



ADOPT-A-TRAIL HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO TRAIL STEWARDSHIP IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY



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INTRODUCTION

RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL PARK & OPEN-SPACE DISTRICT

ADOPT-A-TRAIL PROGRAM

The Adopt-A-Trail (AAT) program was developed by the Riverside County Regional Park & Open-Space District (the District) to bring community members and organizations together to protect and maintain the natural beauty of our trail system and open space areas.

The AAT program encompasses trails, parks, and playgrounds throughout Riverside County from the desert up to the snowy mountains. We rely on the dedication and hard work of volunteers to keep our trails maintained and safe for everyone. Without the dedication of our volunteers, our trails and parks would fall into disrepair and be unavailable for use.

Adopters are required to make a one-year commitment to the program with regular trail checks depending on the needs of the trail. Some trails may require more maintenance than others. It is the Adopter's responsibility to ensure that their trail segment is passable by users at all times.

The purpose of the AAT Program is to foster volunteerism that reduces District costs for trail maintenance. It is not intended to provide an advertising medium. Courtesy signs are intended only to recognize the contribution of the Adopter and such recognition will be strictly limited to the Adopter's name or organization.

The AAT handbook will be your guide to adopting your trail and keeping it maintained for all to enjoy.



For all AAT related questions, please contact the Program Coordinator at Trails@rivco.org or 951-955-5117.

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

This handbook is provided to give Adopters an overview of their responsibilities as well as tips and tricks to making it effortless and exciting for all of those involved! In this handbook you will find information on finding, adopting, and maintaining your trail segment.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

THE DISTRICT'S MISSION

The mission of the District is to acquire, protect, develop, manage, and interpret for the inspiration, use, and enjoyment of all people, a well-balanced system of areas of outstanding scenic, recreational, and historic importance.

THE DISTRICT'S HISTORY

The District was created during a general election in 1990 and currently manages over 80,000 acres of land, 160 miles of trail, 11 regional parks, 14 community parks, 4 community centers, 4 nature centers, 4 historic sites, and 14 wildlife reserves.

ABOUT ADOPT-A-TRAIL

AAT MISSION

Encourage community involvement in the District by increasing active stewardship of our trails and parks to preserve the quality of our open space and trail system.

AAT VISION

Become the regional leader in the beautification and management of our trails, parks, and playgrounds.

AAT VALUES

- ♣ Encourage and nurture the volunteer spirit
- ♣ Instill a connection with the land that fosters its permanent protection
- ♣ Connect Riverside residents and visitors through well-maintained trail system
- ♣ Provide information to the community on resource conservation and open space issues
- ♣ Increase environmental stewardship through teamwork and education.

AAT STAFF

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The AAT Program Coordinator is your main point of contact and will guide you through the adoption process. Once you have adopted your trail, the Coordinator will help you develop your work plan, make sure you understand the reporting process, and that you have all the tools you need to lead your group in a successful adoption campaign.

FIELD COORDINATOR

The Field Coordinator will be your point of contact on your scheduled work days. They will provide the tools and personal protection equipment, collect your sign in sheets and reporting forms, and assist in clean up when the work day is complete.

PERKS OF BECOMING AN ADOPTER

- ♣ Free day-use for Adopters
- ♣ Access to nature center locations
- ♣ Free fishing and camping opportunities
- ♣ Free miniature golf at Rancho Jurupa Park
- ♣ Discounted stays at Lawler Lodge & Lawler Alpine Cabins

ADOPT-A-TRAIL VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

ADOPTER

Agrees to manage and maintain a section of trail for a one-year period. Adopters are responsible for completing the application, recruiting volunteers for their work days, and communicating with the Program Coordinator throughout the term of their contract.

CREW LEADER

Crew Leaders are responsible for leading Adopters and their volunteers in a successful work day on their adopted trail segment. This means coordinating with the Program Coordinator to have the tools available, leading the Tail Gate Safety Session, ensuring all required paperwork is filled out, and that the overall event is a success for both the Adopters and the District. Adopters can become Crew Leaders and serve in both roles.

TRAIL STEWARD

Assigned to a particular location, Stewards report on conditions within their assigned area on a monthly basis. Equestrians, cyclists, and hikers are welcome.

TRAIL PATROLLER

Not assigned to a particular location, Patrollers report monthly on different sites across the county. Equestrians, cyclists, and hikers are welcome.

