



# **CAPE ANN TRAIL STEWARDS FIELD MANUAL**

**1ST EDITION WINTER 2019**

Cape Ann Trail Stewards  
PO Box 690, Essex, MA 01929  
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(978) 696-0300

## Welcome!

As a Cape Ann Trail Steward you have joined an army of volunteers who work to protect and maintain hiking trails on Cape Ann. Without you and our other stewards, CATS would not be as efficient in delivering its extensive services to local communities and property owners. You are an important part of a well established organization dedicated to promoting the common good.

## The Roles of Our Stewards

Trail Stewards have a fairly simple task, but there are a few expectations that we have for becoming a Trail Steward.

- Monitor trails on a regular basis
  - We suggest at least a monthly visit to your chosen property
- Send a report in once a year
  - Trail Stewards can email [contact@capeanntrailstewards.org](mailto:contact@capeanntrailstewards.org) a report once a year, making note of anything significant, such as particular locations for parties, frequent trail marker removal, illicit use such as ATVs, unique habitat or just a report on the condition of the trail. Reports can also be submitted on our website.
  - Attend our Annual Meeting or one or more of our board meetings per year. (You can find our meeting schedule on our website.)
  - Assist with volunteer days on their trails and others!

Major maintenance is generally done by stewards with the help of CATS directors and volunteers recruited for a work day. All work is done with the prior approval of the landowner.

The biggest contribution you can make to our goal of maintaining and improving trail access is simply being our “eyes and ears” for your chosen areas, and notifying us of major issues such as encroachment, dumping or inappropriate use of the site.

You can notify us simply by emailing us at [contact@capeanntrailstewards.org](mailto:contact@capeanntrailstewards.org) or sending us a message on Facebook, or by calling or texting this number: (978) 396-0300.

Many stewards also replace missing trail markers, and do light trimming to maintain the trail or make markers more visible.

## Who We Are

Cape Ann Trail Stewards helps to maintain existing trails, improve access and promote the responsible and safe use of the Cape Ann Trail network and recreational areas for hiking, birding, cross country skiing, mountain biking and other passive recreation. Our work area includes: Essex, Gloucester, Manchester and Rockport.

The majority of the 10,000 acres of open space on Cape Ann is owned by the City of Gloucester and the towns of Rockport, Manchester and Essex. Given the other important demands on their funding and staff, they do not always have the resources to effectively manage these lands.

Cape Ann Trail Stewards brings together experts from private land protection organizations and various user groups and organizes projects to support access to these open space areas.

Our board of directors includes representatives from:

Cape Ann Climbing Coalition	Gloucester Open Space Committee
Dog Friendly Gloucester	Magnolia Woods Oversight Committee
Dogtown Advisory Committee	New England Mountain Bike Association
Essex County Greenbelt	Manchester Essex Conservation Trust
Essex County Trail Association	Rockport Conservation Commission
Essex Open Space Committee	Rockport Open Space Committee
Friends of Dogtown	Rockport Rights of Way Committee

Our board is supported by a part-time Executive Director with extensive conservation stewardship experience in Essex County, and GIS and GPS expertise.

### **How We Work**

CATS identifies trails and open space areas in need of care, develops a basic plan to protect these areas and improve trail access, and then implements these plans under the direction of our experienced and knowledgeable board of directors using volunteers from the Cape Ann communities.

When CATS adopts a new site, we typically install a trail head kiosk and create maps and signs with information about the site and appropriate uses. We also generally mark one or more loops that invite new visitors to explore the area with the confidence so that they will be able to find their way around and back to the trail head without getting lost.

A CATS director will walk new Trail Stewards around the site on an orientation visit, and explain its history and how we became involved. This will give you a chance to get to know the property and ask questions about how it is used and how we hope to manage it.

We now manage and maintain several trails in Gloucester and Rockport. We continue to add new areas, improve trail head kiosks and trail marking, and promote appropriate passive recreations uses of these areas.

CATS works at the direction of the appropriate department or agency; typically the Department of Public Works, Conservation Commission or Rights of Way Committee and can serve a liaison between neighbors, or other user groups and these various agencies.

At each newly adopted site, CATS helps to develop plans to improve access, implements these plans and provides ongoing monitoring and maintenance. A Trail Steward for each site helps execute this process.

Improving access may entail reclaiming an existing trail, laying out new trails, installing trail markers, installing a trail head kiosk, or preparing appropriate maps and descriptions of the site.

