

# Little Traverse Conservancy's Trail Steward Program

Since 1972, the Little Traverse Conservancy has worked with landowners to establish 135 preserves encompassing 6,200 acres. Not all of these properties are suitable for visitor use, but the Conservancy currently manages 10 preserves with established trails and plan to have four more by the end of 2002.

Conservancy trails vary in length and the topography they cover. They meander through upland woods, meadows, and even wetlands where boardwalks provide passage without muddying feet while protecting sensitive habitat. Trails enhance visitor use, but also add to required preserve maintenance. Due to the cost of creating and maintaining trails, trail and boardwalk projects are considered with great care. We are continually seeking the balance between access and protection.

The role of trail stewards is to assist the Conservancy with preserve trail maintenance. Tasks may include monitoring the trail, clearing branches and trees that have fallen over the path, replacing trail markers, and repairing boardwalks.

Trail stewards will receive a blank trail steward report by May 15<sup>th</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup>, and August 15<sup>th</sup> each year. The steward will walk the trail, perform any necessary maintenance, and then return the report to the Conservancy office. If a job is too involved for the steward(s) and assistance is needed, the steward can indicate needed work on the report and help will be arranged.

Some preserves have multi-loop trails, and in these cases, a blank form will be provided for each loop. Multiple volunteers may be needed for one preserve depending on the length of trails. Sections (or loops) of trails can be divided up between multiple volunteers to ease the work load.

The trail stewards will also be “on call” (don’t worry - no evenings or middle of the night calls!). If the Conservancy gets a report from a preserve visitor that maintenance is needed, or if a storm blows through, the steward may be called to check out the trail and clear if necessary.

For more information, please contact:



Little Traverse Conservancy  
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[www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org)

*Stewardship staff: Melissa Hansen & Cindy Mom*

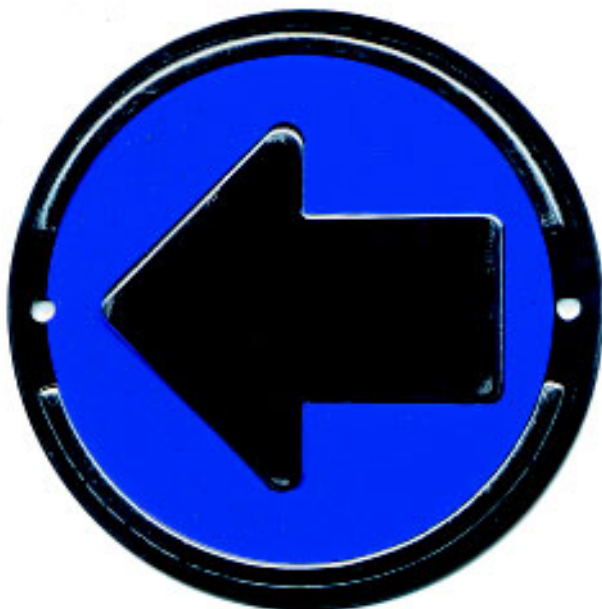


# Signs you will see at a Conservancy Preserve



Boundary Marker

Boundary Marker/  
Corner Marker



Directional Marker  
(blue, red, or orange)

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# Guidelines for Trail Maintenance

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## Parking Areas

Parking areas are typically modest in size, permitting enough space for approximately 4 vehicles. They may be naturally surfaced or have a gravel surface. They are typically bordered by trees, posts, fencing, or other barrier.

***Check for the following:***

- surface for ruts, potholes, soft spots or other problems
- bordering trees that are leaning excessively towards parking area or otherwise present a hazard to people or parked vehicles
- posts, gates, chains, or other fence parts that may need repairing or replacement
- litter - this is the most common place on the preserve to have litter



## Trail Surface and Space

Little Traverse Conservancy trails are typically naturally surfaced, occasionally woodchipped, and created wide enough for people to walk along in single file. The trail surface and space through which visitors are walking needs to be kept reasonably clear and free of debris or objects to help prevent tripping, eye poking, or other injuries. Any obstructions or hazards found must be removed. This may involve trimming/removing branches or cutting/removing trees that have fallen over the path or that are near the path and are posing a safety hazard. The trail surface is typically around 3 feet wide and the vertical trail space around 4 feet wide and 6 1/2 feet high.

***Check for the following:***

- objects obstructing the path or walking space - rocks/branches/fallen trees
- branches from new growth on adjacent trees or new trees encroaching on the surface or upper space
- erosion



## Signs

May include maps, interpretive information, or dedications/memorials.

***Check for the following:***

- wording and graphics for legibility
- sign is adequately attached to post
- post is securely anchored in ground



## Markers

Trails are marked with one or a combination of the following: paint (a circular spot on trees or sprayed on tops of posts) or colored 3" circular aluminum emblem markers with arrows mounted on trees or posts. Different colors are typically used for each trail loop for those preserves with multiple trails.

***Check for the following:***

- paint - faint/difficult to see
- arrow markers - bent or not securely attached to tree or post
- posts - securely anchored

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# Guidelines for Trail Maintenance

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## Posts

Posts, typically made of wood, may be used for trail signs, for trail marking, or as part of an interpretive trail to correspond with information in a brochure.

***Check for the following:***

- leaning - make sure posts are securely anchored
- cracking/deterioration



## Brochure Boxes

Most preserves with trails have a brochure box located at the parking area/trail head. Brochures need to be refilled periodically and are kept in boxes year round.

***Check for the following:***

- cracking/chipping - need for repainting
- plexiglass - broken or dirty
- supporting post securely in place
- brochures are being kept dry
- box empty or needs more brochures



## Boardwalks and Platforms

While the majority of LTC trails are through upland areas on preserves, some trails include boardwalks through low lying or wetland areas. Boardwalks allow visitors to enjoy a more diverse experience by providing access to a broader range of habitats on a preserve. They also help to protect sensitive habitat while allowing this additional access. Most LTC boardwalks are fairly simple in design - three 2" x 10" planks running lengthwise along the trail supported by 6" x 6" posts placed perpendicular at intervals underneath. Boardwalks may end at a platform, usually located along a lake edge, which provides a place to enjoy a view and for a small group to gather during educational or recreational field trips. Maintenance on boardwalks and platforms generally includes repairing loose boards/nails. Periodically planks, beams, or posts will have to be replaced.

***Check for the following:***

- loose boards
- loose nails/bolts
- rotting wood/boards or supports that need replacing
- slippery boards that need cleaning or replacing (most will be slippery when wet)



## Bridges

Bridges increase access and add interest or intrigue to a trail experience. Bridges are included within several LTC preserve trail systems. Most span a river and one spans dunes. Bridges pose increased stewardship concerns involving safety and liability. The integrity of the structure must be maintained.

***Check for the following:***

- broken/weak supports
- loose nails/bolts throughout
- boards that need repair or replacing
- slippery boards (most will be slippery when wet).
- excessive movement