

## **Oak Ridges Trail Association Guide For Trail Maintenance**

**Revised: July 9, 2002**

**Supersedes: October, 1999**

### **Objectives and Responsibilities**

The mission of the Association is " to develop, manage and secure the Oak Ridges Trail (ORT) as a recreational footpath along the Oak Ridges Moraine from the Niagara Escarpment to the Northumberland Forest, thereby promoting appreciation and respect for the Moraine's ecological, cultural scenic integrity, with the aim of retaining the trail corridor its natural state. "

To achieve this objective, Oak Ridges Trail Association Chapters were established along the Moraine, each responsible for a section of the Oak Ridges Trail.

### **Guidelines**

#### **How wide and high should the trail be?**

The trail should be cleared to at least 1.5 m. (5 feet) and the actual treadway 0.6 m. ( 2 feet ). Where public or private existing trails are less than 1.2 meters, they should be evaluated and in most cases left as they are. This helps to preserve the environment and discourages other means of use.

Each trail should be cleared as high as you can reach, **up to 2.5 m. (8 feet)**. Remember when clearing to keep the natural canopy in mind. Use the 2.5 meter height as a guideline Use a common sense approach.

#### **What about treadway surface and windfalls across the trail?**

Trail surface should be uncluttered for safe passage of hikers . Logs, for example, that is less than 8 inches from the surface treadway can be left and stepped over. If the tree logs are greater than 8 inches, the log should be removed or cut the width of the treadway to leave an opening for hikers to pass through.

Note: It is not the policy of the Oak Ridges Trail Association to deliberately place logs or other obstructions across the treadway to discourage mountain bikers and motorized vehicles. This could create a liability issue for the Association.

#### **What to do about wet areas?**

There are several options on how to deal with wet areas. Your first option should be to ask the question: Is this the best location for the trail ? It is better to reroute, if feasible, than to disturb the surrounding environment. Only after this first option is intensely scrutinized should you proceed to other possibilities. These other options could be as follows: stepping stones, wood chips, corduroy, trenching or board walking. Refer to the third edition of the The Bruce Trail Association publication, Guide for Trail Workers. Each Chapter Chair has a copy for use by the Chapter members.

## **Blazes - Why, Where and How?**

### **Main Trail Blazes:**

#### **Why are the blazes 5 x 15 cm ( 2 x 6 inches ), rectangular and painted white ?**

The size, colour and shape of the blazes used by ORTA were based on the The Bruce Trail, who adopted the concept from the Appalachian Trail. Note the blazes must have clear-cut lines so that they stand out from the irregular shapes of natural features. Take your time to ensure that the blazes are neat, have straight lines and are all the same size. Carelessly painted blazes reflect back onto the Association and creates a poor image of our standards of trail maintenance. Where there is a problem with blazing on lightly coloured surfaces, use the tuxedo blaze. This is still a white blaze except it is framed with a larger black rectangle. This is still a white blaze except it is framed with a larger ( 3x7 inch / 8 x 18 cm) black rectangle.

Paint is used for blazes because of its durability. Use an exterior semi-gloss latex or alkyd paint. Latex paint is water soluble and is easier to work with because the brushes and blaze equipment can be cleaned with water. Alkyd ( oil base needing mineral spirits ) is more permanent.

#### **What equipment do you need for blazing?**

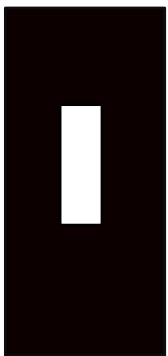
<b>Type of Tool</b>	<b>Use</b>
Paint Scraper	To clean and smooth the bark in preparation for painting.
Secateurs (Pruners)	For pruning small branches that may hide the blaze.
Safety Glasses	For protecting your eyes when scraping, painting, scrubbing or pruning at eye level.
Wire Brush	For scrubbing old blazes off rocks, concrete posts etc.
Sand Paper	Removal of blazes from lamp posts.
Screwdriver	Installing and removing screws from signs.
Template	For painted blaze
Template	For tuxedo blaze
Black Marker	Could be used for outlining before blazing and tuxedoing existing blazes. A black paint stick could be used also.
Paint Brushes	Recommend 1 to 1-1/2 inch natural hair brush. Recommend 1/4 to 1/2 inch natural hairbrush for tuxedo. Recommend carrying extra brushes.

