



NEW YORK - NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE

BLAZE DESCRIPTIONS IN THE TRAIL DATABASE

Approved by the Policy Council May 2, 2017 (minor update 5/20/2017)

1 INTENT AND OVERVIEW

As we review and update our trail database, we need to define what blaze information is to be stored in the database and how it should be stored. This document describes the fields related to blazing which are proposed to be included in the database and how each field is to be used.

The intent is to store in the database a reasonably complete description of the blazes used on a trail. This information will be stored in three fields: blaze type (paint, tag, mixed, or none), a brief blaze description chosen from a list, and an optional text field for a more detailed description of unusual blazes. It is important to note that these descriptions may not fully describe every detail of the blaze. Trail Conference personnel responsible for blazing must work with the land manager to specify the full details of the blazes to be used on a trail. When a new trail is created or a trail is reblazed, we should strongly urge land managers to use a standard blaze and not create a unique blaze.

The blaze description is an attribute of an entire trail, not of segments or parts of a trail. In particular, the blaze description does not change if one trail becomes co-aligned with another and the co-aligned section has two blazes, one for each of the trails. The blaze description for a trail always describes just the blazing which applies to that single trail.

2 RELATED DOCUMENTS

This document gives details about the recording of blaze information in the Trail Conference trail database. For more information about blazing, see the following documents:

- [Trail Maintenance Manual](#)
- [Trail Maintenance 101 charts](#)
- [Guidelines For Blazing Trails](#)
- [Standard Paint Colors Chart](#)

3 DEFINITIONS

Blaze - A marker, typically a paint marking or a plastic or metal tag, indicating the route of a trail.

Paint blaze - A blaze consisting of a painted marking, typically on a tree or rock.

Tag blaze - A blaze consisting of a marker, typically a plastic or metal tag, attached to a tree or other object along the trail.

Trail database - A database maintained by the Trail Conference and accessible through the website with detailed information about the trails which the Trail Conference maintains and including a description of the blazing for each trail. This database is separate from GIS trail databases.

4 DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE OR PROCESS

4.1 Scope

This document specifies how information about the blazing on a trail is to be specified in the trail database.

4.2 Roles

This document should be consulted by LTC Chairs, Supervisors, and Trail Conference staff when entering blaze information into the trail database and when planning with land managers about blazing of new trails or blazing changes.

4.3 Database Fields Relating to Blazing

4.3.1 *Indication of paint and/or tag blazing*

This field indicates the type of blazing, with the only allowed values being “Paint”, “Tag”, “Mixed”, or “None” for unblazed trails. This information will be displayed in SMS and similar summary reports.

4.3.2 *Brief blaze description chosen from a list*

This field gives a brief blaze description with the allowed values chosen from a drop-down list so as to achieve consistency. **The rules for the brief descriptions are given in Section 4.4 below.** The descriptions would typically be the blaze color or colors and might include information about unique letters or symbols on the blaze. The list of brief blaze descriptions will initially be created to include descriptions for all trails currently in the database. The Trail Approval process to be developed will strongly encourage the use of standard blazes. If a new brief description is needed, it can be created using the process described in Section 4.5. For technical reasons and convenience, the number of brief descriptions in the list should remain small, definitely less than 100.

A value for this field must be specified for all trails. If no description exactly matches the blazing on the trail, try to find a description which is close. A value of “Other” can be specified if there is no close match. The brief blaze description will be displayed in SMS and similar summary reports.

4.3.3 *Optional text description for unusual blazes*

While unusual blazes requiring more detailed descriptions are discouraged, a free-form text field is provided for those cases where the brief description is inadequate. The field should be left empty for standard blazes. It can be used, however, to describe blazes with unusual colors, shapes, sizes, or logos. This field is not expected to be displayed in SMS or other summary reports, but it will be visible when viewing the details about the trail.

