



# OHRV GUIDELINES FOR TRAIL SIGNING



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# INTRODUCTION

The NH Bureau of Trails developed these Guidelines as a resource for OHRV club members that are charged with the responsibility of signing the club's trails. Its purpose is to describe techniques for posting state supplied standardized signs to promote uniformity of trail signing throughout the State.

OHRV users are traveling longer distances and venturing farther than ever from their local trail systems. These riders' enjoyment and safety are enhanced when all trail systems are signed uniformly. Few experiences rival the unpleasantness of feeling lost, hungry, and being low on fuel on a poorly signed trail system; this handbook hopes to limit the occurrence of that.

These Guidelines should not be construed as reducing the basic operator responsibility of operating an OHRV in an observant, reasonable, and prudent manner.

## SOME THINGS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION

- To retain as much uniformity as possible, it is recommended that trail signing be done by a small group of club members that are familiar with these Guidelines. The group should work with the club's Trail Maintenance Group to coordinate placement of signs so they do not interfere with the running of maintenance equipment and maintenance procedures.
- Because the Trail Signing Group is most likely made up of individuals very familiar with the trail system, they should imagine they have never been on the trails before and picture what signs would be necessary to get them safely to their destination.
- The club should consider bringing in someone unfamiliar with their trail system and have them review the signage and suggest improvements.
- It is recommended that Trail Maintenance Group members carry these Guidelines, extra signs, and mounting materials in trail maintenance equipment so that vandalized or missing signs can be replaced.
- Informational signs placed on the trails to promote local businesses **must** conform to the standard **Information Sign** color, size, and shape.
- Forest Service sign specifications **must be utilized** on Forest Service lands.

# BOT Provided Signs

## Regulatory Signs



**STOP**  
12" X 12" Octagon  
Instructs riders to bring their OHRV to a COMPLETE STOP



**OHRV PERMITTED**  
9" X 12" Extended Diamond  
Identifies trails where ATVs/UTVs ARE allowed



**NO TRAILBIKES**  
12" X 12" Square  
Identifies trails where trailbikes are NOT allowed.



**ATV's and TRAILBIKES PROHIBITED**  
12" X 12" Square  
Identifies areas where OHRV traffic is NOT allowed. (Typically installed where spurs leave a trail.)



**TRAIL BIKES PERMITTED**  
9" X 12" Extended Diamond  
Identifies trails where trail bikes ARE allowed



**NO SNOWMOBILES**  
12" X 12" Square  
Identifies trails where snowmobiles are NOT allowed.



**OHRV ROAD USE BEGINS**  
12" X 12" Square  
Identifies the beginning of a forest road section that OHRV's are allowed to ride on.



**OHRV ROAD USE ENDS**  
12" X 12" Square  
Identifies the end of OHRV forest road use.

# Warning Signs



**STOP AHEAD**  
12" X 12" Diamond  
*Informs riders that they are approaching a STOP sign.*



**SLOW**  
12" X 12" Diamond  
*Instructs riders to slow their vehicle.*



**OBJECT (Hazard) MARKER**  
7" X 7" Square  
*Identifies a fixed object at the side of the trail. (Used any time the fixed object narrows the normal width of trail.)*



**GATE AHEAD**  
12" X 12" Diamond  
*Informs riders to slow down as they are approaching a gate across the trail.*



**BRIDGE AHEAD**  
12" X 12" Diamond  
*Informs riders to slow down as they are approaching a bridge crossing.*



**LOGGING AHEAD**  
12" X 12" Diamond  
*Informs riders to slow down, could encounter heavy equipment & trucks.*



**PLANTATION**  
12" X 12" Diamond  
*Informs riders they are entering a tree plantation and should stay on the trail.*



**RIGHT or LEFT TURN**  
12" X 12" Square  
*Informs riders that the trail ahead makes significant changes in direction.*

