



**APPALACHIAN TRAIL**  
CONSERVANCY

# Local Management Planning Guide



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# Appalachian Trail Conservancy LOCAL MANAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDE

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## **An Introduction to the Local Management Planning Guide**

### **Local Management Planning**

In 1980, the Appalachian Trail Conference (now the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, or ATC) began promoting the concept of local management planning among the Trail-maintaining clubs and agency partners. In fact, the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) and the Memorandum of Agreement ([Appendix E](#)) between the National Park Service and ATC, which delegated certain management responsibilities to ATC and the Trail clubs, both assume that local management plans will be the cornerstones for cooperative management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.).

In 1987, ATC began developing a “local planning guide” to provide the Trail-maintaining clubs with a comprehensive reference document to aid them in the local planning process. The first version (1989) and a 1997 revision were mailed to Appalachian Trail maintaining clubs and agency partners in binders intended to be handed on to succeeding club officers and agency personnel. That format proved cumbersome and has been difficult to keep current as new ATC policies have been adopted and as the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service have updated their management policies, forest-planning rules and forest land- and resource-management plans.

With this update, the *Local Management Planning Guide (Planning Guide)* becomes a Web-based document that Trail managers can access easily and that can be more readily kept current as new policies are adopted by ATC.

This edition of the *Planning Guide* is intended to serve two primary functions: (1) to consolidate ATC and National Park Service (NPS) policies affecting Trail management into a single reference document for Trail clubs and cooperating agencies; and (2) to answer questions on how to prepare a local management plan and what to include in a plan.

*Please note that for the most part, U.S. Forest Service policies and state agency policies are not included in this document. Forest [planning rules](#) have been under revision. Forest Service [directives](#) are available on the Internet. Maintaining clubs with Trail sections on U.S. Forest Service lands should work closely with their district ranger and ATC regional office staff in developing their local management plans. State agency partners should be involved in development and review of club plans as necessary.*

### **From Conference to Conservancy**

In 2005, several years of structured reflections and strategic planning came to fruition. The Appalachian Trail Conference became the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, a change that reflects the gradual broadening and deepening of the organization’s vision. ATC’s leadership realized that preserving the Trail experience for future generations would require action beyond the boundaries of the Trail corridor and beyond the scope of traditional volunteer Trail building and maintenance.

Clean air, the presence of native flora and fauna, natural and clean streams and ponds, views unmarred by developments are all examples of features that are intrinsically part of the Trail experience, yet they cannot be protected without reaching beyond corridor lands. For this reason, ATC has chosen to broaden its scope of action, while reaffirming its commitment to its first and prime responsibility—that of caring for the Appalachian Trail and its corridor lands.

As a result of the 2005 reorganization, ATC’s former Board of Managers has been replaced by a smaller

Board of Directors (Board) focused on long-term growth and planning issues and financial oversight for the Conservancy. A Stewardship Council, appointed by the Board chair, oversees policy development and programs related to stewardship of the Trail and surrounding public lands, including land protection and land-use planning. The three former regional management committees (Southern, Mid-Atlantic, and New England) that began overseeing A.T. management in 1980 have been replaced by four regional partnership committees (RPCs) corresponding to ATC's four regional offices (known as New England, Mid-Atlantic, Central and Southwest Virginia, and Deep South). The RPCs work closely with and advise ATC's four regional directors and the Stewardship Council. Each RPC provides a forum for coordination and decision-making among Trail-maintaining clubs, ATC staff, agencies, and other partners. Each Trail club has at least one representative on its RPC, and the Stewardship Council includes at least one member from each RPC.

ATC's staff structure has changed since the 2005 reorganization, with Trail-management and land protection functions consolidated into a new department of conservation, and the four regional offices now being headed by regional directors. The organization is still led by the executive director, while a chief operating officer oversees the directors of conservation, finance and administration, marketing and communications, and membership and development.

Changes also have been made in the approval process for certain Trail-management actions. In November 2008, following review, discussion, and concurrence of the four RPCs, the ATC Board of Directors adopted the unanimous recommendation of the Stewardship Council regarding the review and approval of management plans and project proposals, which delegates to ATC's four regional directors approvals for local management plans, changes in Trail-club maintenance assignments, relocations, overnight facilities, side trails, and timber harvest operations (see Chapter 1 (E), the specific chapters on those topics, and the appendices referenced in those chapter).

The policies in this *Planning Guide* have been modified to reflect the changes in ATC's organizational structure. Where only the name of ATC has changed, the policies were edited without being readopted by the Board. Where decision-making processes involving ATC's new governing bodies and staff were involved, the policies were readopted by the Board.

## How this Guide is Organized

**Part 1** of the *Planning Guide* provides an overview of the roles of the partners who collectively manage the Appalachian Trail. The basics of planning are also summarized in this section: how to plan, what to include in a plan, who should participate in preparing a local management plan, review and approval of plans and other project proposals and a final new section on ATC policy development and adoption.

**Parts 2, 3, 4, and 5** are a catalogue of existing guidance for each significant issue that has been raised with respect to managing the A.T. Policies that have been developed for construction and maintenance of the footpath, shelters, and other Trail facilities are assembled in **Part 2**. **Part 3** focuses on the public's use of the A.T. and programs for handling emergencies and disseminating information. **Part 4** summarizes existing monitoring and management policies regarding incompatible uses of the A.T. lands, such as off-road vehicle use, and competing uses, such as utility lines that intersect the A.T. The policies outlined in **Part 5** include guidance for managing the natural and cultural resources that make up the environment of the Trail.

Relevant ATC and NPS policies are summarized in this *Planning Guide*. ATC policies are in a different font and set off from the text so they are easily identifiable. National Park Service policy, for the most part, has been summarized from the 2006 National Park Service [Management Policies](#) compendium. [Appendix C](#) of this document is the compendium of orders containing NPS policy for specific locations

on the Appalachian Trail.

Following the summary of policies for each issue in **Parts 2, 3, 4, and 5** is a subheading entitled “Considerations for Planning,” which is designed to lead the Trail club through the process of drafting its own policy direction and action plan for each issue.

The *Planning Guide* also contains links to Trail management documents and includes several basic reference documents in the appendices. The *Appalachian Trail Data Book* and A.T. maps and guidebooks can be purchased online from the [Ultimate A.T. Store](#) or by calling toll-free 888-287-8673.

# **PART 1**

## **A.T. Planning and the Cooperative Management System**

## CHAPTER 1 (A)

### Cooperative Management System

The Appalachian Trail has been a cooperative enterprise since 1925, when the Appalachian Trail Conference was formed, with private individuals and federal agency representatives among its Board of Managers. In 1938, at ATC's behest, the first Appalachian Trail agreement was signed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), sealing a commitment by the volunteer Trail community and the two principal federal partners that continues today.

Since that first agreement, many agreements have been executed among the 30 maintaining Trail clubs, municipalities, landowners, states, federal agencies, and ATC. In fact, the National Trails System Act, passed in 1968 strongly encourages this activity:

*The Secretary... may enter written cooperative agreements with the States or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of such a... trail, within or outside a federally administered area.*

—Section 7(h) of the [National Trails System Act](#), as amended 2009

The adoption of the National Trails System Act and the extensive land-acquisition program that it authorized also fundamentally altered, and greatly expanded, the roles and responsibilities of the Trail clubs, ATC, and agency partners. Because the land-acquisition program provided an opportunity to relocate many segments of the footpath away from road shoulders and other inferior locations, many club volunteers became engaged in constructing new segments of the footpath, as well as associated facilities, such as shelters and bridges. And, club volunteers and ATC staff members assisted and continue to assist public agencies in scouting potential routes, defining land-acquisition boundaries, and interacting with affected landowners and communities.

Perhaps an even greater challenge for the clubs and ATC stemmed from understandings that were developed around the time of the 1978 amendments to the National Trails System Act. ATC and the Trail clubs strongly supported those amendments, which provided the authority necessary to protect the entire Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Representatives of the Conference and clubs recognized the significant investment of public funds being sought and told the United States Congress and the federal agencies, in effect: "If you buy it, we will manage it." Although, at the time, such an assertion must have required a considerable leap of faith for Congress and agency managers, Trail-community leaders could point to more than 50 years of successful volunteer-based stewardship for the footpath and its facilities. Congress agreed to the deal. As a result, rather than being managed as a traditional unit of the national park system, the Trail continues to be managed primarily by citizen volunteers.

The fundamental management principles of this cooperative management system were outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan for the Protection, Management, Development, and Use of the Appalachian Trail* (usually referred to in this document as the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#)). Published in 1981 and republished in 1987, that document was prepared by the National Park Service Appalachian Trail Park Office and approved by the director of the National Park Service and chief of the U.S. Forest Service. The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) commits the federal agencies to support the volunteer Trail community and the cooperative management of the Trail.

In 1984, these understandings were formalized in a landmark cooperative agreement, often referred to as the "delegation agreement," in which the National Park Service delegated management responsibility for lands acquired by NPS along the Appalachian Trail to ATC. ATC, for itself and in behalf of the Trail-maintaining clubs, accepted responsibility for operations, development, maintenance, and monitoring of



those Trail-corridor lands. In 1994 and again in 2004, the agreement was renewed for ten-year terms (see [Appendix E](#)).

A similar agreement was signed by the U.S. Forest Service and ATC in 1984 and renewed in 1994 that affects certain lands in Vermont, New Hampshire, West Virginia and Virginia that have been administratively transferred by the National Park Service to the U.S. Forest Service.

Those agreements provided ATC with the authority to redelegate responsibilities to Trail-maintaining clubs. That redelegation was effected in October 1984, by a letter to each of the Trail clubs from the chair of ATC. Since that time, the clubs have assumed day-to-day responsibility for operations, development, maintenance, and monitoring for their respective Trail-section assignments, with ATC serving as guarantor to the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service that those lands and resources would be adequately managed in the public interest. This arrangement was formalized in 1997 when each of the maintaining clubs and ATC signed individual agreements (see [Appendix F](#)).

Many other cooperative agreements have been developed at the local or state levels. Beginning in 1987, ATC, Trail clubs, and agency partners began work on a series of statewide cooperative agreements patterned on the basic tenets of the federal agreements. State cooperative agreements are referenced in [Appendix G](#) and are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

### **Cooperative Management System Partners**

The primary partners on any given section of the Appalachian Trail are usually the Trail club, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, state land-managing partners (if any), and one or both federal partners (NPS and USFS). Many secondary partners, such as state law-enforcement agencies, provide support and should be recognized in the local management plans.

The major roles and contributions of each partner are summarized in the rest of this chapter.

### **Appalachian Trail Conservancy**

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's role is defined by its bylaws, policies adopted by its Board of Directors, and cooperative agreements with the National Park Service, the Forest Service, Trail clubs, and states. ATC policies pertaining to management of the Trail may be found in [Appendix D](#).

*ATC's Basic Role*—Historically, ATC has been responsible for ensuring adequate maintenance and management of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor lands through oversight and support of its member organizations, the A.T.-maintaining clubs. If and when needed, ATC has served in a back-up capacity to the clubs, to guarantee adequate maintenance and management. ATC strives to support and respect each Trail club's volunteer traditions. ATC has numerous programs to enhance volunteer management, including grants, workshops, and organized volunteer Trail crews. ATC also works closely with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and each of the 14 states through which the Trail passes.

In addition to that role, ATC has resolved to take on wider stewardship responsibilities, recognizing that concentrating efforts solely on the Trail and its corridor lands will not adequately protect the Trail experience. In 1997, ATC developed the following values statement that more broadly construes its mission with respect to the Appalachian Trail experience, which includes but is not limited to the following features:

- Opportunities for observation, contemplation, enjoyment, and exploration of the natural world;
- A sense of remoteness and detachment from civilization;

- Opportunities to experience solitude, freedom, personal accomplishment, self-reliance, and self-discovery;
- A sense of being on the height of the land;
- Opportunities to experience the historic and pastoral elements of the surrounding countryside;
- A feeling of being part of the natural environment; and
- Opportunities for travel on foot, including opportunities for long-distance hiking.

—*The A.T. Experience and Nonhiking Recreational Uses of A.T. Lands, adopted April 1997*

The affairs of ATC are overseen by a 15-member Board of Directors--stewards of the Conservancy's long-term goals and vision, guarantors of its compliance to legal requirements, and representatives of ATC's membership. The all-volunteer Board meets at least twice a year and reviews any documents, decisions or processes set forth for its approval. The Board is supported in its duties by the Stewardship Council, with 15 members who provide expertise and field experience in the many disciplines required for the Conservancy's conservation programs. The Council also meets twice a year to discuss and recommend policies for management of the Trail and other programs, which are summarized in this *Planning Guide*. In addition, the Stewardship Council may help craft guidance and standards for program activities consistent with the Conservancy's mission to protect and manage the A.T.

*Federal Agreements with ATC*—Following adoption of the [National Trails System Act](#), the National Park Service signed a cooperative agreement (in 1970) with the Appalachian Trail Conference, officially authorizing the organization's traditional stewardship of the A.T. That agreement was the basis for subsequent cooperative efforts, including the 1983 Volunteers in the Parks Agreement, which provides liability and medical protection to ATC and the Trail club volunteers on all NPS, state, and private lands, and the delegation agreement (see [Appendix E](#)).

In September 1980, the Forest Service and ATC signed a memorandum of understanding that authorized ATC efforts in support of local Trail clubs to operate and maintain the Appalachian Trail across the national forests. The USFS now has individual memoranda of understanding with most of the 16 Trail-maintaining clubs having maintenance responsibilities on the eight national forests crossed by the Trail. In addition, the USFS and ATC signed a cooperative agreement in 1984 to provide for ATC and Trail-club management of lands that have been administratively transferred from the NPS to the USFS.

[Appalachian Trail Maintaining Clubs](#)--descriptions of the clubs' Trail sections and links to club Web sites are found on ATC's Web site.

*The Trail Club's Role*—The Trail clubs are responsible for keeping the A.T. “forever open, obvious, and narrowly passable for hiking” and for on-the-ground maintenance and management of associated facilities and lands. Effective, active local Trail clubs—30 of which now maintain Trail sections from Maine to Georgia—are the key grassroots leaders in the managing partnership.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when ATC and Trail club representatives sought greater federal efforts to protect the A.T., Congress was assured that the maintenance and management of the Trail would essentially remain ATC and Trail club responsibilities, saving the government millions of dollars. Further, the possibility of direct involvement in the day-to-day management of the A.T. by NPS, USFS, and states concerned the ATC Board and Trail clubs. ATC worked diligently to guarantee the continuing role of volunteers in the management of the Trail. Those efforts were successful, and the Trail-maintaining clubs continue to fulfill and expand their responsibilities for local management and maintenance of the A.T. as it has grown from a privately maintained footpath into a National Scenic Trail—in effect, a linear national park. While the traditional Trail-maintenance responsibilities remain the clubs' most important A.T. duty, club roles have grown to include new responsibilities for land management and planning.

ATC and each Trail club have a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) that defines those responsibilities and formalizes the relationship between ATC and the club. (Trail Club-ATC MOUs are included by region in [Appendix F](#)). The MOUs apply only to those activities of the clubs that are related to the management of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor, and outline basic Trail club responsibilities as follows:

1. *Trail construction and maintenance* (relocation and side-trail design and construction; footpath protection and hardening with water diversion structures, puncheon, and rockwork; pathway obstruction removal; route marking with blazes, signs, and cairns).
2. *Facilities construction and maintenance* (shelter, privy, and bridge construction; trash and illegal fire-ring removal).
3. *Trail- and corridor-lands management* (regular revision of the local management plan, Trail assessment, corridor monitoring, regular cooperation and communication with ATC and agency partners).
4. *Information and education* (publication, or assistance in publication, of Trail guides, provision of information about the Trail to ATC, agencies, and the public, and hiker education).

Through the MOUs, the Trail clubs also agree to assist to the extent possible ATC's land trust in land protection, management and monitoring efforts, as well as ATC's responses to "external threats" such as highways or development expansions that threaten the Trail.

