

My assignment was to define a good trail system. After giving the assignment some thought, here are some things for the group to think about. I will be unable to attend the December meeting, so this is forwarded to you in case it would be useful at the meeting.

What is a good trail system? What are the elements of the ultimate trail system?

The ultimate trail system should provide:

1. Trails for the users that are safe and free of conflicting users.
2. a range of trails in length and difficulty.
3. Loop trails short to long with total trail miles of 40 plus. Distances would be different for each user group, but enough trails to allow for a number of days use without repeat. With connecting loops, people can customize their trip. Loops can be used to provide more miles of trails and more flexibility for users on the same plot of land than other designs.
4. Trail heads that are accessible from the parking area. Parking area that is accessible from major roads.
5. Safe and adequate parking at the trail head.
6. Trails built with appropriate surfaces and maintained in such a way as to be sustainable and not be an environmental hazard or a safety hazard for the user.
7. Facilities accessible from the trail head should include overnight accommodations (camping, rooms, primitive and facilities for equipment), food service, repair facilities, and retail facilities.
8. Well marked trails with a signing system to get users there and get them back. Information provided to the user including maps, wayside exhibits for scenic spots, a history of the area, and natural resources of interest. Many people like using the trail just for the activity, but they also enjoy having a destination to a special place. Trails that have interesting features will be better than trails without a special place of interest.
9. Emergency services and a contact for general information. A live person is best, however telephone numbers, posted at the trail head and on printed information would be great.
10. Information to potential user groups about the trails, services available, how to get there, and how to make reservations for services if needed.
11. Rest rooms at the trail head and in some cases on trails like at junctions or a stop area.

These are thoughts on a trail system and are only a first draft for thought and discussion. Hopefully people from all of our user groups will read this and work on specifics for their group. I could have missed some important things that someone will wish to add.

In many of the areas, perhaps all areas, it will not be practical to utilize all of these items, however, I have just identified what I think is the ultimate trail system. A good trail system may utilize only part of these items and still function very successfully.

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