**All of this work is planned cooperatively with the appropriate department, agency or landowner, and implemented only after all appropriate filings and approvals.**

### **Communicating with CATS**

The board typically meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6PM at Greenbelt's Cox Reservation in Essex, you can find the meeting schedule on our website. Please join us when you can, as these meetings will give you a sense for the scope of our work, in addition to getting to know our directors.

Any and all communications regarding trail stewardship should be directed to [contact@capeanntrailstewards.org](mailto:contact@capeanntrailstewards.org). You can include a photograph with the location tagged, if possible. Most smart phones now allow you to "georeference" photographs so that they show the location where the photo was taken when opened in Google Earth or similar programs. This is a very simple yet effective way to notify us of trail obstructions, encroachment, dumping or vandalism.

### **Interacting with Visitors and Abutters**

If you choose, you can act as an ambassador for Cape Ann Trail Stewards by explaining our mission to those you encounter on your site. We have small laminated cards with some basic information on who we are, and a link to our website.

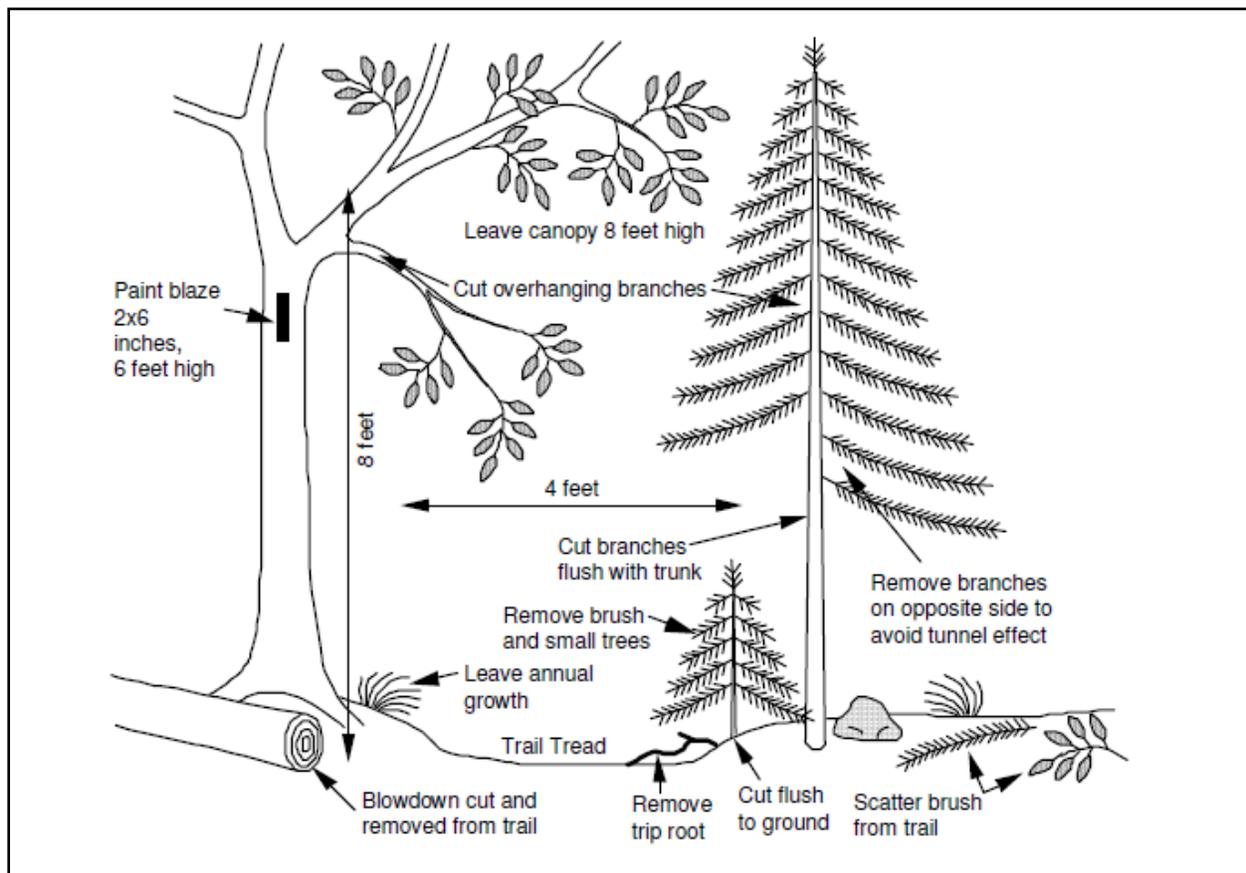
You may encounter visitors and abutters who may have concerns about our work and our authority to maintain a site. Please avoid confrontation at all costs, and refer them to our contact above for more information.

