

HIKE ONTARIO POSITION STATEMENT ON THE SHARED USE OF TRAILS

Ontario is laced with trails, but these are not exclusively hiking trails. Because of the proliferation of trail users, Hike Ontario has formulated a shared-use trails policy.

As hikers, we are interested in a comprehensive trail network across Ontario. The present network of hiking trails should be maintained and expanded. The network should be easily accessible and interconnected. It must be safe for hikers and other users and constructed in such a way as to do minimal damage to the environment.

As hikers, we recognise that not all open spaces are suited to unrestricted access. Some spaces or greenways are significant for wildlife protection and should not be open to any public use, while other greenways can safely be used by various user groups.

Hikers prefer to have a trail just for hikers. Hikers are slower, quieter, and less damaging to the environment. A hiking trail is usually more acceptable to landowners than a multi-use trail.

As hikers, we recognize that shared-use trails are inevitable in many cases. In cases where trails must be shared, and where the corridor is of sufficient width, we prefer to have parallel trails for motorised and non-motorised use. If that is not possible, then the existing trail should be of sufficient width to safely accommodate the various users.

We believe that trails negotiated with landowners and government authorities as hiking trails should remain as hiking trails, unless the landowners or authorities agree otherwise. These trails shall be protected as much as possible through appropriate signage and through construction techniques, such as stiles at fence crossings.

We believe that trails on public lands such as provincial parks and conservation areas should be used as designated by the appropriate authorities. Representation should be made to keep as many trails as possible as hiking trails.

We believe that, if at all possible, problems arising from shared trail use should be addressed through negotiation.

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