

# Trail Signage and Inventory

## Trail Skills 208

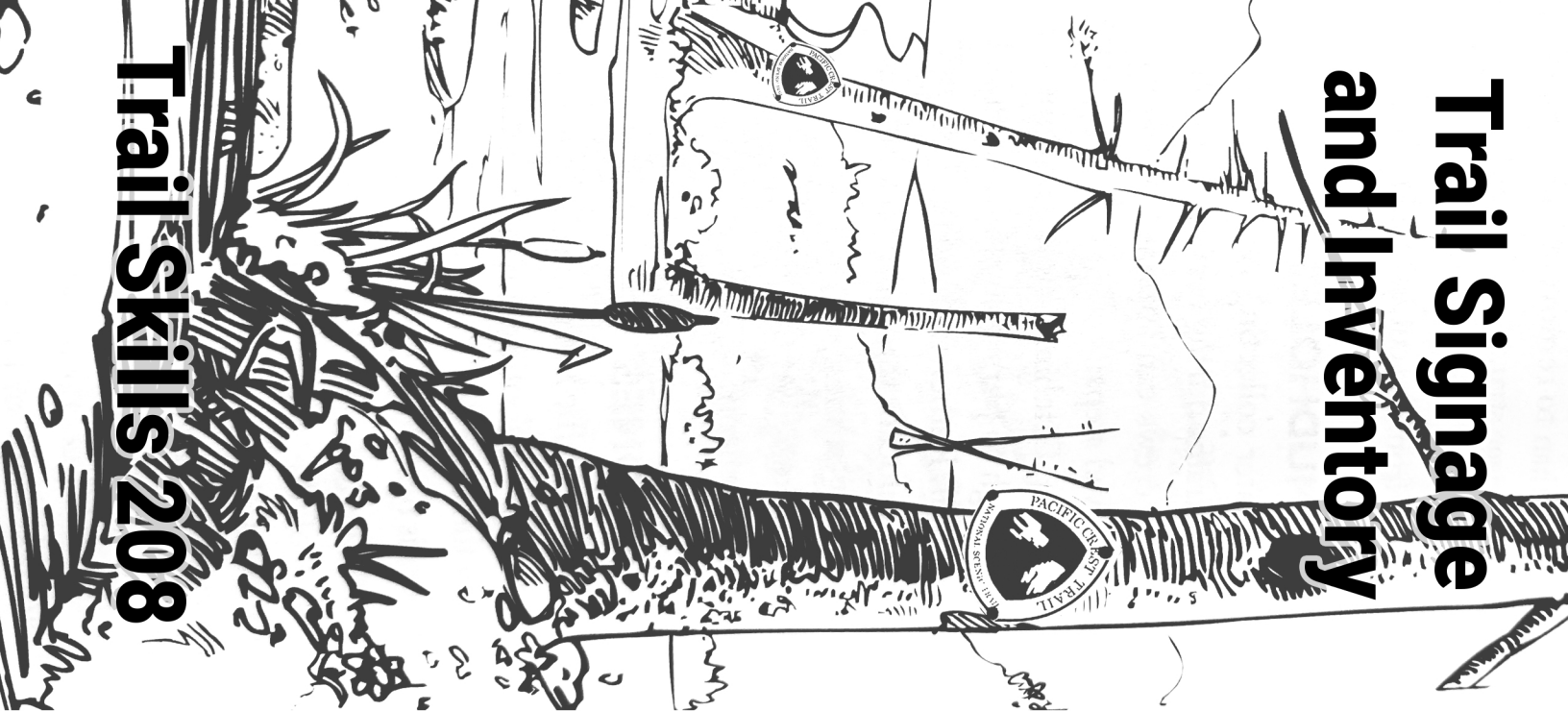


Figure 3. PCT reassurance markers: 9" plastic or metal (top) and 5 1/2" wood sign for use in Wilderness areas (bottom).

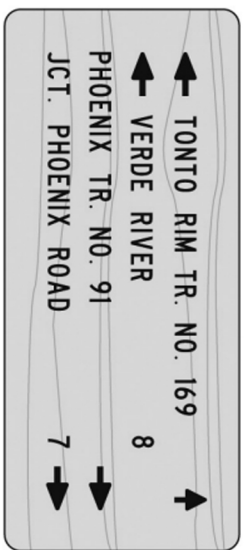
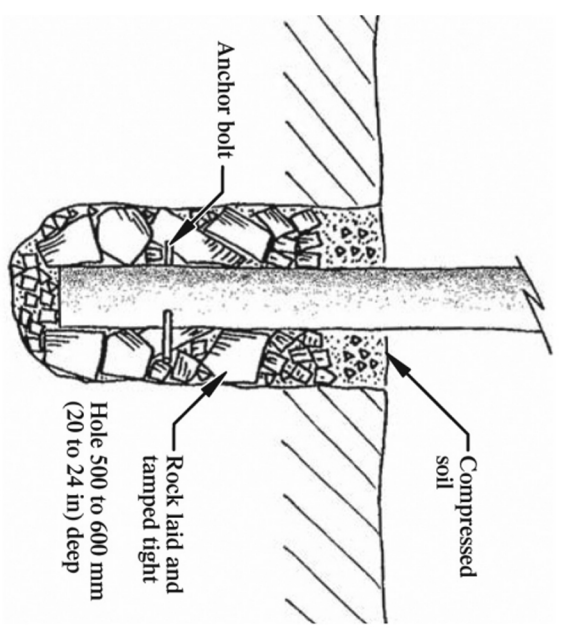