*Preparation of the Local Management Plan*—The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) developed and signed by the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service in 1981, envisioned a series of "local management plans" (LMPs) prepared by Trail clubs in concert with their agency partners. The *Local Management Planning Guide* provides a framework for preparation of those local management plans.

In developing its local management plan, a Trail club needs to consult with its agency partners, ATC, local officials, and other organizations concerned with Trail issues. The club also should provide opportunities for public input into the plan. That can be done formally, through a public meeting cosponsored with an agency partner, or informally, through public notice of a club meeting focusing on planning issues. The club also must assume responsibility for writing the plan and amending it, as necessary, to reflect new club policies and goals. ATC, particularly through its regional staff, is available to assist in this process. Planning is discussed in Chapter 1 (B). Creating a Trail-club's local management plan is detailed in Chapter 1 (C). Local management plans must be approved by ATC, and the approval process is laid out in Chapter 1 (E).

## **Federal Agencies**

*The National Park Service (NPS)*—The National Park Service (NPS) retains the primary authority and responsibility for the acquisition, development, and administration of the Appalachian Trail. Under the [National Trails System Act](#), the secretary of the interior is responsible for administration of the entire Appalachian Trail, in consultation with the secretary of agriculture. The National Park Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Interior, oversees the Appalachian Trail and works in consultation with the Forest Service, an agency of the Department of Agriculture.

The NPS official with overall responsibility for the A.T. is the park manager of the Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO), located in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, a position equivalent to a superintendent in a traditional national park. The park manager carries out the duties and authorities of the secretary in administration of the A.T., including land acquisition outside of established federal units and management direction on NPS-ATPO acquired lands. Even though management responsibility for NPS-acquired land

has been delegated to ATC and the local A.T.-maintaining clubs, the park manager is the responsible official retaining authority for law enforcement, land acquisition, boundary surveys, and compliance with the regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The park manager and his/her staff are bound by the same regulations that are in effect for all national park system lands, as enumerated in the [Code of Federal Regulations](#), Title 36, “Parks, Forests and Public Property.” The park manager also reviews Trail club LMPs to ensure that the policies and practices identified in the LMPs comply with NPS regulations. Furthermore, pursuant to review and acceptance of the LMP by the park manager, LMP designations have force-of-law on NPS lands and can be enforced by the appropriate authorities.

*National Park Units*—The Appalachian Trail crosses six established units of the national park system, each of which is overseen by a park superintendent: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah National Park, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, C&O Canal National Historical Park, and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The parks retain oversight of the A.T. within their boundaries as part of their over-all management of the park and participate in the day-to-day affairs of the Trail, including active involvement in local management planning with the Trail clubs. They are primary partners as signatories on cooperative agreements. Clubs should work in close consultation with the individual park units so that the policies, practices, and actions identified in their local management plans are coordinated with those developed for the park’s general-management and resource-management plans.

*U.S. Forest Service (USFS)*—Approximately 1,015 miles of the Appalachian Trail cross eight national forests, two in the eastern region (USFS Region 9) and six in the southern region (Region 8). The Trail crosses some lands in Virginia, West Virginia, Vermont, and New Hampshire that were acquired by the National Park Service for the Trail but have been administratively transferred from the NPS to the USFS. The national forests crossed by the A.T. are listed in Table 1 below. Each national forest is made up of several ranger districts, the local level of interaction with A.T. Clubs.

The U.S. Forest Service is a multiple-use agency—that is, it manages lands for many different uses, including timber management, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, range, and recreation opportunities. Beginning in the mid-1980s, primary direction for the management of the A.T. has been included in the *Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (FLMP) for each national forest. In each plan, the A.T. and the lands surrounding it are identified as either a “management area” (MA) or a “management prescription” (MRx).

**Table 1**

<b>Forest Name</b>	<b>Current Plan and Date</b>	<b>MA/MRx</b>
Chattahoochee National Forest, GA	FLMP, January 2004	MRx 4A
Nantahala National Forest, NC	FLMP, Amend. 5, March 1994	MA 14
Pisgah National Forest, NC	FLMP, Amend. 5, March 1994	MA 14
Cherokee National Forest, TN	FLMP, January 2004	MRx 4A
Jefferson National Forest, VA	FLMP, January 2004	MRx 4A
George Washington National Forest, VA	FLMP, January 1993	MA 6
Green Mountain National Forest, VT	FLMP February 2006	MA 8.1
White Mountain National Forest, NH	FLMP September 2005	MA 8.3

The A.T. management area or management prescription is a defined area around the Trail, within which the primary management objectives are the protection and enhancement of the A.T. The USFS has developed many innovative techniques for involving the public—including ATC and the local A.T. clubs—in management decisions and for balancing multiple resource objectives in planning forest activities. Examples of those techniques include scoping and request for comments as a part of National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis on proposals, and the Scenery Management System (SMS), which is used to define the boundaries of the A.T. management area or management prescription on most national forests, and to evaluate potential visual resource impacts as viewed from the A.T. on all national forests.

Additional direction for the management of the A.T. on national forest lands can be found online (see the National Forest Management Act [planning page index](#)), in agency [directives](#) (*Forest Service Manual*, *Forest Service Handbook*, and their supplements), and in the several cooperative agreements among the USFS, the NPS, and ATC that are referenced in this *Planning Guide*.

With the implementation of a new agency planning rule in 2008, future forest plan revisions will be less specific and contain fewer standards for management. It is anticipated that some direction currently found in forest plans will be moved to agency directive supplements.

Ranger district personnel should be primary partners in the preparation and review of LMPs.

## **State Agencies**

*Primary State Agencies*—On-the-ground management of state lands is usually carried out by the relevant state park, forest, or local fish and wildlife office. (State-level agencies are listed in the table at the end of this chapter.) State agencies administer state lands under different authorities, and the degree of emphasis given to Trail matters varies from agency to agency. Because of this wide variation in agency charters, a need has been identified for “A.T. management zones” or “corridors” on state-owned lands in order to establish consistent policies and regulations for lands within the A.T. corridor. ATC has initiated a series of cooperative agreements with affected state agencies to establish those zones and articulate the roles of the state primary and secondary agencies, the Trail clubs, ATC and the federal agency partners. A table of the current status of those agreements is included in [Appendix G](#).

*Secondary State Agencies*—Secondary partners include state and local agencies with responsibilities or activities that may affect the A.T. in some way, *e.g.*, departments of transportation, law-enforcement agencies, search-and-rescue agencies, fire-control agencies, fish-and-wildlife agencies, and historic-preservation agencies. Each affected agency should be consulted during the local management planning process and offered an opportunity for review and comment. Local law-enforcement officials and emergency-response personnel should participate in the development of strategies for handling emergencies and other incidents on the Trail.

*The State’s Role in Preparation of the Local Management Plan*—All state agencies that manage land traversed by the A.T. should take an active role in development of the local management plan. The Trail club should contact them early in the planning process and get a clear understanding of state policies and regulations affecting lands crossed by the Trail. Regardless of whether a cooperative agreement is in place, state agencies should be offered the opportunity for review and comment on the plan in its draft form, and relevant comments should be incorporated into the final version of the plan.

**PRIMARY PARTNERS IN THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM  
(listed by Trail state)**

<u>STATE</u>	<u>TRAIL ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>PRIMARY FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES</u>
<i>Maine</i>	Maine Appalachian Trail Club Appalachian Mountain Club	Baxter State Park Maine Dept. of Conservation Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
<i>New Hampshire</i>	Appalachian Mountain Club Dartmouth Outing Club	N.H. Dept. of Resources and Economic Development White Mountain National Forest
<i>Vermont</i>	Dartmouth Outing Club Green Mountain Club	Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Green Mountain National Forest
<i>Massachusetts</i>	AMC-Berkshire Chapter	Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation Mass. Turnpike Authority
<i>Connecticut</i>	AMC-Connecticut Chapter	Conn. Dept. of Environmental Protection
<i>New York</i>	NY-NJ Trail Conference	N.Y. State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation N.Y. Dept. of Environmental Conservation Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge
<i>New Jersey</i>	NY-NJ Trail Conference	N.J. Dept. of Environmental Protection Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	Keystone Trails Association Wilmington Trail Club Batona Hiking Club Appalachian Mountain Club-Delaware Valley Chapter Philadelphia Trail Club Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club Allentown Hiking Club Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club York Hiking Club Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club Mountain Club of Maryland Potomac Appalachian Trail Club	Penn. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources Penn. Bureau of State Parks (within DCNR) Penn. Bureau of Forestry (within DCNR) Penn. Game Commission Penn. Dept. of Public Welfare--So. Mountain Restoration Center Penn. State Police Penn. Emergency Management Agency Penn. Dept. of Transportation Penn. Turnpike Commission
<i>Maryland</i>	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club	Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources C&O Canal National Historical Park
<i>Virginia/ West Virginia</i>	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club Natural Bridge A.T. Club Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Old Dominion A.T. Club Outdoor Club at Virginia Tech. Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Smithsonian Institution Shenandoah National Park George Washington National Forest Jefferson National Forest Blue Ridge Parkway Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries West Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources
<i>Tennessee/North Carolina</i>	Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club Carolina Mountain Club Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Nantahala Hiking Club	Cherokee National Forest Tennessee Valley Authority Pisgah National Forest Nantahala National Forest Great Smoky Mountains National Park Tennessee Dept. of Environmental Health and Natural Resources
<i>Georgia</i>	Georgia Appalachian Trail Club	Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

## CHAPTER 1 (B)

### **Appalachian Trail Planning—Advice to Volunteers**

Planning is as important to effective management as ownership of the land itself. Many Trail clubs have found that formal communications with agency partners and written local management plans are essential to effective stewardship of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor lands. The local management-planning process ensures that Appalachian Trail clubs will have a lead role in managing and maintaining the Trail and that government partners are informed and supportive of the club's priorities. Also, it helps a Trail club organize its work, set priorities, and direct volunteer energy towards the most critical maintenance and management needs. ATC is able to provide grants, workshops, or direct assistance when Trail clubs take the initiative in planning what needs to be done. Most importantly, planning guarantees that the condition of the assigned Trail section will improve with time and steady team effort.

Each Trail club, with the participation of its agency partners and ATC, prepares a local management plan that clearly identifies the partners involved in managing a particular section of Trail, provides useful background on the club's history, identifies the Trail route and significant features for that section, and sets forth club policies and actions that the club intends to take to ensure that its section of Trail is well managed. Each local management plan should include:

- A brief summary or inventory of the important features of the club's assigned section;
- A summary of issues that the club needs to address;
- A statement of the club's policy for each issue or management program;
- An annual plan of work to be undertaken to maintain or improve the status of the club's assigned section.

#### **Organizing for Management Planning: The Committee Approach**

Clubs have organized for planning in a variety of ways. Ideally, the planning process involves a cross-section of the club membership—people involved in all aspects of A.T. management. The two most common approaches are either to form a club committee or to establish a management committee composed of representatives from the club, ATC, agency partners, and appropriate local groups.

A planning committee within the club works well for Trail sections on national forest lands, in established national parks, or on older, established state public lands, where the management situation is relatively simple, with few partners or jurisdictions and easily identified management problems.

A committee with wider representation may be imperative for National Park Service corridor lands and some state lands where jurisdictions overlap, land ownerships are complex, or complicated management problems exist or are likely to crop up. In such cases, A.T. volunteers sustain the committees, but state agencies, local officials, Trail neighbors, farmers, police officers, and members of the general public are invited to participate.

Several Trail clubs have been tempted to opt for the more "efficient" approach of unilateral planning and plan-writing by one or a few individuals. While this might be appropriate for a first draft, both the short- and long-range benefits of involving more club members, agency officials, and Trail neighbors far outweigh the possible disadvantages. A plan written without including the community of club members, government partners, ATC representatives, and Trail neighbors may become a lifeless document that ignores the educational benefits of an open dialogue. The best results arise from involved people working together, sharing ideas, and reaching consensus on how to manage the Trail.



## Opportunities for Public Input in A.T. Planning

Public input is an essential component of A.T. planning. In fact, more opportunities for public input probably exist in the A.T.'s process than in any other national park or forest-planning effort.

After the amendments to the National Trail Systems Act in 1978, the National Park Service solicited public input on the management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The 1981 [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#) included an extensive public review process. Hundreds of comments were received from local, state, and federal government entities, local and national trail organizations, and individuals and organizations interested or involved in the management of the Appalachian Trail. The *Comprehensive Plan* established overall philosophical goals for Trail management and committed A.T. management partners, which include the land-managing agencies, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the local Trail clubs, to develop plans at the local level that incorporate those broad philosophical goals.

A second level of planning and public input takes place at the regional/local level. The [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#) does not usurp or replace the ongoing planning processes of national parks, national forests, state land-managing agencies, and other local governmental administrative units with lands crossed by the Trail. The Forest Service's land- and resource-management plans and the National Park Service's general-management and backcountry-management plans incorporate the key management principles of the *Comprehensive Plan* and provide a critical forum for public input into management of that particular section of the Trail. ATC and the Trail clubs participate in those planning efforts as well.

A third level of planning takes place when the Trail club prepares its local management plan. As part of its planning process, the Trail club solicits comments from its agency partners, local government organizations, and other individuals and organizations that have expressed interest in management of the Trail.

A fourth level takes place at a specific site. Each site-specific action on federal lands with the potential to affect the environment (such as the construction of a Trail shelter or parking lot) is evaluated in an environmental analysis or environmental-impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Most state agencies have similar procedures. Both of those processes provide opportunities for public involvement [see Chapter 5 (M)].

## Getting Informed: Basic Documents and Tools

The philosophies, traditions, policies, regulations, techniques, and other information gleaned from years of management experience by ATC and Trail clubs are contained in a variety of documents. A management committee should assemble those materials in preparation for planning and writing plans. The following documents should provide most of the information a Trail club will need (some may not be applicable to a particular Trail club's section):

- ATC's *Local Management Planning Guide* (this document)
- The NPS *Comprehensive Plan for the Protection, Management, Development, and Use of the Appalachian Trail* (the [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#))
- Trail club files and maps
- NPS-ATPO Capital Plan, sometimes called the "Five-Year Plan" (see [Appendix H](#))
- Trail inventory and project maps and tables
- A.T. guidebooks and maps for the section of Trail
- The *Appalachian Trail Data Book*



- ATC's stewardship publication, *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*
- State cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding ([Appendix G](#))
- State trails acts and state agency plans
- ATC/U.S. Forest Service/National Park Service agreements
- Forest Service manual supplement (Region 8) and regional standards (Region 9) for the A.T.
- The NPS-ATPO park manager's *Compendium of Orders* ([Appendix C](#))
- Forest Service land and resource management plans or national park management plans
- NPS segment maps and land-tract files

Some of these reference documents are included in the appendices or as links in this *Planning Guide*. Others are available from ATC, ATPO, or the U.S. Forest Service. Contact ATC headquarters or your ATC [regional office](#) for more information.

## How to Plan

Although the concept of a local management plan has developed over time, its purpose is still the same: to document the policies or principles of a Trail-maintaining club for all issues that have a bearing on the Appalachian Trail.

Planning is a directed, logical process of organizing common efforts to achieve maximum results. A simple planning model that can be used to help a Trail club put together a local management plan consists of four steps:

- 1) Inventory
- 2) Issue identification
- 3) Policy statement
- 4) Action plan

Step 1 provides an accurate status of the club's Trail section. In Step 2, a small committee of key club representatives identifies the key local management issues, using the information developed in the inventory and the issues contained in Parts 2–5 of this *Planning Guide*. In Step 3, the committee generates the club's approach to each issue. In Step 4, the committee sets forth the actions that the Trail club plans to carry out its policies for maintaining and managing the Trail. Each of these four steps is detailed below, and suggestions and illustrations are provided for accomplishing each step under "Trail Club Policy" and "Considerations for Planning" in each chapter in Parts 2–5.

