

STRIVING FOR SUSTAINABLE TRAILS IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

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What is Sustainability in Trails?

- Designed to protect nature and conserve landscapes while engaging users
- Constructed to minimize natural resource damage and human resource commitment
- Maintained regularly and in a minimally impactful manner



The White Mountain Trail System Takes Shape

- Trails for Extraction: Pre-1830s

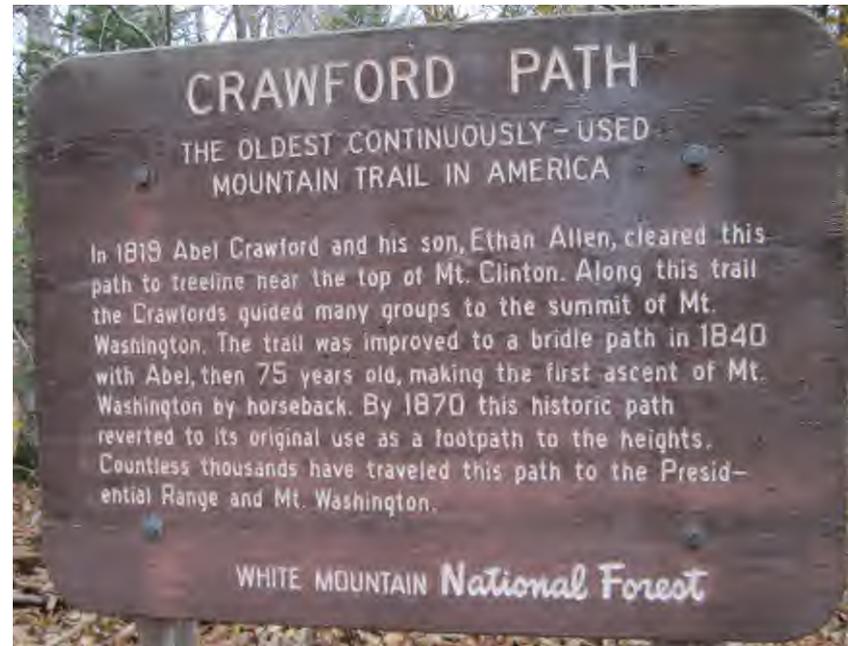
- For natural resource extraction
- Not really “designed” more just cut where it was convenient
- No consideration of sustaining trails or landscape

- Trails Boom: 1840s – 1970s

- Trails for recreational pursuits start to be built in large numbers
 - Trail design is rugged
- Trail systems and clubs take off during 1870s
- Trail crews created to sustain trails
 - Only keep trails open, no regard for sustaining the land

- Sustainable Trails: 1980s – Today

- Baby Boomers hit the trails...hard
- Just keeping trails open no longer sufficient
- Modern concept of sustainability takes shape



Managing Sustainably Today



- Challenges facing sustainability
 - Cultural legacy of rugged trails for a few intrepid explorers
 - Overwhelming mileage
- Strategy to overcome challenges today:
 - Broad support
 - Consistent attention
 - Simple and enduring construction
 - Modern design concepts
 - Consideration of human and *natural* resources

Tactics to Achieve a Sustainable Strategy

- Organizational structure of AMC

- Trails Department

- Adopt-A-Trail
- Volunteer Trail Crews
- Professional Trail Crew

- Prioritization of work

- Maintenance
- Construction (or reconstruction of tread)
- Design (or redesign of poor trail)



Adopt-A-Trail



- Broad support with over 200 adopters
- Provide consistent attention with 3 trips per year
- All about maintenance
 - Clean drains
 - Clear corridor
 - Blaze
 - Act as scouts for Trails Department

Volunteer Trail Crews



- Broad support with an average of 41 different teen and adult crews in the White Mountains each season
- Emphasis is simple projects
 - Considerate of their work ability
 - Ideal for long term sustainability of trail work
- Provide needed consistency of crew work to respond to the large number of trail problems

Professional Trail Crew

- First priority every year is patrolling all 360 miles of AMC White Mountain trails

- Constantly developing construction skills

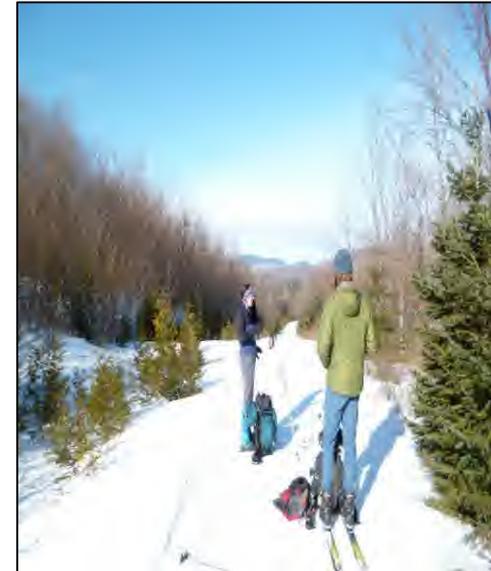
- Responsible for designing modern, sustainable reroutes and realignments



Trail Design

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Who will use the trail?
- How much use will the trail receive?
- Where will the trail go?



