Pacific Crest Trail Association
Scouting Checklist

Before you go

- Notify someone of your plans and your departure!
- Review JHA, TCP, EAP
- Check weather forecast, trail conditions.
- Have appropriate attire, PPE and essentials

When you return

- Check in – notify the appropriate party(ies) of your safe return!
- Report your hours
- Complete and submit your findings

✓ **Corridor**

- Horizontal Clearance -Brush/Tree/Backslope/Rock/Debris etc.
- Vertical Clearance -Branch/Leaner/Downed Tree/Other
- Obstacles/Impediments - Downed Tree, Rock/Debris/Hazard Tree etc.

✓ **Tread**

- Width - Slough/Berm/Braided/Other Wide or Widened/Other Narrow or Narrowed etc
- Surface - Cupped/Signs of Erosion/Gullied/Trenched/Unstable/Rough/Impediment/Cross Slope etc

✓ **Drainage- Ineffective/Blocked**

✓ **Drainage Structures/Features - Effective/Stable/Compromised**

- Check Dam/Step
- Culvert
- Drain Dip
- Water Bar

✓ **Recreational Impact - Campsite/Litter/Waste/Prohibited Use/Social Trail**

✓ **Signage - Damaged/Needs Paint/Missing/Non Standard**

✓ **Trailhead/Junction – Kiosk Condition/Signage Needed or Unclear/Social Trails**

✓ **Structures/Features - Effective/Stable/Compromised**

- Switchbacks (p.105*)
- Dips/Knicks/Waterbars (p.32*)
- Check Steps/Dams
- Stream Fords (p.90*)
- Culverts (p.93*)
- Turnpikes/Causeways/Puncheons (p.81*)
- Walls/Cribbing (p.111*)
- Bridges (p.96*)

** Page number for topic in Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook (2007 edition)*

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Trail Condition Descriptions and Metrics

The description of a trail condition has five parts:

1. **Location**: Half Mile mileage, distance from known landmark, etc.
2. **Condition**: e.g. heavy brush, blocked drainage, downed tree, eroded tread
3. **Impact**: e.g. trail impassable, risk of injury, damage to riparian area, severe soil erosion
4. **Metrics**: e.g. width, height, length, diameter, quantity
5. **Specifics** (if known): e.g. vegetation and debris, dead fir, water flowing from upside

Corridor - Brush: light or heavy – height, depth, distance, impact on corridor – other unusual factors
Example: Moderate sagebrush, 1-2 feet into corridor, 2-3 feet high for 1,200 feet

Corridor - Vertical Clearance: height above trail, diameter
Example: Five to ten 1-3 inches branches 6- 8 feet above trail along 35 feet of trail

Corridor - Downed/Hazard Tree: diameter, alignment, distance from ground, walk around or step over
Example: Downed tree, 18 inch dead lodgepole across the trail, 2 feet off the ground, easy walk around

Other Corridor: width, depth, length impact on corridor
Example: “Boulder, 3 feet by 2 feet by 2 feet boulder blocking trail, impassable to stock”

Tread - Slough/Berm: tread width, width, height, distance
Example: Loose slough 2 feet wide, tread narrowed to 10 inches, 6-12 inches deep for 150 feet

Tread - Cupped/Eroded/Gullied/Trenched: depth, length (width) – source of erosion
Example: Cupped tread, 1 feet wide 4 inches deep for 150 feet, no signs of erosion

Tread - Widened/Braided: width, length, number of braids, cause
Example: Braided trail, 4 braids approx. 15 feet wide for 45 feet, seasonal water causing muddy trail

Tread - Wet/Muddy/Bog: width, length, depth, source of moisture, water standing or flowing
Example: Muddy tread 2 inches deep, muddy area is 20 feet wide for 100 feet, ineffective drainage from seeps uphill side of trail

Tread - Rough/Cobbled: description size of debris, length
Example: Severely cobbled tread, rocks and gravel up to 6 inches in diameter for 75 feet on steep grade, slip and fall hazard

Tread - Obstacle: description, size, height
Example: 3 inch diameter root protruding from tread, tripping hazard

Blocked or Ineffective Drainage: width, length, depth and type of debris
Example: Blocked drain outflow, 3 feet wide drain dip outlet, vegetation and debris 2 feet deep, completely blocked, severe erosion down trail

Drainage Structure: type, width, description of problem
Example: 3 foot waterbar with 8 inch gap, missing rock, water flows down the trail, no significant erosion

Recreational Impact – Illegal Campsite: distance from trail, length, width, structures
Example: Illegal campsite, 15 feet by 20 feet, in corridor 2 feet from trail, rock fire ring and rock wind break

Recreational Impact – Prohibited Use: type, light or heavy use, entry and exit, distance
Example: Mountain bike tracks, heavy use, starting at ABC trailhead exiting at junction with XYZ trail approximately 3 miles

Trail Condition Descriptions and Metrics (cont.)

Signage: type of signage, condition – damaged, needs paint, missing/non standard
Example: Directional sign and going north from xyz road crossing, damaged needs replacement

Structures/Features: type of structure – description of condition
Example: ineffective check step, users have walked around creating a drainage path around the structure.

