

PLTA TRIAL MANUAL

How To Put On A PLTA Pack Llama Trial

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SECTION I OVERVIEW

A. *BACKGROUND*

As you begin to plan for hosting a Pack Llama Trial, keep in mind that one of the main objectives for participants is to have a FUN and SAFE event with their pack llama and other packing enthusiasts! Besides going packing in the real life outdoor environment, there are NO other organized realistic packing events for people and their llamas that are not only social but useful testing grounds for their packers. The llamas enter the trial level for which they are already qualified to do; the trials are “tests”. And while PLTA has created Packer Primer workshops as a venue to assist beginner handlers with teaching their llamas to handle the skills that are evaluated in trials, trials per se, are NOT a place to teach a llama to pack. Trials are also not competitive events; the llamas earn a certification of completion, not the handler.

Pack trials are also wonderful opportunities for handlers to observe and learn from all levels of llama packers. Providing a pack trial that satisfies the needs of all potential attendees can seem overwhelming at times but no matter how many levels, number of participants, or additional “perks” your trial provides, with careful planning and the energetic recruitment of volunteers, your big day (or weekend) will run smoothly and be fun for *all* participants, including you.

The PLTA’s prime objective in promoting the testing of pack llamas against a written standard is to discover and recognize llamas that can fulfill the llama packer’s needs on the trail by performing in a manner consistent with the demands of actual packing conditions. The intent is not to confront the llama with unrealistic or trick problems, rather to test the llama’s natural ability and acquired level of training and conditioning. PLTA tests utilize natural and man made obstacles in a manner found in normal packing situations. While realistic packing conditions are subject to variations in different parts of the country, pack llamas are expected to possess a defined set of abilities which enable them to serve as useful packing companions.

B. *ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT*

As explained fully in the General Procedures, Regulations & Guidelines for PLTA Sanctioned Events (Handbook), the affairs of the PLTA are managed by the Board of Directors (BOD) including the setting of all fees and the establishment of all forms which are subject to change without prior notice.

While PLTA has established the trial test criteria with supportive authorization, data handling, and record keeping, the association does not

conduct the trials or other sanctioned events. Individuals wishing to hold sanctioned trials may make application to the BOD. The Handbook governs these activities.

The purpose of this PLTA Trial Manual is to provide additional details and suggestions to help trial personnel set up and run successful and fun pack trials. With Madeleine Landis’ permission, we have shamelessly borrowed from her “Mad’s Manual” How To Put On A PLTA Pack Llama Trial and hope this replacement provides you with as much assistance as her version did for beginning pack trials during PLTA’s early years. All forms discussed in this booklet are available through the PLTA general office. Selected forms such as Membership & Llama Registration, Event Sanctioning, and PLTA Event Entry forms are also available on the website for the convenience of the membership.

C. *TRIAL MANAGEMENT*

As the Trial Host, there are two main areas of planning you will be doing concurrently: Administration and Course Selection, or in other words—Paperwork and Physical Stuff. They both require keeping track of details. A loose-leaf binder with tabbed sections for each aspect or category of the event, and lists will make it much easier to stay on top of things. It’s helpful to be able to delegate to a couple of close friends you can count on but if you are organized, your committee can be very few in number.

Some of the earlier trials were quite large in the number of participants entered mainly because they were a novelty and so few and far between. The earlier regulations also did not provide for the consolidation of many tasks. These two factors resulted in the need for fairly large committees to run pack trials. Over the years as the trial participant numbers have dropped, and the regulations have been fine-tuned, we have found that in reality, the number of committee members no longer needs to be greater than the sum of the participants. As mentioned earlier, some of the duties require attention to paperwork and others involve physical exertion.

1. *Administration OR The Paperwork Part*

The first example and requirement is the initial submission to the BOD of a sanctioning application to hold a pack trial. Arranging for a place to conduct a trial including procurement of permits, handling of budget considerations, sending out publicity, retaining the services of a Certifier, handling of pre-trial registrations, recruiting volunteers, copying forms, and organizing additional perks for your event are all administrative tasks that are part of hosting a pack trial. As these tasks occur on the time-line, more details will be provided.

2. Course Selection OR The Physical Part

Crucial to having a successful trial is the selection of the place where the trial is to be held and especially the trial course or trail itself on which the participants will be tested. The only way to evaluate it adequately is to have someone physically scout it out. The determination of specifics like water depth and mileage, the assessment and possible modification of obstacles, and assuring that the trial meets all the physical requirements is the focus of this task. The person or volunteers helping here will need to be physically capable as well as have a good understanding of what pack llamas would be normally be capable of handling. This person should have a good feel for typical llama behavior and understand what would be challenging but safe obstacles within the guidelines of the trial requirements.

SECTION II

TIME LINE

A. *SIX MONTHS to ONE YEAR BEFORE TRIAL*

1. **Locate The Trial Grounds**

Locate a place to conduct the trial. Keep in mind many land managers are unfamiliar with llamas. You may have to educate them about how llamas are environmentally friendly because of their minimal impacts on the land. PLTA has copies of studies regarding llama impact on trails that you can use to educate the land managers. **Contact the General Office.** The trial may be held on private or public lands, or a combination of both as long as each level meets the requirements of distance, elevation gain, and obstacles for that level. Ideally the course should be over terrain that is typical of your local packing conditions. Elevation gain is usually the hardest terrain requirement to meet. Some adjustment to the regulations is now possible. Details are provided in this Manual under specific level requirements. **See pgs 9-10.**

Besides the trail portion of the trial, there are five additional space or areas needed. The first is a **parking area** that will accommodate the participant's and helper's trailers and vehicles. This might be located at a neighboring farm with the understanding that the participant teams will pool together to use only one or two vehicles for transport to the trail course.

The second area would be for **registration or check-in** of the entries. Since the participating llamas must carry a percentage of their body weight, the body weights of the animals must be known. It is most convenient if the Trial Host can provide scales capable of weighing the llamas and pack systems/carried weight. If it is not possible to provide an

animal scale, each participant will need to weight their llamas ahead of time and within 15 days of the trial. The PLTA provides a Weight Certification Form to be used and signed off by the scale master for this purpose. At the trial, you will need to provide a scale to verify the weights of the participants' pack system/weights prior to the start of the trial. This weighing in, registration, collection of fees and forms, etc., be conducted in part of the parking area or at another neighboring farm.

The third area needed would include the **space required to assess the Manageability Skills**. This will require the use of a trailer or vehicle to load and unload the llamas, either a pen or use of a trailer for the haltering evaluation, and space for picketing out at least two or three llamas at one time for the allotted period. This area is best located fairly closely to the registration and check-in spot.

A fourth but optional area could be designated for **participant camping**. If the participants do not intend to drive in just for the trial but instead plan to camp at least for one night, an area large enough to accommodate them will be required. If the participants camp overnight with the llamas staked out and observed periodically, the five minute picketing requirement of the manageability tasks may be waived. As mentioned earlier, this could be located at a neighboring farm but you need to make it clear how much carpooling will be required and when the participants need to be at the other appropriate areas.

The fifth and last required space is the **staging area** where the participants will be briefed on last minute instructions including any safety warnings pertinent to the trail course, the location or person who has the safety kit, introduction of the trial personnel, explanation of safety performance points, and opportunity to ask last minute questions. This staging area is often also the official start and end of the trial. This area therefore, is usually at the trail head. If all participants are going in one group, the Roving Steward will typically lead them. If multiple stewards are being used and numbers of participants require splitting into additional groups, the start times for each group should be staggered to avoid congestion at the staging area. Arrangements should also be made to have trailers available to begin carpooling back participants who have finished the course.

Ideally your Host farm or location will have space available for all of the areas required by a pack trial. The harvested hayfield across the road could fill in as the parking area, campground, registration, and manageability task areas allowing the alleyway to the pasture containing the trail course to be considered the staging area with the "trail head" at the pasture gate.

Wilderness areas will present their own logistical problems and will likely require the majority of the area "assignments" to be combined. You will still

need a staging area near the start of the course to check the Manageability Tasks. These are usually done after registration but before starting out on the course. To save time and confusion at the start if multiple levels are being held at the same time, the upper levels might do their picketing tasks at their turnaround or lunch spots. In addition, if camping out, *all* of the Manageability Tasks can be done the night before the trial in the camp area.

2. Select the Course or Trail Site

Plan early, as you may need a special permit or use agreement with the land manager. Riding a mountain bike to check mileage and get around faster than hiking works really well when scouting. Keep in mind that all levels can be run over at least part of the same trail or course which will reduce the number stewards needed but also the number of obstacles to be set up.