## Trail Marker Signs



**TRAIL BLAZE**  
5" X 7" Extended Diamond  
*Informs riders know they are on a designated trail.*



**DIRECTIONAL MARKER**  
8" X 8" Extended Diamond  
*Used to show trail direction in areas where riders could venture off designated trail.*



**STAY ON TRAIL OR STAY HOME**  
6" X 12" Rectangle  
*Many landowners request riders to ride in a specific area.*



**DEAD END**  
6" X 12" Rectangle  
*Informs riders that there is no outlet on trail; trail ends.*

## Informational Signs



**TRAIL INFORMATION**  
6" X 8" Rectangle  
*Informs riders of where they are, how far to gas, who maintains the trail, how far to parking, etc.*



**STAY DRY**  
6" X 8" Rectangle  
*Informs riders that it is illegal to drive in wetlands, streams and rivers.*



**TRAIL HEAD**  
9" X 12" Diamond  
*Used when new trail is started, at the beginning of a trail from parking areas, or to indicate the trailhead across a large open field.*



**LANDOWNERS**  
12" X 12" Square  
*Used as a public relations tool between clubs and landowners. Advises trail users that they are on private property and should "RESPECT IT."*



**TRAIL PARKING TO RIGHT / LEFT**  
12" X 24" Rectangle  
*Placed at the entrance to approved parking areas. Informs riders to go to the right to reach OHRV parking.*

# TRAIL SIGN PLACEMENT

The following provides information on how signs are to be oriented and installed.

## ORIENTATION

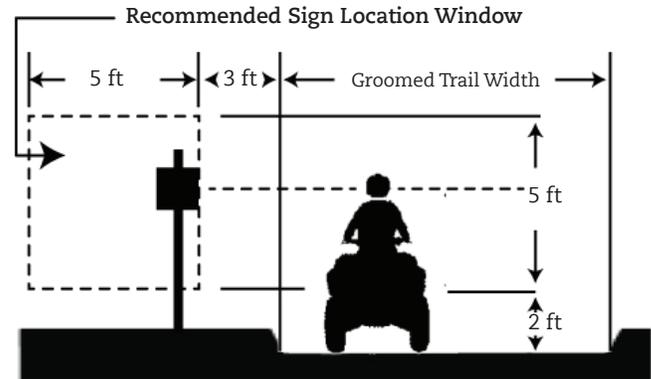
Signs should be orientated perpendicular to the trail within a 5' by 5' area that starts 3' from the trail's edge and 2' above the trail riding surface. See Figure 1.

Since the trail will be used in both directions, separate, and often different, signage may be needed for each direction of travel.

The most critical part of sign mounting is understanding how reflective signs work. One good analogy is to think of reflective signs as mirrors. To maximize the nighttime view of the sign, it must be placed at eye level, perpendicular to the direction of travel on the trail.

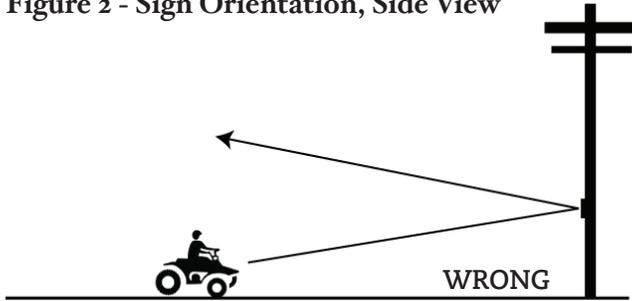
This orientation also ensures that the sign is visible over the longest possible period so that the rider has a chance to understand the message and to react accordingly. See Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 1 - Recommended Sign Location Window

