

**Signs and Trail Markers for  
Protected Lands:  
RI Guidelines on Best Practices and Sources**



**2013 Land and Water Conservation Summit  
Saturday, March 9, 2013  
URI Memorial Union, Kingston**

# Welcome



## Presenters:

- ☞ Clark Collins, Chair SRICD and South Kingstown Land Trust
- ☞ J. Eric Scherer, Executive Director, SRICD
- ☞ Roy Najecki, Gloucester Land Trust

# Concept



- ❧ Create a guide that provides a consistent and comprehensive approach to the design of land trust signage so that the public can more easily find and enjoy public access areas.
- ❧ Good signage should be informative and attractive without diminishing the visual qualities of the land and surroundings that its designed to protect and/or inform the viewer.
- ❧ Although the public access design guidelines are advisory, they are intended to be used consistently in public access areas.

# Background



- ✧ This document is being developed for the Conservation Stewardship Collaborative to “provide training and technical support for the development of signage, trails, and interpretive materials to enhance public access and educational opportunities on conservation lands that are appropriate for and able to support such activities.”

# Purpose



The purpose of this guidance document is to ensure that clear and understandable signs are posted in public access areas that:

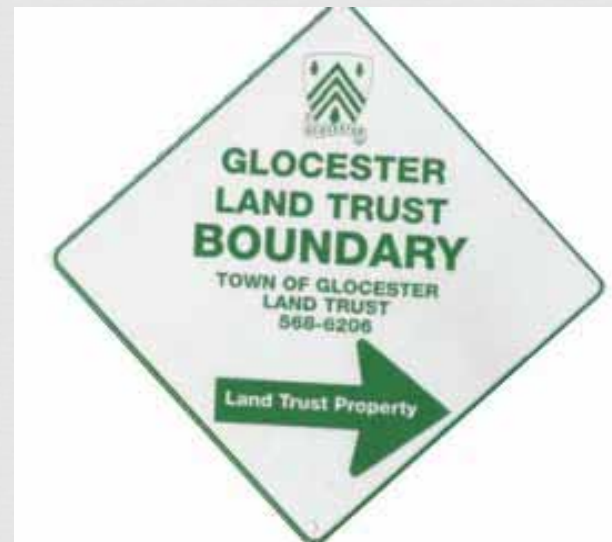
- inform the public where public access areas are located and how to reach them, including parking;
- describe what recreational opportunities are on protected lands;
- describe how the public can use the area, consistent with rules governing appropriate behavior; and
- provide interpretation of natural, historic and cultural features in or near the public access area.

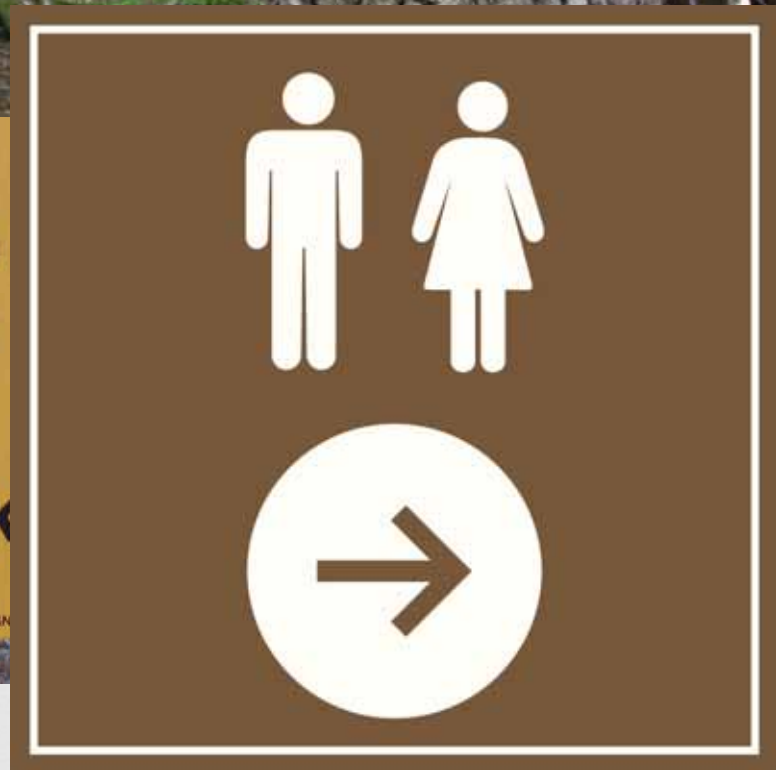
# So What?