SCOUTING OPPORTUNITIES

Adopting a trail is a great way for scouts and their leaders to make a meaningful, long-term impact in their community. It also provides opportunities for scouts to earn **merit badges** such as trailblazing, emergency preparedness, and much more!

Leadership opportunities are also available. Scouts can become Crew Leaders, Trail Stewards, and Patrollers. These leadership opportunities have different requirements; you can read more about them on page 5.

Adoptable trails are available across Riverside County in a variety of settings and degrees of difficulty. Shorter segments with minimal maintenance are available for younger troops while longer, more time consuming segments are available for older scouts.

Troops are required to make the same 1-year commitment as other Adopters and have to submit the required paperwork.

The program requirements and leadership skills essential for a successful adoption campaign are a great opportunity for **rank advancements and awards**. The AAT Program Coordinator is available to brainstorm ideas for your next project!



FINDING YOUR TRAIL

ADOPTABLE TRAILS

Not all trails are created equal. The District manages land throughout Riverside County from Corona all the way to Blythe on the Colorado River. This includes community parks, senior centers, regional parks, camp grounds, and open-space reserves. Trails are adoptable based on the following criteria:

- ♣ Ease of access by the public
- ♣ Required amount of maintenance
- ♣ Stability and safety of the trail: recent fires and erosion may make certain trail segments unsafe
- ♣ Ownership: there are many overlapping boundaries within trails; Bureau of Land Management, Water Districts, and National Forest Service all own and manage lands within Riverside County. The District cannot adopt trails that are managed by other agencies.

The AAT program has adoptable trail segments throughout the District. To view an up-to-date list of adoptable trails, visit the Adopt-A-Trail webpage at www.RivCoParks.org. Click on the "Parks" tab and then on "Trails."

PROGRAM LOCATIONS

- ♣ Box Springs Mountain Reserve
- ♣ Harford Springs Reserve
- ♣ Hidden Valley Wildlife Area
- ♣ Idyllwild Park & Nature Center
- ♣ Lake Skinner Recreation Area
- ♣ McCall Memorial Equestrian Campground
- ♣ Rancho Jurupa Park
- ♣ Santa Ana River Trail
- ♣ Santa Rosa Ecological Reserve (Stewards)



ADOPTING YOUR TRAIL

ADOPTER RESPONSIBILITIES

Adopters are an integral part of the District's mission to protect and manage our areas of scenic and historical importance. Through trail stewardship, Adopters keep our multi-use trails clear of debris and growth. With support and guidance from the AAT Program Coordinator, Adopters and their group are given the tools they need to be successful and have fun! These are the steps that need to be completed before you can begin working on your trail segment:

- ♣ Sign and submit the Adopter Agreement
- ♣ Become a registered volunteer with the District
 - A. Create and maintain online profile using District's volunteer database
 - B. Complete background check
- ♣ Complete the AAT Adopter training and orientation
- ♣ Familiarize yourself with the required reporting forms and processes
- ♣ Draft and submit work plan to AAT Program Coordinator 14 days (2 weeks) prior to the work day
- ♣ Perform these necessary tasks a minimum of four (4) times a year, depending upon the needs of the trail
- ♣ Submit work report, volunteer waivers, and trail summary form to Program Coordinator within 7 days (1 week) after the work day.

ADOPTER TIPS

To keep your adopted trail segment in the best possible condition, we recommend you accomplish the following:

- ♣ Communicate frequently with the Program Coordinator about scheduled volunteers days and any issues or concerns with your adopted trail segment
- ♣ Visit your trail segment on a regular basis. At a minimum we recommend once a month, but if your area experiences inclement weather (heavy rain fall, high winds) we recommend you visit more frequently
- ♣ Plan at least one work day in early spring to clear drainages and overgrowth before hiking season begins. Some trails segments will require multiple work days.
- ♣ Plan your work days earlier in the day to avoid long exposure to the heat
- ♣ Recruit your friends, family, and network to help! The more hands, the more you can accomplish
- ♣ Maintain trail standards year-round. Neglect of an adopted trail segment will result in termination of the adoption agreement and the trail segment will be given to the next applicant.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS & REPORTING

All documents can be located on the Adopt-A-Trail page on the District's website.

WORK PLAN (submitted 14 days in advance)

A work plan is a simple one page document that is submitted and approved before a scheduled volunteer day. A work plan outlines the duties to be carried out by volunteers on a scheduled date. Work plans are submitted 14 days ahead of your scheduled volunteer day. Failure to do so may result in cancelation of work day due to lack of staff support.