Trail Design

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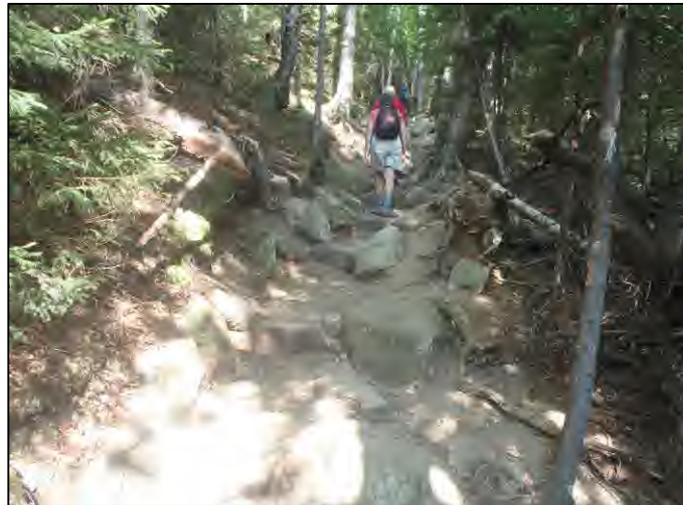
DETERMINE THE USERS



Trail Design

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DESIGNING FOR APPROPRIATE USE



Trail Design

WHERE WILL THE TRAIL GO?

- Study the terrain
 - Slope
 - Water drainage
 - Curvilinear : Fall line

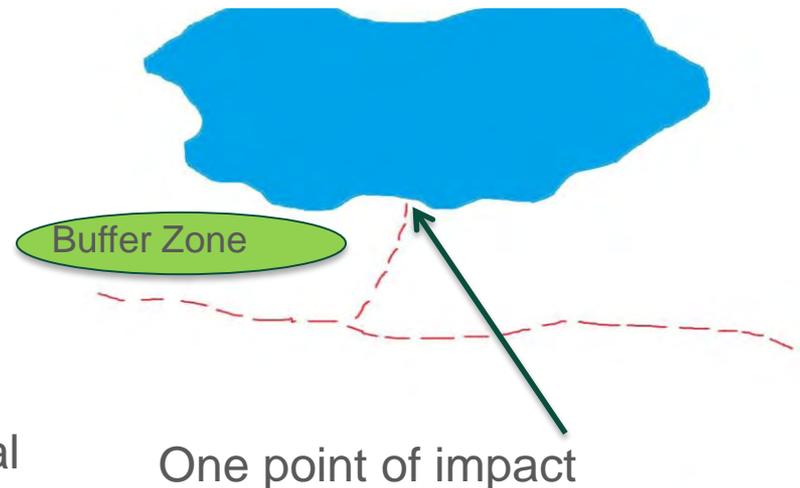
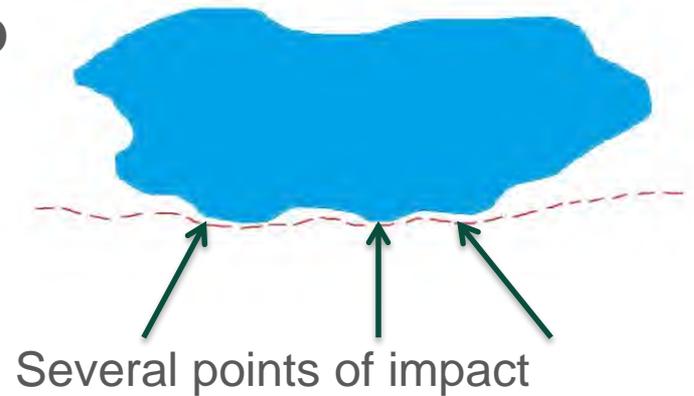


- Topo maps
- Walk around and explore

Trail Design

WHERE TO GO, DESTINATIONS, WHERE TO END?