Because signs of various kinds have been posted in public access areas for years with little or no coordination amongst the entities, these guidelines provide detailed suggestions for the design and installation of signs to assist Rhode Island land trusts in protecting, maintaining and meeting public expectations for lands under their control.





























# Branding



- ❧ “Branding’ is a term often used to help identify significant or special interests areas, whether along motor routes, trails or shorelines.
- ❧ A consistent look to signage, sometimes referred to as ‘branding,’ can help people more easily identify what a sign is about, and can also help to let people know that they are on a land trust property.

# “The Beginning”



The Guide was originally modeled after the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's **Shoreline Signs Guide** and the State of Massachusetts's Department of Conservation and Recreation's **Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual**.

# Review Team Members



## Work Group/Technical Team

Clark Collins – SRKLT and SRICD  
Eric Scherer - SRICD

## Advisory Group

Rupert Friday - RILTC  
David Gregg - RINHS  
Peter August - URI  
Gregg Cassidy - RI Trails Council  
Bruce Hooke – RI Blueways Alliance  
Roy Najecki, Gloucester Land Trust  
Terry Sullivan and Tim Mooney- TNC  
John Monroe - National Park Service  
Harvey Buford and Marilyn Grant – Hopkinton Land

## Trust

Scott Ruhren Ph. D. – Audubon Society of Rhode Island  
Christopher Shafer - RI DEM  
Ted Clement – Aquidneck Land Trust

# Approach



## TASKS

1. In close consultation with a range of land conservation organizations, including land trusts, describe the basic signage needs for a conservation property (e.g., property boundary, begin/end trail, go left, go straight, go right, etc.);
2. Coordinate with the RI Trails Council to ensure that the recommendations made in the report are fully compatible with their best practices;
3. Research sign options including materials, colors, sizes, printing techniques, inks and ink color, feasibility of standard content and interchangeable content, and with attention to life-cycle cost including installation cost, as well as unit price;
4. Research vendors, lead times, minimum order sizes, breaks for bulk pricing;
5. Prepare a written guidance document ("sign guide") that will be available for download on the Land and Water Partnership and Conservation Stewardship Collaborative (CSC) web sites.
6. Obtain samples of signs and a prepare a display ("sign display") for the 2013 Land and Water Summit;



# Focus Group Effort



- ❧ Research and develop advice for land trusts (and other organizations) on the best options & best practices for buying and posting signs.
- ❧ Develop a strategy to help land trusts across the state acquire signs that are more functional, consistent and affordable and get their properties 'properly' signed.
- ❧ Where do you/does your land trust use/want to use/need signs? ie. What are the basic signage needs for a LT property (e.g., property boundary, begin/end trail, go left, go straight, go right, etc.)
- ❧ What are the best practices for signs for property boundaries and trails?

# Focus Group Effort (cont.)



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- ❧ What are the best practices for signs for property boundaries and trails?

# Results



Image from National Park Service

*"Signs are probably the quickest and easiest way to leave the trail user with a positive impression. If the signs are high quality, well maintained, and properly located, other trail problems are often over-looked. Consistent signs are the quickest way to increase the trail's identity and the public's support for the trail."*

-National Park Service

March 2013



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## Objective of a Good Public Access Signage Program

**Provide clear and understandable signs are posted in public access areas that:**

- 1) Inform the public where public access areas are located and how to reach them, including parking
- 2) Describe what recreational opportunities are available at the site
- 3) Describe how the public can use the area, consistent with rules governing appropriate behavior
- 4) Provide the interpretation of natural, historic and cultural features in or near the public access areas

A good signage program should include directional signs on the road system, trail head informational signs, and directional signs and/or blazing on the trail to reassure the travelers of their location. Signs should display a uniform color and detail that successfully “brand” the trail as part the Land Trust holdings. Along the trails it is desirable to include signage describing special site features, wildlife habitats, or rules and restrictions associated with management and proper use of the area.

Using a unified design in every application makes all access areas easily identifiable by the public, and will increase the public’s recognition and appreciation of the sponsor organization. This approach will likely increase the number of people enjoying the trail, and consequently membership and financial support. Remember: select and install signs that are in scale with the environment.

### **Sign Maintenance**

Sign maintenance is critical to the operation of a quality trail system. Well maintained signs that are repaired promptly convey a sense of pride and reduce further vandalism.