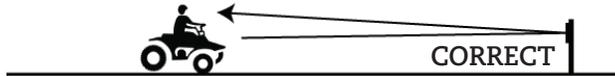


*Signs placed outside this window will not perform as well.*

Figure 2 - Sign Orientation, Side View

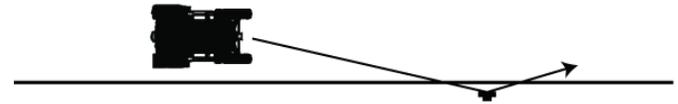


*Signs placed too high do not reflect headlight beams back to the rider.*

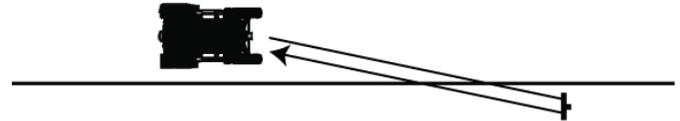


*Signs placed at the rider's eye level reflect back correctly and are much easier to see.*

Figure 3 - Sign Orientation, Plan View



*Signs facing the trail do not reflect headlight beams back to the rider.*



*Signs placed perpendicular to the trail headlights reflect back to the rider correctly.*

# POSTING DISTANCES

*What's the proper distance before a hazard to place a warning sign?*

There are several factors involved in calculating the minimum posting distance, including: (a) sign legibility or recognition, (b) decision-making time, (c) the coefficient of friction between the tire and the ground, (d) a comfortable braking distance, and (e) the initial speed of the OHRV when the sign is first observed by the rider.

In these Guidelines, recommended placement of Warning Signs is determined based on the idea that the OHRV should come to a complete stop **before** the obstruction or trail condition. In some cases a complete stop is not necessary, but we recommend the posting distance be **sufficient for a complete stop in the event it is necessary**.

The factor having the greatest effect on calculations for posting distances is the speed of the vehicle when the rider first sees the sign. The *Warning Sign Placement Table* below is based on miles per hour. The intent of the table is to give a recommended minimum distance and an acceptable range rather than a specified distance. It is the Trail Signing Group's responsibility to estimate the common appropriate speed on the portion of the trail where the signs are being installed.

## WARNING SIGN PLACEMENT TABLE

AVERAGE ANTICIPATED SPEED ON THE TRAIL	RECOMMENDED DISTANCE FROM SIGN TO HAZARD / STOP
10 MPH	50 feet to 100 feet
15 MPH	100 feet to 125 feet
20 MPH	150 feet to 175 feet
25 MPH	150 feet to 200 feet
35 MPH	250 feet to 300 feet

## MOUNTING CONSIDERATIONS

The methods used to mount signs vary greatly depending on the intended permanence of the installation. The following points provide guidance in selecting an appropriate mounting method based on the club's trail circumstance.

- Generally, signs should be placed on the right side of the trail within the sign window to conform with a rider's familiarity to highway signage. See Figure 1, page 6.
  - *The sightline from the driver to the sign must be clear the entire distance that the sign is intended to be viewed. This requires routine monitoring and pruning of vegetation by the club.*
- Signs should be placed in mid to late spring (at the end of mud season) and **removed promptly** at the end of the designated riding season for the club's trail system.
  - *This reduces confusion of other trail users, vandalism, potential trespass, and helps to conserve sign life by reduced exposure to the elements, which helps to conserve the need for new signs and in turn assists in conserving Grant-In-Aid funds for trail projects and equipment.*
- It is recommended that signs be mounted on posts. In these instances, using screws/bolts instead of nails helps to reduce theft and vandalism.
  - *Use durable post materials for permanent installations, such as flexible plastic, fiberglass, wood, or steel.*
  - *Use an existing object, such as a fence post, **ONLY** if it is within the recommended sign location window, **and the permission of the object owner has been obtained.***
  - *A cordless drill with spare battery packs is a great tool for Trail Signing Crews to mount signs and for Trail Maintenance Groups to keep in maintenance equipment to replace/fix signage.*

## MOUNTING CONSIDERATIONS CONTINUED

- It is **not recommended** that signs be mounted on live trees.
  - *If a tree is the only alternative, it is recommended that aluminum nails or staples be used, ensuring they are all removed from the tree when the signs are removed.*
- Overuse of signs should be avoided.
  - *Only authorized trail signs should be posted to avoid clutter and confusion.*
    - *If signage is posted for a local business, it should be carefully controlled by the Trail Signing Group.*
  - *When more than one sign is mounted to the same surface, they should be **placed vertically** with the most important sign on the top.*
    - *No more than 3 signs should be mounted in this fashion.*

