

ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Open Areas and Vistas

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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), a §501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, works closely with Appalachian Trail volunteer maintaining clubs (“Clubs”) and other public and private partners to ensure the protection and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and experiential resources of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (known as ANST, A.T., or “the Trail”). Approximately fifty federal, state, or other public agencies have authority or jurisdiction over lands and resources within the protected A.T. corridor. ATC has a central management role by virtue of its Cooperative Agreement with the USDI National Park Service and its close working partnership with the USDA Forest Service and other agencies.

ATC's Trail management and conservation policies are meant to provide guidance for (a) dissemination to the public; (b) use and implementation by the ATC and the Clubs; and (c) recommendations for land-managing and other agencies. It is the agencies who work within their defined procedures to propose, administer, and enforce public policy. ATC policies are recommendations developed to support appropriate, coordinated Trailwide management.

Policy

1. ATC and the A.T.-maintaining clubs shall give the management of balds, fields, and vistas a high priority and address it through the local management planning process.
2. ATC shall develop, as quickly as possible, management guidelines to assist the clubs, seeking out the knowledge and expertise of the NPS, USFS, and other sources.
3. As a first step, ATC, in consultation with clubs and management partners, will undertake an inventory of the open areas, including balds, fields, meadows, pastures, and vistas. This inventory should include historic balds and fields which might be reestablished, and open areas, including viewpoints, which may not be on the Trail but would be easily accessible with signs and side trails.
4. Management considerations should include hiker experience, resource protection, agency policies, ecological sensitivity, and historic and current use patterns. Some sites may require working with the Appalachian Trail Park Office (or other agency partners) on an environmental assessment.
5. Management actions should be specifically tailored to each site according to its unique blend of historic, biological, geographic, aesthetic, and other qualities and limitations. Methods, including mowing, grazing, burning, hand cutting, or the use of herbicides, should



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be determined considering the above site characteristics as well as potential environmental impacts, accessibility, cost, and long-term feasibility.

6. ATC, the clubs, and other partners will work together to mobilize resources needed for maintaining these areas, including local expertise, financial support, volunteer labor, and local farmers or others who will mow, graze, or otherwise continue former agricultural uses under special-use permits or contracts.

7. Management activities should be monitored and evaluated periodically and adapted to meet changing conditions or to reflect new knowledge and technology.

8. Records, including photographs, should be kept to document management activities.

For questions related to this policy please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at www.appalachiantrail.org, or P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV, 25425-807.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.