## Step 1: Inventory

Conducting an inventory is simply a matter of taking stock of the existing situation. From a practical standpoint, some components of a local management plan can be easily inventoried (*e.g.*, shelters) while other components cannot (*e.g.*, hunting use). A Trail club should aim to develop an inventory for the following components of a local management plan:

- Trail maintenance needs
- Relocations
- Signs
- Bridges
- Streams
- Trailhead facilities and parking

- Overnight sites
- Drinking water supplies
- Exterior corridor-boundary survey (ECBS)—condition, problem spots
- Trained and certified chain-saw and crosscut-saw users
- Roads
- Road closures
- Dumps
- Sites with litter and graffiti
- Utility lines
- Communications sites
- Wind towers
- Geocache sites
- Structures
- Open areas and vistas
- Threatened or endangered species
- Exotic species
- Historic or cultural sites
- Special and unique areas

Most Trail clubs already have much of this information on hand in the collective written and unwritten knowledge of club members, agency partners, and Trail hikers and through the collaborative ATC/NPS/Club project-management cycle. That cycle, driven by NPS accountability requirements for funding, requires inventories and project planning to follow a standardized process and format described below. This process replaces the previous “Trail Assessment” process and is applicable to all A.T. lands.

*Trail Condition Assessment, Inventory and Project Planning*—The aim of the assessment and project planning process is to determine as objectively as possible what the funding needs are, and to be accountable for expenditures. NPS will only fund specific projects, so it in turn can be accountable for its spending. For further information on this, consult the FAQ and supporting documents in [Appendix H](#).

The new information gathering and management system (known as the “Capital Plan” or “Five-Year Plan”) was begun in 2004 when the baseline Trail assessment was begun. As it was impossible to physically assess the condition of the whole Trail within a year, ATPO developed an extrapolation based on random sampling of five-mile Trail sections. From that point on, 20 percent of the Trail was assessed every year, equally distributed over the regions, so that the whole Trail assessment was completed by the end of 2008. The Trail will continue to be fully assessed every five years. Assessments will be conducted jointly by ATC regional staff, Trail club representatives and NPS representatives. Clubs should contact their regional offices to schedule their Trail assessments.

Assessments now use global positioning system (GPS) units to capture both the location and attributes of relevant features—only NPS GPS units may be used as they have a data dictionary function that enables standardization of descriptions. ATC regional office staff has been trained in the use of those units and will handle data entry. The data gathered in the assessments will be processed by ATC and ATPO staff, and maps and tables showing the identified deficiencies will be sent back to the Trail clubs.

These are valuable tools for the Trail clubs to complete and update their five-year project plans, however, the plan must be updated annually for the coming years, and funding requests have to be made for the next open year. For example, a plan submitted in 2009 is for projects from 2012 through 2015. In 2010, any necessary changes must be made to projects planned for 2012 to 2015, and new projects must be submitted for 2016. Because the cooperatively managed assessments only occur once out of every five years for each Trail club, they will periodically be using three- to four-year-old assessment data to aid

their decisions. The clubs therefore still have the responsibility of surveying their sections and planning their maintenance projects each year—the main difference is that clubs are now asked to identify projects several years in advance and coordinate their planning with ATC regional offices to receive funding.

After prioritization at the regional and at the trail-wide level, funding requests are submitted to the NPS and also to other sources. When responses are received, ATC and ATPO consolidate their budgets and send the list of funded projects to the Trail clubs.

The other crucial step in the planning process is the reporting by the clubs to ATC regional offices upon completion of every work season. Clubs are asked to report which projects have been completed and which have not. In the case of projects that were not completed, clubs must decide whether to abandon them or move them to another year. If a project is moved to the newly opened year in the five-year cycle, it will have no ripple effect. However, if it is rescheduled earlier than that, it will displace one or more other projects. This decision-making process is part of the update of the five-year plan that must occur annually.

Details, diagrams and FAQs are included in [Appendix H](#). ATC regional staff is available to assist with planning and to answer any questions the Trail clubs may have.

Finally, Trail clubs are encouraged to use the local management plans to seek funding or means from other sources: just because the NPS budget year will not fund certain projects in a particular fiscal year, does not mean they cannot be tackled if other resources, volunteer and financial, are secured.

*Other Sources of Inventory Data*—Many other sources of basic information about the Trail are available. Agency partners often have map-based inventories of natural resources for lands under their jurisdictions. Trail users often leave comments in registers or in letters to the Trail club or to ATC. A.T. guidebooks and the *Appalachian Trail Data Book* also contain important information.

*The Completed Inventory* —The finished product should be a list of basic inventory data for the club's Trail section, accompanied by a set of maps showing the major features, Trail facilities, and land ownerships. The inventory and maps can be attached to the local management plan as appendices.

## **Step 2: Issue Identification**

The next step in the planning process is identifying management concerns or issues from sources such as Trail club members, agency partners, Trail users, adjacent landowners, local government officials, and the general public. At a minimum, the plan should address the issues or topics outlined in Parts 2–5 of the *Planning Guide*, as shown in the sample “Table of Contents” in the next chapter.)

Those issues generally have been recognized as issues of regional or Trail-wide concern. There also may be issues specific to a club's section of the Trail, such as Trail use and maintenance within a municipal watershed, winter Trail use, research activities, and alpine-ski development.

The Trail club's LMP should have an issue statement for each topic included in its plan. An issue statement is a short, direct statement of a problem. For example:

*Drinking water supplies are essential to hiker safety and comfort and can be threatened by activities of hikers, pets, livestock, and other Trail users. There are few water sources along certain sections of the Trail, and no water source can be assumed to be safe unless the water is treated.*

An issue statement can be written to in a manner that is more specific to a club's Trail section, however unless unusual conditions exist, it does not need to be any more complex than the example above.

### **Step 3: Policy Statement**

A policy statement is a response to an issue that defines a course or method of action to guide and determine present and future decisions. For each issue, the Trail-maintaining club must define its policy. The existing policies of ATC and the National Park Service for each issue are provided under "Existing Policy" in each chapter in Parts 2–5. (A list of policies adopted by ATC is provided in [Appendix D](#).) Individual state-agency policies can be obtained from the agency responsible for managing lands. A Trail club has to comply with agency laws and regulations, as does ATC. However, club policies may differ from ATC policies—ATC policies are parameters, or guidelines, only. While consistency is an ideal, in reality each club faces a unique set of issues and must develop its own policies to guide its actions. A Trail club may adopt ATC policy or a policy developed by another Trail club or develop its own policy for any given issue.

In a typical planning model, policy statements are "issue-driven." Issues are presented as questions or problem statements, and policies are presented as answers or management prescriptions. In response to the sample issue statement, "Drinking water supplies are essential to hiker safety and comfort..." the following policies could be developed:

- Water sources should be protected from contamination by livestock use and unsanitary human use. Privies will be located as far as feasible from water sources and at an elevation lower than water sources.
- Where necessary to prevent livestock use, springs and other water sources will be fenced.
- The guidebook will describe water sources along the Trail, indicate precautions for minimizing the potential for contamination, and describe methods of water treatment.
- Signs will be posted at major trailheads advising hikers to treat water taken from backcountry sources before use.

### **Step 4: Action Plan**

An action plan is a means for identifying and setting priorities for work that needs to be done. The current Trail condition assessment and inventory program mentioned previously results in up-to-date lists of the work that needs to be done, as well as annual work plans based on priorities and available funding for several of the management issues that Trail clubs deal with. However, some issues are not covered by that process and require separate action plans. Further guidance on tackling these issues can be found in the "Action Plan" paragraph of the chapters listed below.

Part 3: Public use, Public Information and Emergency Response

- 3 (A) Emergency Planning and Coordination
- 3 (B) Special Events and Large-Group Use
- 3 (C) Public Information, Education and Outreach Programs
- 3 (D) Caretaker and Ridgerunner Programs
- 3 (F) Minimum Impact Backcountry Use
- 3 (G) Advertising in the A.T. Corridor

Part 4: Conflicting Use, Competing Use and Corridor Monitoring—all chapters

Part 5: Natural, Cultural and Scenic Resources—all chapters

## CHAPTER 1 (C)

**The Local Management Plan—What to Include in the Written Plan**

The end result of the local management planning process for the Appalachian Trail is a document called the “local management plan.” Most Trail clubs have patterned their plans after the format of the example contained in this chapter. However, any format for the written plan is acceptable, provided the plan includes the contents discussed in this chapter. Trail club local management plans should be updated at least once every ten years.

**What to Include in a Local Management Plan**

At a minimum, a local management plan should include:

1. A brief introduction describing the purpose of the plan, the Trail club’s role, the roles of its management partners, and the section of Trail covered by the plan;
2. A summary of Trail-maintenance and -management issues present on the section of Trail and a statement of club policy for each issue or management program affecting the club’s Trail section;
3. An inventory of the important physical features located on the club’s assigned Trail section, a map or set of maps of the club’s assigned section, and copies of any cooperative agreements or other documents that define roles of management partners;
4. The updated five-year plan of work to be undertaken to maintain or improve the status of the club’s assigned section.

**A Sample Format for a Local Management Plan**

*Introduction*—State the purpose of the local management plan: to guide the club in fulfilling its responsibility for the maintenance and management of a specific section of the Appalachian Trail in cooperation with its agency partner(s). Reference the documents that provide the authority for the local management plans—the [National Trails System Act](#) (Public Law 90-543, as amended), the 1981 [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#), and the agreements that delegate responsibility for maintenance and management of the Appalachian Trail to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and its member Trail clubs. Include a short paragraph on the planning process—who was involved in preparing the plan, how the public was given an opportunity to participate, and how often the plan will be updated and reviewed.

*Background*—This section contain two basic components: a description of the Trail route and a short history of the club's involvement in maintenance and management of the Trail. The description of the Trail route should identify important physiographic features and jurisdictions of land-managing agencies. A map or set of maps showing the Trail route and corridor should be included, either in this section or as an appendix.

*The Partners*—The roles of the primary partners, which include the local Trail club, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the state agency, and the federal land-managing agency, should be briefly outlined and any cooperative agreements or other documents defining management responsibilities should be referenced and included as appendices. Most of the information concerning these roles is outlined in Chapter 1 (A) and may be used for preparing this section of the local management plan. If appropriate, regional committees, such as the Orange/Rockland County A.T. Management Committee or the Maryland A.T. Committee, should be mentioned.

*Issues and Policies*—These are the heart of the local management plan. For each issue that the Trail club identifies (including all issues identified in Parts 2–5 of the *Planning Guide*), it should prepare a short issue statement and corresponding policy statement or statements.

A detailed explanation of how to develop an issue statement and a policy statement is provided in Chapter 1 (B), “Appalachian Trail Planning—Advice to Volunteers,” under subheadings titled “Issue Identification,” and “Developing a Policy Statement.” The issues and policies may be prepared according to the general statements that respond to the issue, may be grouped by common themes (the format used in the *Planning Guide*), or they may simply be listed by issue.

*Action Plan*—The Trail club's five-year work plan, as well as any other planning required by specific policies (for example: emergency planning). The club's most recent Trail-assessment information is available upon request from ATC staff and should be included. A long-range plan, if one has been written, should be incorporated.

*Appendices*—Appendices should include:

1. A map or set of maps showing the Trail route, basic Trail features, topography, and land ownership;
2. Cooperative agreements, delegation agreements, memoranda of understanding, *etc.*;
3. Inventory data.

### **Sample Table of Contents for a Local Management Plan**

The following table of contents is an example of the general structure of the local management plan. If a Trail club does not have any need to deal with a specific issue listed in the *Planning Guide* (such as overnight-use areas or wilderness, because there are no overnight-use areas or designated wilderness areas on the club's Trail section), simply include a one-sentence statement to that effect. Policies on additional issues that the club must deal with, such as winter Trail use or ski-area development, can be added where appropriate.

1. Introduction
  - A. Statement of Purpose
2. Background
  - A. Route of the Appalachian Trail
  - B. Land ownership
  - C. Inventories (by reference to appendices)
3. The Partnership and the Planning Process
  - A. Club Roles and Responsibilities
  - B. ATC Roles and Responsibilities
  - C. Agency Partner(s) Roles and Responsibilities
  - D. Roles and Responsibilities of Other Parties
4. Issues and Policies—Managing the Physical Trail
  - A. Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance
  - B. Accessibility
  - C. Relocations
  - D. Stream Crossings and Bridges
  - E. Trailheads and Parking
  - F. Side and Connecting Trails

- G. Overnight Use—Shelters, Campsites, and Privies
  - H. Drinking Water Supplies and Water Quality
  - I. Sanitation
  - J. Managing the Trail for a Primitive Experience
  - K. Safety Training and Certification
5. Issues and Policies—Public Use, Public Information, and Emergency Response
- A. Emergency Planning and Coordination
  - B. Special Events and Large-Group Use
  - C. Public Information, Education, and Outreach Programs
  - D. Ridgerunner and Caretaker Programs
  - E. Trail Signs
  - F. Minimum-Impact Backcountry Use
  - G. Advertising in the A.T. Corridor
6. Issues and Policies—Corridor Monitoring and Management
- A. Corridor Monitoring
  - B. Motorized Uses
  - C. Litter and Graffiti
  - D. Hunting
  - E. Horses and Pack Animals
  - F. Roads and Utilities
  - G. Wind Energy Facilities
  - H. Road Closures and Access Control
  - I. Special Uses
  - J. Structures and Dams
  - K. Military Maneuvers
  - L. Bicycles
  - M. Hang Gliding
  - N. Nonhiking Recreational Uses of Trail Lands
  - O. Impacts of Land Development in the Vicinity of the A.T.
  - P. Geocaching
7. Issues and Policies—Managing Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources
- A. Resource Management
  - B. Climate Change
  - C. Open Areas and Vistas
  - D. Timber Management
  - E. Pest Management
  - F. Threatened and Endangered Species
  - G. Wildlife Management
  - H. Vegetation Management
  - I. Cultural Resources
  - J. Wilderness
  - K. Special and Unique Areas
  - L. Agricultural Use
  - M. National Environmental Policy Act Compliance
  - N. Exotic Species
8. The Club Action Plan
- A. Annual Work Plan
  - B. Long-Range Plan

9. Appendices
  - A. Cooperative Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding
  - B. Inventories
  - C. Maps
  - D. References



