Trail Sign Forum

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Tracy Hall, Norwich, VT


Meeting Notes


Overview by John Taylor, UVTA Trails Program Director

· Trail signage encompasses both aesthetics and information

· The Upper Valley needs adequate signage, yet want to avoid trail sign pollution

· Question for the audience: What is missing from existing trail signs?

- Health and safety information (e.g., nearest rest area, alert users to dangerous areas)

- For example, many mountain bike trails warn riders of upcoming hazards

· Many blazes are old and faded; there is an opportunity to update them with brighter colors

· Usage restrictions can get lost in signs with too much text

· Trail intersection numbers and accompanying maps can be very helpful

· Balance trail sign needs for different users (e.g., skiers versus hikers)

· Ensure durability of sign materials and construction, yet create a sign that matches the natural landscape (e.g., metal signs versus wooden signs)

· In the future, there is the potential to have QR codes that can be read with a smartphone, loading a trail map onto the user's phone


Q&A

· Is there a smartphone app that will track your progress through GPS?

- Trail Finder (http://trailfinder.info/uppervalley) is not capable of this yet, but Local Motion is testing an app that is capable of tracking progress using GPS technology found in most smartphones

- Hanover Conservancy has a QR code posted at Mink Brook that brings users to the part of their Web site with the map for that trail

- Coverage is a potential limitation of this service


Ideas Generated By Breakout Groups

1.    Are there enough trail signs on the trails you currently use? If yes, what do you like? If no, what is missing?

- Parking is a critical problem and signage is often inadequate

- Need to account for sign visibility in different weather conditions

- Signage with phone numbers and hunting restrictions is helpful

- Destination signs are useful

- Trail intersections are a critical area to communicate with trail users

- Understand who the users are for a specific trail; different groups have different needs

- Need to consider what less engaged trail users need from signs


2.    Do you want more consistency in trail signage and markings on trails in the Upper Valley? What would it look like?

- Potential for a standardized sign with customizable features

- Graphic images (e.g., National Park Service approach)

- Text for messages like "Foot Travel Only" may be more succinct than using icons

- Maps with a "you are here" notification

- Offset blazes are an interesting idea

- Concern with trail sign posts getting turned around – use a concrete base to prevent this

- Focus on encouraging participation

3.    What is the best way to mark trailhead access for the public?

- Kiosks

- Signs for trailhead parking

- Depends on how visible landowners want a trail to be

- One consideration is whether or not it is a front or back entrance to the trail(s)

- Consistency in signage will help the public recognize trailheads

Wrap-Up & Takeaways

·    Signage needs to fit the needs of users of a specific trail

·    Web sites play an important role in educating trail users

·    There is a need for universal signage with some customization

UVTA's Role

·    Build more connections among trail networks and help create consistency in signage for future trail connections

·    Serve as a source for sign information – where to get them, design consultation, and fabrication

·    Create a manual with guidance and recommendations for trail signage