

Chapter 6

SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Support structures provide for hiker convenience, comfort, or sanitation. They are not necessary to construct the trail itself. Structures should be built of quality material to provide longevity and should be designed to harmonize with the surrounding environment. If native material is used, the site from which it was obtained should be left in as natural an appearance as possible. Figure 3 includes standards and explanations of some structures. Others are more fully explained in subsequent text.

FIGURE 3. NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL STANDARDS FOR TRAIL SUPPORT FACILITIES

Standards (minimum)	ROS Class			
	Urban	Rural and Roaded Natural	Semiprimitive	Primitive
<u>Primary Trailhead</u> (1)	As needed.	Spacing 5 miles or <u>less</u> when actual or desired use is high. Spacing 10 miles or <u>more</u> when actual or desired use is low.	Spacing 10 miles or more.	*
<u>Campsite/Shelter</u>	N/A	Spacing 8-15 miles. Especially needed when dispersed camping along the route is not permissible.		*
<u>Developed Water</u>	Obtain from public facility or home.	Spacing 10-15 miles when potable or treatable water is not available.	Spacing 20-30 miles when potable or treatable water is not available.	*
<u>Toilet Facility</u>	As needed.	At high use areas, campsites, trailheads, and other public areas as necessary.	As needed for resource protection.	*
<u>Bench</u>	<u>May</u> be provided at selected view spots or rest areas.		Not applicable.	*

(1) Primary trailheads provide parking for a number of vehicles and contain a bulletin board or kiosk for trail information. They may be part of an existing recreation facility or can be located where the trail crosses a highway or major road.

Secondary trailheads may also be established. These have one or two small vehicle spaces or parking is not provided/discouraged because of safety considerations. They may include a small bulletin board or kiosk with trail information. Generally, these will be used when it is necessary to gain access to the NST via other trails. The secondary trailhead should be located where the named trail intersects the NST or at the beginning of the access trail. Secondary trailheads may be found in remote areas where major roads are far apart.

* In Primitive ROS (wilderness) structures are provided only for visitor safety or resource protection—not for visitor convenience or comfort.

Trailhead Parking

Parking areas should be located on public lands, when possible, and provide a suitable day-hiking experience with access to more prominent natural features along the trail. Access trails can be used to connect parking areas with the main trail. The distance between trailhead parking areas can vary considerably depending upon the need. Typically, they are between 5 and 15 miles apart.

Campsites or Shelters

In many areas, particularly publicly-owned forests, dispersed camping is allowed. Hikers may camp at any point along the trail as long as they follow certain guidelines (e.g., how far off the trail they should camp and practicing minimum impact camping techniques). In areas such as state and national parks or wildlife refuges, camping is restricted to designated sites or developed campgrounds. When the trail crosses private land, camping of any kind is usually prohibited by the landowner. In large areas of public land, developed campgrounds may be located near the trail. There are also private campgrounds along the way.

The desired distance between camping areas along the trail is 8 to 15 miles. Contacting an agency or landowner to obtain permission before designation and development occurs provides an excellent opportunity for communication. The choice between developing a campsite or a shelter often is based on local preference. Ideally, needed campsites will eventually be acquired by the trail organization or public agency. Sites for overnight facilities must be selected carefully to withstand user impact. Use should be diverted from heavily eroded, delicate, or impacted sites. Hikers should be directed to overnight sites by maps, guidebooks, and signs.

In selecting a site for a campsite or shelter, the following should be considered:

- Overnight facilities should be located no more than one day's hike apart (8 to 15 miles). Availability of good sites and access to water will influence actual site location.
- Sites should be as isolated as possible to reduce vandalism and other unauthorized uses. Sites should be located at least one mile from public roads.
- Low knolls or gradual slopes that allow water to drain away, and soils that are able to withstand impacts with little erosion are the best choice for an overnight facility. Low lying areas, where drainage may be poor, and areas subject to flooding caused by high water or beaver activity should be avoided.
- Attractive vegetation or topographic features that provide partial shade and shelter from high winds should be a consideration.

- A site that is partially exposed is desirable. Some exposure can provide an interesting view, allow for breezes to disperse mosquitoes, and perhaps catch the first rays of the morning sun. However, a campsite should not stand out or detract from a neighbor's view.
- Facilities should not be located in areas that present high safety risks, such as on a cliff, or in areas subject to flash flooding, rockfalls, lightning, or other natural hazards.
- Campsites or shelters should not be located directly on the shorelines of lakes or other water bodies, and should not be readily visible from the water. A glimpse of the lake or water body from the campsite is ideal.
- Overnight facilities should be located at least 200 feet from the main trail unless topography or ownership patterns dictate otherwise. Some agencies require the campsite to be even farther from the trail. A small sign or marker on the main trail should indicate obscure sites.
- The site should accommodate no more than 7 to 10 persons. One or two flat tent sites should be included or constructed.
- An adequate, year-round source of water for cooking and washing is essential. While close proximity to water is desirable, hikers will accept sources up to ½ mile away. For sanitary purposes, it should be no closer than 150 feet from the actual campsite.
- Some type of privy or wilderness latrine (a wooden box and seat or fiberglass riser over a pit) should be provided. This should be located 100 to 200 feet downwind and at least 200 feet from the drinking water source and any surface water. It should also be located so that the land does not slope toward the drinking water source.
- A fire ring or fire pit may be provided, especially at heavier used sites where wood supply is abundant. This is preferable to several impromptu fire sites.
- Trash receptacles should not be provided. All trash should be carried out or burned.

Water

Potable water is extremely important to backpackers. It can be obtained from domestic pump or pressurized water systems at developed camp and picnic grounds,

administrative sites, roadside parks, homes along the route, or from filtered or chemically treated natural sources of water.

In addition to a water source near campsites and shelters, a source should be available about every 5 miles along the trail. When planning the trail route, a water source is one of the key features that should be identified. Trail should be located to allow hikers periodic access to clear, permanent streams, lakes, or springs which will not quickly clog a portable water filter.

If an area does not have a clear, natural, or domestic water source available, one should be developed according to the schedule shown in Figure 3.