## CHAPTER 1 (D)

**ATC Policy Development and Adoption**

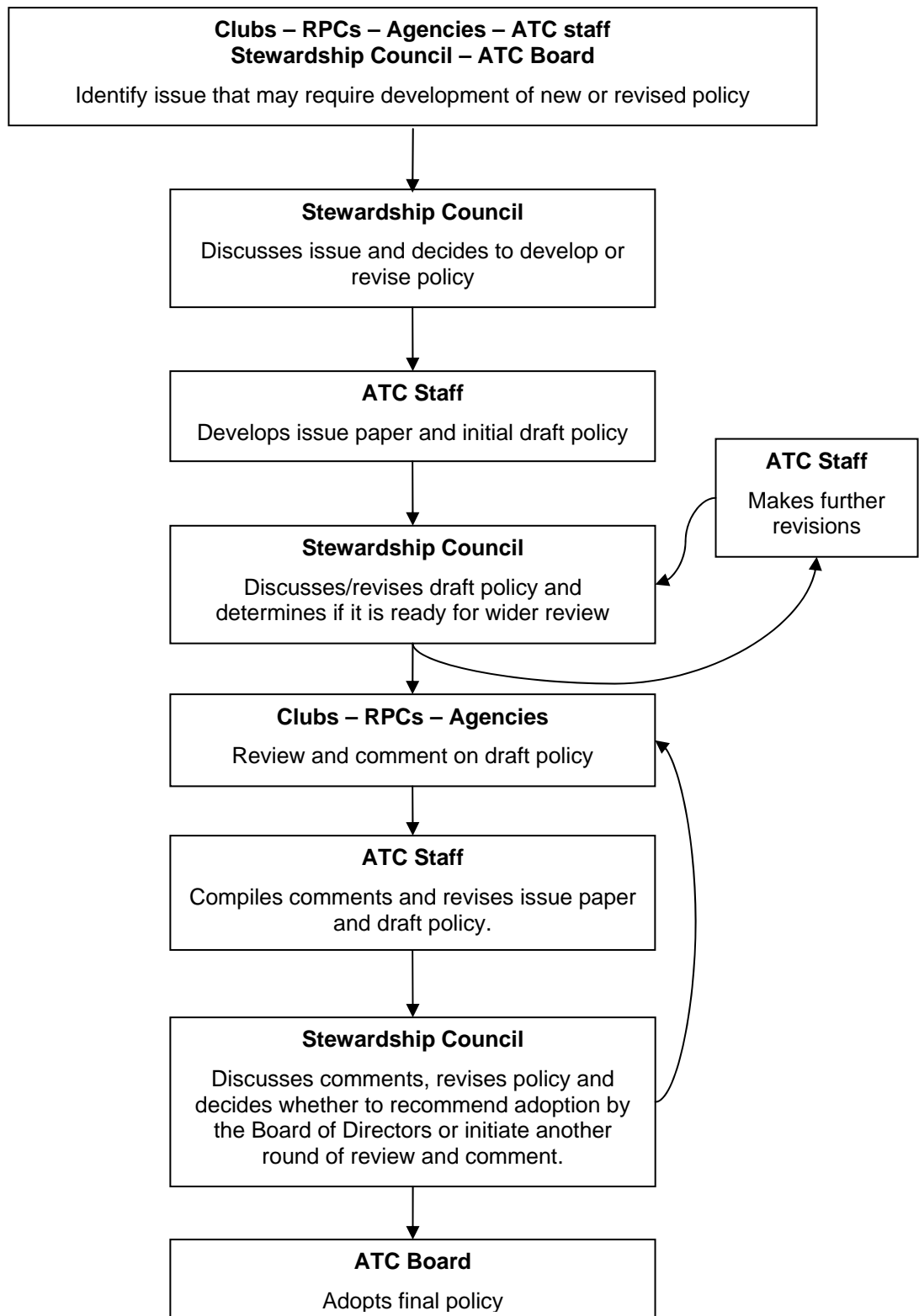
Beginning in the mid-1970s, ATC's management activities in behalf of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail greatly accelerated, both as a result of the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543, as amended) and in anticipation of the Appalachian Trail bill, which was signed by President Jimmy Carter on March 21, 1978. The new legislation emphasized the need for protecting the Trail, including acquiring a corridor, and authorized \$90 million for that purpose. Today, the acquisition program is nearly complete: 99 percent of the Trail is located across public lands, with the narrow, protected corridor authorized in 1978 connecting multiple older federal, state, and local public lands.

With about 30 private Trail clubs and more than 65 public agencies joining forces in the cooperative management of the A.T., as described in Chapter 1 (A), the Conservancy adopted an open process of policy development and adoption that today is reflected throughout the pages of this *Local Management Planning Guide*. In the interest of brevity, this document does not include most of the background information on the history of each policy, only the date of adoption.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy policies are intended to guide the ATC Board, its Stewardship Council, committees, and staff in their decision-making for the management of the Trail. ATC policies also are meant to inform the Trail clubs and agency partners and to help coordinate decision-making by all of the partners toward more consistent management for the entire Trail. ATC also provides this coordination by working with federal and state partners to understand rules and regulations and find acceptable compromises and adaptations between legal requirements and the unique volunteer-based work force dedicated to the Trail. Finally, ATC policies also serve to inform the general public of ATC's position on matters concerning the Appalachian Trail. ATC welcomes input from Trail clubs and other interested parties during the formative stages of policy development. To that end, concerns and comments on proposed policies are solicited through ATC's regional partnership committee (RPC) meetings, letters to Trail-club presidents, and publication of draft versions of proposed policies in [The Register](#).

The schematic on the following page illustrates the process of developing and adopting ATC policies.

### The ATC Policy Development Process



## CHAPTER 1 (E)

**Review and Approval of Management Plans and Project Proposals**

In 2008, the Stewardship Council took the opportunity to review all of the policies that involved review and approval processes and updated them to be consistent with ATC's new governance structure while maintaining the traditions of the cooperative management system:

- Partnerships exist between local Trail clubs and agencies;
- There is a strong volunteer role;
- Management decisions are made by mutual agreement of the cooperating partners whenever possible;
- Management is decentralized to the extent possible;
- ATC is responsible for assuring that the A.T. is satisfactorily managed and serves in a back-up capacity to the Trail clubs.

Since the reorganization, members of the Board of Directors and Stewardship Council are not involved in day-to-day management of the Trail to the extent the members of the former Board of Managers were. ATC's strategic plan envisioned that local A.T. management decisions, within existing policy, would fall to the regional level. Regional staff is charged with seeking advice from local A.T. managers, both volunteers and agency partners, to make fair, effective, and appropriate decisions. In most cases, the knowledge and experience on regional issues and local Trail projects lie within the volunteer base and staff at the regional level. Consequently, the regional director is in the best position to engage local volunteers, encourage dialogue, and make timely decisions in behalf of ATC.

To maintain consistency among the regions the regional directors will be encouraged to consult with their colleagues in the other regions, as well as ATC headquarters and NPS-ATPO, staff, other agency partners, and volunteers (including members of the Stewardship Council).

**ATC Policy**—Following review by and the concurrence of all four of ATC's regional partnership committees and based on the recommendation of the Stewardship Council, the ATC Board of Directors adopted the following policy for the review and approval of management plans and project proposals on November 1, 2008:

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and provide guidance to Trail-maintaining clubs, regional partnership committees and ATC volunteers and staff on the process for review and approval of management plans and management project proposals.

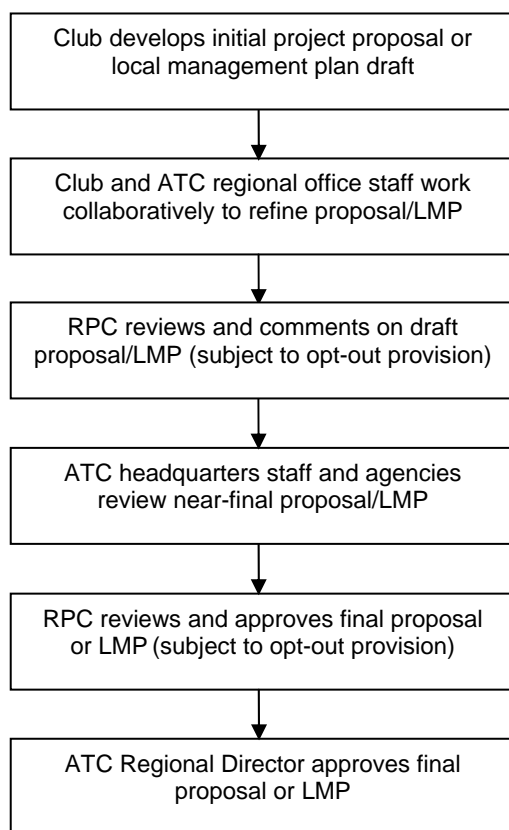
In general, the review and approval process is designed to achieve several objectives:

- Involve all of the relevant partners (Trail clubs, agencies and ATC) in the decision-making process;
- Review project and plan proposals efficiently while providing local volunteers, through the regional partnership committees (RPC), the opportunity to be involved early in the process;
- Have as many management decisions as possible made at the regional level;
- Meet ATC's obligations under its management agreements with land-managing agencies.

Scope: This guidance applies to approval of the following:

- Local management plans
- Trail relocations (minor and major)
- New side or connecting trails
- Construction of new or replacement overnight facilities
- Voluntary Trail club maintenance reassignments

Process: The review and approval process is diagrammed and described below:



The focal point during the processing of projects and plans is the ATC regional office. ATC regional staff will assist clubs and other partners in refining initial proposals, assembling the necessary supporting information and engaging other management partners in the process. Regional staff, especially the regional director, will work closely with the RPC during both the initial and final reviews.

The Regional Partnership Committee chair has the option to “opt-out” of RPC review and approval of minor local management plan amendments, trail relocations, new side or connecting trails or construction of overnight facilities. This decision will be made by the RPC chair in consultation with the club or agency

making the proposal and the ATC regional director.

Responsibility for approval of proposals covered by this guidance is delegated to the regional directors unless specified otherwise in specific policies.

In order to maintain consistency among the regions, regional directors are encouraged to consult with their colleagues in the other regions, as well as ATC headquarters staff, agency partners, and volunteers (including members of the Stewardship Council).

If a regional director feels that a specific decision should be made at a higher level in ATC, the director should forward a request to do so to the director of conservation. The request should include an explanation of the reasons for elevating the decision. The director of conservation will work with staff and volunteer leaders to determine the appropriate decision-making level. Possible levels are director of conservation, chief operating officer, executive director, Stewardship Council and Board of Directors.

The process is designed to involve all partners in the decision-making process and reach consensus. However, if a Trail club or other partner is dissatisfied with a regional director's decision, a review of the decision may be requested. The request will be forwarded to the director of conservation. Further review, up to the Board of Directors, may be requested. Decisions of the Board are final.

### **Endorsement of a Local Management Plan**

Local management plans undergo a review process to ensure consistency with the aims and objectives of ATC, the policies in this *Planning Guide*, and those of the land-management agencies. This process is similar for any important Trail stewardship decision as described above.

The final step in preparing a local management plan is to obtain a formal endorsement of the plan from ATC. A sample approval form is included as [Appendix A](#). At a minimum, the following individuals and organizations should have reviewed the plan before it is submitted for endorsement:

- The Trail club's officers
- The appropriate representative(s) of the land-managing agency partner(s)
- The National Park Service Appalachian Trail Park Office
- The ATC regional director
- The ATC director of conservation operations
- The regional partnership committee

Perhaps the most effective method for obtaining review and comment prior to endorsement of a local management plan is informal consultation: contact individuals in the Trail club, ATC, the Appalachian Trail Park Office, the land-managing agencies, and members of the public who would have an interest in the plan, and offer to let them review a draft and provide comments before the plan is finalized. An informal review can take the place of a formal request for review and comment. If review is formally requested, reviewers should be given at least 30 days to comment.

Development and endorsement of local management plans will follow the process outlined in ATC's policy for review and approval of management plans and project proposals in Chapter 1 (D). *Please note that ATC requests that all club LMPs be submitted in Microsoft Word and PDF formats.*

Following endorsement of Trail club plans involving NPS-acquired lands, the NPS-Appalachian Trail park manager may designate overnight-use areas (if overnight use is restricted to those areas) or close a Trail section to open fires (if fires are an issue), or make similar designations or closures that are promulgated under the NPS [Code of Federal Regulations](#) as proposed or described in the local management plan. These are periodically published by the NPS A.T. Park Office in its *Compendium of Orders* ([Appendix C](#)), a listing of all geographically enforceable closures, making club-recommended controls legally enforceable.

## **PART 2**

### **The Physical Trail**

## CHAPTER 2 (A)

**Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance**

From its beginnings, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy has considered as its main responsibility ensuring that the Appalachian Trail is well-maintained and well-marked for hiker use. ATC has viewed Trail design, construction, and maintenance as the primary job of the Trail-maintaining clubs, and a well-maintained and well-marked section of Trail as the basic measure of a club's success.

Even before the Trail was completed, the 1931 publication of the *Trail Manual*, *ATC Publication No. 1*, established basic guidelines for A.T. maintenance—so “that a trail of such magnitude, laid out and maintained by many persons, would in the essentials be uniform throughout its length, certain trail techniques and practices were gradually evolved and adopted.”

In 1981, ATC produced *Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance* to serve as a guide to volunteers who were involved in designing, constructing, or maintaining portions of the Appalachian Trail. Shortly thereafter, ATC published an abbreviated version of the guide, called *The Appalachian Trail Fieldbook*, to provide Trail workers with a handy field manual. The original guide has since been updated and the 2000 version was renamed *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*. The *Fieldbook* was republished in 2003. (These books can be purchased by Trail workers at a substantial discount by calling ATC's toll-free fulfillment center at 888-287-8673. The discount is not available at the online [Ultimate A.T. Store](#).)

ATC supports accessibility in developed outdoor recreation sites using an “exceptions-based” approach. A.T. managers will consider access for people with disabilities during planning of all A.T. facilities. See Chapter 2 (B) for more information.

**Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—In 1979, ATC formally affirmed the primary mission of the Trail community:

The Appalachian Trail in its entirety shall be kept forever open, obvious, and narrowly passable for hiking. The treadway shall pass lightly over the land to provide for the least disturbance to the natural setting. The Trail shall be marked and cleared to offer passage that may be both enjoyable for the reasonably prepared and in harmony with the natural environment... so that a hiker unfamiliar with the area can discern the direction of the route and the location of water sources and facilities.

Also in 1979, ATC adopted more detailed standards for clearing, marking, and treadway maintenance. These standards encourage the use of native materials and minimum tools and techniques, in order to retain the simple, primitive character of the Trail. The standards are stated in general terms, which permits continued local discretion, resourcefulness, and artistry in Trail stewardship. They are found in ATC's *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance* and ATC's hip-pocket summary version, *The Appalachian Trail Fieldbook*. These standards and guidelines generally are recognized by all clubs and agencies as the policy guide for Trail design, construction, and maintenance.

*Local Adaptations of Standards*—In 1983, ATC passed a resolution regarding the review and approval of local adaptations of standards:

Clubs must consult with ATC before initiating changes. If the adaptation is endorsed and the agency partner concurs, the club's standards should be stated clearly in its local management plan and steps should be taken to inform the public through guidebooks, signs or other means. Failure to follow this simple procedure could lead to confusion on the part of Trail users.

*Double-Blazing Standards*—The standard (two-inch by six-inch) white paint blaze has marked the A.T. footpath since the 1930s. ATC has advocated the use of the double blaze to indicate turns or other places where hikers should be alert. In July 1995, ATC's Board of Managers adopted the following amendment in response to the increasing variations in blazing standards:

Individual clubs may elect to choose one of two alternatives for double paint blazes, the in-line double paint blaze or the standard offset double paint blaze, but no other variations. Painted arrows or blazes that are slanted or at an angle are nonstandard and should be removed and replaced by standard blazes. Only one of the two variations for double paint blazing at turns may be chosen, and it must be chosen for application to the club's entire Trail section. In areas where clubs choose the offset blaze, an in-line blaze may be desirable at locations other than turns, where a double-blaze warning is necessary.

If a club intends to change its blazing style, it should consult with its agency partner(s) before implementation, and it should incorporate these changes into its local management plan prior to implementing the change. Individual maintainers should not effect a change to the offset blaze on the basis of their personal preferences. It is hoped that—by giving maintaining clubs discretion to choose only one of two variations—nonstandard blazing should be reduced, if not eliminated.

