



freshwater  
LAND TRUST®



# ADOPT-A-TRAIL

## 2024 HANDBOOK

Freshwater Land Trust

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# **Adopt-a-Trail Handbook**

## **2024-2025**

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#### **Links:**

[Adopt-a-Trail Interest Form](#)  
[Adopt-a-Trail Service Agreement](#)  
[Adopt-a-Trail Service Report](#)  
[Adopt-a-Trail Advanced Task Request](#)

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## About Adopt-a-Trail Program

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### Who We Are

Freshwater Land Trust (FLT) conserves, connects, and cares for environmentally significant land and water in Central Alabama, creating and protecting dynamic green spaces for future generations. In the simplest terms, we *conserve land* and *build trails* so that our communities are healthier and happier.

### The Adopt-a-Trail Mission

FLT's Adopt-a-Trail program provides an opportunity for volunteers to actively participate in the growth of the Red Rock Trail System® (RRTS) by maintaining and enhancing established trails and serving as ambassadors of the RRTS.

### Red Rock Trail System ®

The RRTS is a network of trails, parks, bike lanes, and sidewalks in Jefferson County, Alabama. Through this trail system, our goals are to increase and diversify community access to the outdoors while conserving some of Alabama's most beautiful green spaces.

RRTS is made up of six major corridors spanning Jefferson County. Each corridor consists of different types of trails that connect the county together. The main trails primarily follow the Birmingham area waterways.

Since 2010, we have completed over 129 miles of trails throughout Jefferson County! View the recently released [Red Rock Action Plan](#) to see the next phase of the RRTS: a 36-mile loop connecting Ruffner Mountain to Red Mountain Park.

### Who Can Volunteer

Volunteers of any age and ability can form a group to adopt a trail in the RRTS. Groups that have participated include:

- Students
- Work colleagues
- Scout troops
- Garden, book, and other hobby clubs

- Running and biking groups
- Neighborhood associations
- Friends, families, acquaintances

You can view our currently adopted trails on our [volunteer page](#).

### **Trails Available for Adoption**

Volunteer groups may adopt a whole trail or a portion of a trail. A portion of trail is considered at least a half-mile in length. For an overview of the trails in the Red Rock Trail System®, visit our [Find A Trail](#) page. Note that not all the trails in the System are adoptable. You may inquire with FLT staff if you need suggestions on an adoptable trail.





## Responsibilities of Volunteer Groups

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### Time Commitment

We ask each volunteer group to commit to one full year of service to their adopted trail. By agreeing to be Adopt-a-Trail participants, groups pledge to perform **two hours of service** on their adopted section **every two months**, or **12 hours of service per year**.

### Initial Steps

- Each group leader must complete the [Adopt-a-Trail Service Agreement](#) (e-form). Please note that a parent or guardian is required to sign on behalf of volunteers under the age of 18 and an adult *must* be present during service hours when minors are performing work.
- Include your group's preferred trail segment(s).
- If the trail that your group has selected is already claimed or is not adoptable for any reason, we will notify you. To prevent this, it is advised that you confer with FLT staff before completing the form.

### Getting Started on Your Trail

- Groups will be given access to this handbook and will be expected to have read and understood its contents prior to beginning their service. Volunteers are required to adhere to the Safety Guidelines addressed in this Handbook and must abide by all posted trail rules.
- Groups may retrieve their basic trail maintenance starter kit (work gloves and trash bags) from the FLT office once they are ready to begin service. Please give staff notice beforehand.
- Once the above requirements have been met, a group may hit the trail as an active Adopt-a-Trail partner!

### Group Participation

Group leaders are responsible for making sure all members of their group are informed of the details and guidelines outlined in this handbook, as well as the tasks and responsibilities expected on their adopted trail. Groups may add or remove members as they wish, as long as FLT is updated on any change in primary contact/group leader. Minors **MUST** be accompanied by an adult at every service event.

