

A Note About Work Hikes

Work hikes are not all work. Participants, whether chapter members or not, should know that work hikes are social occasions where light work is accomplished in addition to hiking and just being outside. Work usually is as simple as pruning a few bushes or vines while hiking, painting blazes for new or re-routed trails or perhaps putting fresh paint on old trail blazes. Self propelled mowers are used to keep the grass and vines to a minimum on the trails. Participants may operate one of these machines, but only if they desire to do so.

No one works or hikes alone, nor does anyone do extensive heavy labor. Usually, the distance covered is 2 to 4 miles.

New trails in the Panhandle area are being planned, due to recent additions to the public landmass. Building new trails requires exploring unexplored new lands, and finding the best route thru them. Work hike participants get involved in trail creation by helping clear the way thru the forests and marking selected trees with colored tape or blazing to signify that the trail is to pass by that tree. How many times in your life are you going to create something that will be used by thousands of people far beyond your lifetime?

Work hikes can be considered as just another excuse to take a hike with like-minded people. Usually, participants for a work hike meet at 8 AM and finish around mid-afternoon. Lunch is usually consumed while on the trail, although if a restaurant is nearby, workers may go there for lunch. The Activity Leader for the hike will let participants know in advance whether they will eat lunch in the woods or at a restaurant.

Work hikes are a great way to get some exercise, socialize and help maintain Florida's trails. All participants are paid by going home, knowing that they did their part to help keep Florida's trails available for everyone in the world to use. They are paid by earning the feelings of camaraderie and accomplishment from the work. That's the payoff for authentic altruism.

There is a team of committed participants who regularly do trail work. They are called Trail Hogs. One merely has to demonstrate a willingness to frequently show up for work hikes, as well as enjoy the work, to belong to this group. Trail Hog work hikes do not appear on the Activities Pages. No one expects any participant or even a Trail Hog to show up 100% of the time. We all have other things in our lives that need attention. Trail Hogs are dedicated and attend many once-a-week sessions. Other Work Hike participants volunteer for the scheduled Work Hikes, which are shown in advance, on the Activities pages. Scheduled Work Hikes are held less frequently with practically none at all in the hot months. You could start with one of these to see if you like it.

For everyone who participates in a work hike, a record of their amount of time so spent is kept. Once certain levels of accumulated time have been reached, recognition of that fact is publicly rewarded by the presentation of various patches and awards at the Chapter's Annual Awards Dinner.

Simply RSVP the work hike Activity Leader on the websites monthly Activity page to learn when and where the next work-social hike will happen. Activity Leaders need to know how many volunteers are going to participate in order to plan the day.

The Florida Trail Association has a motto. "Building, Maintaining, and Protecting Florida's Footpath Forever". By participating in a work hike, you can help make that come true, make new friends, and get some exercise all at the same time.