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Annual Maintenance Versus Trail Reconstruction/Rehabilitation

It is important to distinguish between annual maintenance needs and ***rehabilitation*** or ***reconstruction***.

Simply put, annual maintenance is the work that needs to be done each year to keep the trail open, safe and functional. Doing this work in a timely manner will prevent problems from worsening and becoming major projects. Examples of maintenance include logging out, brushing, tread work, cleaning drains and replacing an existing sign.

There is much confusion over the terms rehabilitation and reconstruction. You will find the two used interchangeably. They both refer to bringing the trail up to standards, performing deferred maintenance and making necessary fixes to the trail and trail structures. Clarification can be necessary to ensure agency partners that by the term ***reconstruction***, you do not imply that you will be relocating the trail; but rather simply fixing or "rehabbing" the existing trail in its current location. Examples include installing new trail signs, redigging sloughed tread, drainage installation or reconstruction, rebuilding or realignment of tread and removal of major obstructions. Rehabilitation typically requires a significant amount of time devoted to a short length of trail. For example, if five volunteers spend eight hours brushing a quarter-mile of trail this would be considered rehabilitation because if annual maintenance was conducted, this work would be unnecessary.

Trail Triage

Because there is almost always more trail work to be done than trail workers to do it, crew leaders must constantly decide what work to tackle now and what can be postponed until later.

Trail Triage has three levels of priority; level one being the most important work:

Level 1: hazardous conditions
Level 2: correcting trail damage
Level 3: restoring trail to standards

Note: It is important to communicate with land managers and PCTA staff regarding priorities in a specific area.

Level 1 Priority: The highest priority trail work eliminates substantial safety risks on the trail that could injure a trail user. Examples include:

- Relocating a trail to avoid a new active rock slide
- Filling new holes in a trail or bridge deck that could break a horse or person's leg, especially in dim light
- Replacing a washed out or collapsed bridge, if the stream is unsafe to ford
- Extreme brush growing over a trail that causes users to lose their way
- Narrowed tread on a steep slope
- Trees or rocks protruding into the trail

Until such hazards can be remedied, at minimum they should be posted at nearby trailheads and on the PCTA website. In extreme cases it is necessary to close the trail until the hazard is removed.

Level 2 Priority: If there are no major safety risks on a trail, then the next priority should be to reduce unacceptable resource damage on the trail. Examples include:

- A failed drainage that is causing gullying of a trail, especially if sediment is washing into a nearby lake or stream, thus harming aquatic life
- A boggy portion of trail that is causing users to create a much wider trail or multiple trails, especially if sensitive plants or animals live in the area
- A failed bridge or blowdown that is causing users to create new trails, especially in sensitive habitat, such as along streams

- Brush or logs on the uphill side of a trail, pushing users away, causing them break down the outside of the tread

Level 3 Priority: The lowest priority work on a trail serves simply to improve user convenience. Examples include:

- Brush, saplings, or limbs growing just a little into the trail corridor on flat ground
- Logs across a trail that can be step-overs
- A failed bridge in an easily-forded wilderness setting; etc.

Even on a day of routine trail maintenance (clearing blowdown, cutting brush, and cleaning drainages), trail crews often must make decisions about what to do that day and what to leave for later. If they know they will only have one day to work on the trail and it will be a year or more before another crew returns, they must make many on the spot decisions about which branches and logs to cut and which drainages to clean. Of course, those that cause the most inconvenience to users or are closest to causing resource damage should be the highest priority.

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Trail Assessment and Conditions Form

Region: _____ Section: _____ Reported By: _____

Start Loc.: _____ End Loc.:_____ Dates Scouted: _____ to _____

Distance Covered: _____ Link to/Location of Photos: _____

Summary of Maintenance Needs	**Brushing (% or ft)**			
	Light ____	Medium _____	Heavy _____	
	Slough/Berm (% or ft)			
	Minor ____	Medium _____	Major _____	
	Drainages (#)			
	Minor ____	Medium _____	Major _____	
	Downed Trees (#)			
	< 12" ____	12 – 20" _____	20 – 30" _____	>30" List Below

Condition Types

Tread
- Cupped/Gullied
- Eroded
- Inslope/Outslope
- Narrowed
- Rough/Cobbled
- Rock/Root/Stump
- Slough/Berm
- Trenched
- Unstable
- Wet/Muddy/Bog
- Widened/Braided

Drainage
- Blocked
- Ineffective

Structure
- Check Dam/Step
- Culvert
- Drain Dip
- Water Bar

Corridor
- Brush/Branches
- Clearance Low/Narrow
- Downed/Hazard Tree(s)
- Heavy Brush
- Slide

Signage/Kiosks
- Damaged/Needs Paint
- Missing
- Non Standard

Recreational Impact
- Illegal Campsite
- Litter/Waste
- Prohibited Use
- Social Trail

Other Structures
- Water Crossings
- Steps
- Switchback
- Turnpike/Causeway
- Wall/Cribbing

Item ID	Condition, Description and Metrics (Length, Width, Depth, Height, Count, Size, etc.)	Photo ID	(M)aint./ (R)econ.	Priority 1-Hazard 2-Damage 3-Restore