

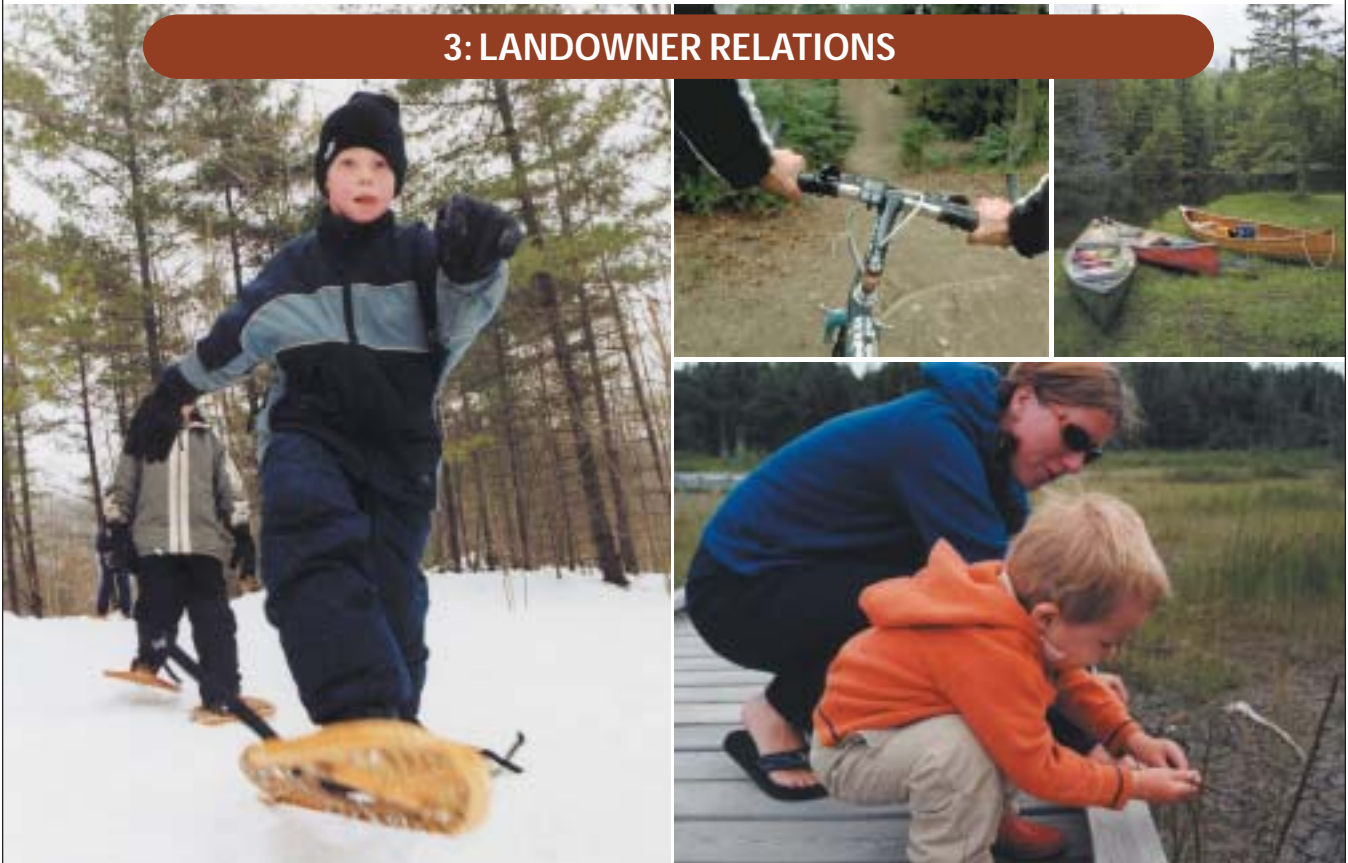
BGTN

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES • BRUCE-GREY TRAILS NETWORK

Trail Building Tool Kit

LAST UPDATED JULY 2003

3: LANDOWNER RELATIONS



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Landowner Relations

People may be hesitant about having a trail developed on or next to their land. They may be concerned about the loss of privacy and the possibility of being held liable if an accident were to happen. It is important for any trail group to recognize these concerns and encourage open communication with adjacent landowners from the beginning of any trail planning activity to reduce conflicts and maintain a positive relationship.

3.1 WHERE TO START?

Once your trail committee is ready to approach landowners, it is a good idea to form a Landowner Relations Sub-Committee. This committee should consist of members who are keen on meeting with the public and willing to commit time to research background information.

Local municipal and city offices will be able to assist you in tracking down landowner names and updated lot and concession information. Be prepared by taking along a pencil, notepad, and change for photocopies. Give yourself lots of time to search among the ledgers and maps available as these items usually are not available for 'signing out' or borrowing. This is a good time to also introduce yourself to the recreation department or any councilors that may be interested in being a part of your trail organization.

Inform the landowners with a written letter, well in advance, explaining that a trail volunteer will be approaching them in the near future in regards to new trail development.

Prepare an information package for the landowners that include the Occupiers' Liability Act and Trespass Act, a map of the proposed route, and a list of benefits that the trail has to offer. Advise the landowner that the trail organization and trail users are working in cooperation to reduce hazards and liability adjacent to their land and a Risk Management Plan will be incorporated.

3.2 KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL LANDOWNER RELATIONS

- Select community trail member(s) to talk face-to-face with landowners in the proposed trail area.
- Hold public meetings and open discussions with all parties involved.
- Educate landowners and trail users by bringing in guest speakers.
- Produce management agreements between all parties involved.
- Host liability, risk management and mapping workshops for landowners and trail users to attend in order to discuss areas of concern, trouble spots, and exchange ideas.
- Encourage trail groups to share specific details with landowners so that they can get an idea of what to expect.
- Point out the benefits of trails and focus on the positive.
- Respect agricultural lands, cattle crossings, and towns.
- Recognize landowner involvement and in-kind contributions.
- Discuss liability, maintenance, privacy and recognition and remain honest when dealing with these 4 main areas.

This sample brochure will be handed to the landowner when meeting with them face-to-face. **See Appendix II - The Owen Sound to Meaford Trail Brochure.**



Experience and research shows that the best strategy for dealing with landowners is:

- To **communicate** with them and **identify** their reasons for concern
- Ease their fears
- Make **compromises** to take steps that will prevent any negative impact
- Directly **involve** them in the overall trail development process¹

Contact the Ontario Trails Council for further information regarding insurance and liability matters.

Recommended Reading

Occupiers' Liability Act, R.S.O.1990, c.0.2. PDF document available at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca

Rails to Trails and Greenway Movements Manual. Dunbar, Irizawa, Thatcher, Chandler, Wiele
Trails Benefits, Issues and Solutions. John Marsh, Trails Study Unit. October 2002.

Trail Builder's Companion. Alberta Trailnet, Alberta Community Development. March 2001.

Trespass to Property Act, 1991, S.O, C.14. PDF document available at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca

Risk Management Manual. Hike Ontario, November 2002

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¹ *Rails to Trails and Greenways Movements Manual*. Dunbar, Irizawa, Thatcher, Chandler, Wiele.