When scouting your site, some additional things to keep in mind besides the distance, elevation gain, and the required number and type of obstacles, are creating obstacles that are challenging for that particular level but safe. Watch for ease of access to turnaround points and potential obstacle clusters for stewards and possible observers. The variety and placement of the obstacles plus the aesthetics of the route can also make it an enjoyable trial. Refreshing shade by a creek along the way or a beautiful view at lunch is always nice. Have a back-up site selected too—just in case some unforeseeable disaster happens on your chosen course the day before or Mother Nature decides to add more rain to her forecast.

a. Course Configurations

As the course and obstacles are set up, keep in mind that while natural packing conditions are expected to vary in different parts of the country, by using a written standard and running a trial under the on-grounds supervision of a Trial Certifier, the PLTA expects the trials to be set up allowing for a sense of consistency and equivalency between trials regardless of their geographical location.

The Trial Marshal (the person handling this physical task) should set up all courses with the number and type of obstacles for each particular level within the prescribed distance and elevation gain for that level. The Trial Marshal shall, whenever possible, see that trials are conducted on existing trails and will only leave existing trails to accomplish specific obstacles as necessary. Existing trails would include those normally used for hiking, backpacking, pack stock, mountain biking, motorcycles, or other off-road vehicles. This is done to discourage the starting of new trails and to promote good packing ethics.

All trial activities shall be conducted in accordance with *Leave No Trace* ethics and environmental considerations. Flagging and trail markers added by the Trial Marshal to designate trails may be used but should be removed at the end of the trial.

A key aspect of PLTA trials is that the llama is to be tested with a realistic packing environment. To that end, the trail course should be set up within the constraints of the criteria but simulate in as close a manner as possible, both conditions and obstacles found on a real pack trip. The different levels reflect the progressive degrees of difficulty expected by the serious llama packer on an actual llama pack trip including the level of work effort the llama must expend to successfully handle the distance, elevation gain, and weight load within the designated time window.

The actual trail course can vary between levels by starting and finishing at separate locations, making a loop, and going out and back over the same route to the starting point. This will depend on the availability of established trails, obstacles, and the Trail Marshall's tolerance for complicated logistics. Based on ease of organization, out and back is ranked first, using a loop second, and other combinations last. However, by going out and back over the same course, the same obstacles can be used more than once and few course stewards are needed. *Note: more recent trials are often using just a single roving steward with each group of participants who stays with that group until they have completed the trial. This considerably reduces the total number of stewards needed.*

b. Distance and Elevation Gain Requirements

The mileage distance can be measured with a pedometer, bike odometer, measuring wheel, GPS unit, or an accurate site or topo map. The required elevation gain can be measured with an altimeter or accurate topo map. This elevation gain is cumulative over the entire length of the course. For example, if you climbed up a 50 foot hill (+50) and down the other side (0), then climbed a 100 foot hill (+100) and down the other side (0), then re-climbed both hills (+50, +100) on your way back, the total elevation gain would be 300 feet.

The target requirements of mileage and elevation gain are selected to maintain a sense of continuity from previous sanctioned trial statistics and those of future trials regardless of geographical locations. Deviations from these standards must be approved by the Trial Certifier.

Basic level llamas must cover a minimum of three (3) miles in the prescribed time window with a cumulative elevation gain of 250 feet to 500 feet. Upon Trial Certifier approval, if the geographical location does not support this targeted elevation gain, the mileage may be adjusted to 4

miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is less than 250 feet or to 2 miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is significantly greater than 500 feet.

Advanced level llamas must cover a minimum of five (5) miles in the prescribed time window with a cumulative elevation gain of 750 feet to 1000 feet. Upon Trial Certifier approval, if the geographical location does not support this targeted elevation gain, the mileage may be adjusted to 7 miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is less than 500 feet, to 6 miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is between 500 and 750 feet, or to 4 miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is greater than 1000 feet. To earn final certification at the Advanced level, a llama MUST complete at least one trial going the 5 mile distance with the standard preferred targeted cumulative elevation gain of 750 feet to 1000 feet. If this modification will be made, make sure you announce this in your trial advertising so all participants are aware of this requirement.

Master level llamas must cover a minimum of eight (8) miles in the prescribed time window with a cumulative elevation gain of 1500 feet to 2000 feet. Upon Trial Certifier approval, if the geographical location does not support this targeted elevation gain, the mileage may be adjusted to 9 miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is between 1250 and 1500 feet, or to 10 miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is between 1000 and 1250 feet. If the cumulative elevation gain however is between 2000 and 2500 feet, the mileage may be adjusted to 7 miles, or to 6 miles total if the cumulative elevation gain is greater than 2500 feet. Therefore a Master level trial cannot be held unless there is at least a cumulative 1000 feet elevation gain.

The distance and elevation for the **Extreme level** llamas have been increased to a minimum of ten (10) miles with an elevation gain of 2500 feet to 3000 feet. Upon Trial Certifier approval, if the geographical location does not support this targeted elevation gain, the mileage may be adjusted to 9 miles if the elevation gain is between 3000 and 3500 feet, or to 8 miles if the elevation gain is greater than 3500 feet. Therefore, an Extreme level trial cannot be held unless there is at least a cumulative 2500 feet elevation gain.

The distance and elevation gain requirements for the **String Trials** are the same as for the equivalent single llama pack trial level; both may be conducted concurrently.

c. Trail Obstacle Requirements

The trail obstacles used in a trial represent those found typically in a realistic packing environment. These may include water, jumps, thick brush, deadfall, rock rubble, bridges, ramps, backing, manipulation of a top-loaded item, tight places, ducking under objects, snow fields, traffic on

the trail, gates to be opened and/or closed, picking up feet, spraying or wiping bug spray, etc. These obstacles are not to be designed so as to create unrealistic or trick problems for the llama.

Basic level llamas will negotiate 5 obstacles. They must include the following 3 obstacles: one water, one jump/step-over, and one deadfall. The Trial Committee will determine the remaining obstacles used.

Advanced level llamas will negotiate 10 obstacles. They must include the following 5 obstacles: two water, one jump/step-over, one deadfall, and one rock rubble. The remaining obstacles used will be determined by the Trial Committee.

Master level llamas will negotiate 12 obstacles. They must include the following 9 obstacles: three water, two jumps/step-overs, one deadfall, one rock rubble, one brush (one of these nine obstacles must require the removal of the pack bags to simulate a situation that would require the bags be removed for safety reasons), and one foot inspection conducted when there is minimal weight being carried by the llama. The Trial Committee will determine the remaining obstacles used

The obstacle requirements of the **Extreme level** are the same as for the Master Level.

The trail obstacles are the same for the **String Trials** as for the equivalent single llama pack trial levels and may be used concurrently.

See Appendix for I. Summary Listing of Obstacles

Remember to be imaginative when creating obstacles as long as they are realistic to the terrain and situations likely to be encountered in your locale, even if it means going off the trail a short distance. For instance, one example often encountered in the Northeast, is the use by landowners of enlarged culverts under busy roads to move from one part of their property to another. Good pack llamas handle them with aplomb including the water and mud that often collects at their base but they can be unsettling to the handlers especially if they run under two lanes of traffic as they are long and dark. The more realistic obstacles are, the more practical the value will be for participants and their llamas, and the easier it will be for you to set the course.

d. Weather Contingency / Back-up Plan

Plan for bad weather or at least as you set up your trail course, consider if rain or sudden warm weather will make the stream crossings dangerous and impassable. Road and trailhead areas may be closed. Ideally, a second route that could utilize your planned staging, parking, and camping areas would be great should there be a sudden trail closure. If you are not

familiar with the area, planning out this far ahead will give you time to scout the route after a major windstorm to determine just how prone your selection is to weather upsets. Better to know now than the night before the trial.

3. Select the Trial Levels to Offer

Now that you've had a chance to scout out some possible trails and determine if you have areas that can be used for staging, parking, etc., you should try to firm up the trial levels you'll be offering. If time, space, and amount of help allow, a multiple trial (any combination of 2 or more levels held on the same day) should be offered. If you are new to hosting, or if your expected participants are fairly similar in their level of experience, consider offering just two levels but maybe plan to repeat them on a second day. A "double" trial (the same level/s are held two days in a row) would tend to encourage participation as the entrants would be able to save on travel costs and time. At the same time, by repeating the same levels, you would not need to set up different trails or obstacles. For instance, to add variety without additional work, you could run the trial course going the opposite direction the second day. As long as the elevation gains were within the guidelines, no changes to the course would need to be done. An easy way for you to gain more experience without more stress.

If your likely participants are fairly new to llama packing, the Basic and Advanced levels would encourage beginners and new participants. If there is desire and experienced packers in your area and you have a terrific course, maybe running the Master and Extreme levels would be most appropriate. Regardless of the levels chosen, you may want to also include a **Packer's Primer** to keep the beginner folks interested. This workshop is most effective if paired with a Basic trial, but sometimes just providing this introduction to llama packing can stimulate spectators to future participation. **See the Handbook about Packer's Primers.**

If your facilities permit, you may want to offer all levels but set a minimum number of entrants required per level to hold it. This will require that you plan for pre-trial registrations and have a well organized person handling the entries. If the numbers fall short of the minimum, you'll want to be able to notify those participants well before the trial dates. On the other hand, if you have lots of entries for all levels, you'll have time to wrangle for the many volunteers you'll need.