Both the in-line and the offset double blaze should be used sparingly, since they become meaningless with frequent use. Double blazes are used to indicate abrupt changes in the direction of the A.T. or at other points where hikers should be especially alert. Use two standard (two-inch by six-inch) white blazes, one above the other and two inches apart; if using the offset, the upper blaze should be clearly off-set approximately two inches in the direction of the turn.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service has generally accepted ATC standards for constructing and maintaining the A.T. on its lands. However, NPS maintains that trail design will vary to accommodate a wide range of users and be appropriate to user patterns and site conditions. Further, wetlands should be avoided wherever possible and, when not possible, should be spanned by a boardwalk (constructed from sustainable materials), so as not to disturb delicate hydrological and ecological processes. Trails will offer visitors a primitive outdoor experience and should remain unsurfaced and modest in character. The use of nonnative materials in trail design or maintenance is not permitted. Trail maintenance structures, such as water bars, may be provided where they are necessary for resource preservation or where safety hazards exist (section 9.2.2.2 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#))

The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) also provides the following philosophical direction:

Trail design, construction, and maintenance should reflect a concern for safety without detracting from the opportunity for hikers to experience the wild and scenic lands by their own unaided efforts, and without sacrificing aspects of the Trail which may challenge their



skill and stamina. Attempts to provide protection for the unprepared lead to a progressive diminution of the experience available to others.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The first step is to list Trail-condition problems. Most clubs conduct an annual walk-through inspection of their section of Trail in preparation for scheduling the coming season's routine work trips and special construction projects. ATC's *Appalachian Trail Fieldbook* provides basic guidance for detecting problems and defining maintenance needs. Other information can be assembled from monitoring reports, Trail-condition reports, optimal location reviews, and comments from hikers in registers, letters, and phone calls. Maintenance needs, particularly needs of a serious nature, also may be noted in Trail assessments (see discussion in Chapter 1 (B) and [Appendix H](#)). Trail assessments can and should be updated with information from annual inspection programs.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The club's local management plan should state the club's intention to maintain the A.T. as described in *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*. This recognition should be stated in local management plans and should describe any local adaptations or clarifications.

**Action Plan**—Once a list of maintenance needs has been prepared, the Trail club needs to set priorities. Actions to correct potential safety hazards usually receive first priority, followed by maintenance needed to prevent erosion and damage to vegetation, then maintenance or construction to provide for a minimum level of hiker comfort. Assign a task leader for each specific major project undertaken by the club. Routine maintenance of the footpath and facilities is a responsibility normally handled by assignment of a section of the Trail to an individual maintainer or overseer. Routine maintenance is not normally put on a priority list. However, if routine maintenance has not been done on a particular section of Trail, it then becomes a matter of more immediate concern that needs to be acknowledged in a list of duties undertaken by the club.

In addition to the work trip, which the Trail clubs traditionally have used to tackle major maintenance and construction projects, other opportunities exist. ATC, and often an agency partner, can contribute manpower, tools, and money, given advance notice of a critical problem. ATC has developed a seasonal Trail-crew program specifically to assist clubs in handling major projects and train club volunteers in Trail construction. ATC crews and other volunteer crews often are able to assist club volunteers in undertaking large projects. The volunteer crew's involvement often serves as a focal point for rallying club members on a large project. Regional organizations, such as the Keystone Trails Association, organize hands-on workshops, which are attended by other Trail clubs, groups, and agency personnel. This can be a particularly effective technique for major litter-cleanup campaigns, site-reclamation work, and tree-planting projects.

## CHAPTER 2 (B)

### Accessibility

Accessibility is a permanent part of the list of design considerations for trails and facilities. Awareness of access issues in the Trail community has increased in recent years, fostered by legislation and societal realities. As the population ages and as interest in nature, wildlife, and physical exercise continues to be strong, public demand for accessible opportunities along the Appalachian Trail continues to grow.

There is a desire among Trail partners to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to use the Appalachian Trail where appropriate and feasible. However, a pedestrian trail that meets accessibility guidelines is a highly designed path, generally with imported surfacing and a gentle slope. It avoids both man-made and natural obstacles. Accessible trails require more involved construction and maintenance techniques and resources. The outdoor community has wrestled with the challenge of increasing recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities on public lands while at the same time ensuring that such opportunities do not alter the settings of these recreational experiences.

Federal laws relating to accessibility include the [Architectural Barriers Act](#) (1968) and the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (1990). National policy guidance on integrating accessibility with outdoor recreation management on public lands, including the Appalachian Trail, resides with the U.S. Access Board. In the 1990s, the board convened a group of outdoor recreation stakeholders, including ATC, to develop new guidelines for accessibility on trails and outdoor facilities. While the work of that group has been completed, the resulting guidelines have not yet been adopted.

In 2006, after a long public process, the USFS developed a set of guidelines to be utilized on all USFS lands to provide direction and tools for land managers to address increasing requests and inquiries regarding opportunities for persons with disabilities on national forest lands. The USFS Trail Accessibility Guidelines ([FSTAG](#)) and the Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines ([FSORAG](#)) define how and when accessibility along trails and at facilities on U.S. Forest Service lands will be considered. Both FSTAG and FSORAG are nearly identical to the Access Board's draft guidelines. *Although FSTAG and FSORAG are specific to USFS lands, they are considered to be the best standard to utilize in complying with federal accessibility laws, and, until the Access Board releases its final guidelines, should be used on all Appalachian Trail lands regardless of ownership.*

Where opportunities have permitted, ATC has worked with local Trail clubs and its agency partners to develop a number of accessible Trail segments. Examples include the one-mile-long crossing of the Pochuck wetland in New Jersey, a 1.1-mile loop trail in Falls Village, Connecticut, an accessible trail section at Thundering Falls, Vermont and a section of the Trail with scenic vistas on the Osborne Farm in Tennessee. Accessible Trail sections are being constructed in New York at Bear Mountain.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—The following resolution was adopted by ATC in November 1995:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy supports the concept of accessibility in outdoor environments, provided that modifications are not made that would detract from the primitive recreational environment or experience. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and its federal land-managing agency partners consider wheelchairs, prostheses, and other devices needed by individuals whose disabilities may require such devices for the purposes of mobility, as part of those persons and not as mechanized or motorized vehicles or means of transport. Sections of the Appalachian Trail that are accessible to varying degrees for people

with disabilities, such as those sections that coincide with the Virginia Creeper Trail and C&O Canal Towpath, may provide opportunities for full access and should be examined for such purposes on a case-by-case basis. However, the Appalachian Trail should not be altered, and construction of facilities out of character with the primitive recreational purpose of the Trail should be prohibited, unless such alterations can be made without changing the fundamental character of the backcountry recreational experience provided by the Trail.

ATC policy will change as federal guidelines and requirements are adopted. In the interim, ATC acknowledges that use of FSTAG and FSORAG are required on all national forest system lands crossed by the Trail and urges the use of FSTAG and FSORAG or equivalent universal designs for project-planning on all jurisdictions. ATC has developed drawings and guidelines for constructing accessible shelters, tent platforms, and privies that meet FSORAG requirements (see [Appendix I](#)).

ATC, with NPS funds, has prepared a manual entitled *Increasing Opportunities for Access on the Appalachian Trail: [A Design Guide](#)* to aid Trail clubs and agencies with universal access issues.

### **Federal Policy**

**NPS Policy**—All reasonable efforts will be undertaken to make NPS facilities, programs, and services accessible to and usable by all people, including those with disabilities. Specific guidance for implementing the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Section 507 of the Americans with Disabilities Act is found in the secretary of interior's regulations at 43 CFR Part 17 (section 8.2.4 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

Although the U.S. Access Board guidelines are not yet final, NPS follows those draft guidelines as the best available standard. U.S. Forest Service guidelines (see below) can be used, as they closely mirror the draft U.S. Access Board standards.

**USFS Policy**—In 2006, the Forest Service adopted Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG), which address hiking trails, and Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines (FSORAG), which apply to all new or altered camping facilities (including shelters), picnic areas, access routes and other constructed features, including pit toilets. These guidelines are required to be used on all national-forest system lands, however, site-specific conditions and impacts may allow exceptions to the requirements and technical specifications.

[FSTAG](#) applies only to trails in the national forest system that are designed for use of hikers/pedestrians, are new or altered, and connect directly to a currently accessible trail or a trailhead. It contains exceptions to prevent accessibility from being applied in a piecemeal fashion along a trail when access between trail segments is not possible. FSTAG also contains requirements to provide accessibility to special features where possible.

[FSORAG](#) has six sections of technical provisions that apply to new or altered constructed features in outdoor recreation areas and also enumerates four conditions for departure that provide for deviation from specific technical provisions. While there may be circumstances where designers and managers may not be able to achieve accessibility, they are always encouraged to provide access to the greatest extent possible.

## Considerations for Planning

A.T. managers should consider access for people with disabilities during planning of all A.T. facilities. Final decisions about design and construction of accessible A.T. segments and facilities should be made in cooperation with all A.T. management partners and in accordance with agency regulations and federal law. A.T. clubs should work closely with their ATC regional offices and land managers in planning and constructing new or altered Trail sections and facilities.

Accessible trail segments are most feasible and practicable where:

- Road and trailhead access with accessible parking are nearby;
- Topography is level to moderate;
- Physical and natural barriers are limited;
- Soil depths are adequate or can be mitigated with construction, such as boardwalks;
- On sloping terrain, the land base is sufficient to permit switchbacks and imported surface soils.

Accessible trail segments generally are not practicable or appropriate where:

- The prevailing trail surface is too rugged, rocky, steep or wet;
- The area is designated wilderness, or on other remote sections without access;
- Road access is limited to nonexistent;
- Topographic variations and barriers are common;
- Conflicting uses (*e.g.*, ATVs) are prevalent and problematic;

Considerations for overnight sites:

- Shelter designs can be modified to accommodate wheelchair transfer;
- Provide access for at least one wheelchair user at cooking pavilions, tenting areas and picnic tables;
- Enclosed privies can be modified, although with a larger footprint and less primitive character. Consider avoiding an enclosed privy building in favor of privacy screens at grade to optimize access to persons with disabilities.

**Inventory**—The Trail club should use the criteria listed above to determine the feasibility of developing accessible trail segments when planning new trail construction or relocations and look for opportunities that may be available. For example, in Falls Village, Connecticut, the Appalachian Mountain Club envisioned an abandoned 19<sup>th</sup> century horse track adjacent to the A.T. as an opportunity to build an accessible trail loop that is now part of the national scenic Trail.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The club should form its policy based on the access, topography and feasibility of its section, acknowledging federal direction and the necessity of accommodating persons with disabilities on its A.T. section and at its overnight facilities.

**Action Plan**—Most accessible trail and shelter projects require familiarization with emerging federal direction. Working with the land-managing agency, and ATC regional office, the Trail club should begin by identifying possible candidate sections and facilities where universal access may be improved over the long-term. The club should have plans for building accessible shelters, tent pads, and privies, as required by federal law (see [Appendix I](#)).

## CHAPTER 2 (C)

### Relocations

Where the Appalachian Trail is located on roads, or its location is undesirable because of resource damage or irreconcilable conflicts with incompatible uses, relocations may be made to provide a more desirable environment for the hiker or to protect the resource. Since the Trail was first completed as a continuous footpath in 1937, many relocations have been necessary to keep the Trail from being severed by subdivisions and road development. Those development threats were the main reason for the federal land-protection program. As federal and state agencies have acquired corridor land, Trail clubs have been involved in major relocations to place the Trail in the newly acquired A.T. corridor.

Care must be exercised so that Trail relocations do not diminish the primitive quality or simplicity of the footpath. Relocations also open up new areas to public use. All relocations should provide a Trail environment that is equal to or better than that of the existing location, while procedurally complying with the legal responsibilities of the landowning agency, particularly those established in the [National Trails System Act](#) and the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA) [see Chapter 5 (M)].

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—Although ATC does not have a formal policy on relocations, ATC ensures that all partners—the Trail clubs, land-managing agencies, and landowners—are involved and consulted, with proposals and plans shared and reviewed *before* relocations are constructed in the field. ATC also serves as guarantor that the primitive quality of the Appalachian Trail is maintained or enhanced in the relocation process. ATC cooperates with federal agencies in completing the environmental assessments required by NEPA. During the land-acquisition program particularly in the southern national forests, ATC and the Forest Service developed an “Optimal Location Review” process to ensure that the optimal A.T. route was selected before acquisition. (This process is still used on USFS lands in the Southern region of the Trail. Trail clubs should check with their ATC regional office for guidance). ATC amends the guidebook series and the annually published *Appalachian Trail Data Book* as necessary and posts descriptions of major relocations on its Web site.

*Relocation Procedure*—ATC, the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and state representatives on the former Appalachian National Scenic Trail Advisory Council (ANSTAC) approved a relocation procedure that required consultation among Trail clubs, ATC, and the landowning agencies or private landowners to ensure that a relocation benefits the Trail. Proposed “relocation approval requests” were classified as “Trivial” (less than 1,000 feet long and 75 feet laterally), “Minor” (more than 1,000 feet long and 75 feet laterally, but not affecting the verbal description or A.T. maps published in the *Federal Register*), or “Major,” requiring an amendment of the description of the Appalachian Trail published in the *Federal Register* notification. However, that relocation procedure was essentially tabled by the federal land-managing agencies’ promulgation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which evaluates environmental or cultural impacts on the human environment regardless of a proposal’s length. Compliance with NEPA is required for all relocations affecting any federal lands crossed by the Trail.

All significant relocations require written concurrence by the local maintaining club, ATC, and the land-managing agency partner. Use the general management approval form provided in [Appendix A](#).

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service retains authority for relocation of the Trail corridor.

*Federal Register Route Description*—In 1971, the National Park Service published a written description and maps of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail right-of-way in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 36, No.

197, October 9, 1971). That right-of-way defines the geographic scope of the federal government's authority to implement relocations. Relocations outside of that right-of-way require publication of amended right-of-way descriptions in the *Federal Register*.

The NPS land-acquisition program was expanded significantly with the adoption of Public Law 95-248, a 1978 amendment to the [National Trails System Act](#). The process required many minor and major relocations, as defined by the 1976 procedures, and a major effort to evaluate all relocations under NEPA. The National Park Service Appalachian Trail Park Office oversees this process and maintains the official record of the route of the Appalachian Trail, including all amendments to the *Federal Register*, all relocation-approval requests and appropriate NEPA documentation.

**U.S. Forest Service Policy**—NEPA review and approval is required in advance of all proposed relocations of the footpath of the Appalachian Trail on Forest Service lands.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—While relocations have become fewer in number as the land-acquisition program has been nearly completed, each Trail club should have a current list of all planned relocations consistent with its Trail assessment inventory. This list can be attached and maintained in its local management plan as an appendix.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club should identify the process (Trail assessment, optimal location review, or informal consultation with agency partner) and the general circumstances in which the club will consider Trail relocations. The policy developed by the club should recognize coordination with agency partners and ATC through use of relocation approval requests or other appropriate means.

**Action Plan**— Using its inventory of planned relocations, the Trail club should establish relocation priorities based on need and available resources. The club also should allow lead time for the agency partner to conduct an environmental assessment or other review of the project, such as evaluation for possible cultural resources. Detailed descriptions of major relocations should be provided to ATC's conservation department to ensure inclusion in publications and on ATC's Web site.

## CHAPTER 2 (D)

### Stream Crossings and Bridges

Traditionally, stream crossings have provided hikers with varying degrees of adventure and tales to be told around campfires. A simple, well-designed ford or a few step-stones suffice for most stream crossings during all or most of the year, except after heavy rains or spring runoff. Others cannot be safely crossed without bridging. However, bridges are expensive and need frequent maintenance. They are usually artificial intrusions into a natural environment and occasionally can be the object of graffiti or other vandalism.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—A policy on bridges and stream crossings was adopted by the ATC Board of Managers in April 1995 and amended by the ATC Board of Directors in November 2008 to reflect changes in the structure of the organization. The policy does not reflect current agency requirements or address accessibility for persons with disabilities and will need to be updated. Also note that due to the difficulty and expense of obtaining engineering assistance, the bridge design handbook and the bridge construction checklist referenced below in the Footbridge Design section have not been undertaken by ATC.

ATC's bridge policy currently reads as follows:

**Bridge Location**—The footpath of the Appalachian Trail should be located to minimize the need for stream crossings and bridges. However, in some areas, the best route for the Trail may require stream crossings. Fords, step-stones, or bridges should be located and installed to improve safety, minimize impacts to natural resources, or enhance the hiking experience.

Because bridges may detract from the natural, remote, and wild character of the Trail, ATC encourages the use of the simplest means available that will assist in providing a safe passage for Trail visitors. A simple, well-designed ford or a few step-stones may be used for most stream crossings. Unbridged stream crossings may be impassable shortly after a storm or during late winter and spring runoff; others may provide a certain measure of challenge even in low-water conditions. These primitive conditions are essential to the Appalachian Trail experience and deserve protection.

