

# RANDOLPH TRAILS NEWSLETTER FALL 2023



The Fall is a wonderful time to get out on the trails. Whether you hike, bike, or walk your dog, the cooler weather and colorful leaves make the Randolph Trails a great place to be. In this issue the significant work done by the Trails Advisory Committee to update the Master Plan is highlighted. There is also information on bear safety and tips on preparing for a hike.

## Randolph Trails Master Plan Update

Did you know that the maintenance and expansion of the Randolph Trail system is guided by the Trails Master Plan developed in 2016?

The Randolph Township Council commissioned a general Township-wide open space and recreation plan in July 2016. A survey conducted as part of that plan found that 71% of respondents identified walking and hiking trails as the most needed facilities in the Township's parks. These findings led to the formation of a Township committee to explore the development of a trails master plan. The Randolph Trails Master Plan has been created to explore the many options available for maintaining the core trail network, improving the utility of that network, and building on the existing trail system to bring its benefits to as many neighborhoods as possible.

Since the Master Plan was published, the Trails Committee has continued to look at opportunities to improve and add to the trail system. The Committee has heard from residents who have come to a committee meeting with suggestions for new trails. Also, Committee members have walked the trails and conferred with Township Planners to determine if there are new opportunities for trail development.

This work was completed in July 2023 and a report of new opportunities and reprioritization of the existing list in the 2017 report was voted on and approved by the Committee. Next steps are to present the report to the Township Council for their approval, at which time a resolution will be written. The updated list of projects will be evaluated by the Engineering Department and then considered for the budget.

There are 13 trail suggestions for the updated Trails Master Plan. Here are the top 3 on the list that are rated for immediate consideration:

1. **Old Shunpike Road/Patriots Path Connector:** New trail from Old Shunpike Road connecting with the section of Patriots Path leading to Clyde Potts Reservoir.
2. **Liberty Village to James Andrews Park:** This trail uses the easement agreed to and documented in the future Liberty Village development approval and resolution. It is planned to connect West Hanover Ave near Sussex Tpke to James Andrews Park.
3. **Gateways Apartments to Hawthorne Ave:** A short connector trail connecting the Gateways apartments to Hedden County Park.

Updates will be posted on the Randolph Trails Facebook page and the final report will be on the Township website.

## Stay Safe on the Trails by Planning for your Hike

It is a beautiful Autumn day that is great for a hike. You want to get outside quickly, so you put on your flip flops and dash out of the house. **STOP!** Where is the planning? A local Girl

Scout troop requested that the Trails Committee provide them with guidelines for planning a hike.

- **Preparation:** Find out who is going and how much hiking experience they have. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes, have a first aid kit, a map, bug spray and a whistle to scare off animals, if needed. Bring water and snacks.
- **Location:** Choose a trail. Both Randolph and Morris County Parks provide lots of interesting trails. Plan for 1 to 1.5 mph to assess how long the hike will be.
- **Start Your Hike:** Be familiar with colored trail blazes and know what they mean. Take breaks to adjust equipment and to have a snack/water. Use the “buddy system” to keep track of your group.
- **On Your Hike:** Stay hydrated. Take in your surroundings. Enjoy the flora and fauna. Sometimes this is called “forest bathing. Check your map frequently to be sure you are on the right trail. If you get lost, backtrack until you find a place that you know is on the trail. Use your whistle or phone to call for help. **Take only photos, leave only footprints.**
- **At the end of the hike: Check for ticks!!** Enter this hike in your journal or mark it on a map.



## Bear Safety

During the summer, there was a posting from the Morris County Park Commission that the Tourne County Park and Trails were closed until further notice because there were several reports of a black bear displaying aggressive behavior toward park patrons. This was likely due to dog owners allowing their pets off leash. There was an incident of a bear protecting her 3 cubs while the dog was off leash. The Morris County Patrol Unit monitored the park to determine when it was safe to reopen.

The Trails Committee has heard from residents about trail safety. Many have expressed a positive opinion about the safety of the trails. But several people said they did not use the trails because they do not feel safe because of reports of bear, coyote and fox on the trails.

One solution is to use trails that are more open with more people on them. One example are trails that start at Brundage Park or Freedom Park. Trails in this area are more open and paved in many areas. This may be an alternate to walking in more wooded areas.

### Township Tip

Randolph Township Animal Control reminds you not to run from bears; remain calm, slowly back away and make the bear aware of you by speaking loudly, singing or clapping your hands. Report aggressive bear behavior to the [NJDEP's 24-hour hotline](#) at 1-877-WARN-DEP and the Randolph Township Police Department.

For more information, visit the [NJDEP website](#).



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