## **Volunteer Activities and Tasks:**

### Basic tasks vs. advanced tasks

Basic tasks are tasks that can be done on your trail on a regular basis that do not require special tools. These tasks do not need approval from FLT staff members:

- Removing litter
- Sweeping, raking, or leaf blowing trails
- Pruning and weeding
- Documenting and reporting trail hazards, dumping sites, storm damage, large spills, and other trail concerns

Advanced tasks require approval from Freshwater Land Trust and usually need special equipment or additional tools\* Groups must submit the [Advanced Task Request Form](#) (e-form) and wait for approval before performing advanced tasks. These tasks include:

- Planting projects
- Large debris removal
- Scout projects
- Beautification projects:
  - art installations
  - landscape amendments such as large-scale invasive vegetation removal or planting of native species
  - equipment additions such as benches, educational signage

\*To request additional tools, please inform FLT staff at least 3 weeks in advance of the proposed project date. If you are interested in performing an advanced task on your trail segment, please call our office at (205) 417-2777 or email Savannah at [savannah.thompson@freshwaterlandtrust.org](mailto:savannah.thompson@freshwaterlandtrust.org). Additional tool requests may be made via the Advanced Task Request Form.

## **Hours and Service Reporting**

Volunteers are asked to report hours spent volunteering and work performed through an e-form. The [Service Report Form](#) should be filled out with details regarding the services completed after each service date, preferably within a week of the completed service day.

FLT uses the information provided in these reports in several ways. The ability to track the work being done allows us to:

- Justify the need for tools and supplies when submitting grant requests to financial sponsors
- Account for the total time donated to the Red Rock Trail System® that will help encourage donations and city investments for further trail development
- Report locations of recurring concerns to the city
- Assist students and individuals seeking to report community service hours

## **Recognition**

Volunteers in this program are vital to maintaining the growing network of accessible trails in the Red Rock Trail System®. Adopt-a-Trail partners are actively contributing to FLT mission to conserve, connect, and care for land and water in Central Alabama, helping to protect dynamic green spaces for future generations. Thank you for your efforts.

- Freshwater Land Trust will acknowledge Adopt-a-Trail partners by name on the website and on metal signage on the adopted portion of trail. Signage typically takes a couple of weeks to be installed.
- Groups are encouraged to share photos from their service days via the [Service Report Form](#) ; Staff may occasionally use these photos and details from groups' updates in social media posts and newsletters.

## **Ending Service**

If your group no longer wishes to participate in the Adopt-a-Trail program or is no longer able to volunteer on your adopted trail, please notify FLT as soon as possible. Additionally, if it is determined that a volunteer group is neglecting their duties as outlined in this handbook, FLT may choose to void the Adopt-a-Trail Agreement with the group.

## Safety Guidelines

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All volunteers are required to follow these guidelines while performing tasks at any trail. Participants in this program are expected to read and abide by the following:

- **Attire:**

- Wear light or bright colored clothing and closed-toed shoes with firm soles.
- Use work gloves. Litter can be dirty, sticky, or sharp and vegetation can be prickly.
- A hat is advisable, and sunscreen is highly recommended.
- Wear long pants and long sleeves for pulling weeds or pruning vegetation.

- **General safety:**

- Use the buddy system!
- Work during daylight hours only, and only in safe weather conditions.
- Stay hydrated and take breaks when you need to.
- Lift bags, limbs, tires, etc. with your legs, not your back!
- Use caution near curbs and the street; watch for vehicles.  
Don't step out into the street to pick up litter.
- Watch for poison ivy, stinging insects, and snakes.
- Bring a basic first aid kit.
- Keep your phone on you\*
- Sanitize your hands after completing service tasks.

*\*For emergency assistance, dial 911. When calling from a cellphone, remember to give your exact location to the dispatcher and state the type of emergency services required. For non-emergency police assistance **in Birmingham City limits**, please dial (205) 328-9311.*

- **Minors:**

- At least one adult supervisor must be present for every five minors.
- Children and minors should NOT handle sharp objects, be that pruning



equipment or broken glass.

- Do NOT leave minors unsupervised in a vehicle or at a site.
- Minors should stay within sight of their group leader.
- Do not allow minors to pick up hazardous litter or dead animals.

- **Pets:**

- Pets are welcome on the trails but must be leashed and supervised. Do NOT leave pets inside a vehicle!
- Bring water for your pets, as well as yourself.

