

# Use and Limits of Power Tools on the Wildlands and Trails

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## Purpose

The objective of this policy is to define the use and limits of power tools on the wildlands and trails of Monhegan Island. From the MAI Trails Policy, “when trimming trails it is important to remember that each foot of the way is a place of wild natural beauty. We are not just cutting an easy highway from the trail beginning to a place of beauty and peace at the end. In work on the trails the Committee shall strive to leave as little evidence as possible of human activities.”

## Scope

The scope of this policy will include both in-season (Memorial Day to Columbus Day) and out-of-season and specifically refer to the use of chain saws and electric trimmers. This policy will also extend to the use of other power tools that might be used in the wildlands and on the trails.

## Policy

### Definitions:

- **Power tools** are defined as any tool that uses a motor, whether powered by gas or electric.
- The **wildlands and trails** are defined as the lands owned, but not leased by Monhegan Associates, Inc.
- **In-Season** will be defined as between Memorial Day and Columbus Day.
- **Designated Person** is defined as someone selected by the Trails Chair (or Co-Chair) who is experienced in the use of the power tools and either provides proof of Workman’s Compensation Insurance or signs an MAI Liability Release Form. **No one other than the designated person is permitted to use power tools on MAI lands.**

The use of power tools in the *wildlands* and on trails should be limited to *designated persons*. The use of power tools should be limited so as to not disrupt the tranquility or adversely influence the natural beauty of the *wildlands*. There are occasions where the use of power tools are necessary to protect visitors and facilitate the maintenance of the island’s vast trail system. Gas powered power tools must be equipped with an approved spark arrestor.

## Implementation

The following outlines specifics regarding the limited use of power tools in the *wildlands* and on trails:

1. **Chain saws** are needed to remove blowdowns that present a danger and/or impede the use of trails. *Designated persons* are the only individuals permitted to use chainsaws on MAI lands. If work is completed along trails, a reasonable effort to remove debris 6 ft. from the trail’s edge, ensure the trunk is contacting the ground and branches are not left in a mound be made. Most chainsaw work will be completed in the Spring prior to in-season; however, it is possible that some chainsaw work will be necessary in-season.

2. **Electric Pruning Saw** may be used in-season by a *designated person* (likely the chair of the Trails Committee or Wildlife Coordinator) to cut limbs that are too big for loppers, but do not necessitate a chainsaw. This tool is preferred to a chainsaw when it can be used because it is safer, does not require gas, and is generally easier to use. *In-season*, the pruning saw on trails should be completed between 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm, or during the weekly Wednesday Work Crew so as to reduce disruptions with hikers.
  
3. **Electric grass trimmers** may be used to trim trails, provided that the *designated person* follows the guidelines set forth in the Trail Maintenance Policy. However, trimmer use should have the following limitations:
  - a. Used only by a *designated person*.
  - b. Used only between the hours of 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm or during the weekly Wednesday Work Crew so as to reduce disruptions with hikers
  - c. Used no more than once a week *in-season*.
  
4. **Power Drills and Sawzall** are necessary for the construction of bog bridges. The construction of bog bridges is typically a Fall or Spring activity, therefore, these will be used during the off-season.

Other power tools may be used if approved by a majority of the Trails Committee. This vote can take place electronically.

# Appendix

## Rationale

The maintenance of the trails in-season is limited to volunteers. Particularly on the southern end of the island, much of the trail maintenance is the trimming of grass around stones in the path or along the edges of narrow trails. This trimming is substantial and in past years it has taken months before volunteers can get to some trails because the work has been limited to several volunteers using only hand tools. The use of electric trimmers - in keeping with the guidelines set forth in the Implementation section of this policy - would allow the Trails Committee to trim grassy areas in a vastly more efficient manner without significantly disrupting the tranquility of the wildlands and trails. The designated person could trim trails on Tuesday evening and the Wednesday morning work crew could follow-up with the trimming of branches and cleaning up the clippings the following morning. When the use of power trimmers was piloted a couple of years ago, the number of encounters with hikers was very limited (typically one hiker). Electric trimmers are significantly quieter than gas-powered trimmers and it is much easier and safer to carry a spare battery as opposed to additional fuel for a gas trimmer. Additionally, electric trimmers are lighter and easier to control than gas-powered trimmer. Therefore, the designated person can trim with greater discretion. There might be concern about the designated person trimming excessively if using a power trimmer; however, this person would be required to fully understand the trail maintenance policy and adhere to this policy to avoid excessive trimming. The purpose of using a trimmer is not to “manicure” the trails, but rather to efficiently maintain them in accordance with the mission and policies of Monhegan Associates.

## Internal References

Trail Maintenance Policy -

[https://monheganassociates.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/MAI-Trails-Policy-updated-DRAFT-w\\_2022-edits-2.pdf](https://monheganassociates.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/MAI-Trails-Policy-updated-DRAFT-w_2022-edits-2.pdf)

Bridging Policy -

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