

Adopt a Trailhead Montana

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 22, 2022

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **74 AATM sites since 2015**
- **42 total AATM partners**
- **Chapters of the Montana Back Country Horsemen have adopted 18 trailheads across the state**
- **There is at least one AATM kiosk on each of the 7 national forests in the state of Montana**
- **A total of 28 AATM kiosks are located on Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' State Parks**

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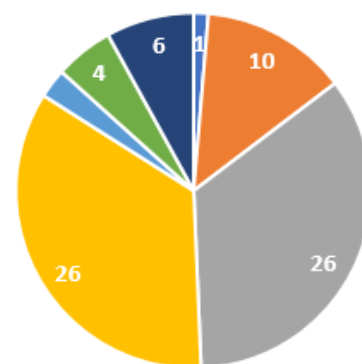
Humble Beginnings

Adopt a Trailhead Montana or (AATM) is a cooperative volunteer program to help protect Montana's trails from further spread of noxious weeds. The program started in 2015 with one AATM kiosk installed on the Lolo National Forest at the Rattlesnake National Recreation Site outside of Missoula. Since then, a total of 74 AATM kiosks have been installed across Montana. The AATM program was started with the intent to increase awareness of site specific weeds and to gain volunteer involvement at trail-

heads. Noxious weeds can be a problem at trailheads because these invasive plants thrive in disturbed areas. Repetitive disturbance at trailheads provides the perfect habitat for noxious weeds to become established and increases their ability to spread. When an infestation occurs at a trailhead, noxious weeds can slowly make their way up that trail system, often hitchhiking as seeds in treads of mountain bike tires, ATVs or other motorized vehicles; in the socks, shoelaces or

gear of hikers and hunters, or in the hair or fur of pack animals. A great prevention tool for noxious weeds is to control them in small areas, which helps reduce their spread to weed free areas, AATM is doing this!

AATM Locations by Year



2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020

How to Adopt?

The AATM program relies on the dedication and involvement of volunteer groups from. Groups interested in participating need to be organized and have good support from their membership for an AATM project to be successful. Member-

ship must be willing to perform removal of noxious weeds at least once per calendar year at the site selected. To adopt a trailhead, a group must choose a trailhead, select 4 species to feature on signage, provide group name, logo, trailhead name, latitude & longitude, the name of the county the trailhead is in, and the land management

agency information. Once these items are provided, signage can be developed and a work day can be organized for a weed pull/education day and kiosk installation.

For more information about AATM and to adopt a trailhead, contact Shantell at 406-883-7375.



Stanton Lake Trail

KellieSue Bain, Glacier View 4H Club Leader



AATM kiosk at the Stanton Lake TH outside of West Glacier, MT.

“This year we look forward to our weed pulling day, planning to not only pull weeds around the trailhead, but along the trail to the lake.”

Glacier View 4H was is a small club just outside of Glacier National Park. Our youth are passionate about educating others, and taking care of the community around us. When a youth noticed an AATM station in a neighboring county, they thought this would be a perfect partnership for Glacier View 4-H. The club kids agreed! We choose the Stanton lake trailhead because that is where our Adopt-A-Highway section is located, making it an ideal location for us to spend an afternoon maintaining the surrounding community. We also liked that this trail is heavily used as an alternative to Glacier National Park users, and horse pack-

ing adventurers. Lots of opportunities to educate! We spent a super fun day cleaning the highway, learning what weeds are in the area and how to remove them, and installed the boot brush/kiosk. We are very excited to run a test in a few years on the soil surrounding the brush, we want to see what weed seeds we collect! A highlight last summer was when a family visiting Glacier National Park started talking to club members about the weeds along the trail in Glacier, they mentioned they had hiked up to Stanton Lake and learned about those weeds from the Kiosk. Little did they know, those very kids hiking next to them had installed the edu-

cational tool that taught them. This was very motivating for the entire club to hear. We do make a difference. This year we look forward to our weed pulling day, planning to not only pull weeds around the trailhead, but along the trail to the lake. Where we plan to hold a picnic, fish and have our club meeting.



Glacier View 4H Club after their AATM weed pull and kiosk install.