Paint	(Exterior)White semi-gloss latex or alkyd paint for main trail blazes. Blue semi-gloss latex or alkyd paint for side trail blazes. Black semi-gloss latex or alkyd paint for tuxedos. Grey spray paint for painting out blazes on metal posts.
Water or varsol	for paint clean up.
Cloth	For correcting mistakes and clean up.
Latex or Cotton Gloves	To keep hands clean.
ORTA Brochures	To give to potential members.
Basket or container	For carrying tools.

**What are the types and meaning of the blazes used?**

**Blaze Colours: White for main trail  
Blue for side trails**

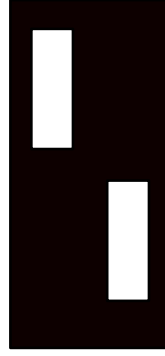
Straight Ahead



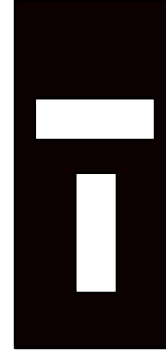
Right Turn



Left Turn



T-Blaze ( End of trail)



These are the only blazes that are acceptable for marking the Oak Ridges Trail. A double blaze straight above the other is not acceptable. **PRIOR TO THE USE OF ANY BLAZES, IT IS THE POLICY OF THE OAK RIDGES TRAIL ASSOCIATION TO OBTAIN PERMISSION FROM THE LANDOWNER , BEING A CONSERVATION AUTHORITY, TOWN, CITY, OR PRIVATE LANDOWNER.**

**Side Trail Blazes:**

Side trails are secondary trails that are not part of the main trail. The side trails are blazed with ORTA approved blue paint. The type of paint to use is exterior semi-gloss latex. Take the colour swatch in the Bruce Trail Guide for Trail Workers and match the paint as closely as possible.

Immediately before reaching the side trail intersection, paint a double blaze on the main trail to advise hikers.

Upon turning, the first blue blaze should be visible from the junction point. and should have a side trail sign above it. When the hiker reaches the termination point, place a T blaze as close as possible to the main trail junction.

### **Where should the blazes be located?**

- Blazes should normally be located at eye level, 1.5 m ( 5 to 6 feet ) above the treadway and preferably on the right side of the trail. The exception to this is on roads where the blazes should be on the left side of the road to encourage hikers to walk facing oncoming traffic.
- Do not blaze both directions at the same time. Blaze one direction and then blaze the other direction. The reason for this is that the blaze may not be visible from both directions.
- Pay particular attention to blazing at intersections of trails. For curves in the trail, use common sense. All curves in the trail do not need turn blazes.
- As you pass one blaze you should be able to see the next blaze, but the distance may be extended if there is no cause for confusion. It is best to err on the side of caution to avoid the possibility of hikers getting lost.
- If you select a dead tree, ensure that it is solid and sturdy.
- If you blaze in the summer, you should check to see if the blazes are also visible in the other three seasons of the year.
- For new trails it is recommended that more blazes be used.

### **Why do we have signs?**

Signs are used by ORTA for the following reasons:

- For identifying the trail to the public.
- For reminding hikers of the Trail User's Code.
- For providing information on how to contact the Association.

## What are the Official ORTA signs and when should they be used?

### 1. Small 15 x 13 cm (6 x 5 inch) rectangular signs



The purposes of these signs are as follows:

- indicate the route of the trail
- advise hikers of intersecting trails
- make hikers feel comfortable that they are on the correct trail
- where there may be confusion of the trail

Generally, these small signs should be placed at least 3/4 to 1 km apart where possible keeping in mind the above four reasons. In areas where the trail is flat and straight, you may decide to mount these signs 2 kms apart.

