



The Highlands Community Association

Chesterfield, VA

The Highlands Community Association, Inc.
Lakes and Trails Committee
Mark Fetty, Member

To: Fred Leckie, Richard Stayman
cc: Jim Hale, Michael Welton

October 6, 2024

Subject: Swift Creek Trail – Walkthrough with BSA Leader

On 6-October, Michael Welton of Troop 2886 and I walked the Swift Creek Trail. Our goals were to evaluate the trail's condition, and to assess the potential for using Eagle Scout Projects as a means to enhance its usability. Eagle Scout projects can help youth achieve early life goals and, at the same time, can provide our community with management and minor labor for several relatively small projects.

There are **two major issues** that need to be answered prior to further scout action.

- One area of concern is generally knowing exactly where the boundaries are for the two HCA common properties, **11305 Amara Dr** (Sundial Farms Section 6) & **11907 Amara Dr** (Sundial Farms Sec 5). This would help to ensure that there is no encroachment onto homeowner properties. While walking, it often seemed that we may have stepped onto some homeowners' properties, however, assessing GPS data after the walk, it appeared that we were generally on HCA property and just close to borders (see attached GPS map graphic).
 - **Should we mark the trail as-is (for now), or get an official survey?**
 - One area appeared to have three possible paths. The newest may encroach on residents' property as a steel rebar property marker was found in the trail center. Resolution is needed. HCA Lakes & Trails Committee to resolve.
- Another area of concern is that there are several large trees down (7+; mostly old/dead) and crossing the trail. While this could be part of a **"Restoration" Eagle project**, the need is immediate. If there is not a scout ready to perform a project, this may be better suited to be handled in another way. If this is too "heavy duty" of a challenge (Scouts cannot use chain saws; adults would do this while scouts may move or split the wood).
 - **Is there a scout ready to take this on? Is this appropriate for an Eagle Scout Project?**
 - If not, should we seek community volunteers or hire someone to clear these trees? (I, personally, could cut this wood with a new chain saw – mine is too small/old/worn.)
- As a point of discussion, some BSA trail projects are carried out in conjunction with a camping event. This helps provide project incentive. Would it be possible to provide special permission for patrol-sized (4-10 person) camping on HCA property should the project leader want this?



Areas of opportunity:

1. **“Blaze” (Mark) the Trail** – While an experienced hiker is able to follow the trail, there are times when the proper direction is questionable. Blazes, in the form of paint or tags on trees, are needed for the general community. For those without experience with blaze directional markings, arrow signs could be helpful in a few locations.
2. **General Restoration / Cleanup** –
 - a. In addition to trees down, there are many areas with heavy debris and areas in need of brush clearing/widening.
 - b. There are areas with grass & weed growth in need of mowing/weed eating.
3. **Trailhead Signs** – Just as the Nature Trail has signs at its endpoints, the Swift Creek Trail needs the same to show users where walking is allowed. These should be small & unobtrusive.
4. **Bridge Enhancements** – There are two bridges along the trail. H
 - a. The northernmost bridge needs a step at each end to aid those with short legs.
 - b. The southernmost bridge needs an extension to cross where the creek flow has widened. This will also act as an entrance/exit ramp. (Is a step needed on other end?)
 - c. There is one creek/ditch that could use a new, small (8’ – 10’) bridge.
5. **Trailhead Path Material** – The heavy wood grindings are working, but is there a better and more visually appealing solution, one that will not lead to erosion issues?
6. **Resting Benches** – A popular scout project are fabrication and installation of resting benches.
 - a. There are a few steep grades that could use a bench as a resting spot after the climb. There are also a few nice locations for observing the Swift Creek.
 - i. Some locations are “Conservation Areas”. Research would be required to determine if benches be added here. Alternatively, free-standing benches can likely be added in these locations and fastened to large trees for security.
7. **Historical Points of Interest** – Near the south (Fedora Drive) trailhead, there are the remains of an old railroad trestle that was used to cross the Swift Creek. Nearby, there appears to be the location the rock was quarried from.
 - a. There is an opportunity to work with the Chesterfield County Historical Society to research these and other locations and install information signs for these.
 - b. Along with this, maps can be created indicating the trail path, these locations, and other features. These can be placed where trailhead paths transition into the wooded area. An elevation map could be included to indicate areas of difficult trail climbs.



8. **“Mile” Markers** – Trail blazes/markers are installed where they are needed to help hikers follow the trail. Mile markers can help them to know how far they have traveled and how far they have yet to go.
 - a. Separate mile markers can be added at regular intervals (e.g., 1/10 mi.).
 - b. Alternatively, irregular distances can be added to any “tag-type” blazes.

Action Required:

1. Immediate:
 - a. The HCA need to decide if a survey is desired.
 - b. The Troop Eagle Advisors need to determine if removing the large trees from the trail is proper as part of an eagle scout project and if so, an approximate time frame in which this can be done.
2. Longer Term:
 - a. The HCA Lakes & Trails Committee should meet to discuss the suggested projects.
 - i. A list of approved projects should be created with enough details added to provide a confined scope. These should be communicated to the scout troop Eagle Advisor.
 - ii. If needed, L&T committee members can re-walk the trail.
 - b. The troop and/or Eagle Project Manager is to contact the HCA Lakes & Trails Committee should a youth decide to manage one or more of the projects.



Attachment 1

GPS Map from Trail Walk-Through.

Note, path is close to residents' properties, but generally does not encroach. Two areas are 1-where a stake ribbon was being checked, and 2-where a "No Trespassing" sign was being recovered and repositioned.

