

Bruce Trail Bridging Ex Hogs Falls, ON

The Support Troop and 1 Field Troop of 32 Combat Engineer Regiment (32 CER) conducted a weekend exercise on October 3rd to October 5th 2014 to construct two footbridges near Hogg's Falls in Flesherton, Ontario. The Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club, one of nine regional Bruce Trail clubs, employed the services of 32 CER in the past for construction of the Ravenna Bridge in 2011.

The objective of this exercise was to offer training to unit members with practical experience such as bridge training, tools training, and project planning. The exercise provided an opportunity for the Regiment to be visible within the community which enhances the relationship between the public and the Department of National Defense (DND). There are approximately 400,000 visitors to the combined trail system each year, which runs from Niagara to Tobermory. 32 CER accepted the task of constructing two footbridges in the Beaver Valley area as the bridges would provide safety for hikers crossing streams along the trail.



The project was proposed to 32 CER on 25 June 2014, and a reconnaissance was conducted in the same month. Once it was assessed that we could provide assistance to the Bruce Trail Association, planning for the exercise was ongoing, culminating in construction of two bridges on 03-05 October 2014. Approvals required by the Regiment were a Land Use Agreement between the property owner who allowed the DND use of his property for the weekend exercise; as well as a Provision of Service contract. Approvals required by the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club included a work permit from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) allowing the project to proceed on crown land; as well as concurrences from the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority. An environmental assessment was completed by the Beaver Valley Conservation Authority for the MNR before commencement of the project.



Materials (including all lumber) were provided by the trail while the Regiment provided equipment and transport, and covered the cost of troops. 32 Service Battalion provided rations in the form a field kitchen which was greatly appreciated by the troops and 32 CER. The funding limit in the Provision of Services contract dictated a maximum of 32 personnel for construction with attachment of 3 for the kitchen staff. For the exercise itself we had 24 personnel present which consisted of 2 officers, 2 sergeants, 3 master corporals, and 17 sappers and corporals. Attachments were 2 staff for the field kitchen. Two sergeants, 1 master corporal, and 1 corporal were a part of the advance party that left Denison Armoury on October 2nd to receive lumber, foot the materials closer to the build site, and set-up the administrative site. The remaining party departed on Friday October 3rd at 8pm.

Troops began constructing cribs and stringers early on Saturday morning for both bridges, the longer of which was 64ft, and the shorter was 32ft. Lumber was carried by each person from the administrative site to the work site which was approximately 100m on sloping terrain that was wet and slippery from previous days of rain. Work progressed steadily and morale remained high throughout the day, and both bridges had decking laid by Saturday night. The field kitchen provided hot meals and coffee which was an added morale booster for troops given the cold and rainy conditions of the weekend. Sunday saw the installation of handrails and toe rails, and other finishing touches. Troops completed both bridges by Sunday afternoon, and the Bruce Trail representatives are extremely happy with the end result. We are excited to provide safe stream crossing for hikers that use the path daily.

Both bridges will have a lifespan of 25 years and will be maintained by the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