### 2. Larger 30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x 12 inch) access signs



The purpose of these signs are as follows:

- identify entry and exit points
- inform trail users that Trail is built and maintained by volunteers
- make hikers aware of trail etiquette
- provide information on Association

Install these signs at access locations such as road crossings, or places where a trail leaves a traveled road or a parking lot that leads directly to the trail.

### **3. Installation of signs**

All new signs should be mounted on 12 mm (1/2 inch) pressure treated plywood backing. The plywood backing helps to prevent damage to the signs by vandals, and eliminates the problem of trees growing out around the sign and its nails or screws. Attach the signs to the backing with 1/2 inch #8 square head wood screws.

Before going out to the trail, predrill two holes one above the other (not side by side) through the sign and backing. Use 3 1/2 inch #10 square head wood screws. Coated deck screws could also be used. Leave the sign out from the tree at least 3/4 inches to allow room for the tree to grow. When that space is used up, the screws can then be backed off to allow for future growth.

### **4. Source of Signs**

All signs must be obtained from the Trail Director. Any sign that is not in accordance with this policy must be approved by the ORTA Board of Directors prior to use.

### **What about stiles?**

Stiles are used to avoid damage to fences. Refer to the third edition of the Bruce Trail Association Guide for Trail Workers for the building plans.

### **What is the Trail Condition Report?**

The Trail Condition Report ( Appendix A ) is a tool to ensure that the Oak Ridges Trail is safe. It should be filled out for each section that a trail captain is responsible for. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the checklist.

The trails are to be formally **inspected twice per year, once in the spring and once in the fall**. The Trail Condition Report is to be submitted to the Trail Director after each inspection. Each Chapter Chair should keep a copy for their corrective action.

Appendix A

**TRAIL CONDITION REPORT**

**CHAPTER :**

**NOTE: The ORT Guide For Trail Maintenance and risk management requires that this report be filled out in the spring and fall of each year.**

Describe Section Inspected:															
Map Number:															
Inspection Date:															
Spring:	Fall:	Year:													
<p><b>CHECK (√) ITEMS IF IN SATISFACTORY CONDITION. IF NOT, PUT X AND COMMENT INCLUDING ACTION TAKEN OR TO BE TAKEN. REPORT MAJOR PROBLEMS AT ONCE TO YOUR CHAPTER CHAIR IMMEDIATELY.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Litter collected and disposed of (including parking areas).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Grass and shrubbery trimmed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Branches pruned back, stumps removed, windfalls cleared.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Safety hazards eliminated (dead limbs, leaning trees, loose rocks etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stiles safe and firmly in place.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fences in good condition</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Slope erosion under control.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do wet areas have adequate drainage.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bridges in good repair with decking intact.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Blazes in good condition and according to ORTA policy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visibility adequate and not confusing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Blazes properly placed and in good condition</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Old unnecessary blazes - scraped off or painted over</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Proper signage on trail and in good repair.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Need for additional signs:</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small ORT A signs                      Number needed:</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12X12 ORTA signs                      Number needed:</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other signs needed Describe and attach drawing, dimensions)</li> </ul> <p><b>CIRCLE YES OR NO.</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Any signs of vandalism or misuse of trail?</td> <td style="width: 10%;">Yes</td> <td style="width: 10%;">No</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any problems with fires in unauthorized places?</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any parking problems, e.g. laneways obstructed?</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				Any signs of vandalism or misuse of trail?	Yes	No		Any problems with fires in unauthorized places?	Yes	No		Any parking problems, e.g. laneways obstructed?	Yes	No	
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Any problems with fires in unauthorized places?	Yes	No													
Any parking problems, e.g. laneways obstructed?	Yes	No													
<p><b>TRAIL CAPTAINS PLEASE NOTE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise Chapter Chair or Trail Director immediately of any land for sale on or near the ORT trail.</li> <li>• Use the back of this sheet for any further comments, including suggestions for improvements of any kind.</li> <li>• Report on or within a week of the date specified, and send the completed form promptly to your Chapter Chair, who will arrange any assistance needed and report conditions to the Trail Director.</li> </ul>															
Trail inspected by (Please print):															
Trail Captain:	Tel:	email or Fax:	Signature:												
Chapter Chair:	Tel:	email or Fax:	Signature:												