A bridge should be constructed or replaced only if:

- 1) It is essential to hiker safety during the snow-free hiking season, recognizing that a stream may be unfordable when seasonal or regular flooding occurs; or
- 2) It is absolutely necessary to protect sensitive resources, such as soils along a river's bank.

**Coalignment with Public Roads**—In situations where the Appalachian Trail is coaligned on or under a bridge with a road or highway, ATC will seek to ensure that state or local departments of transportation include adequate provisions for safe pedestrian use of such facilities. Provisions may include barriers or grade separations between pedestrian and vehicular traffic, adequate roadway/pedestrian-way widths, appropriate surfacing and drainage and other design considerations for the pedestrian pathway, including approach trails or sidewalks at each end of the bridge. These coalignments should be designed



according to standards established by the American Association of State Highway Engineers and Traffic Officers (AASHTO). Coalignment should include appropriate signs for motorists and pedestrians and avoid or minimize at-grade crossings by the Trail of the vehicular-way on the bridge. Unless agreement is reached to the contrary, ATC expects that the agency responsible for construction, inspection, and maintenance of the bridge will also be responsible for the design, installation, and maintenance of the pedestrian portion of the coalignment.

**Footbridge Design**—A footbridge is defined as a permanent, artificial structure not in continuous contact with the ground, regardless of length, width, or height above the surface, with a load-bearing free span between abutments or sills, for passage over streams or wetlands. Bog bridges or puncheon used for Trail hardening and fence stiles are excluded from this policy. For the purposes of this policy, bridges are classified into two categories. Large bridges are those that are 35 feet or more in free span. Small bridges are less than 35 feet in free span. All A.T. bridges, regardless of their span, should be designed to bear a load that meets or exceeds current best management practice for architectural design and engineering of pedestrian structures for remote, recreational trail environments.

ATC will work with qualified engineers to prepare primitive, nontraditional bridge designs that meet safety objectives. These designs will be compiled into a bridge-design handbook that will be available for use by management partners. New bridges constructed in accordance with one of these designs will not require additional engineering review unless required by the appropriate cooperating land-management agency. ATC will prepare a bridge-construction checklist to summarize essential characteristics, such as bridge deck widths, surfacing, slope, stringer sizes, railing requirements, abutment, and stream-channel characteristics.

Designs for large bridges require review by a qualified engineer. In the event that such a review cannot be provided by an agency partner, the club proposing the bridge will arrange for review by a qualified engineer with oversight provided by ATC. No large bridges will be constructed without approval by ATC pursuant to the following process.

The sponsoring club's proposal for a large bridge should include a summary description of the need for the bridge, a map showing the location, construction details (such as drawings or blueprints) that show the bridge's elevation (side view), maximum span, and the species, diameter, and condition of proposed bridge stringers, and a statement of support or endorsement for the structure from the landowning agency. Finally, the club proposal should include a commitment to periodic inspections and periodic maintenance. The maintenance schedule and procedure should be specified by a qualified engineer during the design phase.

**Inventory and Maintenance**—Future Trail-assessment inventories (see [Appendix H](#)) should distinguish large from small bridges as defined by this policy and any other details critical to ATC's oversight of essential characteristics with a bearing on safety.

Large bridges should be inventoried by ATC and the Trail clubs and periodically inspected by the landowning agency partner, ATC or their designees. ATC should allocate necessary and qualified staff time and budgetary resources to complete an inspection program where no



active agency partner is now performing periodic inspections. These areas include NPS-acquired lands outside of established national parks and some state-administered Trail segments.

Small bridges will not be monitored by ATC. However, clubs and agency partners are urged to establish and follow appropriate inspection and maintenance procedures, as they do now for any structure that bears people.

**NPS Policy**—Trail bridges may be used for crossing swift waters areas prone to flash-flooding, and other places that present potential safety hazards. Less obtrusive alternatives to bridges (such as fords) and trail relocation will be considered before a decision is made to build a bridge. A bridge may be the preferred alternative when necessary to prevent stream bank erosion or protect wetlands or fisheries. If a bridge is determined to be appropriate, it will be kept to the minimum size needed to serve trail users, and it will be designed to harmonize with the surrounding natural scene and be as unobtrusive as possible (section 9.2.2.9 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#))

On National Park Service lands, an environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act is required prior to construction of a bridge more than 35 feet in length or in any situation where bridge construction would require significant excavation.

### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—The Trail club should have an inventory of all major stream crossings and existing bridges. A short list of the existing bridges and unbridged major stream crossings should be included in the plan as an appendix. The Trail-assessment process ([Appendix H](#)) currently being administered by ATC and the National Park Service includes bridge inventories and can be used to identify the actual span of an inventoried bridge, as well as the age of the structure and the condition of its stringers, decking, railings, and hardware. Clubs should update their inventory during Trail-assessments, when updating their local management plans, and when bridges are installed or receive major maintenance.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club should evaluate the need for bridges, based primarily upon a minimum standard of safety. The primary issues of safety, aesthetics, and need for bridges should be addressed. If other alternatives for safe crossing of a stream exist, they should be considered first. The club policy statement should address the need for coordination with its agency partner and other agencies.

**Action Plan**—If any existing stream crossings are recognized as unsafe, the Trail club should evaluate what steps are necessary to provide a minimum standard of safety. Bridge inspections should be a normal part of Trail maintenance and should be recognized in Trail-maintenance plans. A regular bridge-inspection routine is particularly important for bridges located on NPS-acquired lands and state lands. If a Trail club does not have the expertise to conduct bridge inspections, it should contact ATC to arrange for an inspection by a qualified engineer. *(Note: the U.S. Forest Service has developed a [Trail Bridge Catalog](#) that includes bridge plans as well as information on planning, siting, designing, constructing, inspecting, and maintaining trail bridges. Trail clubs should consult with their agency partners and ATC regional office on bridge construction and before using any of these designs.)*

## CHAPTER 2 (E)

**Trailheads and Parking**

Careful planning of Trailheads is important for two main reasons: (1) location of Trailheads is a powerful tool for controlling where and how much use the Trail receives; and (2) Trailheads are the most visible evidence of the Trail for the general public and provide the first impression of the Trail to its visitors. Planning, design, and monitoring of Trailheads can determine whether hikers and Trail neighbors find a clean, safe, well-marked scene or are confronted by a littered area that is hazardous to traffic leaving, entering, or passing by.

Informal Trailheads tend to spring up almost anywhere the Trail crosses a road, especially where wide shoulders or cleared areas exist. Many are unnecessary or unsafe or encourage environmental abuse. Not all road crossings are suitable for Trailheads. Many existing ones cause management problems.

If parking lots need to be developed, special planning considerations are required. Parking areas must use or cross highway rights-of-way, and permits from the state or county will probably be needed to create new access from a public road. Concerns for public safety, particularly on roads that handle a significant amount of traffic or less-traveled winding roads with minimal sight distances, must be addressed. Vandalism is also a problem when parking areas are not visible from the roadway, and adequate provisions must be made for keeping the area free of litter. If a Trailhead cannot be maintained by the Trail club, agency partner, or someone else on a regular basis, then the Trail is probably better off without a Trailhead at that location.

**Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—In general, ATC encourages development of small, simply designed Trailhead facilities in areas where use patterns clearly indicate a need. The following guidelines are presented in *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*:

**Study existing hiking patterns**—Document use levels along 5- to 15-mile sections of trail by counting parked cars on average and peak weekends. Look at the whole trail system. Remember, trailhead development is not required at all road crossings. Several key road crossings may be all that need development.

**Check with local residents**—Local police, municipal or county officials, the state transportation officials, and local residents can help you avoid or correct potential problem spots. Your concern will be appreciated.

**Look for good spots**—Inquire or field-check locations that might accommodate parking without additional construction. Wide-shouldered roads, picnic areas, state waysides, sections of old roadbed, and old gravel pits often provide ample space for parking.

**Evaluate motor access safety**—Seek advice from highway safety engineers and local residents to evaluate the safety of access to the roadway, pedestrian crossings, and the local impact of any proposed lot.

**Adhere to standards**—Use the standards followed by most highway departments for parking access. On blind hills and curves, parking is unacceptable. On all roadways, clear

lines of sight must extend down the roadway, usually 200 to 500 feet, depending on the speed limit.

**Avoid overused areas**—Plan to keep parking space to a minimum if an area is fragile or threatened by overuse.

**Consider landforms**—Choose well-drained sites above the 100-year floodplain, without steep banks, on slopes of less than five percent grades; otherwise, the sites may be costly, impractical, or require excavation to develop.

**Let highway planners or designers handle parking lot design**—Urge them to keep lots small and simple, usually for four to six cars. Lot capacities should never exceed the needs for existing use, unless safety requires that all cars be parked off the roadway, even on peak weekends. To retain a simple road crossing for the trail, consider locating parking lots a short distance down the road, with a short side trail connecting to the Appalachian Trail

**Acquire necessary permits**—A driveway permit may be needed to access public roads.

**Discourage vandals**—where necessary, make policing for vandalism easy by locating parking lots where they are clearly visible from the main road.

ATC's booklet entitled [\*Planning a Trailhead Bulletin Board\*](#) provides simple guidelines on designing Trailheads and plans for Trailhead signboards.

**NPS Policy**—Trailheads, and trail access points from which trail use can begin, will be carefully tied into other elements of the park development and circulation system to facilitate safe and enjoyable trail use and efficient management. Parking areas should be located so that they do not unacceptably intrude, by sight, sound, or other impact, on park resource values. When deemed necessary, they should be limited to the smallest size appropriate (sections 9.2.2.8 and 9.2.4 of the 2006 NPS [\*Management Policies\*](#)).

In addition, the park superintendent needs to be involved in development of any parking lot or trailhead facility within the boundaries of a national park. In most cases the National Park Service will need to conduct an appropriate level of environmental review. A categorical exclusion or environmental assessment is required on lands administered by the Appalachian Trail Park Office if the facility is intended to provide parking for more than 10 cars.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The first step in planning Trailhead facilities is an inventory of existing Trailheads, including informal roadside pull-off areas. The inventory should note key features, including location, number of parking spaces, safety, and vulnerability to vandalism. The list can be attached to the local management plan as an appendix.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club should form its policy around the real issues at the local level, whether vandalism, inadequacy of existing Trailheads, safety, or whatever other problems are priorities for local management. Coordination with state and local officials should be recognized.

**Action Plan**—Most Trailhead-construction projects require long-range planning and close coordination with state and local officials. Begin by identifying all Trailhead projects in the club's Trail assessment.

Once the club is ready to begin actual design and construction, assign a project leader to work with state and federal partners. Agency partners and ATC may provide financial and technical assistance.

## CHAPTER 2 (F)

**Side and Connecting Trails**

Many significant trails intersect the Appalachian Trail. The Long Trail (Vermont), the Tuscarora Trail (Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia), the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (North Carolina), the Overmountain Victory Trail (North Carolina and Tennessee), the Benton MacKaye Trail (Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee), the Allegheny Trail (Virginia and West Virginia), and the Potomac Heritage Trail (Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia) are all long-distance trails in their own right. Hundreds of other trails that intersect the A.T. are also important, although not as lengthy as the statewide or multi-state trails listed above.

The [National Trails System Act](#) makes specific reference to the *formal* designation of side and connecting trails as components of the national trail system. Formal designation is the responsibility of the U.S. secretary of agriculture (if that trail is located within national forest proclamation boundaries) or the USDI secretary of the interior (on all other lands). The following definitions of designated side and connecting trails are consistent with the legislation:

*Designated side trail*—Any trail formally designated as such by action of the secretary of agriculture or secretary of the interior that intersects the Appalachian Trail and provides additional access to the Appalachian Trail from outside the Appalachian Trail corridor.

*Designated connecting trail*—Any trail formally designated as such by action of the secretary of agriculture or secretary of the interior that connects the Appalachian Trail and another national scenic, historic, or recreation trail.

Designation of a side or connecting trail does not provide the secretary of agriculture or interior with any authority to acquire lands or interests in lands. There have been no formal designations of side or connecting trails to date.

Other trails may intersect the Trail without being formally designated.

- *Spur trails* intersect the A.T. and provide passage to points of interest (such as natural, cultural, or scenic features) or Trail facilities (such as overnight sites or water sources) within the Trail corridor.
- *Access trails* are trails within the Trail corridor that provide approaches to the A.T. from parking areas, road crossings, and nearby towns.
- *Coaligned trails* refer to segments of trails that use the footpath of the Trail.
- *Alternate routes*, temporary trails and administrative-access (nonpublic) trails.

Many undesignated side trails exist, particularly within large blocks of federal or state lands. They do not require formal designation, but if improperly used or managed can create serious management problems. They can be the cause of unrestricted all-terrain vehicle or horse access to the Trail, inconsistencies in blazing and Trail-maintenance standards, and use-patterns that affect sensitive resource values (such as littering and graffiti at a particularly scenic vista).

The construction of a new side or connecting trail can have significant short-term and long-term effects. Construction of a new trail can affect sensitive resource values, such as a cultural resource site or a specific habitat for a threatened or endangered species. A new side or connecting trail may increase the accessibility and use of the A.T. by horses, bicycles, all-terrain and off-road vehicles, as well as hikers, particularly if the new trail is not afforded the same level of protection as the A.T. Lastly, a new trail can open up a new area to increased use by the hiking public and dramatically change the remote character of

an area. On the other hand, a new trail may provide new opportunities for loop hikes, or for dispersal of users to other trails. These impacts should be assessed carefully.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In 1988, ATC’s Board of Managers adopted a policy on side and connecting trails to provide ATC, Trail clubs, and agency partners with procedures for (1) evaluating and recommending approval of proposals for the development of new foot trails intersecting the A.T.; and (2) recommending action by the secretary of the interior or agriculture for formal designation of side or connecting trails to the Trail. In November 1995, the Board adopted several minor wording changes to clarify the original policy. The policy was updated in 2005 to reflect changes in ATC’s governance structure and amended by the ATC Board of Directors in 2008. The policy now reads as follows:

- A. Procedure for Recommending Approval of New Hiking Trails Entering The Appalachian Trail Corridor—All new hiking trails entering the Appalachian Trail corridor should be approved by the local Trail club, the landowning agency, the appropriate ATC regional partnership committee and ATC in accordance with the ATC Policy for Review and Approval of Management Plans and Project Proposals [see Chapter 1 (E)]. Approval by the regional partnership committee and ATC will be based on the criteria set forth below in part C and any additional criteria provided in the local management plan(s) for the area.
- B. Procedure for Recommending Action by the Secretary of the Interior or Agriculture for Formal Federal Designation of a Side or Connecting Trail—Formal designation of side or connecting and coaligned trails requires action by the secretaries of the interior or agriculture or their designee(s). Any proposal for formal designation shall be reviewed by the regional partnership committee, which will forward its recommendation to the Stewardship Council. The Council will review the recommendation and, with input from the ATC regional director, develop a final recommendation for the appropriate secretary. In addition, review and recommendation processes may occur within the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and/or state agencies as appropriate. ATC review and recommendations shall be based on the criteria set forth below in part C and any additional criteria identified in the local management plan(s) for the area.
- C. Criteria for (1) Recommending Approval of New Hiking Trails Entering The Appalachian Trail Corridor, or (2) Recommending Action by the Secretary of the Interior or Agriculture for Formal Designation of A Side or Connecting Trail—
  - 1. The trail will only enhance or improve the Appalachian Trail.
  - 2. The Appalachian Trail is preeminent over the new or designated trail.
  - 3. The trail will allow only foot traffic.
  - 4. The trail will provide significant access to the Appalachian Trail or between the Trail and significant scenic, natural, or cultural resources and/or Trail facilities.
  - 5. The Appalachian Trail will take precedence on trail signing and marking.
  - 6. Dual marking will be avoided on any new coaligned trail; however, other trails may be identified on A.T. signs. ATC also will work to establish this standard for existing coaligned trails.
  - 7. A.T. managers will cooperate in developing standards for construction, design, and maintenance of trails that intersect the Appalachian Trail. ATC will encourage

adoption of standards that protect resource values and prevent environmental damage in a manner consistent with resource protection on the Appalachian Trail.