4.4 Rules for the Brief Blaze Description List

Brief descriptions such as “Red”, “AT”, “Blue above Red”, or “Other” are defined according to the following rules:

1. For single color blazes, simply specify the color. The list of allowed and recommended colors is: Blue, Green, Orange, Pink, Purple, Red, White, Yellow. The following colors are also currently allowed since there are trails which use them, but we want to eliminate them due to poor visibility: Black, Brown, Gray.
 - A few other colors such as silver or gold may need to be added if current trails use them. If a color is used on only a single trail, however, the brief description can be “Other” and the color can be placed in the text description.

- Paint blazes should normally use the color specified in the document “Standard Paint Colors Chart”. The brief blaze description should not include color variations such as “Light blue”, even if the color differs from the standard paint color. Information about color variations may be included in the optional text description if desired.
- 2. For long distance trails with a blaze specification, use the abbreviated trail name instead of a color. The trails of this type in our area are:
 - For the Appalachian Trail, use AT
 - For the Long Path, use LP
 - For the Highlands Trail, use HT
- 3. A single color followed by a shape description (e.g. “Red triangle” or “White bar”) indicates a blaze of the specified color and shape. The shape should be specified if the blaze shape differs from the standard rectangle or other shape described in the specification for a long distance trail.
- 4. Color1 on Color2 (e.g. “Red on White”) indicates a Color1 blaze on a Color2 background.
- 5. Color1 shape on Color2 (e.g. “Red Cross on White” or “Black Diamond on Blue”) indicates the specified shape in Color1 on a Color2 background.
- 6. Color1|Color2 (e.g. “Blue|Orange”) indicates a 2-color blaze with the colors side by side and with color1 on the left and color2 on the right.
- 7. Color1/Color2 (e.g. “Blue/Red”) indicates a 2-color blaze with color1 on the top half and color2 on the bottom half. *[modified 5/20/2017]*
- 8. Color1 letter(s) on Color2 (e.g. “Black 1777 on White”) indicates the letters in Color1 on a Color2 background.
- 9. Use the description “Logo” for a fancy, unique tag blaze for a particular park or trail. Further information about the logo may be provided in the text description field.
- 10. If no brief description in the list is reasonably close to the blazing used on the trail, specify “Other”.
- 11. For tag blazes, do not indicate the tag material, the tag shape, or information about any printing on the tag in this field. For example, do not specify agency-specific lettering such as DEC or OPRHP. For unusual blazes, further information may be specified in the text description field.
- 12. If a trail is blazed mostly in one manner except that a different blaze (typically unique to that particular trail) is used at trailheads and intersections, the brief blaze description should describe the blazes mostly used. The text description field should be used to describe the special blazes used at trailheads and intersections. *[added 5/20/2017]*
- 13. If the trail is unblazed, specify “None”.

4.5 Process for Adding New Brief Blaze Descriptions

Brief blaze descriptions will initially be created for all trails currently in the database. For new or reblazed trails, the process described below must be followed if a new brief blaze description is requested. The Trail Approval process to be developed will strongly encourage the use of existing blaze descriptions and will reference the process described here for the rare cases where a new brief blaze description is needed.

1. The Trail Conference person requesting a new brief blaze description sends a proposal to the Policy Council chair with the proposed brief blaze description, trail name, park, LTC, and justification of why a new description is needed. A clear justification is required since we discourage the creation of unique new blazes.
2. Policy Council chair approves or rejects the request and notifies the requester. If rejected, the requester may appeal the decision of the Chair to the full Policy Council.

3. If approved, the Policy Council chair notifies the appropriate tech person to add the brief blaze description in the trail database.

5 CONTACTS

This practice is the responsibility of the Policy Council. The technical details of the trail database are the responsibility of the Technology Committee.

This practice will be reviewed periodically by the Policy Council.

6 EFFECTIVE DATE AND PRIOR PRACTICE OR PROCESS REPLACED

This process is effective upon Policy Council approval.

This is a new practice. Previously the description of blazes in the trail database was inconsistent and highly variable.