Most participants will want to earn trial completions for their llama in each level. If you are running "next-step" levels, Basic & Advanced, or Advanced & Master, or Master & Extreme, if someone has finalized their requirements for the lower level on the first day of your double trial, they may feel their

llama is ready to compete at the next level the second day. This is fine but make sure they realize the age, increased weight load, and other minimum requirements must still be met for this more difficult level.

4. Determine Budget Considerations

All livestock competitions cost money but you'll find that most pack trials are more cost-effective than shows. You and/or the Trial Committee should work out a budget for the event and decide how best to meet those needs. Include as many direct expenses in your entry fee as possible. You'll find that PLTA's fees are quite minor; it's the extras depending on your site and add-ons that can add up. Try to keep it Simple.

- A. PLTA Expenses
 - 1) Trial Sanctioning Fees (dependent on level/s)
 - 2) Llama Entry Fees - \$5.00 per entry
 - 3) Packer's Primer Instructor Fee (dependent on number of entries)
- B. Additional Possible Expenses
 - 1) Land Use Fees for the trial course/s
 - 2) Camping Fees
 - 3) Portable Toilets or additional Facility Use Fees
 - 4) Additional Insurance for Land Use (If extra coverage over that provided by PLTA's current insurance policy is required, there may be an additional fee charged by our insurance company to provide that coverage.)
 - 5) Certifier and/or Packer's Primer Instructor's expenses (May include transportation, lodging, certifying fee—negotiable with the individual.)
 - 6) Your Administrative Costs (mailings, phone, supplies)
 - 7) Event T-shirts, catered dinner, or other Host-provided perks
- C. Possible Sources of Income
 - 1) Sponsors of the whole trial or for the different levels
 - 2) Sales of T-Shirts
 - 3) Sales of Catered Dinner or Lunches—Note: Some 4-H clubs might want to sell pre-made lunches (sandwich, fruit, cookies, drink) to your participants as a money-making opportunity for their club.
 - 4) Concession stand at the Registration or Camping areas.

5. Administrative Planning

Fill out any **paperwork and permits** needed by the landowner or land manager. As soon as you have decided on the general location of your course and/or trial areas especially if they are on public land, get your application in. National Forests and any bureaucracy, especially for those

managers who are not residential to the site you have selected, take a fair amount of time to handle paperwork. You don't want to learn that your permit was denied just a few weeks before your trial because fish are

spawning in your river crossing or that your trail was closed due to the woodcutting permits just given out.

If your landowner or land manager requires **additional insurance** than the following: \$1,000,000 Commercial General Liability per occurrence, \$100,000 damage to rented premises (ea occurrence), \$1,000 medical expenses (any one person), \$1,000,000 personal & adv. injury, \$2,000,000 general aggregate, or \$2,000,000 products comp/op agg, please contact the PLTA general office for an additional rider. Depending on what is needed, our insurance company may require additional fees. Also, there is a considerable time lag to get such papers so please let us know as soon as you can.

Notify your local llama organizations and get an ad or at least a listing on that group's calendar of events. Sanctioned trials will be listed on the PLTA webpage and in subsequent PLTA newsletters but advertising to your local llama people will bring in the participants; not just spectators. The association newsletters all have different lead times and are often quite long with issues now coming out only 3-4 times a year. Make sure that you include the date, time, location, levels offered, and if you are limiting the number of entrants. List a contact person with their address, phone number and email address. If you are requiring pre-registration, make sure that is clear or you will have people show up at the trial only to find out that their level was cancelled or filled.

Write articles publicizing your event and explaining the Pack Trial concept. (The PLTA Board will review it if you'd like.) Publications are always interested in new writing. Track which sources worked best for recruiting participants by asking them when they sign up, how they heard about your event. This will help you target your future publicity efforts.

Retain the services of a PLTA Certifier. Make sure a Certifier is available for your chosen trial date/s. A Certifier must be a **current** PLTA member and is required for all trials except the standard Non-String Basic Level. The Trial Certifier will negotiate with each Trial Committee regarding any and all reimbursements for certification of any PLTA sanctioned llama pack trial. These reimbursements may include housing and board, transportation, and a stipend.

When only the Basic level is offered, the course and trial may be validated by the Trial Chairperson with guidance provided by the PLTA office. Basic only trials also require a Mentor to be provided by the PLTA to help the host

set up a successful trial. The mentoring may be done by phone, e-mail, or in person. Allowing a Basic level to be validated by the Trial Chairperson with the assistance of the Mentor, allows Basic only trials to be less expensive to run and helps promote first time participation.

B. TWO or THREE MONTHS BEFORE TRIAL

1. Submit Sanctioning Approval

If you haven't already, submit your Sanctioning Application to the PLTA Board for approval. While some of the preceding AND following information is required on that form, you don't want to be remiss in getting your trial approved as soon as you can. If there are problems, now is the time to get them resolved.

An individual, club or association wishing to hold a PLTA sanctioned trial must apply using the form available from the PLTA's General Office or the PLTA website, and must pay a prescribed sanctioning fee for each individual trial. These sanctioning fees are to be paid at the time the application is submitted for approval. If the trial is not held, the fees will be either held by the PLTA for a future date submission or reimbursed. Approval for sanctioned PLTA trials is granted solely by the PLTA BOD. **The official application for sanctioned PLTA trials must be filed with the PLTA at least 4 weeks before the date of the trial.** All exceptions must be approved by the BOD. A sanction may be granted for any and all test levels, and for any combination as long as the requirements for each level are met.

<u>Sanctioning Application Fees:</u>		
Single Level Trial	Held Once	\$ 35.00
Single Level Trial	Held Twice	\$ 40.00
Multiple Levels Trial	Held Once	\$ 45.00
Multiple Levels Trial	Held Twice	\$ 50.00
Packer's Primer		\$ 10.00
(No additional sanctioning fee if held in conjunction with any Trial.)		

As mentioned earlier, if no trials have been held before in the area, we suggest that over a weekend, a Packer's Primer workshop be held one day, and the beginner Basic Level Trial be held the next. There is no additional sanctioning fee for the Packer's Primer if it is held in conjunction with any trial. All sanctions are non-transferable and valid for the dates indicated on the approved application unless prior approval has been given.

2. Decide on Entry Deadlines and Number of Entrants

If you can only accept a particular number of entrants or do not want to allow participants to enter by just showing up, you'll need to establish entry open and closing dates. Setting these has advantages and disadvantages. On the

plus side, you'll know exactly (barring last minute cancellations) how many entries to expect which should help with setting up the logistics of the trial (determining parking and camping space, number of groups which in turn can determine the number of roving

stewards needed, etc. On the negative side is that you'll be likely turning away people who just missed the deadline and may have assumed that the trial level was full when instead you just needed (and wanted) one more to complete it. You don't want to go to the expense and trouble of planning even a small trial to have to cancel it at the last minute because you prematurely blocked entrants from signing up.

If you do decide to have a deadline, make sure that the open date is after enough publicity has gone out for a wide number of people to have heard about your trial—not just the very local group. People from farther away will be disappointed if they hear about a trial but learn it's already full. The closing date to receive entries should be early enough to allow planning for possible expenses, number of t-shirts to order, and determine the number of stewards. If all levels aren't full a week before the event and you can handle last minute callers, you may choose to accept entries until the last minute. You could also charge a late fee for sign-ups the morning of the trial. The numbers may surprise you.

The maximum number of entrants you accept will likely be dictated by the land manager of the course, the course itself, time available to conduct the trial levels, help available, etc. You may also need though to decide how few participants you must have to still run the course.

3. Send Out Official Entry Forms

Once the publicity is out, people will start calling. Be able to answer questions about the course and what pack trials are all about. Have registration/entry forms ready. If you are selling t-shirts or planning a catered dinner or some other perk that needs a head count, make sure you have a sheet close by to record how many they would like to order, number of campsites required for their party, and/or questions for any of the post-trial activities.

With your entry form, you may want to include a short one-page informational sheet of what to expect for the various trial levels being offered, age and weight requirements, etc. and maybe a basic sheet with directions, likely weather conditions, a poison oak or ivy warning, what the camping facility is like, and usually something about a pot luck dinner, cook off Saturday night, or other perks. You want to make sure that you include information about how the various fees are tallied- such as camping, any clinics being conducted, entry fees, etc.

See Appendix IV./V. Sample Informational & Overview Letters

4. Recruit Personnel to Work Trial

Volunteers are your greatest asset—treat them well as you will find their assistance invaluable. The more that they can provide of their own pencils/pens, clipboards, and personal needs, the better. Be sure to remind them though, that they will be outdoors all day so will need to have sun protection, hats or rain gear, or warm coats depending on the time of year and expected weather conditions. You'll want them to bring their own lunch, water, and hiking boots if they will be out on the trail as stewards. For people helping only at the start and finish points, ask them to bring a folding chair and their knitting or book to be comfortable for the hour or two they might have free. Happy, warm (or cool), dry, prepared helpers are more apt to volunteer again!

