

Adopt-A-Trail



Prescott National Forest USDA Forest Service

This Manual Issued To: _____

Adopted Trail: _____

Sections: _____

Mileage: _____

Trail Use Type: _____

Prescott National Forest

Adopt-A-Trail Manual General Information

There are approximately 850 miles of trail on the Prescott National Forest available for hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, motorcycle, and OHV riding.

Your Help is Welcome!

Individuals and groups can help maintain these trails and restore or protect resources in our area by “adopting” a trail or a section of trail. You or your group would return on a continuing basis to ensure the trail that you adopt remains in good condition.

The Work

The type of maintenance needed on each trail always varies – even weather can determine what work is necessary – but generally, you will remove rock and debris from the trail, trim brush, restore drainage, remove litter, and fix the walking surface. Please read on for specifics.

Adoptees usually schedule work activities at least four times per year.

Because the time you spend on the trail is your free time, we want you to enjoy it. It will involve working, learning, and socializing at the same time. Not only do we want your experience to be enjoyable, we also want it to be safe. You can use this project as an opportunity to teach a safe work ethic to young and old alike. Safety doesn’t spoil the fun, but accidents do. Work Safely!

The Adopt-A-Trail program is open to all and shared cooperatively by many people. All are of equal importance. Though we hope the bonds of friendship develop among trail builders, please try to work through conflict, too. We have come together in the most altruistic way to realize a common goal through the process of maintaining a trail system in a manner that will provide a safe and enjoyable experience for many forest users.

How You Can Adopt a Trail

First, you or your group decide(s) which trail to work on and how much you’re willing to take on. Then, an agreement is made between you or your group and the Forest Service. The Forest Service provides technical direction, information about trail maintenance standards, basic training, and some tools or materials. You provide the time, muscle, and energy to keep the trail in good repair. It’s also up to you to bring gloves and appropriate clothing and boots.

Adopting a trail is a real commitment. The Forest Service relies on you or your group to accomplish all the work you sign up for – and appreciates every bit of your energy spent. You will find this work incredibly rewarding!

What’s In This for You?

The Forest Service will put a sign at the trailhead if appropriate, recognizing your contribution to the resource. More importantly, as a group, you will know how much work and care you put into that area. At the end of a day, you’ll share stories and the satisfaction of muscles sore with accomplishment.

INTERESTED?

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Adopt-A-Trail Manual Adoptee General Duties

- I. Tread Work: The trail tread is the part of the trail that actually receives the traffic. So for a motorcycle trail it is where the tires roll or for a hiker trail it is where the feet walk. It is important that the tread is maintained in a way that inhibits resource damage while also maximizing user enjoyment. The adoptee will therefore be responsible for ensuring that the tread remains within FS specifications.
- II. Clearing Downfall: Trail corridors are to be kept passable through the process of clearing downed material and other obstructions.
- III. Brushing: The process of removing small-diameter trees, brush, and shrubs within a specified limit.
- IV. Drainage Maintenance: Includes the upkeep of various water and erosion control structures such as waterbars, checksteps, grade dips, and grade reversals.
- V. Signage: Adoptee is responsible for reporting missing and damaged signs to their supervisor and repairing the sign to FS standard if applicable while in the field.
- VI. Safety: Volunteers are no different than employees regarding safety: it is always the priority. Adoptees will begin each work day with a safety talk/review based upon two FS documents, the Job Hazard Analysis and the Tailgate Safety Form. All volunteers will also be required to wear the appropriate level of personal protective equipment for a given project. This includes boots, long pants, long-sleeved shirts, gloves, eye protection, and hard hats.
- VII. Check In and Check Out Procedures: Volunteers must check in and out with the Prescott NF dispatch when they are engaged in volunteer activities.
- VIII. Training: Adoptees are required to attend a volunteer orientation once every five years; this training is usually held annually. Adoptees are also required to obtain basic 1st Aid/CPR, blood born pathogen, and "hazardous materials communication" training within six months of the completion of the adoption process. Trainings will be coordinated through and approved by the adoptee's immediate supervisor.
- IX. Policy Compliance: Adoptees are expected to develop a basic understanding of FS regulations regarding trail use and management objectives, thereby understanding what uses are allowed and not allowed on a specific trail.
- X. Documentation: The adoptee is expected to document their hours worked and submit these to their supervisor on a regular basis.
- XI. Additional Information:
 - a. The individual or group will be expected to practice Leave No Trace principles and trail courtesy.