## Trail Sign Schematics

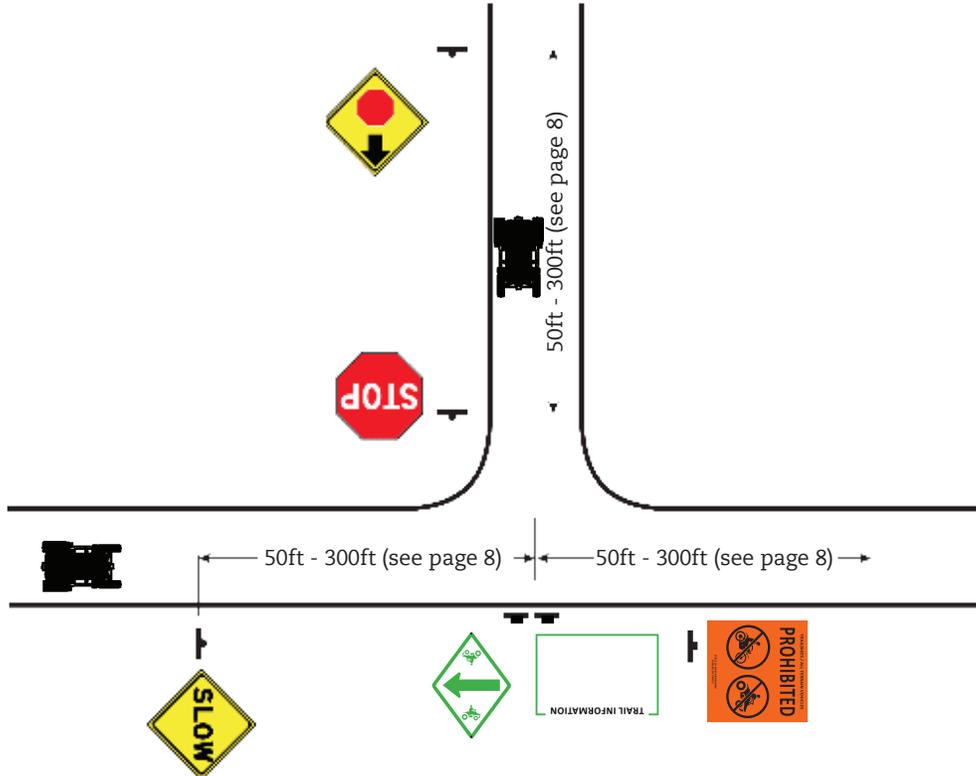
Following are simplified trail sign schematics that are intended to serve as a guide for Trail Signing Crews. They depict some of the most common basic situations that are encountered on most OHRV trails. Not all BOT provided signs are shown in these schematics.

It is understood that unusual situations may be encountered that are related to trail conditions, topography, man-made objects, etc., that will require crews to make some modifications.