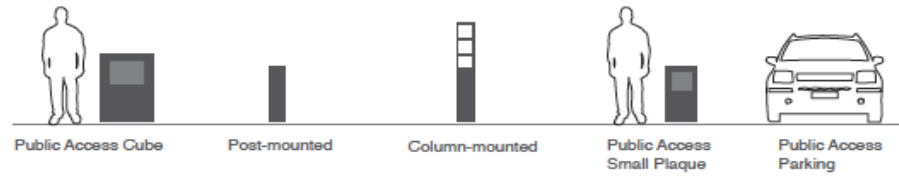
Signs are a highly visible representation of the quality of the trail. Their maintenance or lack of maintenance leaves the visitor with a positive or negative impression about the trail.

Signs convey many kinds of information and it is critical that they be in good shape. Special attention should be given to those that are damaged from shooting and other factors, those that are faded or brittle from long exposure, and those that are simply missing.

All signs that are damaged or weathered no longer convey a good impression or serve the intended purpose, and should be repaired or replaced. Periodic painting and other maintenance is a necessity and will prolong the life of a sign.



### Identification



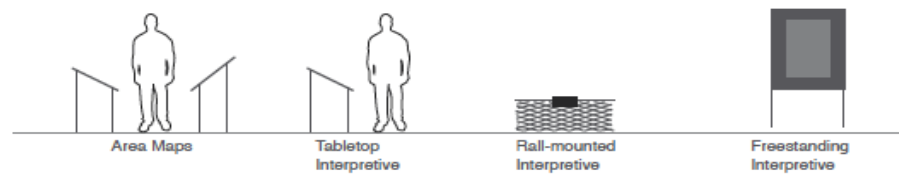
### Wayfinding



### Informational and Advisory



### Area Maps & Interpretive



## Public Access / Identification

### Public Access Signs

#### **Purpose**

The Public Access sign is the centerpiece of the land trust sign program. The design should emphasize bold lettering for quick reading, while offering flexibility for adding other necessary information.

The Public Access sign is designed to work individually, or in conjunction with other land trust signs, such as a special project sign, nature trail signage and interpretive signs.

### Identification Signs

#### **Purpose**

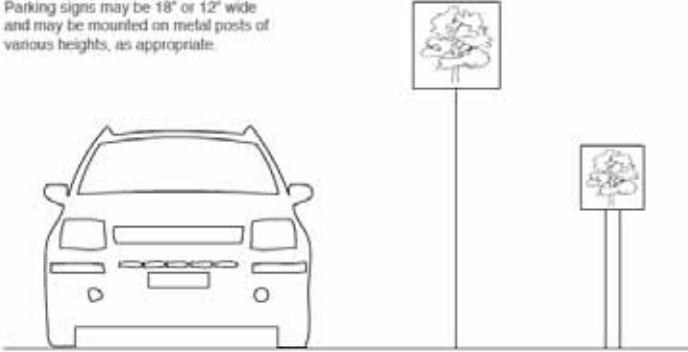
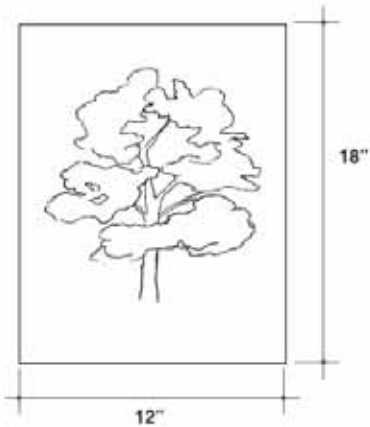
These signs identify public access areas by the land trust, including property boundary signs. Install at entrances to Public Access areas and at key places along trails and points of public access, such as public road right of way and property boundaries. The Identification Sign may also be installed on posts with other existing or proposed signs, for example, those identifying project names or providing directions into a project.



- **Description of Public Access / Information**
- **Signs Size Selection**
- **Sign Fabrication and Mounting**



Parking signs may be 18" or 12" wide and may be mounted on metal posts of various heights, as appropriate.

**Description for Public Access / Identification Signs**

All public access / Identification signs should be a square or rectangle sign panel with either profile or landscape orientation (common property boundary signs are often on a diagonal aspect).

Sign information/content for public access land can be either words (i.e. PARKING ONLY) or a standard symbol (i.e. 'P') either in a positive or negative display or both word and symbol. See Standard Symbols on Pages 20.

