



# Pacific Crest Trail Association

## Online Intro to Trail Scouting Training Instructor Outline

### Introduction – 6:00-6:13

- Welcome & Zoom Technology Tips - 5mins
  - Toolbar like this on your screen
  - Mute on device/phone
  - Video on/off - speaker/gallery view – we'll be sharing screen for most part welcome to keep camera off
  - Chat window – we'll use this a lot tonight - test by typing name
  - “Reactions” - Participant List raise hand
  - We'll record this training
  - Any tech questions?
- Instructors introduce themselves - 2mins
- Group introductions - 2mins
  - One of best parts of volunteering is meeting people, don't have time for full round-room tonight
  - If you can, turn camera on
    - Wave/reaction/holler if: calling from CA, OR, WA, another state. You've volunteered with PCTA, another trail org like BCH, WTA. You're a PCTA member (explain membership). Have a section of the PCT that you scout regularly. First time volunteering
  - Great to see how we're alike, different. Speaks to PCT volunteer community as a whole, wide range of experience, age, backgrounds, more.
- Facilitator start recording and dive in
- Why are we here tonight? -2mins
  - Substantial backlog of deferred maintenance on public lands across country. On top of that, annual maintenance. PCT is no exception. Trail work being taken up by volunteers, led by regional orgs, in partnership with agencies.
  - To plan effective/efficient trail work, need to know what's out there. Crews need to know what to expect, at very least what tools to bring. Scouts provide critical intel by reporting conditions and maintenance needs w/ lot of detail. If you did the at-home photo exercise, you may have gotten taste of this.
  - Typically teach in-person, full-day class on trail. Getting creative, offering online as a way to stay engaged, refresh/sharpen/learn new skills. Condensing material since we can only sit on Zoom for so long.
  - This course isn't a PCTA requirement, hope it will peak volunteers' interest, start to prepare you if you want to scout, be a refresher for current scouts
  - Students should leave tonight with good idea of how to work on their Trail eyes, understand next steps if you want to scout portions of PCT as PCTA volunteer
- Details on today's course – 2mins
  - Focus of the Course
    - Understand safety requirements of Trail scouting
    - Develop Trail Eyes to see the PCT trail corridor and clearing limits



- Know what good trail looks like
- Trail Triage
- Ability to accurately survey a trail for logs, brushing, tread, plus any major construction needs
- Knowledge of PCTA reporting procedures
- Break, Q&As and door-prize drawings throughout

### Safety – 6:13-6:29

- Safety is the #1 priority – 2 min
  - Be prepared for adverse conditions, that's probably why you've been asked to scout there!
  - Don't take undue risks
  - Safety, Fun, Get Work Done
- Safety while scouting – 7 min
  - Check-in, Check-Out
    - PCTA and agency need to know you're scouting
    - Always make sure someone at home knows where you're going and when you should return
    - Carry a device (or, with a group, two devices) that get reception at or near your site. For scouting missions, this device requirement may be waived, although it is still best practice.
  - Be prepared if you are alone
    - Examples: Flat tires, no reception, inability to turn a vehicle around, getting stuck, needing paper maps, etc.
    - First-Aid kit is required, it should include a Volunteer Injury Packet. Add link to chat: <https://www.pcta.org/volunteer/crew-leader-center/>
    - Getting lost, the PCT is remote and scouting is often needed in less ideal Trail conditions
    - Serious accidents rarely happen on the PCT but when they do, we are prepared
  - Briefly describe ten essentials and basic backcountry safety
    - Add link to chat: <https://www.pcta.org/discover-the-trail/backcountry-basics/gear/>
  - PPE requirements and best practices for scouting
    - Bring your hard hat; wear it in windy conditions and in burned areas
    - Get ready for bushwhacking
    - Gloves and boots
    - Bring a facemask
- Preparing to Scout – 7 min
  - Explain difference between casual hiking and formal scouting
    - Casual hiking use trail conditions page: <https://www.pcta.org/discover-the-trail/trail-conditions/report-trail-conditions/>
    - Scouting is a role for section adopters, if you want to adopt: <https://www.pcta.org/volunteer/adopted-trail-map/>

- If you don't have your own section but want to formally scout, ask your local Rep or volunteer leader:
- Formal Scouting
  - Communicate with Rep about where scouting is needed
  - Where do I scout and how do I get there?
- TCP, JHA, COVID, and project report form
- Desktop Resources: Google Earth, CalTopo, etc.
- Handheld resources: HalfMile, Guthook, Avenza, GAIA, Topo Maps (app), paper maps, etc.
- Facilitate Q&A session
  - Read the questions out loud for people who can't see the chat window

