standard. Clear functioning drains of debris.
 - A. Inspect all TTFs for structural and fall zone integrity then complete a TTF inspection sheet for each. TTFs must be inspected twice a year once in the spring and once in the middle of the season (July). Trails that are open for 4 months or less per year only need inspection when they are opened in the spring/summer. Any TTF that is not structurally sound shall be immediately marked as closed until repair, replacement or destruction can take place.
 - B. Inspect for the presence and condition of signage.
 - C. Inspect for good drainage, ideally visit your trail during or immediately after big thunderstorms to determine future drainage needs. Build / excavate drainage capable of functioning during thunderstorms. Plan necessary dirt work (adding dirt) for the fall whenever possible.
4. Submit TTF inspection sheets to the TMC within 3 days of inspection so they can be appropriately filed. Notify the TMC Immediately of any safety issues or potential concerns. Advise Signage Coordinator of any signage changes, repairs or additions as they arise.
5. Web responsibilities: Describe and log all your work hours on the COTA worklog. Write a brief trail description including the applicable trail type and

difficulty level and if possible submit photos to the Web Master. Contact the Web Master on trail open / closed conditions. Answer reasonable questions from the public concerning your adopted trail. (You can do this anonymously)

6. Fall trail work: Work on the tread (adding dirt), drainage features, burms, jumps, smoothing, etc. following trail standards applicable to your trail.
7. Re-adoption: When you can no longer care for your trail contact the TMC as soon as possible. Unresponsiveness to: submitting TTF inspection forms, basic clearing and maintenance needs, communication from the TMC will allow a new steward an opportunity.