

community forum

Repairing trails a yearly task for River Keepers



**Michele
Kading**
COMMUNITY
CORRESPONDENT

ST. VITAL

It has been a wet year. While this makes for excellent canoeing on the Seine River, trail enthusiasts have reported that some trails near the river are in bad shape and sensitive riparian habitat is being damaged.

SOS River Keepers have been working with community members (Patrick, June, Brant, and others) to identify and fix the bad patches. This is no easy task. The solutions vary with the type of trail, its location, and the source of water (surface runoff, high water table, or river overflow).

Permanent trails are often built on the top of the river bank and may be quite far from the river. Loose soil is usually removed and replaced with hard-packed limestone. This can block the flow of water which then collects beside the trail. Eventually, this water flows over or cuts through the trail to reach the river.

Solutions include:

- Installing drain pipe under the trail;
- Installing planks or a bridge over the muddy spot;

- Moving downspouts and sump hoses away from trails;

Dirt paths have been created on the floodplain by people wanting to be closer to the river.

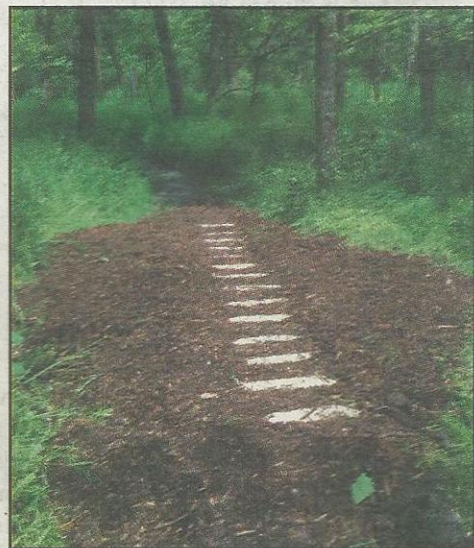
Over time, trampling removes the vegetation and packs the soil so the middle of the path is lower, and often wetter, than the surrounding ground. These paths are situated where the water table (top of the groundwater) is naturally very close to the surface.

Why is this important? Imagine digging a hole at the beach. It fills with water because the water table is very close to the surface of the ground. The same is true on the Seine River floodplain. The water table is very close to the surface. It rises during wet years and saturates the whole floodplain — turning dirt paths to mush or submerging them completely.

Temporary solutions include:

- Closing floodplain paths and only using upland trails when the water table rises;
- Installing corduroy planks to make wet spots passable;
- Placing wood chips beside corduroy to encourage cyclists to stay on the path;

A permanent solution is possible — but expensive. Building a raised boardwalk would elevate people above the water table and protect the riparian zone. Until then, we will do our best with wood chips, corduroy,



Supplied photo by Kevin McRae

A finished river trail 'patch.' Wooden planks (corduroy) and wood chips encourage people to stay on the path.

and public education.

Thanks to the 2016 River Keepers — Kevin, Mitchell, Laura, Hailey, and Ian — for their work on the Seine River and its trails. Thanks also to our annual sponsors: Urban Green Team and Casera Credit Union.

Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine — www.saveourseine.com