This is an area that can be simplified almost to an extreme level if the trial is very small but should be expanded as the number of trial levels and participants grows. Other than the Trial Certifier, there are basically 5 other roles required on the days of the trials. In some cases, a single person might be able to fill a couple of the positions. You as the Trial Host, will need to determine if that is feasible and to have backup people in mind should anyone cancel out at the last minute. One thing to consider is that if you are counting on your best friend to fulfill a role, you want to make sure that they first were not already planning on entering the trial you want them to work.

One of the most important roles is that of the **Secretary**. This should be a detail-oriented person who will not lose the master lists, and can write legibly. They will coordinate the registration before the trials start and will compile the event data as each level completes. Depending on the size of the trials, and how much of the sign-in can be done the day before, the Secretary might benefit from having an assistant. Documentation of the entry information, the steward's tally of performance points, and the trial results is critical to final recognition of the participant's accomplishments. If the results and fees are not turned in or completed correctly, the trials run the risk of being disallowed. The final trial results and fees must be sent to PLTA within two weeks after the trial. This might be left up to the Secretary but you as the Trial Host or Chairperson are ultimately responsible for all forms and paperwork required for the trial. This is definitely NOT the responsibility of the Trial Certifier.

The **Marshal** is usually assigned the task of setting up the trail course with the obstacles and coordinating the Stewards' activities. The Marshall is also responsible for the timing of the participant groups on the course; that is determining the starting and ending times to determine if the participant had completed the trial level within the established time window. This latter task

could be assigned to a separate **Time Keeper** if there are sufficient volunteers. Just a watch is required as the clock time is recorded only to the nearest minute.

Stewards will observe all obstacles to insure that they are negotiated appropriately and to determine if any performance points need to be deducted. They will also watch for any abuse of a llama or intentional interference with another entrant, which may require disqualification. All sanctioned trials must have adequate Stewards to observe each obstacle. If an adequate number of **Stationary Stewards** is unavailable, it is permissible to have a **Roving Steward** who accompanies the same group of llamas through the entire course. Having an experienced llama packer at the more difficult obstacles and/or trial levels should help eliminate any questions as to what constitutes unsafe vs. normal behavior. Place your llama packing novices at the easiest obstacles or better yet, plan to use Roving stewards and make sure they all are experienced packers. An experienced packer should also observe the saddling, and tie-in Manageability Tasks. Note: any disputes or final decision about safety, performance points, or what should be appropriate llama and handler behavior will be resolved by the Trial Certifier.

Whether the trial levels are spread out or overlap, having **Runners or Mountain Bikers** that can move quickly between the Stewards, Certifier, and base of operations can be very helpful for communication purposes—especially in emergency situations. Not all electronic gadgets will work at all elevations or in all areas so having the ability to send someone may be your only means of communication. If your trails are wide enough, an ATV or 4-wheel drive operator with walkie-talkies might also be used.

At the end of the trials, having a **Course Crew** to help with moving scales, tearing down the obstacles (if needed), repairing any trail damage, spreading dung piles, removing trail markers, assisting with parking, etc would be great. (Strong young helpers with healthy backs are especially handy.)

Runners or a separate Course Crew are not essential positions as there have been many trials run without them. Also as noted earlier, one person can fill more than one position at a Trial. In very small trials where one level is not started until the previous one has finished, a single fit and willing Roving Steward could be used—tiring but doable. The better organized the trial is BEFORE the trial date, the more likely that less assistance is need on the day OF the trial.

5. Plan Obstacles

Be flexible as trail conditions can change. Know your trail course and the immediate terrain around it intimately! Plan the obstacles so that different trial levels can use the same general situation but select the progressively

more difficult sections for the higher levels. For example, Basic llamas could cross over the branches of a large deadfall along its outer edge whereas, the Advanced llamas would cross the deadfall through its center where larger branches were piled higher. Some obstacles can be moved easily while others can't. We promote as much as humanly possible to use only naturally occurring obstacles, so this is where using the terrain and natural things like fallen logs, rock piles, and brushy thickets will come in handy. Plan accordingly. If you are creative and have interesting terrain, it's possible to set a course without creating any man-made obstacles. Just flagging, signs, and minimal moving of "stuff" will not only result in a more natural course, but will also SAVE YOU MUCH WORK.

Some land managers do not want any off-trail activity so make sure that you have adequately explained the types of obstacles you need and get their suggestions on where and how those requirements might be met. You may be directed to a more private lesser used trail area that would be more conducive to providing the type of "natural" course you're looking for. Some obstacles are easier to find or set up next to the trail, not on it—thick brush or a duck-under, for example. It is perfectly legitimate to go off the trail for an obstacle (barring any land management restrictions); we do it all the time in "real life" when we meet horses on the trail. There is a fine line as to when 30 llamas going off trail in the same place on one day might mean making more impact (i.e., a new trail), so it will be the Trial Certifier's final say as to where to have the least impact. If you have been given permission to set up obstacles across existing trails, you may be restricted to doing that only early on the day of the event. Make sure the Trial Certifier has been told of this, as both they and the Trail Marshall will need to arrive plenty early that day to not only set up the obstacles as needed, but to complete the PLTA-mandatory walk-through. **See Section III regarding Certifier duties.**

Also be aware of any restrictions for flagging your obstacles and/or the trail itself. Some land use managers specifically prohibit the use of nails and request that regardless of the signs you wanted to use (complete with cute pack llamas on them in colors coordinated with the trial level pins), that only paper plates tacked with thumbtacks would be allowed to mark your trails. One way of handling trail designation is to make sure that maps clearly marking the route including notes warning of any potential problem areas, are distributed to all participants or minimally to each Roving Steward. It would also be helpful to show the Roving Stewards the trail course the day before to reduce the chances of wrong turns. If other users of the trail system will likely be there on the day of the trial, you may also run the risk of mischievous removal of your trail signage. Always helps to have a Plan B.

C. ONE MONTH BEFORE TRIAL

NOTE DEADLINE: SANCTIONING APPLICATION DUE

TO PLTA FOR APPROVAL if you haven't done this already!

1. *Communications*

Radios or cell phones can be helpful for communication between course stewards, the certifier, and yourself throughout the trial days. However, in rolling terrain or deep valleys, they are not always dependable. Now is the time to check out what does work, make sure there are plenty of back up batteries, and where on the course reception is absent. Those “dead” areas will be in greatest need of a runner on foot, mountain bike, or by some other means. It's also advantageous if the terrain allows, that an ATV or 4-wheel vehicle and driver be available to transport the certifier as needed. This will really help save that person a lot of legwork.

2. *Final Designation of Area Allocations*

Now is the time to finalize the specific areas for camping, parking, registration, the evaluation of the manageability tasks, and any other aspects of the trial that will take up physical space. As entries come in, or knowing what your maximum number of participants will be, you should be able to determine if the trailhead, for instance, will handle all the space for the participant's trailers and/or vehicles and still leave parking for other trail users. If the course is on public land, it will likely have limited parking so set up your registration, weigh-in, and other administrative activities at another location. If you need additional permissions to do so, now is the time to obtain those. Most likely any additional changes in terms of restrictions from the previous year or season are now established and applicable for your event. If needed, you can search for additional space; if not, be happy to cross one more thing off your list.

Make arrangements for a llama scale to be brought to the weigh-in area. Do you need to plan for “muscle” to move it? If it needs electric to run, will a portable generator be necessary as well? If no scale is available, you still have some time to tell your participants they will need to weigh their llamas before they come and provide them with the appropriate paperwork. Have you made arrangements for a pen and/or trailer to evaluate the manageability tasks? Were you going to order portable toilets? Don't wait any longer.

If the facilities do not have cover of any sort, have a big tarp or tent at least for the volunteers handling registration. Any items like tables, chairs, a scale for weighing the llama packs & pack systems, cases of water if you're expecting it to be hot, or any other perks you might have been planning to provide should be ordered or arranged for now.

3. *Accommodations for Participants and Llamas*

Will the pack trial be a one-day event or part of a camp-out/weekend or rendezvous type of activity? Area motels may be able to give special rates and overnight camping areas may need to be reserved. Make sure you think about where the llamas will camp too. Offer to picket them away from heavy use areas or make arrangements to only feed them hay in their trailers. Make sure to be especially careful if you are in areas where non-native seeding is a problem. Some trials are able to use a llama owner's ranch as the trial base for everything but the trail course itself. If this is your situation, make sure the participants get clear directions to this location; you might also want to post a sign at the trailhead in case someone shows up there in error. If your camping area is strictly primitive tent camping only, forewarn your participants. You may also want to consider trucking in some potable water if that is also limited at the site. This is the time to make these sorts of arrangements.