**NPS Policy**—The Appalachian Trail park manager, as the National Park Service’s principal representative for management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, must be involved in decisions regarding the official formal designation of connecting and side trails under the National Trails Systems Act on all NPS and state-owned land.

No formal side or connecting trails to the Appalachian Trail (in the context of the [National Trails System Act](#)) have been formally designated since the passage of the Act.

The A.T. park manager must evaluate any proposal for formal designation of a connecting or side trail under the National Trails System Act and take action based on the following criteria:

1. It has undergone review according to ATC’s prescribed process.
2. It provides the potential for promoting greater public enjoyment of the Appalachian Trail.
3. It has received the concurrence of the landowner(s).

The A.T. park manager is also the approving official in decisions regarding the development of new trails that enter the corridor of National Park Service-acquired land. Again, proposals will be considered only after having undergone the review and approval process identified in ATC policy. Following that, if new construction is required, the NPS may need to prepare a categorical exclusion or environmental assessment to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. It is only after that point that construction can commence.

The Trail club may recommend abandoning or closing an existing side trail because of problems of overuse or inappropriate use resulting in resource damage or reduced quality of experience by the hiker. The club should consult with ATC and the NPS A.T. Park Office before closing an approved side trail.

In existing national park units, planning for development of new trails or official designation of side or connecting trails in existing park units will involve local Trail club members, ATC, and the agency partners in the design and review process. The park superintendent is the approving official for development of new trails. Final action for recommending formal designation of connecting and side trails resides with the A.T. park manager following a recommendation by ATC and the Trail-maintaining club and concurrence of the park superintendent.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The Trail club should identify all connecting and side trails in a brief list and include a description of the important characteristics of the trails. The connecting and side trails should also be shown on a map. The list should include a short explanation of the club’s intent, if any, to seek designation of any significant connecting or side trail. The approval process outlined in Chapter 1 (E) applies to any new side or connecting trails and requires use of the general management approval form provided in [Appendix A](#).

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The club should indicate the criteria that it will use in determining whether or not a connecting or side trail should receive formal designation. The club should also note its intentions to maintain side trails to standards comparable to the A.T., where appropriate.

**Action Plan**—The maintenance of all connecting and side trails should be identified as a work item in the Trail club's work plan. If the club is considering constructing a new side trail, the club should allow lead time for consultation with its agency partners.



## CHAPTER 2 (G)

### Overnight-Use Areas

Managing overnight-use areas constitutes an important part of Trail club efforts. Numerous factors must be considered in locating and designing overnight-use areas, including proximity to the A.T., soils, vegetation, topography, expected visitor use, proximity to water, distances to roads and other overnight sites, and use of adjoining lands. Ideally, shelters and campsites should be spaced a modest day's hike apart, and they should be designed to contain the environmental and social impacts of overnight visitors within a confined area. Provisions also should be made for dependable water supplies and sanitation at each site. Finally, the use of campfires must be assessed and regulated based on patterns of use, environmental impacts and local rules.

Options for overnight use exist in many areas along the Trail. In addition to shelters, some Trail clubs and agency jurisdictions permit dispersed camping without formal designation of specific sites. Several clubs have designated campsites, often with tent platforms and sanitary facilities. And, although not traditionally viewed as substitutes for shelters and campsites on the Trail, hostels, community centers, bed-and-breakfast inns, and motels cater to long-distance hikers in many towns along the Trail.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—Since 1925, ATC policy has supported “a connected series of primitive lean-tos and camps” as an integral part of the Trail experience, described as “a sense of remoteness and detachment from civilization, opportunities to experience solitude, freedom, personal accomplishment, self-reliance, and self discovery...” [ATC *Policy on the Appalachian Trail Experience*, see Chapter 2 (J)].

In response to a trend toward larger shelters with more amenities for hikers that serve no resource-protection function and detract from the Trail experience, the Stewardship Council endorsed the following guidance for locating and designing A.T. shelters and campsites in 2007. The [full text](#) includes background and planning information. Please note that this guidance does not include standards for accessible facilities. See Chapter 2 (B) and the accessible facilities guidelines and drawings found in [Appendix I](#) for information.

Proposals for new or replacement overnight facilities shall be reviewed and approved in accordance with the ATC policy for review and approval of management plans and project proposals. [See Chapter 1 (E) and [Appendix A](#)]

Page references below are to the document by Jeffrey L. Marion entitled [Camping Impact Management on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail](#).

#### [Guidance for Locating and Designing A.T. Shelters and Formal Campsites](#)

This section provides more specific guidance on topics like shelter/campsite capacity, location, site design, shelter/campsite design, sanitation, maintenance, and visitor-use management. Generic guidance is provided where possible, but the A.T. crosses diverse environments, from pristine wilderness, to backcountry, to highly accessible frontcountry. The type of setting or area should influence the type and design of facilities, so this section begins by discussing how overnight site design might vary by environmental setting.

The ATC's “Trail Experience” statement provides a “shared vision” of the desired A.T. visitor experience that the Trail community seeks to provide. While the “Trail Experience”

statement is helpful, it applies equally to the entire A.T., including frontcountry, backcountry, and wilderness settings. *Frontcountry* areas are close to paved roads and developed areas and are highly visited. *Backcountry* areas are more distant from paved roads and developed areas and environmental settings are more natural. *Wilderness* areas are either federally designated or managed as Wilderness Study Areas. When designing a shelter or formal campsite, Trail clubs should consult with ATC and their land-management partners to determine which type of area the proposed development falls within, and then consider the following guidance. Adherence to this more explicit guidance can help promote more consistent decision-making for each type of area along the A.T.

### ***Shelter and Formal Campsite Capacity***

Design the shelters and campsites to:

- ✓ *Minimize crowding and conflicts*—Limit new shelter capacities to 15. Consider constructing two separate shelters when higher visitation requires additional capacity that cannot be accommodated by campsites. Limit total overnight camping capacity from co-located shelters and campsites to the following: Frontcountry—35; Backcountry—25; Wilderness—15. Capacity limits may be increased based on documented, site-specific management considerations.
- ✓ Capacity estimates for shelters can be calculated at one person per 15 ft<sup>2</sup>; capacity for campsites is best estimated by observing the typical number of campers in the area on high, but not peak, use nights.
- ✓ Locations that currently exceed capacities can be improved by applying campsite ruination or closure techniques described in [Camping Impact Management](#) [pp 99–102]
- ✓ Accommodate expanding overnight visitation by constructing well-designed formal camping areas rather than new shelters (shelter numbers increased 14 percent from 1971 (N=237, 8.6/mile) to 2006 (N=271, 8.02/mile). Include a justification explaining why a shelter is preferable to campsites with proposals to construct new (and in Wilderness, replacement) shelters.

### ***Shelter and Formal Campsite Location***

Preferable locations for shelters and formal campsites are:

- ✓ *Near permanent sources of clean water*—A permanent source of clean water is a nearly essential requirement. The highest mid-slope location within a drainage that retains flowing water during drought periods is best. Springs are preferred over small streams, but they must have a dependable flow history over several years. Land within the drainage above the site should be in public ownership and have no human habitations or grazing. Locate shelters and campsites more than 200 feet from water sources unless no suitable option exists.
- ✓ *Remote from motorized access*—Locate at least two miles from roads, including ORV-use areas, to deter vandalism and use by nonhikers.

- ✓ *Out-of-sight from the A.T.*—To preserve a more primitive trail experience, locate facilities just beyond sight of the A.T. whenever possible. Trailside locations reduce solitude for both hikers and campers.
- ✓ *In mid-slope positions*—Avoid ravines and depressions that can be seasonally wet and subject to cooler temperatures and lack of sun exposure. Similarly, ridge tops can be windy and prone to lightening strikes. Flat valley bottom or ridge top locations have poor drainage and allow the rapid proliferation and expansion of campsites and trampled areas. Placement on small flat areas within mid-slope positions enlists the sloping topography to concentrate foot traffic on the intended use areas or create gently out-sloped benches for shelter and camping sites using side-hill construction practices described in [Camping Impact Management](#) [pp 99–102].
- ✓ *Trampling resistant and expansion proof*—Minimize the loss of vegetation from trampling by choosing locations that: 1) have limited expansion potential due to topography, rockiness, or dense vegetation cover; and, 2) have very sparse vegetation cover or grassy cover instead of broad-leaved herbs (e.g., sunnier locations). See [Camping Impact Management](#) [pp 94–97] for additional guidance.
- ✓ *Protective of visitor safety and sensitive natural or cultural resources*—Avoid locations close to waterfalls and mountain, ridge, and cliff tops. Provide at least a 200-foot riparian buffer between the facility footprint and shorelines and stream banks, and build trails to provide access to the water. Avoid locations near sensitive natural and cultural resources, especially known cultural resource or natural heritage sites, to promote resource protection.

### **Site Design**

Design the site to:

- ✓ *Prevent erosion*—Anticipate traffic patterns and design the site and trail layout to avoid the proliferation of visitor-created trails and erosion. A linear layout of the shelter and campsites along the contour promotes use of provided trails. Shelters and campsites should be clearly marked with side-trail signs. Refer to additional site design guidance in [Camping Impact Management](#) [pp 99–101].
- ✓ *Protect water sources*—Design and maintain water-access trails to prevent erosion. Route water-access trails to a durable access point that avoids traffic above the collection point and erosion at any location. Where necessary, protect springs by constructing a covered stone water box with an outlet that allows easy filling of water containers.
- ✓ *Promote solitude*—Where two shelters are built on a site, or where campsites are co-located with shelters, locate them outside the view-shed of the front side of shelters. Where possible, provide a minimum of 30 yards of separation between shelters, between campsites and other campsites or shelters, and between the A.T. and these facilities.

- ✓ *Promote visitor safety*—Face the shelter opening away from prevailing winter-season winds, preferably to the south and east. Regularly inspect the proposed site for hazard trees and have them removed.

### ***Shelter/Campsite Design***

Design the shelter/campsite to:

- ✓ *Emphasize primitive, rustic qualities*—Use rustic architectural designs and primitive materials for shelters, *e.g.*, sides consisting of logs, rough-cut wood, or natural stone and non-glare roofing. Use of planed, dimensional lumber should be minimized. Limit the visibility of shelters by using roofing or paints with natural colors. Where possible, hide concrete footers by facing them with natural stone.
- ✓ *Emphasize resource protection in shelter designs and facilities*—Use the minimal design necessary to concentrate sleeping and cooking activities in a small shelter “footprint.” Features such as large covered decks, windows, hanging chairs, showers, and wood stoves are considered inconsistent with the intended A.T. Experience and should be avoided. In Wilderness, shelter designs and associated facilities should be reduced to the absolute minimum required for resource protection. See *Camping Impact Management* [pp 102–105] for further discussion.
- ✓ *Maximize lifespan and minimize maintenance*—Provide separation between the ground and wood, and use pressure-treated lumber. In the south, use metal flashing at key places as a termite barrier. Provide adequate overhangs to keep wood sides dry and overlap roofing to prevent rot in supporting wood. Slope the land uphill from the shelter to divert water flow around the shelter area and install broad and deep drainage channels armored with rock to capture and divert roof water.
- ✓ *Minimize fire danger*—Where fires are allowed, fire rings should be small. Provide no more than one fire ring at a shelter. Consider using firmly anchored metal fire rings/grates of a small diameter to discourage dangerous and fuel-consuming bonfires. Avoid or minimize use of substantial masonry work. At campsites, consider ice-berging large rectangular rocks to permanently define and anchor fire site locations. Consult with the local Fire Marshall for approval where necessary, and note that fires are prohibited in some states and parks. Emphasize Leave No Trace practices with respect to fires.
- ✓ *Minimize campsite proliferation/expansion*—Employ side-hill campsite design practices where possible, or use site closure/ruination practices to deter these problems in flatter terrain (see [Camping Impact Management](#) [pp 99-102]).
- ✓ *Minimize use of tent platforms*—Tent platforms are less natural, expensive, and require on-going regular maintenance. Where possible, employ side-hill campsite designs to create gently-sloped tent pads; in rocky areas obtain soil from wind-thrown tree root balls or borrow pits.

- ✓ *Ensure food protection from wildlife*—Install appropriate facilities where necessary to prevent wildlife from obtaining human food. Examples include bear poles, cable systems, or steel food-storage boxes.

### **Sanitation**

Toilet facilities should:

- ✓ *Be located in well-drained soils*—A toilet site should be more than 200 feet from all water sources and the shelter or campsites, and preferably downhill. Perform a percolation test by digging a hole and filling it with water. The hole should drain readily within a short time. Look for areas with deep soils and water tables (>4 ft), where the digging is easiest.
- ✓ *Follow applicable state and ATC guidance*—Consult and follow all state regulations for pit toilet use. Consult the ATC publication [\*Backcountry Sanitation Manual\*](#) (ATC and Green Mountain Club 2002) for further guidance and options.
- ✓ *Protect human and wildlife safety*—Pits and bins receiving human waste should be inaccessible to wildlife and flying insects, with openings only through a covered and screened vent stack and waste entry hole with a self-closing lid. Retired privy sites should be filled with soil and mounded at least 12 inches above grade to allow for settling.

### **Maintenance**

Perform routine maintenance to:

- ✓ *Minimize soil erosion*—Maintain trails within the site and to the water source to minimize soil erosion. Water-source trails are often too steep and have fall-line alignments. If alternate alignments are impractical (*i.e.*, visitors won't use them), then install sufficient tread hardening to limit erosion. Inspect shelter/campsite areas carefully for signs of erosion and install grade dips or water bars to avoid further erosion.
- ✓ *Limit fire danger*—Clear wind-thrown trees and other flammable materials away from the shelter. Keep fire rings away from the shelter overhang.
- ✓ *Maximize facility lifespan*—Check all wooden structures annually for signs of mold and rot and repair roofing or paint to prevent further deterioration. Inspect and repair other damage as needed.
- ✓ *Remove hazard trees*—Check for and remove hazard trees from shelter and designated camping areas. Hazard trees are dangerous to remove. This is an excellent job for your agency partner.
- ✓ *Preserve the natural appearance of facilities*—Use clear or semi-transparent flat (non-reflecting) paints with natural colors to preserve wood in shelters.

- ✓ *Maintain clean site appearances*—Dig out all fire grates, remove trash and scatter coals/ash in off-site areas. Pick up all litter and discarded food; clean the shelter.

### **Visitor Use Management**

Manage visitor use to:

- ✓ *Avoid or minimize resource and social impacts*—Communicate Leave No Trace practices. [Note: LNT practices for A.T. shelters and campsites may be found at the end of the full text of this [Guidance](#) document.]
- ✓ *Minimize use of regulations*—Preserve visitor freedom by employing educational options first and regulations if problems are not resolved. Potential regulations to consider include limiting camping in shelter areas to shelters and formal campsites, prohibitions of campfires, and hanging food bags in bear country.
- ✓

**NPS Policy**—Although the development of facilities to serve visitors will generally be avoided, campsites may be designated when essential for resource protection and preservation or to meet other specific wilderness management objectives. In keeping with the terms of the park’s wilderness management plan, campsite facilities may include a site marker, fire rings, tent sites, food storage devices, and toilets if these are determined by the superintendent to be the minimum facilities necessary for the health and safety of wilderness users or for the preservation of wilderness resources and values.

*Designated or Dispersed Camping*— In July 1986, the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office adopted the following rule under its regulatory authority in 36 CFR 2.10: “On NPS lands, camping is allowed on designated sites only, unless the local Trail club states otherwise in its ATC-approved local management plan. Overnight stays at camping and/or shelter sites are limited to the maximum number of nights specified in the applicable local management plan, or two nights where a local management plan makes no specification or has not been endorsed by the ATC regional director. Camping policy on NPS corridor lands should be consistent, to the extent feasible, with the policies on adjacent lands to minimize confusion and enhance understanding and coordination between jurisdictions.”