**Size Selection**

It is important to select and install signs that are in scale with the environment.

Message context controls overall physical size of signs. Whenever practicable, the overall dimension of the sign plates should be in multiples of 6 inches (150mm). For Public Entrance signs for conventional roads in rural districts on major routes, the principal legend on guide signs shall be at least 6 inches (150 mm) in height. On low-volume roads and on urban streets with speeds of 25 mph or less (40 km/h), the principal legend shall be in letters at least 4 inches (100 mm) high.

There are typically three preferred sizes of the Public Access Sign mounted to trees, posts or columns: 18", 12" and 3".

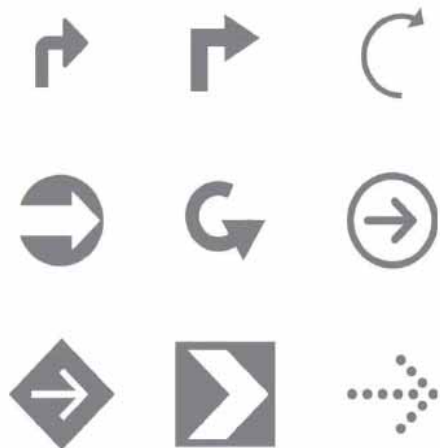


Image from NPS



Photo Courtesy of American Trails



Image from NPS

## Wayfinding

### Purpose

The Wayfinding Sign may be installed on trees, fences, posts or Flexible delineator posts with other existing or proposed signs, for example, those identifying project names or providing directions into a project.

### Description

Square or rectangular sign panels. Use standard symbols/content such as shown on Pages 11 along with directional arrows if appropriate. This format may be used for signs directing to the public areas, trails, parking, restrooms or ancillary destinations.

### Intersection Wayfinding Signs



Photo from MA DCR Trail Guidelines

Wayfinding signs should be placed at trail intersections. Depending on the setting, trail class signs should either be placed at most intersections or at main intersections, decision points, and spur junctions. Ideally, intersection signs should be mounted on 4"x4" wood posts. Post type should be consistent within the site. In areas with vandalism or other issues, intersection signs may be mounted high on trees. Trails names and arrows may also be placed vertically on wood or 'Carsonite' type posts.

Intersection Wayfinding signs are the most important source of information for users, and can serve to enhance safety, avoid bad user experiences, and increase use of under-used sections of the trail. If someone knows that there is a

## Wayfinding

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The Wayfinding Sign may be installed on trees, fences, posts or Flexible delineator posts with other existing or proposed signs, for example, those identifying project names or providing directions into a project.





Photos Courtesy of American Trails

## Informational / Advisory

### Purpose

Install where needed to communicate general information and behavioral rules and expectations. Public Access Informational/Advisory Signs may also be installed on posts with other existing or proposed signs, for example, those providing directions into a project.

Consider installing signs where needed in the special areas of concern. Advisory signs must follow local and RI DEM regulations for proper placement and spacing of signs (i.e. No Hunting, Trespassing, etc.).

### Description

Square sign panel with informational / regulatory content for Public Access that may include a land trust information line and standard symbol (s) as either positive or prohibitive behaviors (i.e. use a red circle and slash to show prohibited behaviors).

Trailhead Kiosk / Signs - Trailhead kiosks or signs may come in different forms depending on the setting, complexity, and information needs.

**For more developed trailheads**, popular trails or high profile trails, a designed and professionally fabricated trailhead sign is appropriate. This template includes:

- A sign board of approximately 20" wide by 24" in height (5:6 portrait orientation).
- Trail Name in Frutiger, Helvetica, Arial Italics in a 4" (1/6) at the top.

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Image Courtesy of NPS



Photo Courtesy of American Trails

## Area Maps / Interpretive

### Description

Area maps help visitors find the way along the trails. Designed correctly, maps can enhance a public Access visit by presenting geographic context. All developers and operators of publicly accessible properties are encouraged to create and install area maps.

Interpretive signage is permanently posted information about local history, natural features or events that enhance the visitor experience. Developers and operators of publicly accessible properties are encouraged to create and implement such displays, thereby adding value to public access visits.

### Content Guidelines

Area maps should be centered on the site where the map is located, should describe the immediate inland areas within an approximately three to five mile radius of the site, should include points of interest that fall within the area of the map and a small key map or overview of the larger area, highlighting the area shown on the main map. Maps should have a scale and provide information about walking times and distances to points of interest.