In the event that you see an inappropriate use as it is happening (dumping, motorized vehicle use, etc.), do not confront the persons involved directly. Make a note of the time and location, and send this information along to the appropriate CATS contact.

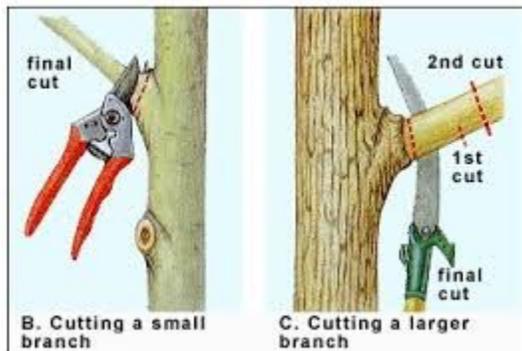
## Trail Pruning

If you do not have clippers or a saw, we will supply them. Both will stay sharp longer if you spray the cutting surfaces with WD-40 or silicone spray after each use and store them where they can air dry. Avoid touching the cutting surfaces, as there may be poison ivy oils from prior use.

Prune branches that intrude onto the trail or that obscure trail makers. (See figure below for proper trail pruning.)



It is best to cut branches near the node where they connect to the trunk (see image B. below). A long stub won't heal properly, and will lead to infection and rot. When cutting a large branch, first cut the branch a few inches from the trunk, and then remove the stub with a second cut (See image C. below). This will prevent the branch from splitting away and leaving a large wound.



Source, *Town of Beech Mountain, North Carolina website*

If you need to cut a sapling or shrub at ground level, try to cut it flush with the ground. Leaving a stub will create a trip hazard.

### Trail Appearance

A well-maintained trail should look natural, with few visible cuts on bordering vegetation. All cut branches and brush should be moved well off the trail with the cut end pointing away from the trail.

### Trail Width and Height

Trails should generally be trimmed to the following widths from ground level to the highest overhead reach while standing on the ground:

- Singletrack with normal trailside vegetation: 4 feet (both elbows outstretched)
- Singletrack if trailside vegetation is thorny, allergenic (poison ivy), rapidly growing, or invasive: 6 feet (both arms outstretched)
- Doubletrack minimum: 8 feet
- Doubletrack for easy passage of any sized service vehicle: 11 feet

Better visibility around curves reassures users about what is ahead and reduces conflicts between visitors. For example, faster traffic can slow down when approaching slower traffic. By selectively pruning growth on the inside of curves, good visibility can be maintained without overly widening trails. Intersections are a common stopping point for visitors to rest, navigate, or socialize and should be trimmed wider than trails to accommodate these needs and reduce conflicts involving faster traffic.

So trails will remain passable all winter, overhead clearance should be as high as can be achieved by workers standing on the ground (approximately 8 feet) to allow for deep snow cover and branches weighted down with snow and ice.

**Please refrain from the use power tools of any kind for trail maintenance!** If there are large blow downs or overhanging branches that require the use of a chainsaw, please let us know (a photo with a location tagged is best), and we will make arrangements to have a contractor or qualified board member do the work.

### **Maintaining Trail Markers**

We will supply you with the appropriate markers for your site, and aluminum nails.

As you walk the trails, look for markers that need to be replaced (a broken marker or a bare nail) and for opportunities to improve marking.

Markers hung high up suffer less vandalism, but if they are too high they are difficult to see.

A good compromise is to hang them as high as you can reach your arm over your head. Gently tap the nail into the center of the marker and hold the marker by the bottom as you hammer the nail in.

Leave 1/4" or 1/2" between the nail head and the trail marker. Markers nailed flush will soon fold as the tree grows in diameter.

Markers should be hung at right angles to the direction of travel along the trail. It is important to walk the trail in both directions to assess where markers are needed. Please replace old markers when the tree has out grown them. Remove tags and nails from trees that have fallen over.

Please refrain from using spray paint to mark trails and instead use trail markers provided by CATS.

### **Developing a Work Day Plan**

As you visit your site over the seasons, make notes about possible improvements that could be the focus of future work days.

Improvements might include rerouting a portion of the trail around a seasonally wet area, installing a boardwalk, blocking an access that has been the source of dumping or motorized vehicle access, or improvements to the kiosk signage.

### **Our Partnership!**

We want your volunteer experience with Cape Ann Trail Stewards to be enjoyable so that you will be involved with your site for many years.