- **Procedures**

- Tie bags tightly before placing in trash receptacles, and handle with care; sharp objects can pierce through if handled roughly.
- Please recycle whenever possible! Separated recyclables (plastics 1-2, paper, and aluminum) can be transported home for curbside pick-up or taken to a local drop-off center.
- Call or email us if you are planning a major cleanup that will result in large trash bag piles; bag collection will need to be arranged ahead of time.
- Be respectful of pedestrians, cyclists, and other trail users. Make sure to keep trash bags and piles of vegetation on the side of the trail.
- Don't pick up materials you suspect might be hazardous or contaminated, such as bloodied items, needles, drug paraphernalia, or weapons. These items must be documented and reported. See the section below for further details.

- **Reporting hazards**

Once FLT has facilitated the building of a trail, the maintenance of its infrastructure becomes the responsibility of the City, as the trail is City property.

- Trail property and infrastructure hazards such as:
  - broken signage or railings
  - downed trees
  - cracked pavement
  - illegal dumping and large spills (toxic substances, tires, furniture, etc.)

- other hazardous trail conditions related to infrastructure must be documented in the [Service Report Form](#) and reported to the Call Center; **dial 311** to reach this service or submit your report online here [seeclickfix.com/report](https://see.clickfix.com/report).
- Hazardous materials such as:
  - medical and drug paraphernalia (needles/ syringes, pipes, etc.)
  - significantly- bloodied items
  - weapons

*Should be left untouched.* Use your judgement; you may contact the Call Center at 311 or contact the city in which your trail is located.



Bham Hardcourt Bike Polo – Hugh Kaul Trail

## **Additional Safety Information:**

### **Skin irritants, insect-borne diseases, and other contagions**

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#### **Poison Ivy**

*Leaves of three, let it be.* If you think you have come in contact with poison ivy, immediately wash the area with soap and water. Contaminated clothing should be washed thoroughly. Calamine lotion is an effective topical remedy. Additionally, over-the-counter antihistamine tablets, such as Benadryl, can be used.



#### **Ticks: Lyme Disease**

Lyme Disease is transmitted to animals and people through bites from infected blacklegged ticks. If you see a tick on your skin, carefully grab it with tweezers as close to the skin as possible and pull slowly. Don't twist, wiggle, or squeeze it; this could cause parts of the insect to remain embedded.

How to avoid tick bites:

- Wear light-colored clothing. Ticks are more easily spotted against a light background.
- Tuck long pants into socks to prevent ticks from getting to your skin.
- Apply chemical repellents with DEET, permethrin, or picaridin according to label instructions. Applying repellent directly on clothing is most effective.
- Stay on trails to avoid the most common tick habitats.
- Check skin for ticks after each service project.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Lyme Disease  
<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>

### **Mosquitos: West Nile Virus**

West Nile Virus can be spread to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito.

Protection against the West Nile Virus:

- Avoid scheduling service projects at dawn and dusk.
- Wear pants and long-sleeved shirts whenever you are outdoors.
- Place mosquito netting over infant carriers when outdoors with babies.
- Spray clothing with repellants containing DEET or permethrin- mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing even if it covers your skin. Do not apply repellents containing permethrin directly to exposed skin.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, West Nile Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/>

### **COVID-19**

It remains critical to follow recommended safety measures and stay up to date with the CDC's guidelines for safety.

Prevention of transmitting COVID-19:

- Be alert for [symptoms](#): cough, fever, shortness of breath, fatigue, etc.
- Take your temperature if you feel unwell and follow [CDC guidelines](#) if symptoms develop.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, every time!
- Sanitize your hands frequently.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>



## CHECKLIST

- Share the expectations and safety guidelines outlined in this handbook with the other members of your group.
- Complete the [Adopt-a-Trail Service Agreement](#) if you have yet to do so.
- Arrange to collect trash bags and gloves from FLT, if needed.
- Schedule your first service day with your group on the trail, and please remember to complete your [Adopt-a-Trail Service Report](#) after every service day!

*Thank you for adopting a trail!*