4. *Potential Medical Emergency Considerations*

Should there be a medical emergency for either people or llamas, what will you do? Minimally, know and even alert a local llama vet if possible or determine if someone may be at the trial with medical training. Know the phone numbers and who to contact in that immediate area if there is a problem and make sure your personnel have that information as well. This planning may feel like the most scary part of putting on a trial but thankfully it's rarely actually needed.

D. *TWO to THREE WEEKS BEFORE TRIAL*

1. *Obtain Signs and Flagging, Miscellaneous Supplies*

Heeding the requests of the land managers, make your own signs with markers if you can't print them on a computer. Get different colored rolls of bright plastic flagging for each level to mark obstacles, where the course might leave an established trail, start & finish lines, etc. Some folks use different colored “sprinkler” flags. Remember all such markers must be removed at the end of the trial. You might want to consider color-coordinating your flagging with the PLTA “official” standard level colors. These are white for Basic, yellow for Advanced, red for Master, and green for Extreme. That way, it's easy for novices to keep on their correct level's trail when multiple levels are running over the same path but may be going in different directions or cross trails. A staple gun and colored paper plates and/or arrows in the appropriate colors works. Gather screw stakes and picket lines for the tie-out manageability task. It's convenient if the participants bring their own, but you can't count on that nor do you want them to pull up their stake when their own llama is done being evaluated. Make sure you have a set (or two) of accurate spring scales to weigh the

packs & pack systems.

Each llama that completes a trial successfully gets a hat pin for that level

so you'll want double the number of pins if it's a double trial. PLTA will need to know the number of pins you'll need (add a few more for last minute entries) as soon as you can get a good estimate. It will take some time to ship them to you so you have to plan for that.

2. *Scout the Primary Course and Backup*

You as the Trial Host/Chairperson, the Trail Marshall, and any available people that will be filling the role of Stewards, should hike the course with some test llamas wearing full packs to evaluate questionable obstacles to determine their safety and suitability. Llamas of varying ages and ability should be used. This is also a chance to start determining the minimum and maximum time window for each level. If you are planning on a String trial, you might want to consider using a couple of those test llamas in a practice string thru the obstacles. Now is the time to determine if the log placements are just a tab bit too high or far apart to make it a safe obstacle.

3. *Prepare and Print Out Any Paperwork Needed*

The paper blizzard starts now although we've done our best to contain it by consolidating forms and using both sides of the paper. PLTA will send you a packet after your sanctioning application has been approved. Some of the forms are also available on the website for the convenience of the trial participants. Let us know if you have ANY questions about the forms. **See Appendix II. List of Forms Required by PLTA.**

For the double-sided forms, if your printer only prints one side, simply print multiple copies of page one of the document, turn the papers over and replace them in your printer, and print the same number of copies of the second page.

If you are creating maps for the participants of their level's course, try to use colored markers to indicate the same marking signage they'll find out on the trail. The software program TopoZone® has topographic maps of the entire US. You can draw your trails on it in any color since there is a color palette similar to many drawing programs. You can even mark the obstacle locations, add captions, and have it calculate the distance and elevation. Just make sure you are very accurate when tracing your trail or your numbers can vary significantly. It also produces a "side view" or cut away showing the elevation changes.

Final instructions will vary depending on what you were able to send out pre-registration. You may now need to send out directions to the trial, a reminder for them to bring their own weights (Note: this is a chronic problem

so please emphasize it), and other last minute information. First timers to a PLTA trial might also benefit from a simple, outline of the mandatory and possible optional obstacles they will be required to do in whatever level they are signed up for. If the trial site has any inherent issues such as the presence of poisonous plants, or non-potable water, forewarning the participants will enable them to plan accordingly such as bringing masks for their llamas or their own water needs. **See Appendix IV./V. Sample Informational & Overview Letters**

Your own record keeping will be tested. Make sure you (or the Trial's Secretary) has the list of who has pre-registered, money paid or owed, t-shirts purchased and given out, etc. Have signs made up for directions to the other trial areas as needed, for notices to participants, parking requests, camping designations, and registration needs.

See that you have adequate course or trail description sheets or maps—minimum of one per trial level that can be posted for all participants to review. This is less of an issue if you will be sending out a group with a roving steward, but for trials where the participants go out on their own and stewards are only stationed at the obstacles, having maps of the course for each participant is very important if you don't want them to get lost. Note: if you are relying on your signs placed on public trails, be aware that some trail users find it great fun to remove them or change direction of the arrows. Clear maps on the participant's person remove this source of confusion.

A note about non-participants. Depending on the number of trial registered llamas and possible course restrictions, people not participating in the pack trial may be allowed to take their llamas on the course if the Trial Certifier and the Trial Committee concur but no records will be kept and the llamas will not be officially entered in the trial. However, PLTA's insurance requirements force us to mandate that the handlers for these additional llamas must be members of the organization and sign a waiver since they will be comingling with the trial participants. The PLTA has made this relatively easy by offering a \$5.00 Associate Membership. See the main Guidebook for details. Of course, all obstacles should be negotiated by the trial participants before the non-participants; the non-trial participants must not interfere in any way with the trial entries. It is suggested that the non-participants follow behind the trial participants; This will reduce the possibility of the obstacles being accidentally modified before all trial participants can be tested. If you plan to allow non-participants on the trial course, you'll need to keep track of their fees paid, memberships, and waivers as well. They would therefore, benefit from a mailing about these requirements.

4. **Recheck those Devilish Details**

Make sure that all permits have been received. Is the primary course and the

backup in good shape? Do you have enough stewards? If some levels

are full and others are still open, consider adjusting the numbers you will allow in each level or eliminating one if there are too few entries to make it worth setting up (i.e., the extra distance and obstacles in the Master or Extreme levels.) Try to VISUALIZE and THINK about how the day will flow, where to set things up to avoid congestion during registration and doing the manageability tasks. Do you have a pretty good idea of who will be handling what and how competent they will be? Do you need to line up any more volunteers just in case? Keep making lists and checking them two or three times.

E. ONE WEEK BEFORE THE TRIAL

1. Confirm personnel availability. Remind them to bring their clipboards and other items.
2. Set up any obstacles, if possible or if you haven't already.
3. Test-run the Course again if possible. Check for safety and suitability. Confirm the time windows for each level, knowing you'll have to take weather into consideration.
4. Pray for perfect weather, knowing you can't change a thing, but it will make you think about your bad weather contingency plans.
5. Get t-shirts from the printer & organize by size to help lessen the registration chaos. Or any other perk you've set up. Suitcases work well for being relatively weather proof carriers of such things.
6. Make sure you have a simple First Aid kit suitable for both llamas and animals to be available just in case.
7. Make sure your paperwork is filled out as completely as possible from the early registrations. This will really make the registration process run more smoothly. Plan on who will collect and how the money will be kept during the entire event.

F. ONE DAY BEFORE THE TRIAL

1. Put up signs or directions to trial site
2. Finish setting up the obstacles on the whole course, flagging the route, and checking that it's clear and no one will get lost.
3. Walk the course with the Certifier per PLTA trial requirements.
4. Gather all paperwork, registration materials, T-shirts, tables and chairs, a garbage can, and all the other things on your LISTS.

5. Stay near a phone, but get some sleep!

G. DAY OF THE TRIAL

1. Set up registration area and any last minute signs. Have a safe place to put money from t-shirt sales and entry fees.
2. Set up panels, the picket area, park the trailer, and place the scale for optimum traffic flow. Remember, you can do this without much thinking because you planned it weeks ago.
3. Have your pre-trial meeting with the volunteers and the Certifier. Provide all paperwork and any last minute instructions. (The things you want to say are already written down on one of your lists.)
4. Get the stationary stewards out on the trail to their obstacles early or see that the roving stewards are set and all know their responsibilities. Remind them they will need to complete and sign their forms before they leave!
5. Take lots of photographs—you'll want to send them to PLTA for the website and newsletter with a great article about the trial of course! And if you have the volunteers, you might ask someone to take photos of each individual llama completing a trial level. These could be sent to PLTA with the results to be used on their formal Certifications. The final decision to use the photo should be the owner's, but it really expedites getting these out to people if we don't have to wait for the owner to send us a photo.
6. Start early. This is very important in warm weather. Sell lots of t-shirts, Make sure your cell phone is ON! **HAVE FUN!**

H. AFTER THE TRIAL IS OVER

Use **Appendix VIII. Host Checklist** to be sure you have documented all of the necessary info that the PLTA office will need to assure that the trial entries are credited correctly. ✓ When completed.

