

RMFI Trail Terminology

If you find yourself on a RMFI stewardship day, you'll probably hear some of the words below used frequently. This is a guide to help you better understand RMFI's stewardship work and know what to expect on a stewardship day.

Armoring

*When we armor the tread, we use large, flat rocks to create a cobbling effect on the trail. Armoring serves to protect the tread from **erosion** and create a more stable surface.*

Back Slope

The back slope refers to where the inside of the trail connects to the upward slope of the hill.

Bambinos (also known as sugar spoons)

Bambinos are short-handled spade shovels, used for removing small amounts of soil.

Check Dams

*Check dams are created with either a log or row of rocks perpendicular to a **gullied fall line** trail. We construct check dams by embedding each side of the log or rocks in both banks to slow the rate of water **erosion**.*

Crush

Crush is used to stabilize rock and timber structures. It consists of smaller, fragmented rock pieces that fill in the gaps between the structure and the ground.

Double Jack

*A double jack is a long-handled hammer that is used to break up rocks, create **crush**, or install rebar spikes.*

Drainage Structures

*Drainage structures are used to slough water off the trail in a way that prevents erosion. Examples include **water bars**, **grade reversals** and **armored drains**.*

Duff

*Duff is decaying organic material (look for grey-colored grasses, pine needles, etc.) that we collect with **mcleods** and use to cover restored rogue trails. Duff serves many purposes: to disguise the rogue trail and discourage use, keep freshly planted seed in place, and protect the seed from **erosion**.*

Erosion

The transport of soil by water, wind, or gravity.

Fall Line

*The shortest and steepest way down a hill (**switchbacks** always avoid the fall line, travelling alongside the hill rather than straight up the hill). Trails that follow the fall line have a high rate of **erosion**.*

Gargoyle

*Gargoyles are large rocks used as a visual preventative measure to discourage use of **rogue trails** or other areas that are off-limits to trail users. The rocks are not set into the ground like you would construct a **monowall** or **retaining wall**.*

Grade Dip

*Grade dips are a type of **grade reversal** in which a short section of new trail is designed to shed water by descending briefly into and then ascending out of a small topographical draw.*

Grade Reversal

Grade reversals are regular ups and downs designed to slough water from the trail.

Grip Hoist

A grip hoist is a hand-operated mechanical tool capable of moving very heavy objects that require no external power source beyond arm strength.

Gullied Trail

*A gullied trail has eroded down the middle to form a cupping effect, often located on a **fall line**. Gullies have typically eroded around 12". Severe gullying can exceed 36" and requires major trail reconstruction.*

McLeod

*A McLeod tool looks very similar to a rake, used to improve newly cut tread, rake duff for restoring rogue trails, and for **tamping** the soil.*

Paleo

*Paleos are small, precision digging tools, typically used to create trenches for rock and log **check dams**.*

Pick Mattock

*A pick mattock is a tool commonly used to break up compacted soil for **restoration**. Often mis-referred to as a pick axe, the pick mattock is differentiated by having a pick side and a mattock side.*

Pulaski

A pulaski is a tool very similar to an axe, which is used to remove stumps and roots from the trail.

Restoration

*Restoration is our most common stewardship day activity. We perform restoration on **rogue** or **social trails**, which are non-system trails. Stewardship volunteers and staff will start by tilling any bare soil with **pick mattocks**, then plant native grass seed before raking and **tamping** the soil. Finally, we will cover the area with **duff** and close it off to prevent further destruction.*

Rogue or Social Trails

*Rogue or social trails are non-system (unplanned) trails that are created when users go off the main system trail, often to get a closer look at a natural feature such as an overlook, rock structure or body of water. Rogue trails are destructive to the surrounding habitats, causing damage to vegetation and leading to **erosion**.*

Single Jack

*Single jacks are short-handled hammers that are used to install and create **crush**.*

Switchbacks

*Switchbacks are more sustainable trails that wind alongside steep hillsides, rather than cutting up through the **fall line**. Using switchbacks mitigates extreme **erosion**.*

Tamping

*Tamping refers to manually compacting the soil, often in the context of trail **restoration** or trail building.*

Water Bar

*Water bars are trail **drainage structures** that include a drain dip reinforced by a timber. The reinforcing timber is buried at a 45 degree angle across the tread, which allows water to slough off the trail before reaching a lower portion of the tread (which can create pooling and cause **erosion**).*

This is not a comprehensive list. If you would like additional clarification, please contact Savannah Robar, Volunteer and Partnership Coordinator, at savannah@rmfi.org.