

## 202: TRAIL SIGNAGE AND BLAZING

### Signage

Trail signs for the Florida Trail are typically used to inform the motoring public and/or trail users that they are approaching, or are on, the Florida Trail. When blazes are not sufficient to inform the user of location specific information then directional, interpretive or regulatory signage may be necessary. Examples include directions to water sources, campsites, trailheads, land use restrictions, location signage, trail junctions, etc. Signage frequency and purpose should be consistent with trail class matrix for the trail segment (Chapter 201). Trailside signage should be placed at the level of blazes, visible to trail users, and far enough off the trail centerline to not interfere with the passage of users. Be conservative with the quantity of both signage and blazes. Over blazing and signing has a negative impact on the trail experience.

The number, types, and frequency of signs or blazes depends primarily on the trail user's skill level and the trail's designed use and Trail Class. Low-challenge trails (Class 4 and 5) typically will be signed with destinations and distances. Usually, the trail will be so obvious that blazing is minimal or necessary only at points where users might be confused. As the desired opportunity for challenge rises (Class 1-3), the amount of information given by signs usually drops to trail identification and direction.

The FNST Program Manager is responsible for working directly with FNST land management partners in evaluating FNST shield sign requirements and approving their location and placement. FTA regional representatives have primary responsibility for signage coordination, selection, and placement with land managers. In areas without FTA regional representatives those functions are shared between the Section Leaders and FTA Trail Program Director. FTA volunteers are encouraged to assist in FNST shield signage planning and placement.

*Chapter 310: [FTA Sign Library](#) contains a comprehensive display of signage and guidelines for location and usage.*



**FNST Shield Sign.** The *purpose* of the 24-inch and 12-inch FNST Shield Signs is *to identify the location of the FNST to the motoring public*. These markers should be placed so they can be readily seen from a moving vehicle approaching from either direction. The placement of the markers on right-of-way requires approval of appropriate State or

County authorities. Section Leaders and managing agencies should give high priority to timely repair and/or replacement of missing or damaged signs. FNST Shield Signs are available to land managers from the USDA-FS/FNST Office, 325 John Knox Rd., F-100, Tallahassee, FL 32303-4160.

**24-inch Shield.** These signs are for location on federal or state highways (speed over 40 mph) and need to comply with the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) or FDOT sign standards.

**12-inch Shield.** These signs are for locations where the FNST crosses secondary roads (paved or aggregate surface), with one sign facing each direction of traffic and approximately 100 feet before the actual trail crossing point.

**3-inch Shield.** The purpose of the 3-inch shield is to identify the FNST to the person approaching from a side trail. It is to be used only on the FNST at common access junctions, at intersections with other trails, or where needed as a reassurance sign if other land use activities or game trails make the trail location uncertain to the traveler. The 3- inch shield is not intended to be used as a trail blaze.



**Hiking Trail Symbol Sign.** This sign can be used to identify the FNST or FTS trail locations to the public.

## **Blazing**

In the recreational trails community painted blazes are one form of *reassurance markers*. On the Florida Trail these are painted orange blazes that are typically placed on trees or wood posts. The purpose of reassurance markers is to help users identify the trail corridor. They are most useful when the trail corridor is indistinct, confused by multiple trails or otherwise obscured.

**Uniformity and Standardization.** The importance of *uniform and standardized* blazing cannot be overstated. The task of blazing should be assigned to experienced volunteers who have demonstrated an understanding of the importance and methodology of blazing. Blaze placement and frequency are decisions best left to seasoned trail volunteers. New or inexperienced volunteers seldom have the trail skills to understand blazing's significance or impact on the trail user.