1. Clean up the course and remove all man-manipulated obstacles. Make sure the trail is back to a natural condition. The last group back can take down the flagging as they return, if the course was set this way. This will clean up most of it right away. Mountain Bikers also enjoy this part of the clean-up.
2. Collect and save the leftover supplies (trail signage too if possible) for the next trial. Spread out the dung piles from the camping areas and anywhere the llamas had congregated (like lunch stops).
3. Make available trial Critiques to each participant and main trial personnel. Hand out PLTA pins for each llama that just successfully

completed their trial. Remember, if this was a double trial and they successfully completed both of them, they earned two pins. Remind the participants that when a llama has completed all of the requirements for that level, they will be asked by the PLTA to confirm the information and to send in a photo of their llama to be included on an official Certificate (if you didn't take any at the trial).

4. Collect Critiques from participants and trial committee and include with trial papers for PLTA.

5. Collect outstanding money, pay any final bills, and complete your expense report.

6. Submit the trial results, fees, and all forms to PLTA within 21 days of the trial date. See the Handbook for details and review **Appendix II. List of Forms**. Make sure the Certifier has completed and signed the Course Certification form and include with the trial results. The Certifier is supposed to be able to have a copy of all of the final paperwork submitted to the PLTA so you should be making an extra copy at this time. (See why we said a good Secretary was very important?)

7. Write articles about the trial for publication and include photos if possible. Don't forget to submit it to the PLTA for publication in **The PLTA News** and/or on the website.

SECTION III

ADDITIONAL FINE PRINT

A. CERTIFIER RESPONSIBILITIES

(The following has been reprinted from the Handbook as a reminder to the Trial Chairperson of the duties of the Trial Certifier and the seriousness of their position as a representative of the BOD.)

The Trial Certifier will walk the course with the person responsible for setting it up prior to the start of the trial. During this pre-trial walk thru, the Trial Certifier will make note of the simulated packing scenario, the objective of each obstacle, and the expected performance of the llamas so that the handlers and Stewards can be briefed prior to the start of the trial.

The Trial Certifier will also insure that the course has been designed by the Trial Marshal to have the following aspects determined for each level given at the trial: 1) Proper length 2) Required elevation gain 3) Proper number and types of obstacles are present 4) An estimated time window is determined. If the physical location prevents the exact logistical requirements from being met, the Trial Certifier may approve modifications to the elevation and/or mileage specifications as pre-determined by the PLTA

BOD. These changes will be made only after all other potential routes have been considered. It is the responsibility of the Certifier at each trial, to approve the final elevation gain & mileage because they are in the best position to evaluate the effects of the trail conditions in combination with the weather at the time of the trial on the participant llamas.

No llama that shows obvious signs of being lame or injured and that otherwise is not fit enough to complete the required course shall participate in a trial. The Trial Certifier will make this determination.

Some time before the trial, the Trial Certifier will meet with all Stewards to brief them and address any questions about what is or is not behavior requiring the deduction of performance points. **See Appendix VII. Steward's Guide to Obstacle Objectives and Performance Point Deductions**. In addition, the Stewards evaluating the trail obstacles will be instructed in the packing scenario, the object of each obstacle, and the expected performance of each llama.

Prior to the start of each trial the Trial Certifier will hold a meeting of all the entrants and, if possible, the Trial Committee. It must be realized that some participants may not be experienced llama packers, consequently the Trial Certifier will explain the packing scenario, the purpose of each obstacle, and the expected performance of the llama. In addition, any particular issues pertaining to the conduct of the trial such as responsibilities of the chaperones for the participants under 18, the location of the safety first aid kit, the presence of poisonous plants within "snacking" distance of the llamas while on the trail or in camp, protocol in case of an encounter with horsemen and/or dogs, etc., will be addressed at this time.

The meetings with the Stewards and with the entrants may be combined if that is the only time available.

During the trial, the Trial Certifier will also spot check the course and Stewards, provide assistance as necessary, and resolve all disputes.

Since flagging and trail markers added by the Trial Marshal to designate trails must be removed at the end of the trial; the Trial Certifier will make sure this will be done

After the trial is completed, the Trial Certifier will make sure that the information from the Steward's Data forms is transferred to the Trial Results form by the Trial Secretary, sign the Trial Results form, and sign the completed PLTA Pack Llama Trial Certificate. One copy will be retained by the Trial Certifier, It is the responsibility of the Trial Secretary and/or the Trial Chairperson and NOT the Trial Certifier to submit the required paperwork and money to the PLTA within 21 days after the trial is completed.

The Trial Certifier shall provide feedback to the BOD by completing a PLTA Course Critique form and sending it to the General Office.

B. STEWARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Refer to the Handbook for specific duties required of the Stewards in PLTA sanctioned trials. The Trial Committee should have provided the Stewards with a handout that lists possible performance point deductions that often occur during the Manageability Tasks and during trail obstacles. If a Steward does not feel capable of making the required assessments after reviewing this handout, the Steward should be replaced.

See Appendix VI. Examples of Stewards and Participants/Handlers Pre-Trial Briefings

APPENDIX

I. SUMMARY LISTING OF OBSTACLES

BARRIER: Obstacles that must be stepped through carefully such as a fallen stone wall, or one that the handler must evaluate and negotiate the llama through safely such as an obstructive fallen tree or branch that could be repositioned to go over, under, or passed.

BRIDGES: Any bridge or ramp set above or thru an area such as over a stream or thru a swamp, muddy, or rocky area.

BRUSH: Thick bushes, dense low tree branches or thick and tall grass or reeds which will rub against the llama's pack system.

BUG SPRAY: An obstacle to mimic the application of applying bug repellent to the llama. Water should be used in this obstacle to prevent possible allergic reactions of llamas to a selected repellent. The handler should be allowed to use either a spray or wipe-on method of application. The body section of the llama to be treated may vary with the trial level.

DEADFALL: Debris on the ground or very low that the llama and handler must pick their way through, such as downed trees or branches.

DUCK UNDER: Low hanging branches, leaning trees or rock outcroppings, or similar natural obstructions that cause the handler and llama to duck their heads and possibly their bodies in order to pass under.

FOOT INSPECTION: Picking up the llama's foot to inspect for possible injury to the leg, foot or pad. This is a required obstacle at the Master level and above. This will be done without the fully loaded packs attached to the llama, possibly before the start of the course, during a rest stop, at an obstacle that requires the removal of the packs to be safely negotiated, or

after the course is completed. The foot to be picked up will be designated by the Trial Committee and/or Trial Marshall in agreement with the Trial Certifier.

GATES: The handler and llama must open, pass through, and close a gate.

HALTERING: The halter is removed from the llama while confined in a small pen or trailer. The animal is allowed to be completely free within the confines of the enclosure; often the handler is asked to turn their back on the llama and to move to the opposite end of the enclosure so the llama recognizes it is loose. After a few seconds or when it is obvious that the llama realizes it is free, the handler is asked to put the halter back on. The interaction between the llama and handler is evaluated only as to the degree of calmness and lack of anxiety. The llama should stand calmly and still while the handler takes the halter off as well as when they put it back on.

JUMP/STEP-OVER: Obstacles 16 to 24 inches high or wide, that must be jumped or stepped over such as a rock, log, small ditch, or other low barrier. All jumps should be controlled.

LOADING/UNLOADING: The llama shall be loaded and unloaded from a trailer or vehicle. While loading & unloading, the llama should willingly enter and exit the trailer or vehicle and would be penalized if it balks or refused, or leapt out of or into the trailer in an unsafe manner.

MANDATORY OBSTACLES: *The specific obstacles determined by the PLTA BOD as required for that particular trial level. The substitution of mandatory obstacles is now allowed but only if the required obstacle is not available. The Trial Certifier must approve the mandatory obstacle substitution. To earn final certification, a llama MUST complete at least one trial with the mandatory obstacle negotiated. All obstacles set up for a given trial MUST be satisfactorily completed by the participant in order for that llama to have successfully completed that specific trial. Therefore, regardless of the number of performance points awarded, if the llama does not successfully negotiate through or complete all of the obstacles (this includes both the mandatory and those obstacles set up by the Trial Committee), the llama will not have satisfied the requirements of that specific trial.*

PACK ATTACHMENT: The packs or panniers must be attached to the saddled llama properly. The handler may have assistance with this task

PACK MANIPULATION: An obstacle where the handler must open a pannier and put something in or take something out (or both). This might also include putting a rain cover on the llama, or a rain slicker on the handler (these items would be provided by the trial committee).

PICKETING: The llama is tied by a 16 foot long line to something fixed or that pivots around a stake in the ground for a minimum of 5 minutes. The llama must remain calm even if they become entangled in the line. If the llama becomes “hog-tied” where the rope encircles their feet so it can’t move, or becomes tangled and panics, performance points would be deducted for this unsafe activity. If the trial is held at a campout location and all of the llamas have been staked out overnight, the 5 minute picketing requirement can be waived if no problems were noted with any of the participating llamas during that overnight picketing period.

ROCK RUBBLE: Usually scree or small talus-size rocks that require the llama to pick its way through and over them.

SADDLING: The llama must be saddled properly and should stand calmly while the handler attaches all parts of the saddle system except for the panniers or packs. The handler may have assistance with this task.