TRAIL SUMMARY FORM (submitted after completion of work day)

The trail summary form is a report of the work completed and also includes the names and signatures of all volunteers who participated in the project.

TAILGATE SAFETY SESSION FORM (submitted after completion of work day)

A simple one-page document verifying the training was performed and witnessed by volunteers.

VOLUNTEER WAIVERS (submitted after completion of work day)

All volunteers who are not registered with the District s must sign a volunteer waiver prior to the work day. These are turned in with the Trail Safety Session Form before the work day is started.

REQUIRED TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

AAT ADOPTER TRAINING & ORIENTATION (Performed quarterly)

Adopters are required to attend one (1) training session prior to their first volunteer work day on their trail. This training is provided by The District s and covers all of the necessary information you will need to be successful in your projects. The training is approximately one-hour in duration.

Rather than making volunteers work hard to get things done, it is the goal of the District to accomplish top-quality trail work by providing exemplary training and support! Trail work involves using shovels, shears, and a variety of other tools to move dirt, trim hedges and branches, haul out debris, and adjust water run-off on your trail. With specialized training and approval, volunteers may have the opportunity to use chain saws, build retaining walls, or perform other technical work with may require the use of power tools. This is up to the discretion of the AAT Program Coordinator.

The goal of the training is to increase trail stewardship through action and education. We will give our Adopters and Volunteers every tool they need to be successful.

MAINTAINING YOUR ADOPTED TRAIL



ADOPT-A-TRAIL TRAILER AND TOOLS

The District's AAT trailer is a resource available to all Adopters in the program. The trailer is moved to the work day location upon receipt of required 14-day notice, and has every tool you and your volunteers will need to work on your trail segment. The tools and their proper usage will be covered in the Tailgate Safety Session prior to the start of your work day. More information regarding the AAT trailer and tools can be found on the District's [website](#).

THE WORK DAY

PLANNING THE AAT WORK DAY

Adopt-A-Trail work days should be planned and promoted well in advance to ensure you have enough volunteers to complete the basic maintenance tasks. Remember to submit your work plan 14 days (two weeks) in advance for approval. Approval is contingent upon availability of equipment and conflicting projects which have already been scheduled.

- Email, call, or text your volunteers asking them to RSVP for the work day
- Broadcast your project on social media
- Get your entire network involved; ask your friends, family, neighbors, or coworkers
- Ask the AAT Program Coordinator to promote your event on District website and social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram).

GETTING STARTED

AAT Work Days begin with a quick orientation and tailgate safety session in the parking lot. The Field Coordinator and Adopter will have all volunteers sign waivers and log their hours on a sign-in sheet. Personal protection equipment (PPE) will be handed out and tasks assigned before heading out on the trail.

TAILGATE SAFETY SESSION (TSS)

The "tailgate safety session" is a thorough overview of the tools and equipment available for use on the trail. This is a mandatory component of the work day because it ensures that all participants know how to properly use the tools available to them. The TSS form must be filled out and returned with the Trail Summary form.

HAVE FUN!

Trail maintenance is hard work, but that doesn't mean it can't be fun. To ensure everyone in your group enjoys their time on the trail, make sure you take frequent breaks, stay hydrated, and take a moment to cool down in the shade or eat some snacks.

DOING THE WORK

Together with the Program Coordinator and Field Coordinator, each Adopter will have planned the work day in advance based on the trail's needs. All volunteers will be assigned a task and demonstrations performed if necessary. District staff will be onsite to make sure tasks are completed correctly and offer guidance to the group. Each work day is different, so remember to be flexible and ready to learn.

ENDING THE DAY

Once the work day is complete, the Field Coordinator will help your group clean up the mess. This means picking up all debris and trash your group cleared from the trail. If you are unable to clear all of the debris, you must notify the Program Coordinator so arrangements can be made. Do not block trails, roads, or gates when you are leaving the trail.

SAMPLE ADOPTER SCHEDULE

The schedule for your trail depends on its location and many other factors including its popularity with the public, altitude (will it see snow?), and its overall design (are there switchbacks, hills, erosion?). Several of our locations close for several months to allow for the mating season to occur without disruption. The Program Coordinator will notify potential Adopters of closures before the application is completed. Prior to planning the first work day, the Adopter should visit the trail to get an idea of what needs to be done. This will allow plenty of opportunity to plan ahead, gather enough volunteers, and prepare for the work day. Do not hesitate to contact the Program Coordinator if you need assistance planning your work day.