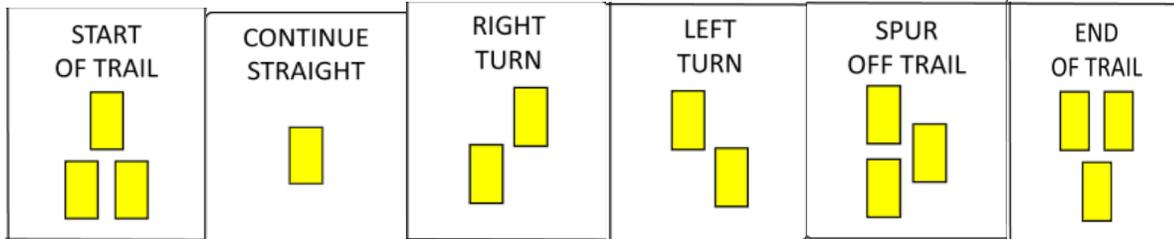
**Frequency of Blazes.** The *frequency* of blazes depends primarily on visibility. Visibility is heavily dependent upon trail design, layout, the anticipated user's skill level, and the trail class. Trails designed with minimal abrupt turns allow for increased visibility and therefore fewer blazes. Over-blazing diminishes the user experience and adds unnecessary work for trail maintainers. Under-blazing can result in lost hikers.

A properly blazed trail will permit users to enjoy the woods while not being continuously concerned about losing the trail. Blazes should be frequent enough to assure the hiker that he or she is on the trail. Normally, this is accomplished by placing the blazes so that when the hiker is passing one blaze the next quickly comes into view. Terrain and other factors often dictate the frequency of blazes. Road walk connectors are to be blazed. The blazing on road walks should be close enough so the hiker is regularly reassured. Blazing every other telephone pole is sufficient along paved roads.

**Painting the Blazes.** To ensure that blazes are appropriately located, it is recommended that the trail be walked in both directions, blazing in one direction at a time. What you notice in one direction may not be obvious from the other. If equally visible from either direction, blazes may be painted on opposite sides of trees or posts. Select live trees or other objects (such as fence posts and poles) that catch the eye. Obtain permission to use fence posts and poles, especially power poles. Brush back (remove) vegetation that may obscure the blaze visibility. Working in teams of two or three people helps determine blaze visibility from a distance.

Blazes should be painted five-and-one-half feet above the ground with the top six feet above ground level. The blaze should be two inches wide and six inches long (approximately the size of a dollar bill), preferably on trees wide enough to provide a contrast for the paint. An offset double blaze is used when

the trail makes an abrupt change in direction (more than a gentle curve), with the top blaze offset in the direction of the turn. *Note: Double blazes (one directly over the other) can be used when the blazing surface doesn't allow for offset blazes or when alerting the user to a trail change other than a turn.* In very limited circumstances the blazes for START, SPUR, and END (shown below) may be appropriate. These three should be used sparingly.



**Blaze Colors.** Orange is the official blaze color for the Florida Trail. Only the Florida Trail (FNST) is to be blazed orange. The blaze colors of other trails maintained by FTA volunteers (including side and/or connector trails) should **not** include orange. Otherwise, the blaze color and rules for these trails are at the discretion of the land manager.

*The Florida Trail (FNST) blazing color system:*

- Orange is for the Florida Trail (FNST) through trail.
- Blue blazes mark side, spur and connector trails to camping, access points, or places of interest.
- White blazes may be used for loop or alternate routes when they are connected to the Florida Trail (FNST).
- Yellow blazes may be used for trails that intersect other trails already blazed in orange, blue or white.

**Paint Formulas.** The official Florida Trail blaze paint is a Coronado acrylic water-base, high-gloss enamel. This water-based paint is durable on tree bark and affords easy cleanup with water.

*FTA approved Coronado paint formulas:*

- The formula for one gallon of Florida Trail **orange** blaze paint is:  
80-139 (OSHA Orange) plus R-Y; T-Y; M-40; F-8; B-1
- The formula for one gallon of Florida Trail **blue** blaze paint is:  
80-34 plus D-Y; E-3Y
- The formula for one gallon of Florida Trail **white** blaze paint is:  
80-1 (White)
- The formula for one gallon of Florida Trail **yellow** blaze paint is:  
80-151 (OSHA Yellow)

**Note:** Additional information on blazing standards and techniques is in Chapter 211: Basic Trail Maintenance.