

Trail Condition Class Systems

Trail condition class systems can be applied to an entire trail (if in uniform condition) or to segments. For the latter you would push a measuring wheel down the trail (or use GPS) and ascribe a condition class rating to segments of the trail in uniform condition. You might need to have a minimum distance rule (like 30 ft as the smallest segment that can be labeled as a condition class).

Numerical

Class 1: >10% vegetation cover on trail

Class 2: <10% vegetation cover and less than 20 inches (0.5m) wide

Class 3: <10% vegetation cover and > 20 inches wide

Comments: Only 3 categories, though that's easy to apply and should be fine for most areas (additional categories could be added). The criteria (10% and 20 inches) could be modified if needed. Judging the 10% veg cover might be somewhat difficult in some places due to patchy vegetation.

Descriptive

Class 0: Trail barely distinguishable; no or minimal disturbance of vegetation and/or organic litter.

Class 1: Trail distinguishable; slight loss of vegetation cover and/or minimal disturbance of organic litter.

Class 2: Trail obvious; vegetation cover lost and/or organic litter pulverized in primary use areas.

Class 3: Vegetation cover lost and/or organic litter pulverized within the center of the tread, some bare soil exposed.

Class 4: Nearly complete or total loss of vegetation cover and organic litter within the tread, bare soil widespread.

Class 5: Soil erosion obvious, as indicated by exposed roots and rocks and/or gullying

Comments: More categories but less quantitative. Potentially has a greater possibility for subjectivity in application or differences in interpreting findings.