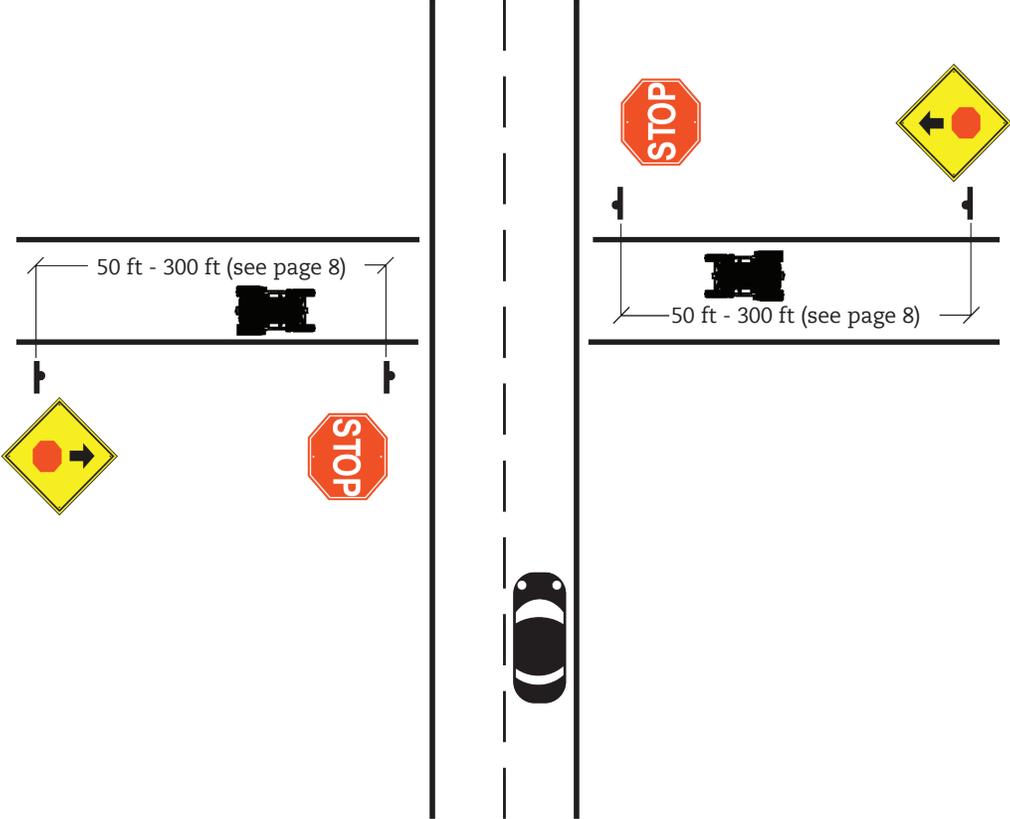
**“The most suitable placement of each sign must be determined at the site, by the Trail Signing Crew, where all variables are visible.”**

Rider safety and rider information are paramount and must be considered by the Trail Signing Crew.

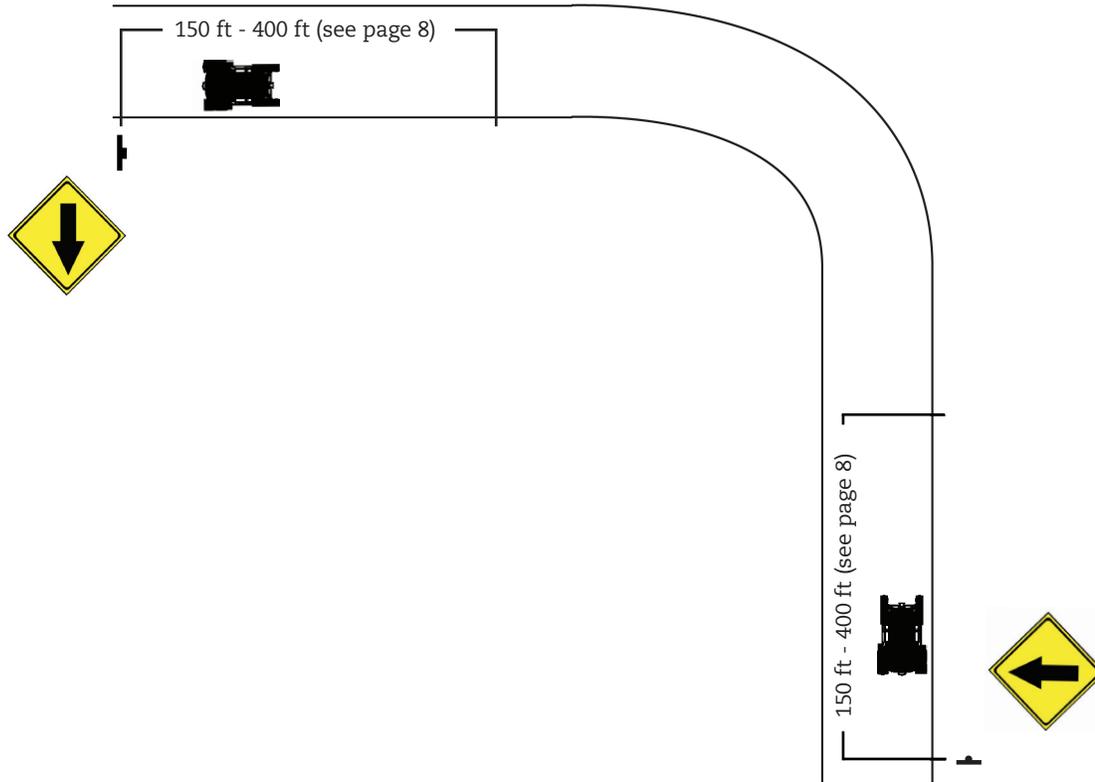
# Common Trail Intersection (with Information) Schematic