The best interpretive displays are usually based on a series of simple, but inter-related



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Typical colors schemes for Public Access Identification and Wayfinding Signs



USFS Brown / Cream / Brown



Brown / White / Brown

Typical Colors for Boundary and Advisory Signs



White / Green / White



Yellow / Black / Yellow



Photo Courtesy of American Trails



## Typography

All Public Access signs are to be composed with the Frutiger, Helvetica, or Arial type font family. The font was selected for its boldness and clarity. Do not use any other type fonts on Public Access signs. Do not modify the proportions of Frutiger, Helvetica, or Arial type font.

Note: Hand paint or hand lettered signs done by freehand are a lot less expensive than getting a commercial sign done when a small property sign might be all that is needed - but it is recommended that the use of inexpensive templates or stencils might result in clearer and easier-to-read lettering. Templates and stencils in Helvetica font in various heights can be bought at local craft stores.

## Symbols

Non-verbal pictograms or symbols help reinforce written messages and can be recognized and understood quickly. This group of symbols has been selected to work well together and to compliment the Frutiger, Helvetica, or Arial type font. Always print these symbols in white on the blue Public Access Graphic Background.

Always print the 'strike-out' circle and slash in red. Do not modify the symbols in any way. Additional symbols may be used to address unique site conditions.

## Sign Colors

Generally, combination of colors should be chosen for visibility and consistency. It is recommended that following the standard colors of brown background with white or yellow lettering is consistent within a most park facilities. Other color options are shown. The more visible colors of blue, red and yellow backgrounds are often used for advisory signage.

## **Sign Mounting**

Mounting (Posts, fences and boards)

Signs should be firmly attached to the post, wall or with tamper-proof hardware. While it is preferred that Public Access signs be mounted with concealed fasteners, bolting through the sign face is acceptable. The size of visible bolt heads should be minimal. Do not bolt through lettering or symbols.

## **Aluminum Mounting Nails**

### **WHY ALUMINUM NAILS?**

The use of aluminum mounting nails prevents corrosion problems and rust marks that occur when steel nails are used.

The use of aluminum nails is also safer when your sign is being nailed to a tree. If the tree is ever harvested, saws will cut through aluminum nails easily, preventing harm to both the saw blade and sawyer.

When nailing signs to trees, it is advisable to leave a 1-inch space between the sign and the tree to allow for tree growth while still securing the sign to the tree. Experience has shown that this technique will allow the sign mounting to last approximately five years before re-applying it.

### **HOW TO USE?**

Leave the nail a little short of "all the way in," about 1/2" left to go, so that a few of the rings on the nail shank still show. This leaves room for the tree to grow out, while preventing the sign from being pushed off the nail, and keeping the sign mounted longer.

Use large headed aluminum nails, for loggers' safety, that are long enough to leave at least 1/2-inch of the head exposed to accommodate the growing tree.

- Placing signs high enough on trees, or post in open areas, so that it is difficult for vandals to reach easily
- Placing signs close enough so that you can see a sign from the adjoining signs
- Place signs on live, long living, hardwood trees
- Place signs on obvious travel routes such as old roads crossing the boundary, ridge tops, creek bottoms
- Clean brush, limbs, etc. from around signs so that they can be seen easily



## Trail Ratings

### Typical difficulty of trails at site (considering both terrain and skill needed to follow trails):

Below is an explanation of what you can expect the difficulty ratings to indicate. What one person thinks of as an “easy” hike, someone else might call “moderate”—so this legend explains what the difficulty ratings mean. These ratings were adapted from ones used on the HikeNewEngland.com’s website.

Note that these ratings pertain to “summer” hiking under normal conditions. Winter hikes are usually more difficult since you may be walking on unpacked snow and possibly dealing with ice—not to mention dealing with colder temperatures and shorter daylight hours. Spring hikes may be complicated by high water flow and difficult or impossible stream crossings. So the hike ratings reflect the difficulty level of the hike under normal “summer” conditions, regardless to the season that the actual hike occurred. You should adjust the rating up if you are hiking in a more challenging season or expect other types of adverse circumstances.

If you’re unsure where your fitness and comfort level fits in with these ratings, it’s always best to start with an easier hike. Then depending on how that felt, you can better judge what you’re capable of for your next outing.

### Easy – Trails are relatively smooth, mostly level and the route is quite obvious and marked with signage, such as trail blazes.