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Certifications and Training Requirements Checklist

Task	Supervisor/Date	Adoptee/Date
Volunteer Agreement: OF301a		
Emergency Contact Information Provided to Dispatch		
Check In/Out Procedures Set Up		
Volunteer Handbook – Provided and Read		
AAT Manual – Provided and Read		
JHA Reviewed, Signed, and on File		
Safety Expectations & Accomplishment Reporting (Tailgate Form) Reviewed and Provided to Adoptee		
1 st Aid/CPR Documentation		
Blood Borne Pathogens Training		
Hazardous Materials Communication Training		
FS Volunteer Orientation – Must Attend Once Every 5 Years		
Map of Adopted Trail Provided		
Equipment and tools issued and documented on AD-107		
(Adopt-A-Trail Crew Leaders Only)-Observation of Adoptee Facilitating Project Day(s) by Supervisor to Ensure Adoptee Can Perform Safety & Technical Tasks		
Adoptee Understands PPE Requirements, Safety Protocols, Check In/Out Procedures, Accomplishment Reporting, and Knows How to Contact Supervisor		
Annual Site Visit By FS Personnel		

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Forest Service Specifications for Trail Work

There are many technical documents available for specifications on trail maintenance and construction, and volunteers are encouraged to delve into this literature at their convenience and desire. For the purposes of the Adopt-A-Trail program some general guidance will be given here and all adoptees will be provided with a copy of the USFS Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook, as well as the specifications for their adopted trail. All trails are unique, and specific guidance and direction will be given during the site visit conducted by USFS personnel and the adoptee. Adoptees are encouraged to come out on all projects to learn additional skills that will allow them to ever improve their adopted trail.

Brushing and Grubbing: The primary challenge the Prescott NF trails program deals with on our trails is brush, so having assistance from volunteers to maintain a trail corridor free of brush is extremely valuable to the agency and the trail users.

Tools: Loppers and Hand Saw

Brushing Standards:

- Most motorized and non-motorized trails that allow equestrians should be brushed to allow safe passage of a horse and rider as well as pack stock. This is most of our motorized and non-motorized trails on the Prescott NF.
 - 8-10 ft high
 - 6-8 ft wide @ shoulder height
- If you are 5-6 ft tall and you walk down the center of the trail with your hands outstretched and don't touch any brush then the trail has been brushed to standard.
- Getting the overhead height tall enough is always challenging for non-equestrian users. Don't climb into trees or take chances trying to get the high stuff. Ask the trails program to provide you with a pole saw to get this higher stuff.
- Important reminders:
 - Cut all brush as close to the ground as possible, without putting your tool in the dirt. It's no fun brushing with dull hand saws or loppers! This practice prevents leaving dangerous little spears sticking up along the trail that users could fall on and get seriously hurt.
 - Cut all tree limbs flush with the trunk, making a slight undercut before making the downward cut to prevent stripping a large piece of bark off the tree, as it's unsightly. Don't leave any nasty hat hooks out there that can snag on people as they pass by!
 - Dispose of all cut material downhill and away from the trail, don't leave a bunch of cut brush piled beside the trail. Make a pile and drag it safely off the trail and out of sight.

- Think about preemptive brushing. Will that oak bush grow into the trail in the next six months? Some brush around the Prescott NF can put on 2-3 feet of growth during the monsoon season.
- On all multi-use trails pay special attention to blind corners and sight lines to prevent user conflicts. These areas will require brushing outside the standards above to ensure there is visibility on corners and along meandering sections of trail.

Grubbing Standards:

Tools: Pulaski, Pick Mattock

- Sometimes it is more appropriate to grub out a root wad than to keep brushing it over and over again. This is particularly important with plants like New Mexican locust, catclaw acacia, and various cactus species, as these are unpleasant to walk or ride through.
 - Grub out any root wad/woody plant that is growing directly in the trail tread or directly beside it.
 - Cactus growing adjacent to the trail can be beautiful, but not so much when it's stuck in your leg. Remove prickly pear pads that are growing into the trail corridor up to 2 feet from the trail tread. Be careful. McLeods work well for this; try to separate the pads without mangling the cactus.
- Important Reminders:
 - Grubbing requires the correct tool, Pulaski or pick mattock normally. Don't try to use the wrong tool for the job as it will just result in damaging the tool and/or injuring yourself. Do not pry with a Pulaski.
 - Throw root wads out of sight of the trail, and fill in any hole that you create and naturalize it to the best of your ability.

