May 14, 2020

Recommendations for BTA Volunteers Groups for all Upcoming Potential Buckeye Trail Crew Work Parties during the COVID-19/Coronavirus

Along with all of the other inconveniences of the COVID-19/Coronavirus several Buckeye Trail Crew and other BTA Volunteer events have been forced to reschedule. Guidance from Governor DeWine and the Ohio Department of Health is cautiously moving toward reopening Ohio for business. Volunteering is our business and we want to cautiously get back to work as well. It is important to abide by our rules and recommendations as well as those of the Ohio Department of Health so that we don’t jeopardize the remainder of the trail work season. The BTA is also serving on the Governor’s Outdoor Recreation Task Force lead by ODNR to provide input on reopening Ohio; especially on the topics of hiking, volunteering, programming and events, and campgrounds.

In summary, BTA Volunteers should prepare themselves to be completely ‘self-contained and self-sufficient’ when they participate in an upcoming socially distanced Buckeye Trail Crew Work Party. We expect BTA Volunteers to be great role models for volunteering around the State of Ohio. If someone shows symptoms of COVID-19/Coronavirus or is unable to adhere to the guidelines below they will be asked to leave the volunteer event by the event leader. At this time training new volunteers under these conditions is difficult so we are primarily asking volunteers with some prior experience to participate.

BTA Volunteers are able to work on upcoming Buckeye Trail Crew Work Parties if the following conditions can be met by the land owner, the camp site, and the volunteers. Each landowner, or campsite manager, has the right to decline BTA Volunteer work or stay at this time even if the project has been previously approved.

Camping:
1. Minimum 15’ between campsites/campers
2. Maximum 10 people at anytime during duration of work party (1 leaves, 1 arrives, 2 leave, 2 arrive, etc.)
3. All rules/regulations will be given to each camper, and posted at campsite.
4. An alternative includes travelling locally from home to join the Buckeye Trail Crew Work Party and returning home after trail work each day.

Working:
1. Maximum 10 people per crew. Non campers may arrive at work site as long as there are less than 10 people on crew.
2. Minimum of 10’ between workers at all times.
3. All workers will have temperature monitoring before and after working when signing in and out on Buckeye Trail Crew timesheet.

Tools:
1. No sharing of tools. Personal tool use only.
2. Any tools borrowed from the Trail Management Team/BTA will be labeled with user's initials and signed in/out AND must only be used by that individual. Each tool will be sanitized at the end of each day by the user before signing back in.
3. ALL tools will be carried out at the end of each work day.

Travel:
1. Travel to and from camping, as well as to and from the work site will be limited to personal vehicles. ANY occupants must have resided with the driver for longer than 14 days.
2. No tools/gear/food/water/etc. shall be transported for any individual except for vehicle occupant(s).

Bathrooms:
1. Any bathroom provided for workers will have a minimum of 1 can of disinfectant spray/day of use/unit.
2. Bathroom will be thoroughly sprayed after each use, and allowed at minimum 1 minute between uses.
3. Toilet Paper (TP) must be provided by each individual using restrooms, no communal TP will be provided.

Food/Eating:
1. No communal food will be provided for any camper/worker, OR by any camper/worker.
2. All water must be provided by individual camper/worker for personal use. Absolutely no sharing.
3. All food must be consumed with a minimum of 10' distance between campers/workers.

Shower:
1. If a shower is available, it will be disinfected after each use. (See bathroom disinfecting above)
2. Each individual using the shower is responsible for the water being used during each shower.
3. Use of a shower is by choice.
4. Absolutely no sharing of shower products, or towels.

**Working on 129 West Main Street**
As you may know, the BTA is developing a late 1800’s house on Main Street in Shawnee as our new office space and volunteer resource center. Most of the same rules apply for groups of BTA Volunteers working together during this time. Because it is an enclosed space we are reducing the number of Volunteers allowed to work at this location to 3 at a time with some exceptions depending on the work project. All BTA Volunteers must schedule their time with BTA President, Steve Walker at president@buckeyetrail.org, in advance so that we can coordinate this work and advise on sanitization best practices.

**For Individual BTA Volunteers such as BTA Trail Adopters**
Following all guidance from the Ohio Department of Health on sanitization and social distancing an individual BTA Volunteer could still get out on the BT to improve the BT experience ‘close to home’. It is still a great idea to work alongside another Volunteer for normal safety reasons such as caring for an accidental twisted ankle as long as social distance is kept.

The BT has become more relevant in many Ohioans lives more than ever. Providing them a well-maintained trail experience is now a more difficult and important challenge with guidance from health officials and other limitations on BTA Volunteers. Here are a few things that we can do, are appropriate, and important during this season:

Paint Blazing the BT. Including road walks that may have a little less traffic on them these days. Enjoy a day hiking and painting on the BT, call the office for paint and paint brush resources.

Vegetation maintenance with loppers, pruners, weed whackers, etc. ‘Tis the season. Enjoy a day or two clearing the BT for all to enjoy. Step off the side of the trail when safe to allow hikers to pass by with a 6-10 foot distance.
Unfortunately Chainsaw work at this time is not recommended. We understand that there are a lot of trees down in need of clearing. Chainsaw work requires a two person team for safety. Chainsaw work is inherently more dangerous. Although we trust our trained Chainsawyers, the risk taken could include emergency medical professionals being pulled away from their community to a difficult to access primitive trail and BTA Volunteers spending time at the hospital during this pandemic.

For Trail Adopters with their own hand tools for trail construction such as a mattocks, Pulaski, McLeod, etc., it is amazing what one person can do in a short amount of time to solve water drainage issues, re-bench a portion of trail that has become too skinny, or remove invasive species like multi-floral rose by the roots. All of these activities lessen future trail maintenance needs and improve the BT for hikers instantly.

Off of the BT, this is a great time to volunteer for the next phase of the Buckeye Trail Association. A lot of work needs to be done to implement our new strategic plan, BT 2025, and there is something there for every interest. Most of the work involves working from home, conversing with other BTA Volunteers to develop implementation strategies to improve the BT and the BTA moving forward. Check out the plan on buckeyetrail.org.

This is also a great time to reach out and call other BTA Volunteers that we miss to see how they are doing, compare notes and make plans for the future. This is as important as ever for our Buckeye Trail Family.

Thank you for being a great role model as a BTA Volunteer!

Be Well!

Andrew Bashaw
Executive Director
Buckeye Trail Association