# Common Road Crossing Schematic

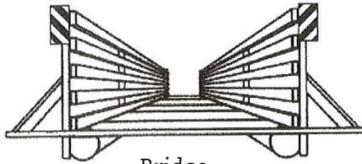


# Change of Direction Schematic

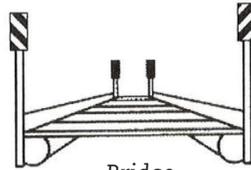


# The Object Marker

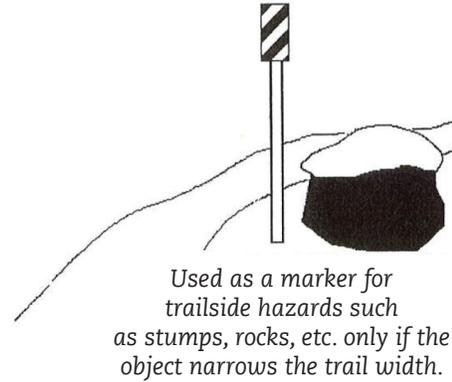
Object Markers are valuable signs that show the safe passage on a trail. They are usually placed on bridges, but may be used on permanent trailside hazards such as stumps, rocks, etc. When mounting these signs, the yellow and black stripes should always point down and away from the hazard toward the safe lane of travel.



