

Minutes of the Norwich Trails Committee for August 3, 2016

Present: George Clark, Gered Dunne, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskin, Byron Haynes, David Hubbard, Nick Krembs, Gerry Plummer, Liz Russell

A severe storm on July 23 brought down trees across trails in several locations. Although members of the committee have cleared a number of blowdowns, including in the northern part of the Blue Ribbon Trail and on parts of the Ballard Trail, additional clearing is known to be needed at 4 sites on southern and central parts of the Blue Ribbon Trail, at 3 sites on the Cossingham Road Farm Trails, and at a site on Brownschoolhouse Road trail.

The current email system for reporting downed trees and other trail problems has not been receiving emails from the public so adjustments in that system seem warranted. It is hoped to modify the system to encourage more reporting and to enable inclusion of GPS locations to assist responders.

This committee is to hold half day work sessions on three upcoming Saturdays: September 24th at Cossingham Road Farm Trails, October 1 at Brookmead Conservation Area, and October 22 on the Blue Ribbon Trail and connector to Parcel 5

Leaf blowing of trails has become increasingly popular for trails used for mountain biking. Advantages of such leaf blowing include a) keeping a trail more stable by removing leaves and other debris in which water may pool, b) making the route of the treadway much clearer so that bikers and other trail users navigate correctly and remain on the trail, c) making the treadway safer by removal of accumulated litter which can conceal hazards beneath, and d) extension of the season for biking. Concerns about leaf blowing include a) its noise, b) its potential for misapplication resulting in wider trails, and c) its use by unauthorized individuals without approval from landowners or land managers. The committee policy is that no leaf blowing be done without landowner approval. In a one year trial, the committee has agreed, if landowners consent, to authorize leaf blowing during the third week of October on the Blue Ribbon Trail, the connector trail, and the bike trail from the power line right-of-way to the summit of Gile Mountain. The committee will then review the situation. There is a need for trailhead signs indicating that trail maintenance is prohibited without approval from the committee.

Under arrangements planned by the Recreation Council, September 10 is to be a day showcasing new trails. Hikers are to be led by Laura Duncan, runners by Rebecca Matteo, and bikers by Gered Dunne and Byron Haynes. Before this event, it hoped to have additional trail route markers installed on the Blue Ribbon connector and on the link between Parcel 5 and the Brookmead Conservation Area.

Work on the Gile Mountain Trail has been going well. Volunteer helpers will be welcomed every Thursday in August from 8 AM to 2 PM when the Belgian horses will be working to move materials from the power line right-of-way to the work locations on the trail. Anyone wishing to help should bring work gloves, drinking water, a snack if desired, and insect repellent. It is anticipated that the two profession trail builders will resume stone work, possibly as early as the latter part of August but certainly in September. Although funds are on hand for support for a portion of this ongoing work on the Gile Mountain Trail, additional funds will need to be raised to enable a desired final completion of the stone work during this calendar year.

Respectfully submitted,
George Clark