Don't Forget... Annual Forms are DUE!

Montana Noxious Weed Education Campaign

One of the yearly requirements of adopting a trailhead under the AATM program is to provide data collection: pounds of weeds pulled, number of hours spent pulling, number of volunteers and other logistics regarding the signs/kiosks. If you have yet to submit your annual forms for 2021, please do so! Also, please report if you are in need of a replacement boot brush due to extreme wear (I hope this is the case for all of you... that means the kiosks are getting used!) Also let the MNWEC know if your kiosk has been vandalized, you need a new sign, or any other important details that may be essential to keeping the kiosks looking bright, shiny, and ready for trail users during the 2022 season!

Also don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions about forms, reporting, the adoption process, events you are holding or would like to hold, or if you have questions about signs or sign replacement. The MNWEC is looking forward to an amazing AATM summer in 2022 thanks to all of YOU!



Volunteer Activity Report Form

Complete this form for each AATM Trailhead your group has adopted. Once completed, email it to Shantell Frame-Martin at Shantell.Frame@montana.edu or call 406-328-4785 if you have questions.

AATM Activity Date: July 24, 2021
 Number of Participants: 8
 Time Spent Pulling Weeds: 0
 Number of Bags Filled with Weeds: 0
 Pounds of Weeds Pulled: Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable pulled 260lbs at concurrent event.
 Tentative Date for Next AATM Weed Pull at Adopted Trailhead: July 2022

AATM Trailhead Name: Clary Coulee, Jones Creek
 AATM Trailhead Location (lat/long, brief description): Clary Coulee (47.884215, -112.702559), Jones Creek (47.917985, -112.744624)
 County Where AATM Trailhead is Located: Teton County

AATM Group Name: Friends of the Teton
 Contact Person for Group: Kevin Stone
 Contact Person Address: 23A S Rodney St, Helena, MT, 59601
 Contact Person Phone Number and Email: 541-554-5773, kervin.c.stone@icloud.com

Land Management Agency where AATM Trailhead is Located: Helena, Lewis and Clark National Forest
 Land Management Agency Contact Person: Michael Muñoz, District Ranger
 Land Management Agency Contact Person Address: 1102 Main Ave. NW, Choteau, MT 59422
 Land Management Agency Contact Person Phone Number and Email: (406) 466-5341, michael.munoz@usda.gov

AATM Kiosk Sign & Boot Brush Information:

Was an AATM Kiosk installed on the work date listed above? Yes ☒ No ☐
 Does your group have an AATM recognition sign on the kiosk? Yes ☒ No ☐
 Is there a pre-existing kiosk at this trailhead location? Yes ☐ No ☒

Pipestone Pass Trail

Karen Porter, Member, Calypso Chapter of MT Native Plants Society

South of Butte, Montana, Highway 2 winds its way to the top of Pipestone Pass on the Continental Divide and down the east side into the Jefferson River Valley. This section of the highway is carved into granitic rock of the Boulder Batholith. The Continental Divide Trail (CDT) crosses the highway at the pass, providing easy access to this iconic through-going trail within the National Scenic Trail System. Day hikers, bicyclists and horsemen arrive at the pass, heading north or south along the Divide for a day's recreation in the quiet world of rocks and trees and a welcoming trail. Through-hikers stop here to meet a supply contact. In the winter months there

are skiers and snowshoers.

Recently the Forest Service constructed a large parking area on the south side of the highway to accommodate horse trailers and additional vehicles. And as expected, the disturbed ground of the access roads and adjacent slopes burst into non-native weedy surfaces of hoary alyssum, houndstongue, knapweed, Canada thistle and other invasives. Many members of the Calypso Chapter of the Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS) live in Butte and use this trail. Early in 2021 we learned about the Adopt A Trailhead Program and knew this program could be the way to manage the weeds and promote MNPS.

Although we did not get all the contacts and conversations in place before the summer, we decided to go ahead and pull weeds anyway, and over several sessions we carried over 500 pounds to the landfill. Now, ahead of next summer, we have established the needed contacts and will continue the work on Pipestone Pass, perhaps including emplacement of the informational signage and kiosk.

