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## ***Volunteer Trail Surveyor Handbook***



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Thanks for volunteering to explore trails for Local Motion's exciting new project, the Trail Finder! Volunteers are the backbone of our work and your efforts will certainly show in this project. Each trail in the region will be GPS'd, noted, and photographed by our volunteers, and so the magnitude of our final product will be a result of your great efforts!

### ***Overview***

As you know, the Online Trail Finder project seeks to inventory all hiking, biking, skating, skiing and walking trails in the area. Along with a map of the trail, this resource will contain valuable information about the trail surface, length, available amenities, nearby attractions, and directions to get there. All of this information gets presented in a user-friendly and searchable website. The first phase of the Trail Finder covered Chittenden County, which you can see online currently at [www.localmotion.org/trails](http://www.localmotion.org/trails).

### ***Your Role As A Volunteer***

As a volunteer to the Trail Finder project, you are our ***Trail Surveyor***. Your role is to collect information on *publicly-accessible* trails. As a representative of Local Motion in the field, you may encounter trail users who are curious about the work that you are doing. Feel free to tell them about this exciting project. Please also remember that we are attempting to foster regional trail linkages. If anyone gives you a hard-time, simply explain to them that you are a volunteer and that they can contact Local Motion staff directly with any concerns.

As a trail surveyor, you will be ***collecting GPS data, taking notes*** on trail information, and ***capturing photographs*** of the trail. This handbook is designed to help you with these three tasks. Please take a moment to review before embarking on your excursion.

If you have any questions about your volunteer surveying, please don't hesitate to contact Todd or Brooke at Local Motion – 652-2453 or [trails@localmotion.org](mailto:trails@localmotion.org).

## ***Picking Up and Returning Surveying Materials***

At your convenience, you can schedule a date for your surveying excursion. On or before that day, stop by the pick-up location to get your survey materials. You will receive:

- GPS unit (with charged batteries)
- Trail Information Collection Worksheet (1 per trail)
- Volunteer Trail Surveyor Handbook (this document)
- GPS Reference Guide

Please provide these items yourself:

- Pen or pencil
- Camera
- Clipboard (optional)

Of course, you'll also want your typical trail gear, including water, snacks, and clothing appropriate for the conditions.

You can choose to do all of your trails at once, or to do them one at a time. Since we have a limited number of GPS units, it is important to return them in a timely fashion. ***Please return the unit to pick-up location within a week.*** Trail Information Collection Worksheets can be retyped and submitted afterward if you need more time.

## **Collecting GPS Data**

For some of you, this is your first experience using a Global Positioning System (GPS). For others, you are knowledgeable and have done GPS work before. Either way, collecting GPS data for this project will be fun and easy!

To begin collecting GPS data, you simply turn on the unit, wait for it to obtain sufficient satellite information, and then walk about. That's it! **To ensure accurate data collection, please keep the GPS out in front of you with a clear path to the sky. Please do not carry the unit in your pocket or backpack. Before proceeding, check to make sure the GPS has obtained an accuracy at or below 40 feet.**

Take a look at the reference guide for the GPS unit you'll be using. It helps to familiarize yourself with the buttons and functions before you go.

## **Marking Waypoints**

It is helpful to mark special locations on your trail, such as the trailhead, parking area, information booths, bathrooms, scenic views, etc. To do this with the GPS unit, we'll make **Waypoints**. Please refer to the GPS reference guide to learn how to do this.

As you mark each waypoint, you'll see an ID number associated with that point ("WP001" for example). Write this number on your **Trail Info Collection Worksheet** along with a description of this point of interest, then save the point on the GPS.

Mark as many Waypoints as you'd like! The more information about the trail, the better.

**That's it!** Simply walk the entire length of your trail with the GPS on and mark special points of interest. Once your GPS data collection is complete, simply turn off the unit and return to Local Motion. We will retrieve your collected data and double check its accuracy.

**\* If you are surveying another trail before returning the unit,** simply turn off the unit between trails. The GPS has plenty of memory to store your tracks and waypoints, so don't worry about that. One thing to take note of, however, is your battery level. Always make sure you have a spare set.

## ***Taking Notes on Trail Information***

While exploring your trail, please observe the various characteristics and facilities that trail users find important. Your ***Trail Information Collection Worksheet*** outlines the essential details that we would like to convey in the Trail Finder. Please take this worksheet with you on the trail and fill in the information that you find. You may not be able to determine all details while on the trail – just fill in what you can.

You may want to write full descriptions of particular attributes once you return home. Just take a few notes on the trail and put your thoughts on paper later.

Once you have all of your trail information gathered, *please assist us further by typing your notes into our online form*. This form can be found on the Volunteers page of the Trail Finder site ([www.localmotion.org/trails](http://www.localmotion.org/trails)). If you do not have internet access, you may simply return your handwritten notes to Local Motion.

With your permission, we would like to attach your name to the trail information that you collect. It's our way of saying thank you for your time. We also like to show that volunteers are integral to our work. Lastly, this gives the Trail Finder a sense of community, one that we are hoping to develop further with the capability of posting public comments about trails and the like. If you would like to remain anonymous, just let us know.

## ***Capturing Trail Photographs***

To obtain visual information about the trail, we'd like to provide Trail Finder users with pictures. We ask that you use your own digital or film camera. If using a digital camera, please take medium to high resolution photos.

Important visual information to look for:

- Trailhead signage
- Trail surface information (is it singletrack, logging road, paved path?)
- Scenery (is it in a forest, around a lake, on a mountain?)
- Scenic views
- Special points of interest (camping area, summit, etc.)

When you return from trail surveying, please send us your digital files or copies of your film prints. We will credit the photos to your name.

***Thank you for your help!***