### Recording Trail Assessments and Conditions– 6:30-6:50

- Why is this important?
  - Trail crew, agency partner, or others have to be able to clearly understand
  - It could be some time before a crew can fix any damages
  - Trail Assessment and Condition Form
    - This is a resource for volunteers to use to record:
    - [https://www.pcta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Trail-Assessment-Form-2017\\_7\\_21.pdf](https://www.pcta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Trail-Assessment-Form-2017_7_21.pdf)
    - Can be accessed via Crew Leader Center:  
<https://www.pcta.org/volunteer/crew-leader-center/>
  - Briefly explain summary, condition types, and descriptions
    - Maintenance vs. Recon box speaks to severity of issue (Trail triage)
  - Item ID is location, can use Trail Mile to the tenth of a mile
    - Lat/long good for agency partners
    - Even better, use a device to collect data and export in appropriate file type to put on maps
  - Photos! Photos! Photos!
    - Identifying and describing problems
  - Quantitative vs qualitative
  - Specificity is key! Estimates such as “Lots’ of ‘huge’ blow downs on the PCT ‘north’ of South Sister,” are of little use to the next trail crew because “lots” could be 10 or 100, and “huge” could be 20” or 40” and there is a lot of country “north” of South Sister
  - Trail triage should be noted (Safety hazard, major issue, or routine)
  - Read example description in PowerPoint
- Reporting Procedures
  - Unreported scouting is of little value
  - Who to report to (PCTA Rep, agency staff, or volunteer leader)
  - Communicate beforehand with best methods
  - Format is up to you if not using the Assessment Form
- Facilitate Q&A session
  - Read the questions out loud for people who can't see the chat window

Break - 5mins

### Developing Trail Eyes - 6:55-7:18

- Defined as: “the ability to see how a trail is functioning in the landscape, and most importantly what Trail work needs to be done to bring it into good shape”
- Primarily includes attention to clearing limits and drainage, but also tread condition, retaining walls, and major construction needs
- Honed over many seasons of service, so think of it as a work in progress
- Start by learning to see and communicate current conditions. Over time you’ll learn the “what trail work needs to be done” part, especially if you volunteer on trail crews
- **Assessing brushing**
  - How much seasonal plant growth an area receives
  - What type of plants?
  - Is corridor being encroached upon? Remember packstock
  - Is new growth uphill or downhill of the Trail?
- **Tread and Drainage Assessments**
  - How narrow is the tread (PCT is ideally cut to 36”, operates at 24”, and gets a retread when 18” or less)
    - Share tips for measuring without a tape measure, such as a pre-measured and knotted string
  - How stable is the tread (Sandy, eroded, burnt, etc)
  - What does the hinge look like
  - Is the “critical edge” in critical condition?
  - Are drains full?
  - Is there cupping?
- **Signage**
  - PCT service mark used as a reassurance marker
  - Used sparingly and only in confusing locations
- **Blow down events**
  - How many trees are down?
  - Is there a lot of complexity?
  - What is the diameter of these trees
    - Share a tip for measuring diameter
  - Are they stable?
- **Assessing rock work**
  - Are rocks missing?
  - Are rocks loose?
  - Does it have a lot of empty space?
- **Facilitate Q&A session**
  - Read the questions out loud for people who can’t see the chat window

### Assessment Activities – 7:18-7:54

- Similar to at-home photo exercise, you may even recognize some of the photos.
- **Photo 1**
  - Instructors describe what they notice in photo

- Show slide with example of scouting description
- Photo 2
  - Brief description of photo with background info
  - Students type scouting description into chat box (play “Jeopardy” music)
  - Instructors highlight a few good examples from chat box
- Photo 3
  - Brief description of photo with background info
  - Students type scouting description into chat box (play “Jeopardy” music)
  - Instructors highlight a few good examples from chat box
- Photo 4, etc.
  - Continue as time allows or photos run out

Facilitate final Q&A session – End by 7:54

Now what? - 7:55-7:58

- Look at trails when out hiking
- Online course meant to be a sampler but there’s much more to learn
- Return to at-home photo exercise and highlight your new skills
- Invite participants to a Trail Skills College post-Covid
- Stay connected to PCTA
  - Contact Regional Rep
  - Work groups when allowed
  - Less maintenance is getting done, but that’s OK, it means more scouting needs so work can be prioritized
- Trainings like this will help us ramp up and bounce back as public health situation allows. Visit 2020 TM Protocols page for more details.
- Trail Skills College Curriculum:  
<https://www.pcta.org/volunteer/trail-skills-college/trail-skills-college-course-curriculum/>
- Link to USFS Publications Website:  
[https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational\\_trails/publications/fs\\_publications/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/fs_publications/)
- We’ll share resources from tonight like slides, recordings, links

Acknowledgements – 7:58-8:00

- Thanks for your time, thanks for coming tonight!
- Door-prize winners: we’ll check the mailing addresses we have on file for you and get these in the mail.
- Survey tonight while material is fresh in your minds
- Another email tmrw with resources from tonight. Slides, recording, contact info.