The AATM has arrived here just in time – to give voice to the problem, recognition to the workers, and education for the public. Pipestone Pass can only get better from here on.

2021 Partner Spotlight: Powell Co. Weed Dist. & Blackfoot Challenge

Montana Noxious Weed Education Campaign

Overall, the AATM project has been a great success.

Thousands of pounds of weeds have been pulled and hundreds of volunteer hours have been logged. While many groups have annually contributed and fulfilled their AATM requirements, one group has consistently provided superior organization and conducted an average of 2 weed pulls yearly. The Powell County Weed District in coordination with the Blackfoot Challenge have proven to be incredible AATM partners; and noxious weeds on trails in and around the Russell Gates Fishing Access are being removed.

A HUGE shout and many THANKS to the Blackfoot Challenge and to Powell County's Weed Coordinator, Karen Laitala for programmatic

oversight and organization of this AATM location.



The Blackfoot Challenge and Powell County Weed District conduct 1-2 annual weed pulls at their chosen AATM location! Nice job!!!

Boot Brush Stations: Are they effective?

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Written by: Chris Evans, University of Illinois

Original article can be found at: info.playcleango.org/blog/boot-brush-stations-are-the-effective

Boot brush stations are becoming more and more popular as a tool to both raise awareness about invasive species and to reduce the spread and establishment of new infestations. Often placed at trailheads, these boot brush stations offer education about local invasive species while inviting outdoor enthusiasts to remove foreign material including seeds that can be stuck on their shoes BEFORE and AFTER their adventure into the forest.

This type of spread prevention practice is similar to equipment cleaning, using only local firewood, and inspecting boats at ramps. Spread prevention aims to change behaviors to eliminate even the slightest opportunity for an invasive species to establish. This type of management avoids the costs and time of controlling or eradicating intact infestations.

But, are boot brush stations really effective?

This question keeps popping up - does the simple act of swiping your feet in one of these boot brushes actually accomplish anything? And if installed, will people actually use them? In hopes of answering these questions, the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (which is located in Illinois) and partners started a **small research project a few years ago to take a closer look at our boot brush program.**

In 2006, the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area and partners started installing boot brush stations in southern Illinois. Today, there are over 50 boot brushes on the ground at trailheads across the region. If you go for a hike in southern Illinois, chances are, you will see one of these stations and hopefully use it!

Knowing these stations were being used, our research started out as a fun project. We began by collecting the mound of dirt that accumulated under the boot brush and then looked at what seeds were found. Specifically, we cold stratified the dirt to mimic the winter rest that many seeds need, and spread out the dirt in flats. In a greenhouse, we began growing out each of the seeds to see what plants would sprout.

Surprisingly, we found 39 different species growing in those mounds of dirt, including 14 exotic plant species. Among the exotic species, **we found two of our top target invasive species growing under boot brushes**, garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*)!

To expand on our research, we also took samples of dirt found along the path that outdoor recreationists would take. We grew the seeds found in these dirt samples for comparison. The community of seeds under the bush brushes was very different than the seeds found

in dirt just along the path. So, **based on this data, we determined these brushes ARE removing a lot of seeds from boots.** A win-win!

Now, while conducting this research, we noticed how fast the bristles were wearing down and how quick the mounds of dirt built up. A great problem to have because we then knew these brushes are being used, a lot. It answered the question that if installed would people use the boot brush stations. We decided to take the next step



Grow results from soil collected under kiosks

in our research and really dive into the question about people using the stations. Our research concluded that **if the boot brush stations were broken, dirty, unkept, or have weeds growing around them, people do not use them.** Regular maintenance is a must! This does add on extra cost however, the costs to maintain will outweigh the cost for eradicating invasive species!

Here are a few simple tasks to keep your boot brush stations in top shape:

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- At a minimum, **clean the boot brush signage and replace worn bristles at least once a year.**
- **Remove and properly dispose of the dirt mound** that will accumulate under them. We add-

“We found 39 different species growing in those mounds of dirt, including 14 exotic plant species.”

ed a large, shallow box at the base filled with gravel to help keep the area clean and dry. Replacing the gravel every year or two really helps keep the brush stations in nice shape.