SPRING

Several work days should take place in early spring. This will ensure that overgrowth is trimmed and the trail is ready for the hiking season. These will likely be your heaviest work days so plan accordingly.

SUMMER

The summer months are the busiest times for our trails and parks. During this season you will need to plan your work days early in the morning to avoid the higher temperatures in the afternoon, and focus on trash removal, brushing, and general trail maintenance.

FALL & WINTER

When the rain begins to fall, trouble spots on your trail may start to appear. Erosion may increase, slopes may collapse, and debris may pile up. It is very important to visit your trail after a heavy rain fall to determine if you will need to schedule a work day.

If you notice severe problems on your trail after a heavy storm (such as downed trees or sections of trail missing), you will need to contact the Program Coordinator so the District can manage the repair.

INTERACTING WITH THE PUBLIC

While on your adopted trail segment, you or members of your group may come into contact with other community members or park employees. This section lists some tips for interacting with them and answering questions they may have.

- ♣ Grant pedestrians, bikers, and equestrians the right-of-way
- ♣ Volunteers are required to stop what they are doing, place their tools in a safe position, and move to the side of the trail, allowing others to pass safely
- ♣ Be pleasant in your speech and remember that you represent the District while working on your trail
- ♣ If trail users express interest in helping work on the trail or want to become an Adopter, have them speak to the Field Coordinator
- ♣ If you witness illegal dumping or other activities, notify the Field Coordinator

LEAVE NO TRACE

The District highly encourages all Adopters and trail users to learn about the 7 principles of Leave No Trace. You can visit their website [here](#). As our population continues to increase, so does the impact we have on the environment. We need to do more than just pick up trash; we need to plan ahead and be mindful of leaving the wilderness as we found it.

PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

Carry a map and know where you are going to reduce the chance of having to travel off trail. Always pack out trash. Repackage food to reduce waste.

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Pack it in, pack it out.

Do your business in "cat holes" at least 200 feet from water, and cover the hole when done

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

That rock or antler looks cooler in the wild than on a shelf at home.

Minimize campfire impacts

RESPECT WILDLIFE

View from a distance.

Never feed wildlife

Control pets so that they don't harass or scare wildlife.

****pets are not allowed on AAT Work Days.***

BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

Be quiet and let others coming up the trail pass by.

SAFETY TIPS

We intentionally saved this for last, as safety and having a good time are by far the most important parts of an AAT event. The work we do on AAT work days resembles landscaping or housework with the level of difficulty increasing depending on your trail and length of time between work days.

The following list of safety tips are designed to make your volunteer work day successful and enjoyable by everyone involved.

All Adopt-A-Trail Volunteers are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) for the entire duration of the scheduled work day. PPE includes:

- ♣ Safety vest
- ♣ Glasses
- ♣ Gloves
- ♣ Hard hat



Volunteers should be dressed appropriately for the project. This includes long sleeved shirts, long pants, and sturdy tennis shoes or hiking boots. Volunteers are also encouraged to use sunscreen & insect repellent. Volunteers not wearing the proper footwear (flip flops, Vans) will be turned away from the work day.

- ♣ Children under 18 must be supervised by an Adult at all times. Small children are discouraged from working on an Adopt-A-Trail due to the nature of the volunteer work and the tools required.
- ♣ Do not try to lift or carry anything beyond your ability. Report the location of heavy objects to the Field Coordinator.
- ♣ Do not overstuff garbage bags, especially if you have sharp objects which may pierce the bags.
- ♣ Plan ahead and be prepared for possible accidents or sudden weather changes.
- ♣ The District will provide a first aid kit and water during schedule work days.
- ♣ Work during daylight hours. In case of rain or thunderstorm, do not seek shelter under tall trees. Take refuge in a vehicle or building or find a low lying area that is sheltered from the wind. Avoid gullies and stream banks which may be susceptible to flash flooding.
- ♣ Avoid overexertion.
- ♣ Know and avoid poison oak and stinging nettles. Check for ticks at the end of each day.
- ♣ Be on the lookout for snakes, bees, wasps, and other wildlife. Report them to the Field Coordinator if they are encountered on your trail.

ADOPT-A-TRAIL HANDBOOK

A guide to trail stewardship



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