

Keeping Hikers on the Centerline



Discuss Types of User-Created Impacts

Ask participants to think about their own hiking preferences. Discuss frustrations people may feel about steps that are too high, muddy areas of trail, places where it's uncomfortable or difficult to walk on the center of the trail.

According to recreation ecologists and the Center for Leave No Trace, it takes just fifteen times of passing over the same area vegetation to be trampled, creating a new path. Explore the importance of responding to early observations of user-created impacts and the implications for natural resource protection.

Observational Walking

See Yourself: During the course or as a "take home assignment," ask students to notice where they're walking when they're walking. Is there conscious or unconscious inclination to hike toward the outer edge of the trail? What observations can they make about where people choose to walk to make travel easier. After making mental notes, they share back their observations.

INSTRUCTION MATERIALS FOR COURSE

- Field work and hand tools JHA
- Grubbing tools and Loppers
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Pin Flags
- Shovel and Plastic grocery bags if cleaning or resizing fire rings

Put it Into Practice

Squash the Shortcut

If training location allows for the opportunity to brush in a switchback shortcut, participants can go collect item(s) they think would best work to prevent future use of the user-created path. This gives everyone the chance to explain their selection before placing it and to observe how the pieces together discourage future use. If land manager consent is in hand before the course, instructor could lead the revegetation of the shortcut by moving other living shrubs in to the shortcut. Participants should be clear that revegetation only takes place with advanced consent from land manager.

Resetting Backslope

For a section of sidehill trail that has moved down slope due to erosion and trail creep, give each participant a pin flag.

Ask half of them to use their flags to denote where the inside edge (hinge) of the trail should be.
Ask the other half to use their flags to denote where they think the top of the backslope should go.

After participants have made their selection, instructor could demonstrate using the handle length of a pulaski or mattock to determine the necessary tread width and hinge location. After celebrating the "closest without going into the Trail" pin placement, align more pins along the hinge and at the top of the backslope. Demonstrate tool handling, removal of duff as far away from the trail as possible, and then the removal of mineral soil to desired trail width. As participants begin their work, circulate to coach them on root removal, disbursement of soil, compaction of mineral soil that comprises the widened footpath, and checking for a slight outslope.