

Avon Trail – Guidebook for Trail Audits April, 2014

Audit Mission Statement

The purpose of the Avon trail is to review the condition of the trail and trail structures managed by the Avon Trail Corporation.

Application of the Mission Statement

The Avon Trail Board is committed to improving the quality and safety of its trails, in order to offer an enjoyable environment for its members and walkers from the general public. As part of its trail maintenance and risk management objectives, an external audit of the trail is undertaken on a regular basis.

The Scope of the Audit Program

The Audit consists of an external team walking the entire trail, examining structures, commenting on the condition of the trail as compared to the standards set out in the “Guide for Avon Trail Workers”¹. Specifically, the Audit is to determine the safety of the trail for hikers, to identify potential liability issues such as unsafe bridges or unsecured stiles, to note sufficiency and accuracy of blazing and to report on hazards of the tread way.

The Trail Audit is undertaken on the authority of the Board of Directors and in fulfillment of the Avon Trail Strategic Plan to “... audit [the] trail and trail structures, with outside assistance where required” with the intent of “adopting high standards for trail structures and maintenance ...”²

While the objective of the Trail Audit is to produce a written Summary Report for the Board, and particularly for the Trail Coordinator, nevertheless, should serious hazards or unsafe structures be encountered by the Audit Team during the process of the Audit, these should be reported immediately to the Supervisor whose responsibility it is to inform the Trail Coordinator immediately.

Results of the Audit, the **Summary Trail Audit Report**, compiled by the Audit Supervisor, will be presented to the Board by the Trail Coordinator, and will be used to update the Avon Trail Guidebook

¹ Based on the Bruce Trail Conservancy, Guide for Trail Workers

² Avon Trail Strategic Plan 2013-2017, Priority Area 1, ‘Some potential Initiatives’.

Preferred Time of Year to perform Audit

Audit fieldwork is performed during the summer months since this is the time of year having the most vegetation growth and thus the most obstruction of the Trail.

Audit Frequency

The entire trail shall be audited every five years. The Board or the Trail Coordinator may request that specific sections or structures be reviewed earlier or more often than the planned audit year by an auditor or audit team, if safety or route conditions require it.

Trail Audit Officers

The Trail Coordinator (usually a Director of the Avon Trail) will

- Determine, in consultation with the Board, when a Trail Audit is to be undertaken
- Recruit and submit to the Board, a candidate to serve in the role of the Trail Audit Supervisor
- Receive notification from the Audit Supervisor whilst the Audit is ongoing, of Trail hazards needing immediate remedy
- Accept the final Trail Audit Report from the Trail Audit Supervisor on the completion of the Trail Audit
- Report to the Board recommendations to enact improvement to the Trail based on recommendations made in the Trail Audit Report

The Trail Audit Supervisor

- will report to the Trail Coordinator
- is responsible for Recruiting, instructing and overseeing the Trail Audit Team
- Will coordinate, submit and facilitate the submission of GPS data to the Avon Trail GPS master data officer
- Will submit a Trail Audit Report to the Trail Coordinator following the completion of the Audit

The Trail Audit Team will

- be comprised of at least two persons, not intimately familiar with the Avon Trail
- submit ongoing Trail Monitor Reports to the Supervisor on a regular and agreed-upon schedule whilst the Trail Audit is in progress
- assist the Trail Audit Supervisor, as requested, in compiling and writing the final Trail Audit Report

Trail Audit Team Collective Skills

Required:

- Strong map-reading skills
- Extensive Hiking experience
- Organizational & writing skills
- Detail oriented
- Driver's license
- Problem-solving ability

Desired:

- GPS experience & related computer experience
- First Aid, CPR

The Trail Auditors Specific Responsibilities

- Walk the entire length of the Avon Trail, noting deficiencies, disrepair or inaccuracies in
 - Blazing, bridges, stiles, signage, grooming,
 - Kilometer readings
 - Trail route discrepancies with the Guide Book
 - Hazards in the tread way such as fallen trees, overly wet areas, noxious weeds
 - Available parking at access points
- Repair minor deviations where practical
- Note and photograph hazards not easily repaired that pose a liability issue for immediate (i.e. daily) reporting to the Audit Supervisor
- Using the Trail Monitor Report Form, record the health of the Trail for each section walked
 - Recording the Kilometer reading and, if equipped to do so, the GPS reading
 - Correlating GPS readings recorded with that of the Avon Trail Guide Book data base

Trail Auditors Equipment

- Avon Trail Guidebook
- pen or pencil and notebook for each auditor
- cell phone
- 100 m measuring tape
- clipboard with rain protection
- digital camera, with extra batteries
- Tools for minor repairs: small hammer, wire-cutters,
- Work gloves

- GPS system (optional)
- map of section to be walked
- first aid kit
- rain gear
- Standard personal hikers day pack equipment (water, insect repellent, snack)

Operating Procedures

- The Audit Supervisor will instruct the Trail Audit Team on their task, and undertake to assist in planning the mechanics of the process as requested
- Field work by the Trail Auditors should always be carried out in pairs
- Trail Auditors, assisted by the Supervisor as requested, will prepare an overall plan for the project (dates, sections, reporting procedures, transportation)
- The Avon Trail is marked from south to north and is recommended to always be audited in this direction to match the Guidebook.
- When measuring side Trails, always start at the point on the main Trail closest to the southern beginning of the Side Trail from the Main trail. This point where the Side trail leaves the Main trail would be 0.0.
- Collection, compilation and entering of audit data should be done daily, using the standard Avon Trail Monitor Report form (see www.avontrail.ca for this form); it is encouraged that these Reports for each section be submitted digitally. A Word (editable) version of this form is available from the Trail Coordinator. GPS data should be compiled and entered as soon following the field work as is feasible.
- Care must be taken to record data in a consistent manner:
 - Referencing Structures by their Kilometer location
 - Accurately noting Road numbers and/or names
- There will be a budget of \$100 for each Trail Auditor to provide each with a gas card

The Trail Audit Report

The Audit Supervisor will compile, with the assistance of the Trail Auditors, a final, **Summary Trail Audit Report** to be submitted to the Trail Coordinator. The Report should include an evaluation of the state of the Trail, using these headings:

- Hazards needing immediate attention, in order of priority; digital photographs with identifying Km reference will assist remedial steps being taken. All hazards should be reported immediately to the Trail Coordinator via the Audit Supervisor in addition to being included in the Summary Report
- Structures:³
 - Stiles, number, Km reference, state of repair, redundant, secure
 - Bridges: Km reference, repair, secure
 - Steps

³ See Bruce Trail Conservancy Trail Maintenance Guide examples, appended

- Boardwalks: existing; areas that would benefit by installing boardwalk (indicate total length)
- Signage: in place at each access point, securely fastened
- Blazes:⁴ sufficient, visible, not ‘over-blazed’, turns correctly shown, metal blazes on live-tree growth to be removed
- Trail Blockages such as fallen trees, overgrown, other obstructions
- Route changes, interruptions, Trail closures, noting discrepancy between the Trail and the Guidebook. Any interruptions in the Trail should be reported immediately to the Trail Coordinator by way of the Audit Supervisor as well as being included in the Summary Report.
- Suggested Trail route improvements (to avoid wet areas etc.)
- Suitability of Parking at Trail access points

Trail Auditor Team Volunteer Time

- Number of Volunteer hours (total hrs. x no. of volunteers)
- Total length of Trail Audited
- Total number of Audit days
 - On the Trail
 - Planning, recording, writing

Audit Supervisor Volunteer Time

- Volunteer Time Instructing, planning, facilitating Audit Team
- Compiling Summary Trail Audit Report



BTC Stile .pdf



BTC Bridge.pdf



BTC Boardwalk .pdf



BTC Blazes .pdf

⁴ See Bruce Trail Conservancy Trail Guidebook example, appended