TIE-IN: Manageability obstacle required for String Trials where the lead and trailing llamas are connected to each other in a string formation. The position of each llama in the string is at the discretion of the handler. A chest strap must be on the lead llama if the tied-in llama is attached to the saddle of the lead llama. All connections or tie-ins between llamas must be done with a quick release knot or breakaway system. The Certifier will have the final say if the method of attachment is safe and acceptable.

TIGHT PLACES: An obstacle (often a grove of small saplings or young evergreens) that present passageways that are narrower than the main trail requiring the llama to either brush against the sides or to manipulate their body and panniers through the obstacle.

TRAIL TRAFFIC: The llama is required to pass calmly by hikers with or without dogs, people on horseback, trail bikers, or other trail users.

WATER: A body of water that can be moving, such as a creek or shallow river, the area along the edge of a lake or pond, or wet mud, or swamp. A llama must be in this obstacle for a minimum of ten feet; water can be no more than two feet deep. It is acceptable to artificially add water to a usually adequate water obstacle. If there is a total lack of natural wet conditions adequate for a mandatory water obstacle, it is acceptable to substitute deep sand or some other natural obstacle that would tend to be potentially uncomfortable for the llama. The substitution must be pre-approved by the BOD.

II. LIST OF FORMS REQUIRED BY PLTA

FORM NAME	WHAT IT DOES
Event/Trial Sanctioning Application	Requests Approval of BOD for Sanctioning of Trial/Event: Must be sent to PLTA with appropriate fee.
PLTA Applications - Memberships & Llama Registrations	Membership Form & Llama Registration Form: Owners of llamas must be Full Members; Handlers must be Associate or Full Member. Llamas entered in trials must be Registered with PLTA. Check for membership & llama registration from listings provided. If not already a member, must join at trial; form & fees to be sent to PLTA.
PLTA Event Entry Form and Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability	Participant’s entry into Trial or Packer’s Primer: Owner, Llama, and Handler information required for every participant. Includes opportunity to register the animal & record pre-trial weight if no scale will be present at the trial. Forms to be sent to PLTA Insurance Liability Waiver: Required of all participants who may be handling llamas. Forms to be sent to PLTA with final trial results. Helpers and stewards are considered employees/volunteers by our insurance and are therefore covered Printed on reverse of Entry Form.
PLTA Steward’s Obstacle Score Sheet (2-sided)	Stewards Manageability & Trail Obstacle Score Sheets: Used to record trial start and stop times, performance points, and Qualification notes for each participant in the pack trials. Must be signed & dated by the Stewards and sent to PLTA with final trial results.
PLTA Pack Trial Certification Form	Trial Certification Form: Must be completed, signed, and dated by Certifier certifying the trial met the PLTA requirements. Must be sent to PLTA with final trial results.
PLTA Thank you Note	Thank you Note for Participant: Should be provided to each participant at the end of the event. Notes are printed two per page for copying convenience.
PLTA Event / Trial Critique Sheet	Critique Sheet: Should be available to each participant and event committee members. We’re interested in making trials and PLTA sanctioned events the best we can and would appreciate the input

Money Due PLTA	Specific Form Not Provided by PLTA: We request a documented monetary breakdown of all fees due to PLTA and collected at event including number & names of new memberships, llama registrations, and event participants' entry fees. Prefer a single check be made payable to PLTA of the total owed.
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III. SUMMARY TRIAL SPECIFICATIONS

	Basic	Advanced	Master	Extreme
Age and Load	Minimum 24 month old: no weight carried 30 months: 10% load	Minimum 36 months 15% load	Minimum 48 months 25% load Not to exceed 90 lbs	Must have Master Level certification
Distance	3 miles	5 miles	8 miles	10 miles
Elevation Gain	250 to 500 feet	750 to 1000 feet	1500 to 2000 feet	2500 to 3000 feet
Manageability: haltering, loading/unloading, picketing, saddling, and pack attachment				
Trail Obstacles	1 water 1 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 2 committee choice	2 water 2 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 1 rock rubble 5 committee choice	3 water 2 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 1 rock rubble 1 brush 1 foot inspection w/ minimal weight on llama (1 of above must include removal of pack bags) 3 committee choice	3 water 2 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 1 rock rubble 1 brush 1 foot inspection w/ minimal weight on llama (1 of above must include removal of pack bags) 3 committee choice
Deductions allowed	5	3	2	2
Number of Trials Required	2, including one carrying weight	4 or Basic Certificate and 3 trials	4 or Advanced Certificate and 3 trials	Master Certificate and 2 trials

	Basic String	Advanced String	Master String	Extreme String
Age and Load	Minimum 24 months: no weight carried 30 months: 10% load	Minimum 36 months 15% load	Minimum 48 months 25% load Not to exceed 90 lbs	Must have Master Level Certificate
Distance	3 miles	5 miles	8 miles	10 miles
Elevation Gain	250 to 500 feet	750 to 1000 feet	1500 to 2000 feet	2500 to 3000 feet
Manageability: saddling, and pack attachment				
Trail Obstacles	1 water 1 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 2 committee choice	2 water 2 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 1 rock rubble 5 committee choice	3 water 2 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 1 rock rubble 1 brush 1 foot inspection w/ minimal weight on llama (1 of above must include removal of pack bags) 3 committee choice	3 water 2 jump/step-over 1 deadfall 1 rock rubble 1 brush 1 foot inspection w/ minimal weight on llama (1 of above must include removal of pack bags) 3 committee choice
Deductions allowed	5	3	2	2
Number of Trials Required	Basic Certificate and 2 string trials	Advanced Certificate and 2 string trials	Master Certificate and 2 string trials	Extreme Certificate and 2 string trials

IV. SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL LETTER

Whiskeytown Lake Fall Pack Trials

Come join us Halloween Weekend at scenic Whiskeytown Lake National Recreational Area near Redding, California for our 3rd annual PLTA sanctioned pack trials. All three levels will be offered both days and there will be a “learning to pack” seminar held on Friday for those just starting out. Saturday night dinner will once again be the result of a friendly packer’s cook-off so bring your favorite camping dish to share. We have some great prizes lined up this year. Categories are Drinks/Appetizers, Soups/Salads/Sides,

Main Dishes, and Desserts. If you need any last minute supplies there is a large supermarket on highway 299 about 2 miles from the visitor center at the lake.

We will be camping at the Horse Camp. There are picnic tables, food lockers, fire rings, potable water, and no-flush toilets. There is room for self contained RV’s but no electric or water hookups. Hot showers (coin operated) are available a short drive away at Brandy Creek Campground on the lake. While there is plenty of space to stake out your llamas, you will need to bring feed as very little grazing is left. If you prefer, you may bring your own pens or house your llamas in their trailer overnight. The Park Service asks that we scatter hay and droppings before leaving-Please don’t dispose of these in the bear proof garbage cans.

Dogs and kids are welcome as long as they are under control. If part of your group is not participating in the trials, there is still plenty for them to do. Fishing can be quite good in Clear Creek or the lake, the fall foliage is generally peaking towards the end of the month, and the nearby historic gold mining towns of French Gulch and Old Shasta are interesting to explore. You can even try your luck panning for gold or learn to kayak through the Park’s interactive educational programs. For Halloween buffs, the haunted house at the French Gulch Hotel is one of the best around (about 15 minutes from camp).

Weather can be unpredictable this time of year. We generally enjoy mild conditions with days in the 60’s-70’s with nighttime temps in the 40’s-50’s but it could rain. The trials will take place regardless so come prepared. There is poison oak on or near the trail in a few places so be aware of that and plan on long pants if you are highly allergic.

The pack trials will start at 8 a.m. both days, with the Master group heading out first. A digital llama scale will be set up for weighing you llamas and gear. Please remember that you are expected to provide your own “weight” for the panniers. Water jugs and sand bags or kitty litter are easy to adjust and can be dumped along the way if necessary. We generally try to do the manageability tasks the evening before but if you are arriving in the morning we will be ready to take care of you then. Be aware that a \$5.00 daily parking pass is required for day use within the Park. If you are just coming in for the day or joining us late (without pre-registering) you will need to stop at the visitor’s center to purchase a pass.

Attached are directions to the trial location, condensed rules, and the registration information. Hope to see you there and please don’t hesitate to phone or e-mail me with any questions you may have.

V. SAMPLE OVERVIEW LETTER

Greetings everyone! The SSLA Easter Pack Trial will be held Sat. April 15th, 2006, in the Harmon Den Ranger district of Pisgah National Forest, near Hot Springs/ Waynesville, NC. The horse camp has been reserved for our use and offers primitive camping with toilets available. There is space for pop up campers and small travel trailers but no hook-ups are available. Potable water is also available.

We will be offering a basic and advanced course. Trails begin and end at the horse camp so llamas do not have to be trailered to the trailhead. To reserve a campsite include a check for \$15 per night payable to SSLA with your entry form attached to this e-mail. Space is limited in the camp to 35 sites and will be first come first serve. THE DEADLINE FOR RESERVING A CAMPSITE IS APRIL 3rd, 2006.

