



ADOPT-A-TRAIL PROGRAM GUIDE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Welcome and thank you for volunteering for the OF4WD's adopt-a-trail program. The following guide will assist you in understanding the programs initiative and history of development and why the OF4WD need people just like you.

The Adopt-a-trail program is an important stewardship initiative to help ensure the continued availability of public lands for the off roading enthusiast. The program is basically a monitoring and maintenance program for trails.

To be successful, this program will require a lot of resources in terms of time and manpower as well as some funding. Financially, the only way we can practically do this is by relying heavily on volunteer effort. Again, thank you for volunteering. You are making a valuable contribution to ensure trails stay open now and in the future.

As the name suggests the focus of this program is for clubs/groups of individuals to focus their efforts in smaller geographical areas or even single trails. The hope is that this focused approach makes the greater task more manageable and allows clubs/groups greater direct involvement and opportunity to see the rewards for their efforts. Providing the OF4WD with a regular periodic report on trail conditions and issues, in particular trail damage or environmental damage will provide the board of directors the data it needs to do its job. i.e. allocate/raise funds on a priority basis for repairs and potentially have the trail coordinator organize a larger volunteer work force effort focusing attention to one particularly troubled area. Also, the data is invaluable in making the case to MNR and others that the trails are indeed being used and maintained in a sustainable fashion.

EXPECTATIONS

Volunteers to the program will be placed in manageable sized groups (typically 4 to 8 people). Clubs will stay intact as their own "group" and depending on size will work as one group.

1. A group will volunteer to adopt a trail within the OF4WD list of their choice on a first come first served basis. A group joining the program may be assigned a trail that is agreed upon between the trail coordinator and the group lead hand.
2. The group will ride the trail twice a year gathering information which will be explained further on in this document.
 - a. One Pre-Season ride after May 1st, consider good judgement of trail conditions depending on spring runoff and snow conditions from the winter. Some trails due to location may have to wait till June to obtain information due to wetness on the trails.
 - b. One Post Season ride after September 20th obtaining information and paying special attention to riding conditions such as holes and erosion.
3. A trail report form will be submitted to the trail coordinator after each ride.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Information will be gathered via a written report and pictures taken during the ride. This is a very useful data for the OF4WD. The information obtained can be very useful for showing statistics on trail use, provides a historical record of trail conditions and provides a record of the involvement and work performed on the trail.

Things to look for and report on:

- Trail surface condition, paying attention to water content in the mud. Is there any significant rutting? Is the rutting getting worse? Can they be filled? Is there anything we can do to minimize the rutting? Do the ruts fill in quickly? Please take photos.
- Rock climb conditions, is there a lot of erosion? Are the rocks coming apart? Are the rocks becoming so exposed that other user groups could not use the trail?
- Water crossings - are there culverts, bridges or underwater log bridges? What is their condition? Do they need repair? If you have to ford the water, is the bottom hard packed/surfaced or are you churning up sediment? Could the water crossing encountered, use a bridge or underwater crossing to minimize impact on environment?
- Vegetation – are there fallen trees/branches across the trail? Does it look like someone has cut it down or is likely natural storm damage/dead fall? Is the trail becoming overgrown?
- Detours - are detours being created around obstacles, e.g. water holes, fallen trees etc.? Can this be fixed to get users back in the trail?
- We are interested in any man made alterations of the trail/landscape that could be viewed as damage – e.g. damage to tree bark by winch ropes, vehicle contact etc.?. We are also looking for damage/alteration due to natural effects such as storms, flooding etc. Distinguishing between the two is important even though both may require maintenance work.
- Garbage, is there a lot of garbage? If so, is it from other trail users such as oil containers or food wrapping or has the area become a dumping ground for locals?
- Will your group need more people to fix a problem area? Possible fix for an area?
- Do not limit reporting damage on only other user groups, if you see damage by large vehicles, report it as well.

PICTURES ARE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS TAKE LOTS AND SUBMIT THEM WITH REPORT.

SUBMITTING A REPORT

Anyone can submit a report. The report form can be obtained for the OF4WD website where you can print a copy or fill it out on line and e-mail it. Reports can also be submitted by mail to the OF4WD, the address is on the website.

CORRECTING CONDITIONS

In the post season ride it will be a good idea to bring shovels and possibly a chain saw. Many trees come down during summer storms. The shovels can be used to fill in holes and ruts as you pass through the trail. This is very important for the winter users and you are encouraged to take pictures of your work. This type of work has been an identified weak spot of the OF4WD and is jeopardizing our position to fair trail usage.

If a condition is a larger job then your group can handle you can report that to the trail coordinator requesting funds or personnel help from other volunteers. Rutting may require the need for us to bring in aggregate or other materials to make the area more durable. The coordinator will put a call out to all adopt-a-trail volunteers and lead hands requesting assistance and coordinate an effort or plan to correct the problem. If funds are required the coordinator will submit to the board of directors a plan and estimated cost to fix the problem on the trail. Other groups such as the OFSC and other ATV and motorcycle organizations may also become involved in the solution which will take more time however the result will be much better for all users.

EDUCATION

If groups come across areas of damage caused by larger vehicles please take pictures and report it to the OF4WD. Some people are not part of the OF4WD and some members need reminders from time to time about proper trail use. An education person has been appointed by the board where monthly e-mails will be sent out to the membership consisting of safety advice, environmental impact and other damage that can be caused on the trails. The source of the report or how it was obtained will not be publicly released without your permission. It is strictly between the group and the OF4WD.

Again we thank you for your participation in the Adopt-a-Trail Program and assisting with the OF4WD primary mandate of ensuring the sustainability of 4-wheel drive-based recreational activities in Ontario.

