

# What Does a Volunteer Trail Builder Look Like?

Compiled by: Bob Johnson 2012



Volunteers that come out to build/repair trail sometimes come arrive dressed strangely or more correctly – not attired properly for the work they signed up for. How should a volunteer prepare for an outdoor event? Usually the agency hosting the trail work will prescribe what to bring – included suggested clothing. The agency will or should inform the volunteer what not to wear.

It is not expected that every volunteer will be totally outfitted properly with steel-tipped boots, canvas trousers, synthetic clothing, fleece pull over's, and other clothing that veteran trail builders know to bring and wear during the course of the project day or weekend. Some items of wear are strictly prohibited for safety reasons and the volunteer will not be allowed on the trail; such items are open-toed shoes of any description. Volunteers can not work with any tool without wearing gloves. Eye and ear protections are needed for specialized work.

Below is a list of suggested clothing and allowable garments for the great outdoors

## ACCEPTABLE CLOTHING:

- Hats of all kinds, wide brimmed, for sun protection
- Shirts – blouses that are comfortable, loose, light colored
- T-shirts without any controversial logos or statements
- Under garments suited for the sex, synthetic (polypropylene, capilene, acrylic, nylon, thermax, thinsolite, and others)
- Trousers – loose fitting, including jeans, cargo pants, convertibles, canvas work pants, bib overalls
- Belts of all descriptions to hold up said pants, suspenders if preferred
- Socks – controversial issue – most will show with all cotton socks....Recommend wool, combination wool blend, or all synthetic
- Shoes – Boots of all description, lace up or Velcro, tread on soles, mid top to protect ankle is recommended.....What shows up on the worksite is sneakers of all kinds – running shoes, basketball shoes, track shoes.



## UNACCEPTABLE APPAREL:



- Tank tops, running outfits, bad t-shirts, shirtless
- Shorts, swimsuits, baggy designer jeans around the ankles
- Office clothing
- Crocs, flip flops, sandals, Tevas, any open toed shoe
- Any clothing not designed for roughed outdoor wear



## WHAT DO YOU DO WITH SOME PEOPLE WITH CLOTHING ISSUES?

Obviously, if they dare arrive at an event dressed somewhat safe for the type of work to be done – then use them. Volunteers with all cotton clothing will need to stay high and dry. Their clothing will be an issue when wet with perspiration or sudden rainfall. ‘Cotton Kills’ is the dire statement that describes clothing that has negative retention of body heat when wet. **SAVER:** Appropriately shed clothing when getting wet, sun or air dry on branches, rain jacket when raining.



Volunteers in shorts – cannot work on their knees – thus limited rock work. They can work all day on trail construction or repair. Care should be given about going off trail into thickets, dense scrub bushes, briar patches – they will live to tell the tale, and perhaps not return another day. On the other hand, they may learn a lesson and wear long pants next time. **SAVER:** Strap on knee pads, kneeling pad.

T-shirts, short-sleeved, tank tops – looks stylish – but not so functional up in the mountains. Direct sun and wind is the prime enemy. Same with going off trail into the bushes – they will be scratched up. Sun block applied, and some tough attitudes will usually get the volunteer through the day. Perhaps they want some sun? **SAVER:** Long sleeve shirts that rolled up and tie off into short sleeve shirts, lots of sun block.

Sneakers – of all kinds, especially boat sneakers – no tread at all are an accident waiting to happen. Sneakers are designed for a multitude of sports and comforts. Some trail running sneakers are great for trail running, but for the most part, nothing beats a good boot for protection against ankle twists, sprains, injuries, rock smashing episodes on toes. Mid-tops and even high top boots keep the duff and scree out of one’s boot, provide good ankle support, have great tread and are effectively safer around rocks and boulders. **SAVER:** Cheap boots from Wal-Mart, any shoe outlet store makes a decent inexpensive trail boot.



## WHAT ELSE DOES A TRAIL VOLUNTEER BRING OUT THERE?

- ✓ **Identification:** Medical cards/plans, bracelets, photo ID, special needs outline
- ✓ Daypack, fanny pack, any portable bag – durable, weatherproof, size accommodating
- ✓ Rain jacket, poncho, plastic trash bag – who can predict the weather?
- ✓ Water – bottle(s), bladder, hydration system
- ✓ Food – lunch (provided by agency), or snacks, or personal food items
- ✓ Personal Comfort items: Meds, candy, first aid supplies, gadgets (cell, GPS), toilet paper, knife, Leatherman
- ✓ Sunglasses, ear protection, lip balm, sun block, insect repellent
- ✓ Gloves – leather preferred, outdoor type, construction
- ✓ Weather clothing: Fleece, jacket, beanie, warm gloves
- ✓ Common Sense and a good attitude

