

# Trail Maintenance: Lay out and up keep of Hero sections

By John Newton

**Scout-** New hero sections or addition / changes to current ones should be walked and laid out with ribbon so to take advantage of as much of the land as possible. Once scouted and a plan is made as to where a trail will go someone will need to Ruff Arrow the new section. Both these steps are usually done by a couple of members and completed before a crew ever shows up.

**Ruff arrow-** This is something usually done by someone with a good amount of experience and is able to see a good line in uncut woods. Ruff arrows will usually follow the ribbon that has laid and should be followed more than the ribbon; it should be a good lead for the brushing crews to follow. Ruff arrows are usually in a more or less straight line. Crews following should remember this is just a good idea of where to go not the exact trail which may damage due to what the cutting crew uncovers.

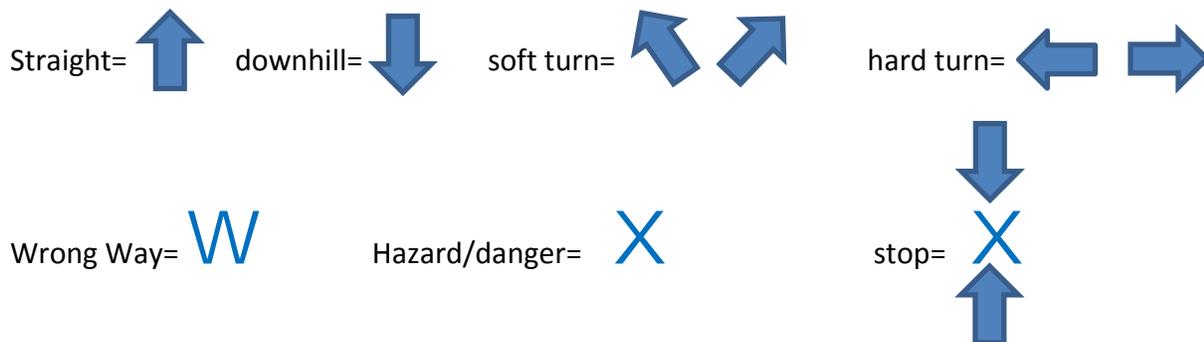
**Cutting in-** The crew with the chain saws is usually the first group in taking out trees, tops, hanging limbs pretty much anything bigger than 1 to 2" that needs to be cut from the trail. Things cut should be cut back 4 to 6' and all debris should be thrown beyond that. In the case of stumps they should be cut as close to the ground as possible and any that can't be cut back to a safe point or rocks, they should be marked so they won't be hit by riders. If there is big stuff either throw it completely out of the trail area, unless it's a planned obstacle like a log that riders will hop over.

**Whackers-** This should be at least a 2 person team one person swinging the weed whacker the other one throwing brush from the trail. Whacking is a 2 step process- first everything under 1-2" for apx 12-18" from the rut should be cut out tossed well away and cut as close to the ground as possible. Next- for another 12 to 18 " outside the first zone clear out anything that hangs into trail, there are the slappers and grabber that cut, scratch and try to rip you off the bike when riding through. This should be done once a year because it's usually things like berry brambles that grow over a couple years than take over from the lack of competition to grow against. Also in low, badly rutted , rocky stumpy places get as much of the vegetation cleaned out as possible to give riders options especially if others are stuck/ hung up.

The second person on the whacker team is there for one main purpose- throwing brush and assisting the person swinging the whacker. If at all possible throw all limbs, bramble and brush as far away from the trail as possible or at least make sure it can't fall or blow back into the trail.

**Established trail-** it is common when whacking on established trail that the crew would be 3-4 workers with the extra one carrying a chain saw and or a arrowing belt to do any add in or finish arrows that may be needed. On large hero sections when there are 2 or 3 crews always work in the direction the trail is run corners, arrows, and other obstacles can be easily missed if it is walked and cleaned by walking it in reverse.

**Finish Arrowing-** This is the person who will actually put in all of the corner making arrows and give the trail its directions. Arrows and their placement all mean something.



This is usually done by a member on a bike after riding the trail as to know where and how to space so an appropriate distance is given between the arrows and what the its signaling. The new plastic arrows we use are more expensive than the paper ones we have used in the past but seem to hold up a lot longer if used correctly. Use enough to mark the trail but don't be wasteful. When hanging arrows; always use at least 3 or 4 staples. At least do the top two corners and center of the bottom or better all four corners. Do not staple down the center only, the wind will rip it off or the water will make it curl around and be unreadable.

Once everything is cleared and arrowed the trail should be ridden to start to establish a rut in new sections or in established areas just to prove the flow and that everything is in good ride able shape, things look and feel a lot different at riding speed than they do when walking. Riding besides being fun gives us a chance to see that the trail flows well, arrows are marking the trail well, obstacles are visible and the trail is clear of brush.

By doing all these things the same in all the hero sections and by all workers it should make all the hero sections more consistent to ride and over the years of maintaining easier to keep up.

**Maintaining-** when working on trails watch for early signs of eroding places, some come on quickly after an event , other times its from years of use, if you notice a place that's breaking down, washing out, or has bad trenches that happened, look for options as to where/ how the trail can be rerouted early. Is it is a whole section that is wearing badly, we may have to look at

reversing whole sections or doing a major change to a large part of trail. When moving trail try to traverse hills by doing long slow slopes or switch backs in the hill, if there is absolutely no other option other than to go straight up or down a hill at least be sure we dig in water bars to diffuse the water.

**Event final set up-** In the last 1-3 days before an event a couple members should return and ride each hars section to see that everything is still the way we last left it. Over the years we have found plenty of surprises after thinking we were done and the trail was ready from wind and other storm damage, logging, flooding, other users pulling or changing routes and the list goes on. Along with this the entrance and exit arrows will need to be hung/ set up including the thank you and reset signs. You should plan on bringing everything you could need to do these extra arrows, caution ribbon, lath, will all need to be hung. While re-riding add in safety ribbon where needed, but remember there is a fine line between using enough to keep everyone safe and being part of the clean-up crew wondering , “why the hell did we need all this?” If there is stuff put up at this point beyond the normal entry exit stuff, make sure it is noted and gotten to the clean-up crew so they know where and how to find it so they can clean it up. From past experience the group that is setting up isn't usually the same group to go out and clean up so this last step of notes is pretty important. If the whacker crew also notices something that needs attention, signage or ribbon, note it as well so the pre-ride crew knows to do it.

At the end of each work weekend and after the events all tools should be returned to the club trailer, inspected for issues like blades, chains, damage staples and staplers all working and that everything is back so it can be used next time. If it's damaged decide who is going to take it in, make the repair, or order the parts needed.