Logging out or clearing downfall: Many aspects of this task can be completed by adoptees, as not all downfall is large and requiring a chainsaw or crosscut saw. It is not practical for adoptees to expect that the USFS would be able to train trail volunteers in chainsaw use as it is at minimum a three-day class with continued yearly obligations to retain certification. The Prescott NF trails program is typically able to clear downfall from trails within a few days to a few weeks of when it is reported, depending on location, level of use, and ability for users to temporarily navigate around the downed tree.

Tools: Hand saw, axe or Pulaski

- Clear all downfall to the same standards as brushing. Don't leave butt ends sticking into the trail corridor.
- Don't cut trees bigger than your handsaw can handle, as it will most likely get pinched in the tree and you will either bend the saw or have a struggle ahead of you to get it out.
- Inform Prescott NF Trails personnel of downfall requiring chainsaws as soon as practical.

- Important Reminders:
 - Use caution! If even a small tree has fallen across the trail, that means there could be other trees ready to fall or pieces of that tree stuck in the branches above you.

Tread Work and Drainage: The task of keeping the trail tread safe, enjoyable, and not damaging to the environment can be one of the harder tasks that adoptees will undertake. Cleaning existing drainage structures and restoring outslope to the trail tread can prevent future trail reroutes and heavy maintenance activities, making these simple tasks the most important. The harder job of installing drainage features on an already eroded trail will require more training and experience by adoptees and will not be covered here.

Tread Maintenance and Drainage Standards:

Tools: McLeods, Pick Mattocks, Pulaskis, Shovels

- When maintaining drainage on a trail, it is critical to think like water flows. Observe what the water is doing. Where is it taking soil away and where is it depositing it? Our goal is to reduce soil erosion from the tread and surrounding landscape. When water speeds up, it increases its ability to remove soil, so we need to keep water flowing across the trail, not down it.
 - Clean the drain: Water bars, grade dips, and even grade reversals have a place where water drains off the trail. If the drain becomes filled in or clogged with material, the water will bypass this drain and run down the trail to the next, typically taking more soil with it. The drain in front of a grade dip or water bar should be at least as wide as the trail and should slope out from the inside edge of the trail a couple of feet into the drain off the trail. This is where soil will get deposited and will need to be removed. If it is wet and will compact on top of the grade dip this can be done; if not, just disperse it below the drain.
 - Restoring outslope: Many trails are maintained by having a slight outslope on the tread allowing water to flow across the trail. Over time the trail tread can get a small berm built up on the outside edge that needs to be removed to maintain the drainage. This is easily accomplished by removing this soil with a pick or even McLeod and dispersing the soil downhill. The outslope should be about 3%. It is subtle. Walk on the tread afterwards and see if you feel like your ankles want to roll; if they do, there is too much outslope.
- Important Reminders:
 - Always use care when digging in the trail tread, a good trail tread is easily disturbed by excited trail workers.

**Good trail maintenance is rarely noticed by users,
but poor maintenance is noticed by all.**

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Adopt-A-Trail Manual Attached Document Explanation

These documents are included as attachments to this handbook; they are to be filled out accurately and completely by the potential adoptee and returned to the FS.

1. **Adopt-A-Trail Handbook:** what you're reading now.
2. **OF301a, Volunteer Service Agreement:** Document serves as the official agreement between the FS and adoptee.
3. **FS Volunteer Handbook:** This document provides general information about volunteering within the agency. It needs to be read as it contains important information on civil rights.
4. **Employee/Volunteer Emergency Data Card:** This document is to be filled out and returned to adoptee's immediate supervisor. The document will be given to Prescott Dispatch for emergency use.
5. **Adopt-A-Trail Tailgate Safety and Accomplishment Reporting:** This is the standard form that adoptees as well as FS trails personnel use to document completed work and safety meetings. Adoptees are expected to complete this form each time they engage in project work in an official capacity for the agency and are also expected to submit this document to their immediate supervisor within one week of the date the work was performed.
6. **Job Hazard Analysis:** This document reviews the work activities, associated risks and appropriate mitigation measures. Signature will be needed to be placed on file, and then adoptee will keep a copy for daily review.
7. **Equipment Transfer Form:** This form documents any equipment issued to the volunteer from the Forest Service. FS personnel will complete with you if equipment is issued.