*Bridge  
placement  
with rails*

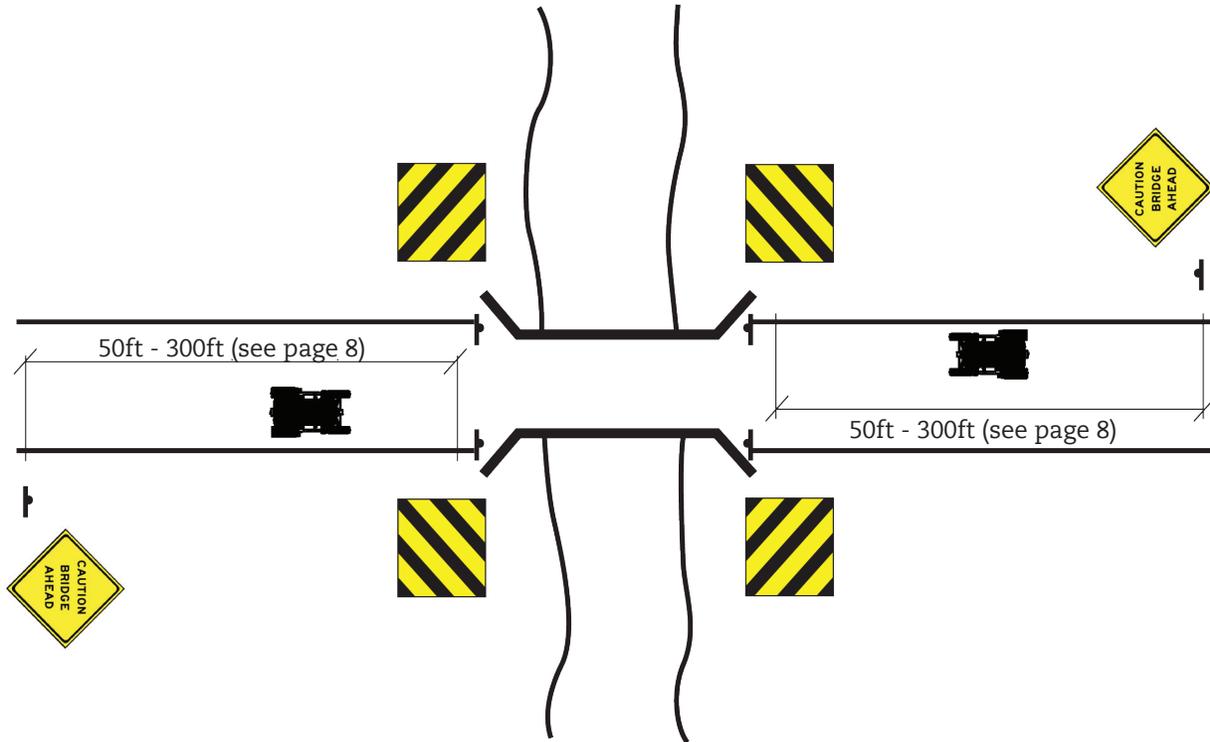


*Bridge  
placement  
no rails*



*Used as a marker for  
trailside hazards such  
as stumps, rocks, etc. only if the  
object narrows the trail width.*

# Common Bridge Schematic



## Staking Information

Following an OHRV trail in forested areas may be a fairly obvious and straightforward task; however, when trails cross fields and other large cleared areas they may not be visible at all. Relying on established tracks is not adequate as even well-established trails can be quickly obscured by irresponsible trail users, weather, or debris. Riders and club trail maintenance personnel need continuous reference points to navigate these types of trails confidently. A simple method of identifying this type of trail is “staking”.

Staking is when wooden stakes are driven into the ground in pairs at right angles to the trail. See Figure 1. The next pair of stakes should be easily visible at a distance immediately after passing through a pair. The frequency of stakes should be increased to indicate a turn. If the turn is sharp, the signing requirements for curves should be used instead of stakes.

A typical stake is a 2” x 2” (minimum) piece of inexpensive lumber sharpened at one end for installation. A minimum of 12” at the top of the stake should be painted with a high impact color such as fluorescent orange. To improve nighttime visibility, at least three square inches of a reflective tape should be wrapped around the stake about 4” down from the top. The stake should extend 30” above the average maximum snow depth, with the reflective tape as close as possible to riders’ eye level. Stake lengths of 5’ and 6’ are typical. See Figure 2.

# Stake Illustration

Figure 1: Stake Placement



*A single stake is used to augment an existing fixed object, such as a fence post. Note the use of the trail blazer on the post to provide a second reference point.*



*Standard two-stake configuration leaves no doubt as to the intended trail route.*

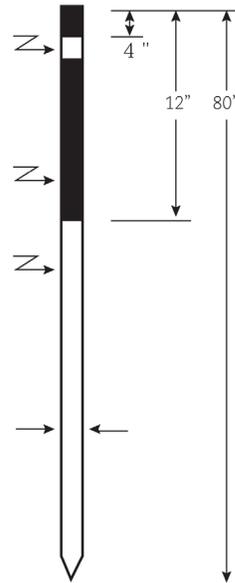
Figure 2: Stake Illustration

*3 square inches of reflective material, 4" from top.*

*12" from top painted high impact color.*

*2" x 2" spruce or similar wood.*

*Stake to extend 30" above average maximum snow depth.*





State of New Hampshire  
Department of Resources and Economic Development  
Division of Parks and Recreation  
**Bureau of Trails**  
[www.nhtrails.org](http://www.nhtrails.org)

*Revised 2016*