

How to Make a Wading Staff from Recycled Materials

After fishing with a friend on several mountain streams I realized that the expensive wading staff he carried was a great piece of equipment. However, I was a bit too cheap to drop serious money on a staff that looked pretty much like a glorified ski pole. I also had a strong interest in using recycled materials that I had around the house. These interests led to this project to construct a useful wading staff. The list of materials includes:

An old cross country ski pole

An old mouse pad

Two round nylon sneaker shoe strings from my kid's old sneakers

Partially used tube of Aquaseal wader repair

Brush to apply Aquaseal

Hockey tape (I had to buy this new at a local hockey equipment shop for about \$1.50)

Utility knife

Straight edge and triangle

Cutting board

Rubber cane tip from Ace hardware store, about \$1

Masking tape

Rag for cleanup

Isopropyl alcohol (dish washing detergent and water would work as well)

Figure 1 shows the old cross country ski pole I used. I had bought poles and skis about 25 years prior and hadn't used them in years. The pole is a light weight fiber-reinforced plastic tube. If you don't have a ski pole you can probably pick up one (or a pair) cheap at a garage sale or ski swap. A cross county pole is good since they are usually longer than down hill poles and provide for a longer grip length.



Figure 1. Old cross country ski pole.

The biggest job is collecting all the other materials as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Most of the materials and tools you will need to complete the wading staff.

The first thing I did was to hacksaw off the metal tip and basket of the ski pole. I then put masking tape around the pole where I wanted to build a cushioned grip. The 1 inch wide stripe of masking tape (white arrow) is used to measure and cut a piece of mouse

pad to form the grip as shown in Figure 4 below. First, using the straightedge and utility knife, square up the edge of the mouse pad since the corners are rounded (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Trim a square edge on the mouse pad using the utility knife and straight edge.

Next, using the utility knife, cut the strip of masking tape off the ski pole shaft, peel it off, and stick it on the mouse pad as shown in Figure 4. Using the masking tape as a guide cut the mouse pad about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wider than the tape (Figure 4) to allow for the thickness of the mouse pad when you wrap it around the pole.



Figure 4. Using the masking tape as a guide cut the mouse pad about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wider than the tape.

We're now ready to glue the mouse pad material to the staff. I had an old half empty tube of Aquaseal from fixing leaks in waders. Before applying the Aquaseal, wipe down

the staff with a rag and isopropyl alcohol. Alternately, you can wash the staff with detergent water, rinse with water and let dry prior to gluing. Using a brush, coat the staff with Aquaseal just below the grip over the length of the mouse pad and set the staff on the middle of the mouse pad. Wrap the mouse pad around the staff while spiraling masking tape around the mouse pad and staff to compress the mouse pad around the shaft. Further wrap a shoe string over the tape covering the mouse pad and tie it off at both ends of the mouse pad. Let the Aquaseal dry for 24 hours before removing the shoe string and masking tape.

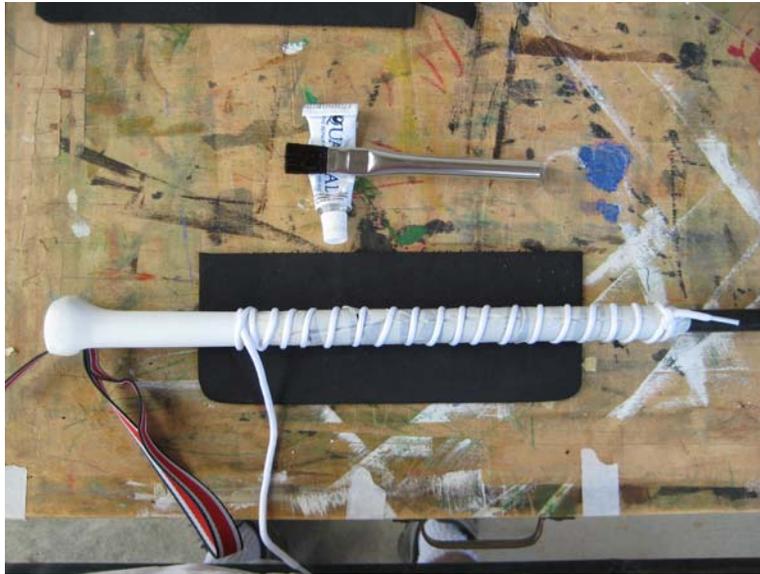


Figure 5. Wrap the tape covered mouse pad with shoe string and tie off.

After removing the masking tape, rewrap the shoe string around the mouse pad again tying it off at each end of the grip as in Figure 6 which also shows the roll of hockey tape. Trim off the tag ends of the shoe strings.

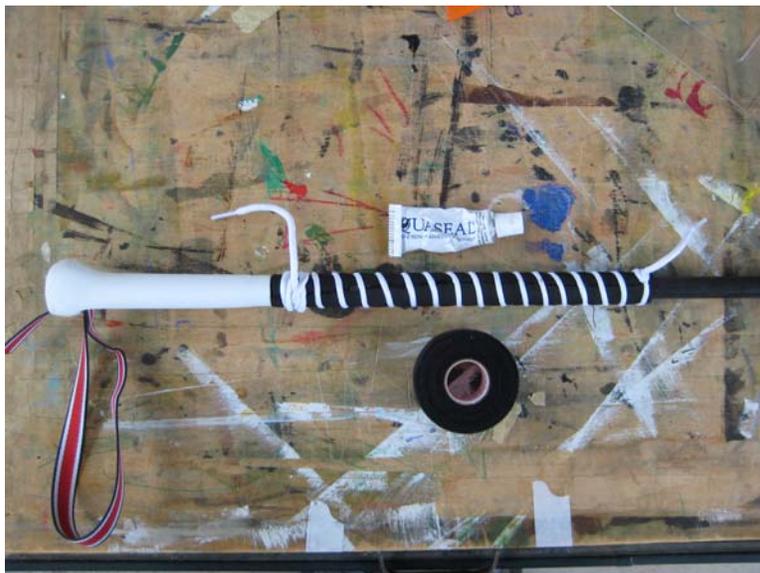


Figure 6. To form the grip wrap the mouse pad with shoe string and tie off.

Next, place the staff in a vise as shown in Figure 7 and wrap the hockey tape over the grip being sure to overlap the tape at both ends of the grip.



Figure 7. Wrap the hockey tape over the grip.

After wrapping the grip with hockey tape, apply Aquaseal at both ends of the grip to reinforce the tape coverage as shown Figure 8.



Figure 8. Apply Aquaseal over the hockey tape to secure and reinforce the joints.

Now put the rubber cane tip on the cut off end of the staff and secure it in place with a heavy coating of Aquaseal. Let the Aquaseal dry for 24 hours. Securing the cane tip is essential as field testing revealed that omitting this step resulted in the tip coming off

each time the staff was jammed between rocks which of course is the intended purpose of the staff!



Figure 9. Put cane tip on bottom of staff and secure with a heavy coating of Aquaseal (not shown).

To complete the staff, tie a second nylon shoe string to the staff near the top of the hockey tape covered grip. This string can be used to secure the staff to the side of your wading belt. This attachment will keep the staff readily at hand when you are fishing. The lightweight staff drags behind one pretty well and only rarely hangs up on things.



Figure 9. The finished wading staff.

I have used the staff now on several occasions and the extra stability is greatly appreciated when wading. The staff is also very handy when rock hopping along the stream bank. So far the staff has held up well and I look forward to using it again next season. If nothing else, I have used the staff to prove to myself what a valuable fishing aid it is. Who knows, I may break down and buy one of those fancy commercial staffs now that I understand how useful it is and how much work goes into building one!