In order to participate in a PLTA trial for credits you need to be a member of PLTA. Depending on the number of trial registered llamas, nonmembers may still be allowed to take their llama on the course if the course Certifier and the trial sponsor concur; however, there will not be any records kept for nonmembers of PLTA. If you have any questions regarding pack trials or would like to join PLTA, visit their website www.packllama.org for more information.

This Pack Trial is authorized under a special use permit by the Pisgah National Forest. Check-in time for the horse camp will be after 3PM on Friday April 14th. There will be a pot-luck supper and campfire festivities on Sat evening. You are on your own for other meals.

Hope to see you April 14, 15, 16! Also attached you will find directions to the Horse camp. Please mail your camp reservation check and entry form to:

(Person’s name, address, phone & email address.)

VI. EXAMPLES OF STEWARDS AND PARTICIPANTS/HANDLERS PRE-TRIAL BRIEFINGS

Steward's Briefing

Remember – these trials were started for people to learn about packing & **have fun**. (Awareness of safety, if llama is overheating, good trail etiquette, etc.)

1. Safety – be looking at **Actual, not Potential safety problems**. Ask yourself: Was it unsafe for the llama &/or the handler? Example: The llama COULD HAVE kicked you vs. llama DID kick you.

2. Can more than one Performance Point be lost at one obstacle?

Yes. Example: During Manageability portion, the llama jerks its head during haltering & hits the handler in the nose – 1 Performance Point lost. If it happens more than once it would result in more points lost. (Water example below, too.)

Also, a Steward may deduct a performance point anywhere along the trial; not just at their obstacle or while the llama is attempting to negotiate it.

3. Manageability task - Putting on Packs: The handler may have someone assist to put the pack on the llama. This part is **judged on the llama's behavior, not usually on the handler**, so the person putting on the packs is less important.

4. Be sure to **let the handler know** whenever a Performance Point is lost or an animal receives an incomplete and write it on the score sheet. The handler needs to know before proceeding so that they can decide whether or not to finish the course after they know they are disqualified.

5. Let the handler know **what they are expected to do** at each obstacle before it is attempted. Examples: Jump over the log at the point where the ribbon is tied. Cross the mud between the rock and the brush.

6. When the last entry passes, take your score sheet back to the Recorder so they can put your scores on the appropriate summary forms. **Make sure you SIGN your score sheets.**

Examples of Pre-Trial Briefings for Stewards and Participants/Handlers (cont.)

with signs; the Steward will explain what to do to complete each obstacle. If you have questions during the Trial, ask the Steward or Trial Certifier.

3. Your llama can make multiple attempts to complete an obstacle.

4. Your llama will be judged at each obstacle on two criteria: safety and completion. If you are uncertain about what you have to do to successfully complete an obstacle, ask the Steward

5. The Steward will tell you your score (Completion/Not Completed and Performance Points deducted, if any) before you progress to the next obstacle. You are to keep track of your status. If your llama is disqualified, you may choose to either complete the course or to turn back.

6. If you are the last entry, tell the Steward at that obstacle so that they can take their scores to the Recorder at the trailhead.

7. When you cross the finish line, make sure your time is recorded. Scores will be added up at this time. If your llama is successful, it will receive a pin and the Trial results will be sent to the PLTA to be officially recorded in the database.

Examples:

1. Manageability task - Putting on Packs: You may have someone assist you to put the pack on the llama. This part is **judged on the llama's behavior, not usually on the handler**, so the person putting on the packs is less important.

2. Water: The Steward will show you where to go through the obstacle and tell you what is expected. If the llama does not stay in the water obstacle for enough time/distance, the Steward will inform you so you may try it again. **Note: The llama must walk through the water, not leap over.**

3. Jump: If the llama is 'pulled over' the jump, it counts. If the llama nicks the top of the jump with a foot, it counts. If the llama makes it over but lands on the handler, it counts, but a Performance Point is deducted. If the llama jumps over the log in the same way but the handler is aware & moves out of the way ahead of time; it counts with no Performance Points deducted.

VII. STEWARD'S GUIDE TO OBSTACLE OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE POINT DEDUCTIONS

MANAGEABILITY TASKS

HALTERING

Objective: The llama should stand calmly and still while the handler takes the halter off and then puts it back on.

Performance Point deductions should be made for any of the following:

- a) The llama jumps around or kicks.
- b) The llama tosses its head around during the haltering process.
- c) The llama pushes the handler around with its body.
- d) The llama spits or screams.
- e) The handler is unable to either take the halter off or put it back on.

TRAILERING

Objective: The llama willingly enters and exits the trailer or vehicle.

Performance Point deductions should be made for any of the following:

- a) The llama balks or refuses to either enter or exit the trailer or vehicle.
- b) The llama leaps out of or into the trailer or vehicle in an unsafe manner.

PICKET LINE

Objective: The llama acts in a calm manner while attached to the picket line. If they become entangled in the line, but remain calm, that's OK.

Performance Point deductions should be made for any of the following:

- a) The llama becomes "hog-tied".
- b) The llama becomes tangled and panics.

Note: If overnight camping took place and the llama was staked out all night without a problem, this task may be waived by the Trial Certifier.

- b) The llama pushes into the handler forcing them to lose their balance.

SADDLING & PANNIER ATTACHMENT

Objective: The llama should stand calmly and still while saddling and while the panniers are attached. (String Trials require use of a chest strap on the lead llama if attaching the tied-in llama to the saddle of the lead llama.)

Performance Point deductions should be made for any of the following:

- a) The llama kicks or spits.
- c) The llama dances around avoiding the handler or saddle or panniers.
- d) If the handler is unable to safely saddle the llama or attach the panniers.

TIE-IN (String Trials Only)

Objective: The lead llama should stand calmly and still while the handler connects the trailing llama to the lead llama in string formation. The trailing llama should act in a calm and quiet manner while close to the lead llama and during the tie-in process. (All connections or tie-ins between llamas will be done with a quick release knot or breakaway system.)

Performance Point deductions should be made for any of the following:

- a) Either llama spits or kicks at the handler or each other.
- b) Either llama pushes into the handler forcing them to lose their balance or get entangled with the other llama.
- c) Either llama dances around avoiding the tie-in process.
- d) If the handler is unable to safely tie-in the llamas.

COURSE OBSTACLES (ON THE TRAIL)

Objective: For all trail obstacles, the objective is that the llama safely and calmly negotiates each obstacle while demonstrating a degree of training appropriate to the level they are entered in.

Performance Point deductions are REQUIRED to be made for any of the following:

- a) The llama knocks the handler or any other person down.
- b) The llama jumps for any reason other than jumping a "Jump" obstacle.
- c) The llama kicks at its handler or any other person, llama, or trail occupant.
- d) The llama lies down and refuses to attempt an obstacle.
- e) The llama lunges through an obstacle in an unsafe manner.
- f) The llama pushes its handler causing them to lose their balance.
- g) The llama tries to pass its handler on the trail or during an obstacle.
- h) The llama needs to follow another llama to complete any obstacle in the Master or Extreme levels.

The Steward should record details of the point deductions on the

appropriate forms for further review if necessary.

**VIII. HOST'S CHECKLIST for PLTA
Use Before the Trial Ends**

 Llama Entries – Check the following for each llama entered in each trial on each day.

 Provide PLTA Event Form for each llama entered in each trial

 and/or Packer's Primer.

 \$5 Payment for each trial entry is required.

 Make sure participant has signed Insurance Waiver.

 Check Owner for PLTA membership:

 Is Owner a PLTA FULL member?
Provide PLTA member #.

 If not a Full member – provide
Membership form with all
info requested

 \$30 Payment for Annual Full
Membership is required unless
 previously acquired Associate membership within the same
calendar year (then \$25 due).

 If llama is PLTA registered – provide PLTA
llama #.

 If not PLTA registered, provide all info
requested

 \$10 Payment due for Llama Registration.

 If Handler is a PLTA Full member, provide name
and make sure they have
signed the Insurance Waiver.

 If not a Full member – provide
Membership form & required
 info to become an Associate member for this trial and
make

 sure they have signed the Insurance
Waiver.

 \$5 Payment for each Associate
Membership is required.

(They may join as a Full Member at this time – same form
but \$30 payment due.)

Trial Info – Check the following for each trial day
 “PLTA Steward’s Obstacle Score Sheet” (2-sided) is filled out
 completely & signed by Stewards. There should be Score Sheets
documenting results for
 all Manageability & Trail Obstacles for all levels and all trials.
 “PLTA Pack Trial Certification Form” is filled out completely &
signed by Certifier.

Final Checks

 Pins were handed out.
 PLTA’s Thank you notes were handed out.
 PLTA’s Critique Sheets were made available
 No monetary issues outstanding; documented breakdown of fees
due PLTA & collected will be complete and easily done.