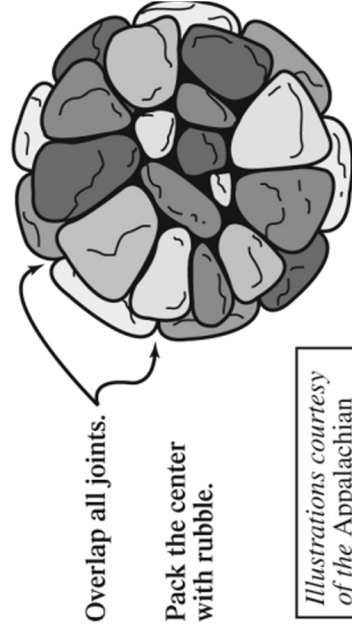
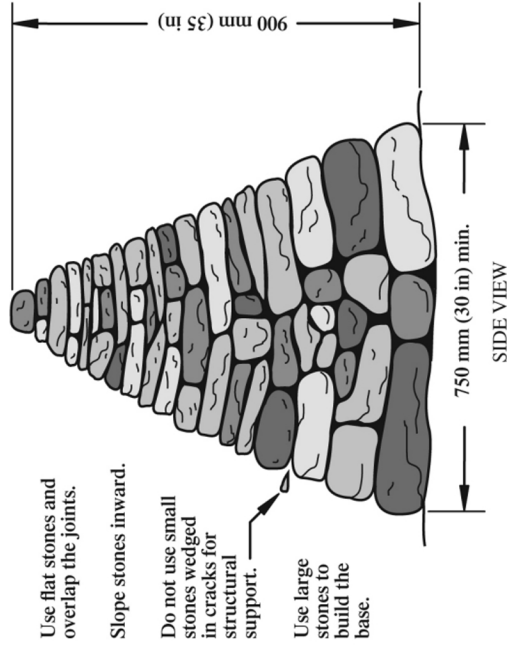
Figure 1. Typical non-Wilderness trail "guide" sign. Wilderness junction guide signs do not indicate mileages. (IMAGE COURTESY OF USFS)

Figure 2. The key to solid posts is vigorously tamping the rock and soil with a rockbar, as you fill the hole. Spikes or lag screws can be used at the base of the post to improve anchoring. Top off the hole with mounded soil to accommodate settling and prevent water from puddling around the post. (IMAGE COURTESY OF USFS)



# Trail Terms

Figure 4. Properly constructed rock cairn to mark a trail.  
(IMAGE COURTESY OF USFS)



*Illustrations courtesy of the Appalachian Mountain Club's Trail Adopter Handbook.*

**Guide Signs:** Term used by Forest Service Sign Manual to describe trailhead and junction signs that include trail name and/or number, and if outside Wilderness, trail destinations and mileages.

**Reassurance Markers** (aka blazes, diamonds, tags, markers): On the PCT these are 3.5", 9", and 18" plastic triangles or 5.5" wood squares (used in wilderness areas) all with the PCT logo imprinted. They are installed north and south of each side trail junction, and in sections where the trail location may be unclear. On other trails they may be colored diamonds, notches cut in a tree, or painted stripes.

**Sign Inventory:** A comprehensive list of every sign in a given area that provides the details of sign location, message, and material. Typically entered into a database and include photos as well as text. US Forest service includes sign inventory as part of its TRACS (Trail Assessment Condition Survey) system.

**Cairn:** A carefully stacked cone of quality rocks built only in open rocky areas where the trail is impossible to make distinct. It may have a post built into it to extend its height (helpful for snow). In general, and especially in Wilderness areas, cairns are not appropriate and should be removed.

**Wilderness:** Federal lands designated by US Congress under the Wilderness Act of 1964. Much of the PCT passes through such Wilderness areas. Motorized tools and mechanized transport are prohibited. Signs in Wilderness intentionally provide less information, requiring more skill of visitors.

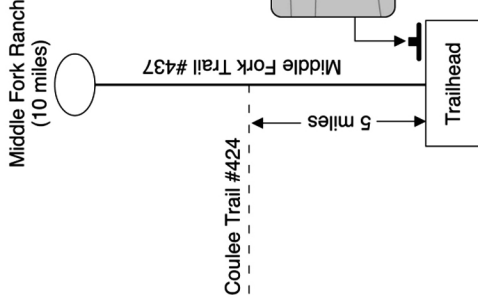


Figure 3. Trailhead guide sign.  
(IMAGE COURTESY OF USFS)

Note: Wilderness signs would show no mileages, and rarely destinations, rather simply trail names and numbers.

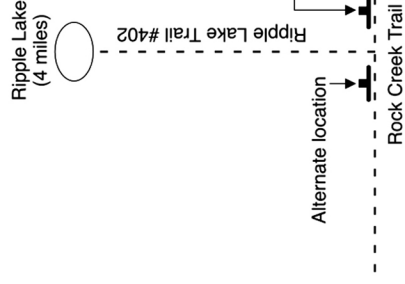


Figure 4. Trail junction guide sign.  
(IMAGE COURTESY OF USFS)