- **Remove and properly dispose of weeds** that grow around the boot brush station.
- **Fix any broken parts,** tighten loose screws and simply keep the station sturdy and kept up.

On busier trailheads, consider more regular maintenance or even installing multiple boot brush stations to prevent hikers from passing them up because of lines. No one enjoys standing in lines.

Overall, our research has proven that boot brushes stations have become a great tool

for raising awareness about invasive species. They have empowered many to take action and know they too have a role to play in helping to prevent the spread of these pesky hitchhikers. In conclusion, if you or your organization are considering installing a boot brush station, just know – if you install it, they will be used!



Weeds growing under an educational boot brush kiosk.

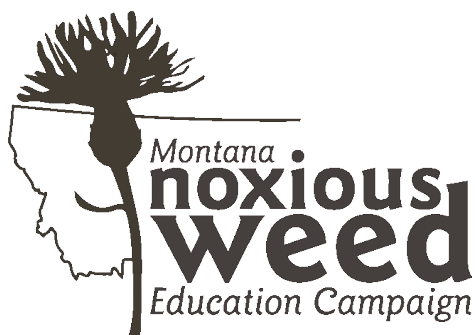
Painted Hills Trail

MT Noxious Weed Education Campaign

One of the advantages that AATM provides is the ability for multiple groups to come together and adopt a single trailhead or numerous trailheads collaboratively. Working together on AATM projects provides each group with the flexibility to hold weed pull days together or separately and share the responsibility of annual weed pulls and kiosk upkeep. In June 2021 MSU Weed Ecology, Gallatin County Weed District and the Gallatin Val-

Land Trust adopted the Painted Hills Trailhead on the edge of Bozeman’s city limits. This particular trailhead was selected because of its proximity to town, the amount of bike and foot traffic use in all seasons, and the fact that this trailhead is the only way to access numerous other trails that are on public lands. While any trailhead not adopted may be, it’s important to consider factors such as trail usage so that AATM can provide be effective at eliminating noxious weeds at/along highly used trails, as well as to provide trail users with educational signage and information that they can bank and use at any non-AATM locations to help limit their spread of noxious weeds and other invasive species.





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Website: WeedAwareness.org

The Montana Noxious Weed Education Campaign (MNWEC) started in 1996 with the goal of educating the public of Montana about the economic and environmental impacts of noxious weeds, while encouraging public participation in ecologically based integrated weed management.

The MNWEC is a grassroots campaign that works directly with federal, state, county and tribal land management agencies and organizations and other non-governmental organizations to produce noxious weed educational materials.

“To educate the people of Montana about the economic and environmental impacts of noxious weeds while encouraging the public to participate in ecologically based integrated weed management.”

Thank You AATM Partners!

- Beaverhead Deerlodge NF
- Beaverhead Trails Coalition
- Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest
- Bitterroot Back Country Horsemen
- Blackfoot Challenge
- Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation
- Butte BLM Field Office
- Cabinet Back Country Horsemen
- City of Helena Parks & Rec
- City of Livingston
- Custer Gallatin NF
- Dillon BLM Field Office
- Flathead Audubon Chapter
- Friends of the Tetons
- Gallatin County Weed District
- Glacier View 4H Club
- Helena-Lewis & Clark NF
- Kalispell DNRC
- Kootenai NF
- Lolo NF
- Makoshika State Park
- Missoula Back Country Horsemen
- Missoula County Weed District
- Montana Back Country Hunters & Anglers
- Montana Dept of Ag-PMB
- Montana State University-LRES/Weed Ecology
- Montana WILD
- Montana Wilderness Assoc.-SW Wildlands Chapter
- Mountain Sky Guest Ranch
- MT FWP, Region 2
- MT FWP, Region 3
- MT FWP, Region 4
- Northwest Back Country Horsemen
- Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program
- Powell County Weed District
- Rattlesnake Trail Users
- Selway-Pintlar Back Country Horsemen
- Smith River Weed Volunteers
- Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon
- Youth in Restoration
- Musselshell-Golden Valley 4H Council
- Musselshell County Weed District
- Wheatland County Weed District



For more information about AATM or how to adopt a trailhead, contact Shantell at 406-883-7375.