

# TRAIL AMBASSADORS

## A Helpful Guide when Engaging Others on the Trail

As a Trail Ambassador, your job is to visit a popular Nature Reserve once a month and report back on trail use, pick up garbage, and safely engage trail users in the work we do. During the pandemic, we have come to discover that one of the best places to engage people in our work is on the trail. Plus, what better place to talk about nature than in nature!



### Trail Engagement

It's important to remember that everyone you chat with is a potential supporter. Our hope is to find those who care about nature, are interested in our work, and will eventually take a step to protect the places they love exploring.

#### When approaching another trail user, always:

- Be friendly ☺
- Introduce yourself and mention that you are a volunteer with the Conservancy
- Start up a conversation and introduce them to our work:
  - Have you ever been to this trail before?
  - Did you know this trail is owned/protected by The Couchiching Conservancy?
  - How did you find out about this trail?
  - Did you know there are 15 other Nature Reserves with trails you can explore?
- If they seem interested and want to know more about our work, please direct them to our website ([www.couchichingconserv.ca](http://www.couchichingconserv.ca)) and share the ways they can get involved

### Prohibited Activities

It's so great that more people want to explore their local Nature Reserves, but it's important they follow good trail etiquette, respect nature and others when visiting. In some cases, you may be monitoring the trails and see someone disobeying the rules or guidelines we have put in place. If you feel comfortable, please kindly make the individual aware, but **do not get into any altercations or arguments about the matter.**

#### Activities we do not allow on the Nature Reserves:

Paintball Off-leash dogs Feeding wildlife ATVs/off-road vehicles Mountain biking Shelters and stands Harvesting and foraging	Hunting Trapping Swimming Camping Collection of material such as picking wildflowers, removal of wood, fossils, etc.
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If you choose to approach an individual about one of the above incursions, please take into account the following considerations:

**Safety first, always:**

Your safety is most important. **Never approach someone on the trail if they make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.**

If you choose to chat with a trail user, especially if it's regarding an activity we do not allow on the Nature Reserve, it's best to do this when you are with another person.

If at any point during your conversation, the individual gets upset, angry, or frustrated please:

- Remain calm and positive
- Do not engage in the conversation any further and leave the situation
- Note the situation and their response on your monitoring sheet
- If they want to talk about the issue further, please take down their contact information or share Samantha's information

Please be respectful of other peoples' boundaries regarding COVID-19. If the other person seems uncomfortable when approaching them, please give them lots of space.

## Approaching Others about Prohibited Activities

*See 'Trail Engagement' section above before mentioning the prohibited activity*

**Suggested messaging:**

**Dogs (off leash or waste is left behind):**

- Can I take this opportunity to remind you that this is a protected area? The Couchiching Conservancy doesn't allow dogs off leash or waste left on the trail
- It's good trail etiquette to pick up after your pet
- Please help keep the trails clean by picking up after your pet
- Use light humour (e.g. "sorry to break up the party")
- Did you know Orillia has several great dog parks, including one at Kitchener Park? It's new and right on the lake. This is a great place where your dog can run off leash
- Would you be willing to put your dog on a leash/pick up your pet's waste?

**If individuals ask why we don't allow dogs off leash:**

- This is a **protected area first** and a recreational trail second and respecting nature is the priority
- By keeping your dog on leash/picking up its waste, you're ensuring everyone can enjoy the forest
- The Nature Reserves that The Couchiching Conservancy helps protect are ecologically significant. The organization doesn't just select any land to protect, but places that are rare and home to Species at Risk
- Keeping your dog on leash protects sensitive species on the forest floor, keeps wildlife and your dog safe, helps stop the spread of invasive species, and decreases the stress on the Nature Reserve
- Keeping your dog on leash/picking up its waste has nothing to do with your dog - it has to do with the forest and its inhabitants.

**HELPFUL TIP:** Bring dog treats with you and give them to dogs who are on leash, if it is okay with the owner. You will not only gain a furry friend, but it encourages the owner to continue this good behaviour.

**Other activities that are prohibited:**

- This is a protected area and The Conservancy prohibits this activity, which is written in their policy.

**Please avoid saying:**

- You/this activity is destroying nature
- You/this activity is being disruptive
- This is not a dog park
- This activity is disrespectful
- You are wrecking the experience for other trail users

## Contact Information



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