Natural Lands (https://natlands.org/)

Trail Renovation at Willisbrook Preserve

Field Notes (https://natlands.org/category/field-notes/)

March 12, 2020

By Natural Lands

pink flags on the sections of trail marked for restoration.

Early on a misty morning, five volunteers and eight staff members gathered to give the yellow trail at Willisbrook Preserve (https://natlands.org/willisbrook-preserve/) a much-needed makeover. This mile–long trail (https://natlands.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WillisbrookBroch_2020-04.pdf) winds through a wetland area, which means that conditions are often muddy. While getting some dirt on your boots can be fun, a muddy trail is a less accessible trail. As hikers skirt around the mud and puddles, the trail widens and encroaches into the surrounding vegetation, killing plants and cutting into wildlife habitat.

The trail was renovated with a technique called 'turnpiking'. Although the name might sound like we're installing tolls, it's actually a process for elevating a trail. Turnpiking uses fill

material to provide a stable base for hikers and equestrians. The team worked for five days digging trenches, hauling three tons of gravel, installing geotextile fabric, and moving dirt to renovate the trail.

This week stewardship staff returned to to install a truck bed of wood chips. Wood chips help to stabilize moist soil. One more load of wood chips on the trail and the project will be complete. The yellow trail will reopen for visitors in April.

pouring dirt on the trail

Trail improvements make our preserves more accessible to visitors, but it takes supplies, skill, and many hours of work to make it happen. In the end, the effort is invisible as the trail blends back into the natural landscape. Visitors won't know they are walking on three tons of gravel, they'll just see a winding trail through the trees where the birds are singing, and the first signs of spring are sprouting.

Photos by Erin Smith.

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renovation-at-willisbrook-preserve/img_2167_medium/)

Hauling gravel to the trail.

renovation-at-willisbrook-preserve/img_2161_medium/)

three tons of gravel were moved by staff and volunteers

renovation-at-willisbrook-preserve/img_2195_medium/)

staff and volunteers at work on the trail

(https://natlands.org/trail-renovation-at-willisbrook-preserve/img_2179_medium/)

raking dirt over the trail

(https://natlands.org/trail-renovation-at-willisbrook-preserve/img_2085_medium/)

muddy boots from a day of work

(https://natlands.org/trail-renovation-at-willisbrook-preserve/image001-2/)

Wood chips placed on top of the trail

You can support our efforts to maintain trails at Willisbrook Preserve and our other natural areas when you become a member of Natural Lands (https://natlands.org/support/membership/).

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1031 Palmers Mill Road
Media, PA 19063
P 610-353-5587 (tel:+1-610-353-5587)
info@natlands.org (mailto:info@natlands.org)

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