- Identify Major Control Points
 - Positive
 - Stunning vistas, unique rock formations
 - Peaks, bodies of water
 - Campsites
 - Negative
 - Roads (state, highway, logging)
 - Other evidence of humans
 - Dangerous, unsafe areas
 - Critical habitat or sensitive natural areas



Trail Construction

HARD, DRY, and VISIBLE

- Hard
 - Tread should be durable
 - Rock, wood, dirt, gravel
- Dry
 - Keep water off the trail or the trail off water
 - Drainage needs
- Visible
 - Corridor should be clear
 - Trail well marked



Trail Construction

HARD & DURABLE



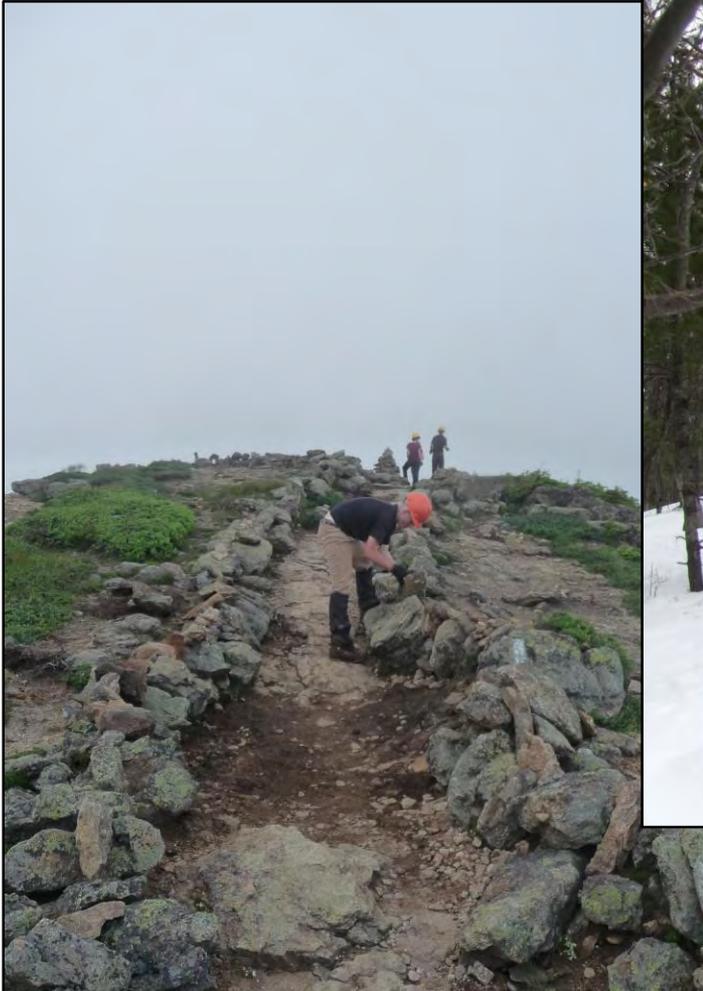
Trail Construction

DRY



Trail Construction

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VISIBLE



Trail Construction

WHO WILL BUILD IT?

- Keep it simple
 - Rock or wood structures
 - Pros and cons for both
- Who will build it?
 - Trail project location
 - Materials and available access
- Who will maintain it?



You don't know what lies beneath until you start digging.

Maintenance



- Regular maintenance prevents irregular problems
 - Adopters complete 3 times a season
 - First thing Professional Crew does
- Maintain both parts of the trail:
 - Corridor
 - Clear brush and blowdowns to keep trail visible and people off the surrounding land
 - Keep well marked with signs, cairns, and blazes
 - Tread
 - Keep water off the trail, so that soil will remain

Learning from the Past

- **Look to maintain what you have first**
- **Design and construct trails after considering all of your resources**
 - **Now and in the future**
 - **Human and natural**
- **Manage your trail system with a strategy to:**
 - **Build broad support for the trails**
 - **Consistently work on them**
 - **Construct simply and with the long term in mind**
 - **Design in harmony with nature**
 - **Consider all the resources you have**

Additional Resources

- AMC Trails Department Programs
 - <http://www.outdoors.org/conservation/trails/index.cfm>
- Books on Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance
 - *AMC's Complete Guide to Trail Building & Maintenance*
 - *Lightly on the Land*
 - *USDA Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook*
- American Trails
 - Excellent source of countless trail articles:
<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/index.html>

References

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 - <http://www.whitemtridgerunners.com/news/wmrr-railtrails7.htm>