

Attachment 3

Trail Difficulty Rating System is a method used to categorize the relative technical difficulty of recreation trails. Please note there are no BLM standards for trail difficulty available. There are many variables, which make standards hard to determine, such as varying driver experience, vehicle capabilities and dimensions, etc.

Utah State-Wide OHV Trail Signing Standards Prepared by the NRCC Technical Team

To gain consistency throughout the state, these standards are recommended for all new signs installed to manage off-highway vehicle use after January 1, 2002. It is also recommended that signs which had been placed prior to this date be brought into compliance as soon as possible on an opportunity basis during normal maintenance and as funding permits.

“Recommended” as used in the following standards means the item should be included, if available, unless there are overriding reasons not to. “Optional” means the item is highly desirable, but not absolutely necessary.

- A. TRAIL HEAD SIGNS** - This category includes all signs placed at the trail head to help the user ride safely, responsibly and lawfully, and to maximize their recreational experience. Don't overload any one sign or location.
1. **Map.** (Recommended) - Where possible these maps should be diagrammatic. **Caution:** the use of travel plan maps is discouraged as they are often too cluttered with extraneous information that make them difficult to read. Information that may be included on these maps could be general layout of the trail system, difficulty ratings, type of trail [road, ATV trail, single track trail], use restrictions, points of interest, approximate lengths of trail system segments, location of services, “You are here,” major landmarks, etc.
 2. **Rules/laws governing use of trail.** (Recommended) Includes community access restrictions when applicable.
 3. **NRCC (green arrow) logo or poster.** (Recommended)
 4. **Vehicle type restrictions.** (Recommended)
 5. **Difficulty rating explanation.** (Recommended, if the trail(s) are rated.)
 6. **Emergency telephone number.** (Recommended) 1-800, etc. for cell phone use.
 7. **Riding ethic message.** (Optional)
 8. **Safety message.** (Optional)
 9. **Availability and direction to community services.** (Optional)
 10. **Interpretive information.** (Optional)
 11. **Racks for brochures or maps.** (Optional)
 12. **Where maps can be obtained.** (Optional)
- B. INTERSECTION MARKERS** - This category includes all signs placed at intersections to help the user decide which direction to go. Information is listed from the top of the post down. It is recommended that all intersection marker posts be brown.

1. **Directional arrow.** (Recommended) Use plain white arrows oriented to indicate the direction of the trail.
2. **Name, number or symbol of trail.** (Recommended)
3. **Vehicle type restrictions.** (Recommended) Vehicle type restrictions will be shown by three universal symbols, one for each class of vehicle; i.e. full-sized 4-wheel drive vehicle (Jeep), ATV and motorcycle. At each location where restrictions are displayed, each one of these classes will be shown as either open with the universal vehicle symbol or closed with a universal symbol that has a red diagonal slash through it. A person using a route should have no doubt about access requirements.
4. **Difficulty rating.** (Recommended, if the trail(s) are rated.)
5. **GPS coordinates.** (Optional)
6. **Intersection number.** (Optional) Useful when there are corresponding numbers on the trail system map.

C. ROUTE MARKERS - This category includes all signs placed along a trail to help the user follow the designated route. Information is listed from the top of the post down. It is recommended that all route marker posts be brown.

1. **Directional arrow.** (Recommended) - Use plain white arrows oriented to indicate the direction of the trail.
2. **Name, number or symbol of the trail.** (Recommended) - First one or two markers from the trail head or intersection. They may be placed at other locations where needed. All trails should be identified by a name, number and/or symbol.
3. **Vehicle type restrictions.** (Recommended) - First one or two markers from the trail head or intersection.
4. **Difficulty rating.** (Recommended) - First one or two markers from trail head or intersection where a rating changes. They may be placed at other locations where needed.

D. CAUTION SIGNS - This category includes signs placed along trails to warn the rider of hazardous situations on the trail ahead. Information is listed from the top of the post down.

1. **Caution sign.** (Recommended) - (Normally has a yellow background with black lettering.)
2. **Difficulty rating.** (Recommended)

E. INFORMATION SIGNS ALONG TRAIL (All optional)

1. **Interpretive.**
2. **Direction to point of interest.**
3. **Distance to destination.**
4. **Direction and distance to services.**
5. **GPS coordinates.**

F. OFF-TRAIL RESTRICTIONS/OWNERSHIP BOUNDARY SIGNS

1. **Special area closures.** (Fragile ecosystems, sensitive wildlife habitat, etc. These signs are recommended if there are not sufficient natural or constructed obstacles to prevent use.)

2. Special area boundary. (Wilderness, WSA, etc. These signs are recommended if there are not sufficient natural or constructed obstacles to prevent use.)

3. Land ownership boundaries. (These signs are optional, but highly desirable for private land boundaries.)

G. SIGN PLACEMENT

1. Where possible, place signs where they are unlikely to be run over or hit by a vehicle.
 2. Limit sight distance at remote locations to the minimum necessary to achieve sign purpose. This will make them less of a target for firearms.
 3. Make signs (markers) visible from one to the next when necessary to keep rider on trail. (Slickrock, many braided trails, etc.)
 4. Place where the users need it.
5. Don't overload any one sign or location.

DIFFICULTY RATING

I. FOUR LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY To be applied to all featured recreational trails systems. Where choices exist, 'Extreme' trails should not be included in featured systems. In some parts of the state there are "Jeep" trails that exceed the "Extreme" criteria. They are left open for ATVs and motorcycles, but are not recommended for this use. These trails should have special signing explaining the hazards that will be encountered by ATVs or motorcycles.

1. **Easiest Trails** (solid green circle) These are gravel or dirt surface routes which are relatively flat and wide. For ATV riders, these routes are generally wide enough to pass a full-sized vehicle safely. They may have gentle curves, shallow stream crossings, and minor wheel ruts. They may be dusty but are relatively smooth throughout with no rocks or roots protruding more than three inches above the surface.
2. **More Difficult Trails** (solid blue square) These are loose gravel, sandy, rocky or slickrock surface routes. They may have short sections, which may be narrow and can have blind turns, steep or roller coaster grades, minor drop-offs, dust, ruts and frequent changes in riding surfaces. There are occasional obstacles that may strike the frame.
3. **Most Difficult Trails** (solid black diamond) These are routes with rocky surfaces, sharp turns, switch backs, steep grades, narrow passages, low overhangs, ledges and large rocks. They can be slippery and muddy when wet. These routes may have steep side-slope with exposure to drop offs, and can be very rough due to past erosion. They may have tree stumps, limbs or other debris. Machines with low ground clearance may strike or high center on obstacles. Some riders may be more comfortable using 4-wheel drive machines.
4. **Extreme Trails** (solid double black diamond) These routes may be extremely steep and rocky with ledges and drop-offs, narrow switchbacks, boulders and uneven or unbalanced trail surfaces. There may be long stretches of loose rock or deep sand on steep grades with extreme side-slopes. Some obstacles will high center most machines. Four wheel drive is recommended. In some areas it may be necessary to walk machines over or have a helping third hand. These routes require experienced riders with a full array of good riding skills. All users should consider riding abilities and machine capabilities before attempting these routes.

II. APPLYING DIFFICULTY RATING SYSTEMS

Each trail segment, from intersection to intersection, will be rated based on the worst part of that segment. As an example, if a segment is 5 miles long and is generally an “easiest” trail but has a 1/4 mile of “most difficult” trail, it would be rated as a “most difficult” trail. In these cases, caution signs should be placed to alert riders when they approach the “most difficult” portion of the trail.