These trails can be a single point to point trail or an easy network of trails in an urban or suburban setting where help is always readily at hand. A map may be useful but is not necessary.

You can certainly expect tree roots, small rocks, and things of that sort on any trail walk but for hikes rated as “easy” there won’t be any big-step-up boulders to get past and no rock scrambling

If a hike is long and flat, it will likely get a rating of “easy” in spite of its long distance. If a hike is short but has more than minimal elevation gain, it can also be rated as “easy” due to the overall levelness of the hike. i.e. If a big hill only accounts for a tenth of a mile of a hike, then it’s probably something that people accustomed to walking on flat terrain can handle.

Easy hikes are generally suitable for anyone that enjoys walking. Just remember to choose an easy hike with a distance that you can comfortably handle.

**Intermediate (Moderate) – Somewhat more strenuous trails or harder to follow trails. Trails are well-marked but following them requires a trail map and a trail map is readily available; preferably at the site.**



Image courtesy of NPS

outdoor recreational locations, may not need to change unless alterations to the trail's layout will be made. Any new portions of the existing trail are covered under the guidelines. According to the U.S. Access Board website, routine maintenance such as removal of debris or vegetation, filling ruts or other wise repairing the trail, erosion control or repairing structures along the trail are exempt from the ADA guidelines.

### **Technical Trail Requirements**

When a trail is developed or is being modified to the extent at which the guidelines must be met, there are specific technical requirements for developers to follow. According to the specifications, the trail surface should be firm and stable. The tread width of the trail should be a minimum of 36 inches and clear. Openings in the surface of the trail should be no larger than a half-inch and any protruding objects should allow for a minimum of 80 inches of headroom. Tread obstacles should be no more than two inches in height. If the trail is less than 60 inches wide, there should be adequate passing room at least every 100 feet.

## **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The **Americans With Disabilities Act**<sup>1</sup> (ADA) is a piece of legislation intended to reasonably accommodate millions of Americans with disabilities in terms of services, accessibility and employment. The ADA reaches into many areas of society, including accessibility standards for public places. The U.S. Access Board develops accessibility guidelines to comply with the ADA, and they have issued guidelines that pertain to newly constructed or altered outdoor trails as part of their work.

### **New Trails Vs. Existing Trails**

There are separate standards when it comes to accessibility to trails depending on whether the trail is a new development or an existing trail that needs to be altered. Any new trail being developed is subject to accessibility standards set by the access board. However, the many trails already available to the public in parks, along greenways or other

## RI Trailheads Data Form

January 4, 2012 version



RI Land Trust Council is partnering with the RI Blueways Alliance to put land trust trail maps and maps of other trails on protected lands on the Explore RI website. We hope that by making many trail maps available on one site we will encourage more Rhode Island residents and visitors to enjoy the protected lands in our communities throughout the state.

Property Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Also known as: \_\_\_\_\_

Data provided by (your name): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**OWNERSHIP** (for sites owned by towns or the state, we do not need all the contact information. We DO NEED TO KNOW that the trail is open to the public).

Land Trust/Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_


Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this trail open for public use?    Yes    No

Note: If the trail is not open to the public (you circled "No" above) stop here; please do not submit this trail for addition to the Explore RI website



Company	Services	Catalogue	Service Area	Examples of Products/Services
American Beauty <a href="#">Signworks</a>				
Address: 345 Providence Street Woonsocket, RI 02895		n/a	Southern New England	See website
Phone: 401-767-2922				
Contact: Oscar Hancock				
Email: <a href="mailto:info@absignworks.com">info@absignworks.com</a>	Design/printing/production of laminate, plastic signs			
Website: <a href="http://www.absignworks.com">http://www.absignworks.com</a>				
Voss Signs				
Address: 310 Oswego Street Liverpool, New York 13088	Since 1965, Voss Signs, LLC has produced custom and stock signs for various customers that include: Forestry Professionals, Land Owners, State and Federal Government Agencies, School Districts and the general public throughout the United States and overseas. Signs are either screen-printed or digitally printed on aluminum, plastic or other custom substrates providing long-term outdoor durability. Custom Signs are our specialty, and we feature full in-house graphic arts capabilities. Our friendly and knowledgeable staff will assist you with selecting the material, gauge, text and graphics to create your custom signs.	Yes	National	 <p data-bbox="1255 943 1287 1286">4" x 4" Reflective Decals</p>