*Campfires*—On NPS lands, campfires are prohibited except at the locations specified in the applicable local management plan.

*Environmental Compliance*—On NPS corridor lands, new shelters and large campsites with more than one pit privy must be subject to an environmental assessment by the NPS prior to any clearing, excavation, or construction by the club. Improvements to existing shelters and installation of new campsites with one pit privy do not normally require an environmental assessment; they are “categorically excluded” from compliance with NEPA (Federal Register, Vol. 49, No. 194, October 4, 1984).

The construction of new shelters in designated wilderness areas generally will not be allowed, in keeping with the values and character of wilderness. An existing shelter may be maintained or reconstructed only if the facility is necessary to achieve specific wilderness management objectives as identified in the park’s wilderness and cultural-resources management plans (section 6.3.10 and 6.3.10.3 of 2006 NPS *Management Policies*).

## Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—All Trail clubs should maintain a list of their existing overnight-use facilities and should periodically evaluate site conditions. The following checklist may be used for this evaluation:

1. Is the shelter in good repair (or is the campsite in good condition)?
2. Is the site free of litter?
3. Is there an enclosed privy, and is it adequate for current levels of use?
4. If there is no privy, is sanitation a problem?
5. Is the site dry and well-drained?
6. Have hikers trampled soils and vegetation to an unacceptable degree?
7. Are fire-rings usually found, and if so are they reasonable in size or can they be seen to be causing damage?
8. Is there a reliable supply of clean water within a reasonable distance?
9. Is it a reasonable hike from the site to the next overnight-use area?
10. Are there any chronic problems with vandalism, littering, parties, or trespassing?
11. Are there any safety hazards, such as dead or dying trees, present at the site?

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Club policy should focus on determining what provisions should be made to limit the overnight visitor's environmental impact as well as to provide the visitor with basic amenities. In general, the club policy should respond to the concerns raised above in the inventory checklist and the *Checklist for New or Replacement Overnight Facilities along the Appalachian Trail* ([Appendix B](#)). Care should be taken to ensure that, to the extent possible, developed facilities retain a primitive and remote quality.

Working with land-owning agencies, Trail clubs should clearly define the camping policy for their section and specify any closures or prohibitions. Signage at Trailheads, major Trail junctions, and designated overnight areas should clearly inform hikers about overnight-use policies for the area. To the extent feasible, clubs and land-managing agencies should attempt to make use rules consistent throughout an area (regardless of ownership) to minimize hikers' confusion and inconvenience. Maps, guidebooks, and other information should contain similar information and be consistent with posted closures and regulations.

Clubs should determine a policy on campfires. Options include prohibiting all open fires, prohibiting fires except at designated campsites, or allowing some dispersed camping and fires while prohibiting them in problematic locations or during official fire closures.

By writing designated sites and prohibitions into their LMPs, Trail clubs give the park rangers and other law-enforcement personnel the regulatory basis they need to enforce those prescriptions. Importantly, designated overnight areas and prohibitions must be promulgated by the land-managing agency before they are implemented on the ground.

**Action Plan**—Most Trail clubs have maintenance plans for existing shelters and long-range plans for constructing new shelters as major work projects. Those plans should be incorporated into the local management plan.

## CHAPTER 2 (H)

### **Drinking Water Supplies and Water Quality**

Since it was conceived and constructed more than 50 years ago, the Appalachian Trail has relied on a number of different types of water sources for hikers to use, including undeveloped springs, springs that are nominally improved, streams, rivers, and other open-water sources. Hikers expect that water will be available at reasonable intervals along the Trail (including locations within reasonable walking distance of overnight facilities) and that water sources will be adequately identified. Hikers in recent years have become accustomed to treating water taken from backcountry sources by boiling, filtering, or chemically treating it before use.

Improved, developed water systems are usually considered by Trail managers only when no other water sources are available and a water source is deemed essential for Trail users. The Safe Drinking Water Act of 1977, as amended, sets thresholds for various types of “community water systems” (which are defined in the act), based on the number of citizens using a water supply and duration and time of use. The act assigned responsibility for implementing the law to the states, which develop regulations to comply with the law. Those regulations require periodic testing and, if necessary, treatment to ensure that the water taken from the system is safe for human consumption.

The Trail traverses the headwaters of many important public and private watersheds that provide water for adjacent municipalities and communities. In many cases, Trail use is restricted within these watershed boundaries. Overnight use may be prohibited. Trail land managers must monitor activities that could significantly degrade quality of water supplies, whether they occur on or off the Trail corridor, and take common-sense steps to prevent and control contamination. Where the A.T. crosses municipal watersheds, regulations prohibiting camping or overnight use may be imposed by local municipalities or an agency partner.

#### **Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—For many years, ATC policy has required identification of water supplies for hikers and encouraged protection of existing water supplies by careful location and design of trails and sanitation facilities. ATC’s policy states that ATC does not and cannot guarantee water quality from any source along the Trail, that all water sources should be considered unprotected, and that water from these sources should be boiled, filtered, or chemically treated before use.

In November 1993, ATC supplemented this direction by adopting revised policy guidelines that affirm the importance of identifying sources of water for hikers and encourage Trail clubs to post signs informing hikers of the need to treat water from backcountry water sources prior to use. ATC’s revised policy on drinking-water supplies and water quality reads as follows:

Water sources located at or near overnight-use areas provide virtually all the water needed by hikers along the A.T. Hikers on the Trail have a reasonable expectation that water will be available at these intervals and that the water sources be adequately marked. Water along the Trail is available for hikers from two sources:

Natural or backcountry water sources, which are naturally occurring surface-water sources (including springs and seeps) that are undeveloped or minimally improved. Minimal improvements include construction of small catchment basins or other primitive collection



devices that clearly do not indicate to the user that water is being provided from a developed, protected water system.

Water systems, which typically are engineered systems that transport, store, or deliver water for human consumption. Improvements, such as wells, service connections, pumps, hand pumps, holding tanks, faucets, or spigots usually indicate that water is being provided through a water system.

ATC guidelines for natural or backcountry water sources are as follows:

1. ATC Web site, guidebooks, brochures, maps, and other publications will emphasize the need to adequately treat water from unprotected water sources before use. Guidebooks will advise the reader that the purity of water from natural sources cannot be guaranteed, and all water should be treated before use. Guidebooks and other Trail publications that contain detailed information on hiker health and safety should continue to provide information on currently accepted methods for boiling, filtering, and chemically treating water.
2. While ATC recognizes the risks inherent in identifying water sources along the A.T., it also recognizes the need to inform hikers as to where water can be found. ATC's marking standard, as outlined in *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*, recommends methods for marking water supplies and encourages Trail clubs to assist hikers in locating water at appropriate intervals along the Trail. Water sources along the Trail may be identified by blue-blazed trails, directional signs, and guidebook or map references.
3. In order to inform hikers of potential hazards incident to the use of natural water sources, Trail clubs and agency partners should include information on signs at Trailheads (or in other appropriate locations) advising hikers to treat water from all sources before use. The specific language used for Trail-club signs should be reviewed and approved by the landowning agency partner.
4. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy will make signs available to Trail clubs that can be posted at Trailheads or other appropriate locations along the Appalachian Trail with prior approval of agency partners. These signs will contain a message that advises the public that water from unprotected natural sources should be boiled, filtered, or chemically treated before use.
5. Natural water sources should not be modified or developed in a manner that would lead the user to believe that the source is protected or that water from the source is safe to use without treatment. Minor modifications to improve water collection, such as small catchment basins, springboxes, short lengths of pipe, or other devices, should not include faucets, spigots, or cisterns, or otherwise appear to indicate that water is being provided from a developed, protected water source.
6. Natural water sources located in an area where the potential for chemical contamination is known to exist should not be identified to the public. Subject to availability of funds, ATC will assist Trail clubs in testing natural water sources suspected

of chemical contamination. Where testing indicates that chemical contaminants are present, appropriate action should be taken to deter public use.

ATC guidelines for water systems are as follows:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy will comply with all provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act and state and federal regulations promulgated to implement the provisions of the act. As necessary, the Conservancy will assist local Trail clubs in testing and treating water from water systems to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal regulations.

Water resources on the Appalachian Trail provide the vital water supplies needed by hikers, both along the Trail and at shelter sites. Hikers have a reasonable expectation that water will be available at reasonable intervals, that water sources will be adequately marked, and that identified water sources will be clean and potable after treatment. Typically, these water sources are undeveloped or are only nominally improved by construction of a small catchment basin. Improvements such as hand pumps usually are considered only when no other water sources are available.

Because of the complexity of maintaining water systems in accordance with the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the ATC declared an open-ended moratorium in 1998 on building or integrating already existing water systems to the Trail water supply.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service states that all backcountry water sources (which include naturally occurring springs, seeps, streams, and other types of open water) should be suspected of being contaminated and should be treated if visitors intend to consume them.

The NPS will:

1. Work with appropriate governmental bodies to obtain the highest possible standards available under the Clean Water Act for the protection for park waters;
2. Take all necessary actions to maintain or restore the quality of surface waters and groundwaters within the parks consistent with the Clean Water Act and all other applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations; and
3. Enter into agreements with other agencies and governing bodies, as appropriate, to secure their cooperation in maintaining or restoring the quality of park water resources.

NPS guidelines for management of backcountry water sources state that they must be maintained in an undeveloped condition. Minor modifications that are made to improve water collection, such as catch basins, short lengths of pipe, or springboxes, cannot indicate or lead users to believe that the water is protected or safe. Any information that is provided to the public about these water sources needs to include an advisory or warning statement that says, in effect, that the water is unprotected and must be properly treated before use.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—An inventory of drinking water sources should include the type of source (spring, stream, pump, well, tap, *etc.*), location, and a general indication of susceptibility to contamination (open water is much more likely to be contaminated) for each water source. If water is scarce, the inventory could include potential sources that could be developed. An inventory of municipal watersheds simply should identify the number of miles of the A.T. within the watershed boundary and the local or state authority responsible for management of the watershed.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A club policy statement should give priority to protecting water sources from contamination and to informing the public of the need to treat water prior to use.

**Action Plan**—If any water sources are known to be contaminated, they should be posted as unsuitable for drinking, and any improvements should be removed. Notifications should be inserted into written guides and, in areas where water supplies are limited, signs should be posted at Trailheads to inform hikers in advance so that they can arrange for alternative water supplies. ATC can provide funding for testing water sources when new or improved water systems are developed or where sources are suspected of being polluted by organic or chemical pollutants. If water sources are open and vulnerable, steps should be taken to protect them from contamination. If other usable water sources are known, they should be identified and protected as necessary. These actions should be included in a Trail club's work plan. The club also can promote good sanitation practices through information and educational efforts aimed at Trail users.

## CHAPTER 2 (I)

### Sanitation

The primary purpose of any sanitation strategy is to provide a barrier between feces-borne pathogens and backcountry water supplies. To ensure a “sanitation barrier,” human waste must be contained in a well-sited sanitation system. The most common type of sanitation facility on the A.T. is the pit toilet or “pit privy,” a small structure over a hole in the ground. Where the structure and pit are poorly located, designed, vented, and maintained, or when the pit is full, these facilities need to be repaired, removed, or replaced. Conversely, well-designed and ventilated pit privies built on suitable soils are an asset at most campsites and shelters.

The [Backcountry Sanitation Manual](#) produced in 2002 by the Green Mountain Club in collaboration with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, offers advice and information on backcountry waste-management options, with emphasis on moldering privies. Regardless of whether an established privy or dispersed disposal area is used to accommodate human waste, the area of each site should be monitored to ensure that sanitary conditions do not create environmental or health problems.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—Sanitation facilities should be provided at high-use shelters and popular campsites. In April 1989, ATC adopted the following resolution regarding sanitation:

1. ATC, the clubs, and the land-managing agencies declare that the public interest is to promote safe and healthful conditions, free from unnecessary, preventable pollution at shelters, designated campsites, and water supplies, particularly at areas of repeated, overnight use by the hiking public and along Trail sections where pollution from outside A.T. boundaries may be a threat; and
2. ATC, the clubs, and the land-managing agencies should visually evaluate and endeavor to ascertain where existing sanitary conditions may not be acceptable and, to the extent practicable, initiate actions to eliminate or mitigate preventable sanitary problems; and,
3. ATC, the clubs, and land-managing agencies should install privies or toilets, located and designed to meet local conditions, where other options to maintain sanitary conditions are not effective; and
4. ATC, the clubs, and the land-managing agencies should conduct educational programs for the hiking public about proper sanitary techniques and the challenges of maintaining and improving sanitary conditions; and
5. ATC will work with the clubs and land-managing agencies to collect management information on successful, efficient techniques and methodologies for managing sanitation and overnight use, will encourage the development of new techniques and methodologies, and will share this information among partners that cooperatively manage the Appalachian Trail.

**NPS Policy**—NPS defines wastewater as any liquid or waterborne solid that, if improperly controlled or inadequately treated, can cause human illness and/or pollution of the environment. Wastewater management systems will be constructed only if a determination has first been made that reasonable

conservation measures will not be sufficient to cover park needs. In the selection of an appropriate method of wastewater treatment, factors such as all-season reliability, regulatory and public health issues, cost-effectiveness, and minimum adverse impact on the environment will all be considered. In the event of an alternative wastewater treatment facility, such as a composting toilet, there should be interpretation for visitors regarding the importance of recycling organic waste. Wastewater will be treated in such a way that when it returns to water courses or has been recycled it meets or exceeds applicable state and federal water-quality standards. NPS approved backcountry wastewater systems, all of which must meet public health standards, include low-water or waterless toilets, chemical toilets, vault and composting toilets, and pit privies (section 9.1.5.2 of 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

In designated wilderness areas, sanitation facilities will be placed only in locations where their presence and use will resolve serious health and sanitation problems or prevent serious resource impacts (section 6.3.10.3 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—Trail clubs should maintain a list of their existing sanitation facilities. The club should monitor the condition of overnight or popular day-use sites for each designated sanitation facility. The following list may be used for this evaluation:

1. What are the characteristics of the site with respect to human-waste disposal?
  - a) Soil type
  - b) Soil depth
  - c) Decomposition rate
  - d) Drainage rate
  - e) Slope
2. If the site has no pit privy, is the level of use compatible with a dispersed cat-hole method of waste disposal? Do the existing conditions require installation of a new or additional pit privy?
3. If a pit privy exists at the site, is it in good repair and well-ventilated?
4. Is there intermittent flooding of the surrounding area?
5. What is the distance to the nearest open water and/or clean-water supply?
6. Is the site located outside of municipal drainages or watersheds?
7. If a pit privy exists, is it adequate for current levels of use? How large is the existing pit? How full is it? Has it been moved before? How often? Does a good site exist for construction of a new privy?

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Regardless of which overnight-use policy (designated sites or dispersed use) a Trail club adopts for a particular site, a club should work with its agency partner(s) to choose what sanitation strategy to apply. If field conditions indicate sanitary problems, club policy should focus on determining what action is needed to meet the guidelines outlined in the inventory checklist.

**Action Plan**—Most Trail clubs maintain existing sanitation facilities, and some have longer-range plans for construction of new facilities as major work projects. Each club's sanitation strategy, including future site plans, should be incorporated into its local management plan and Trail assessment.

## CHAPTER 2 (J)

### **Managing the Trail for a Primitive Experience**

In 1921, an article by Benton MacKaye titled “An Appalachian Trail: A Project In Regional Planning” was published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. The article presented the Trail concept as a “new approach to the problem of living” and proposed an extended wilderness along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains as a crucial line of defense against the oppression of modern civilization. The idea sparked the imaginations of many individuals in hiking clubs and land-managing agencies along the length of the proposed route of the Appalachian Trail and, within 16 years, construction of the initial route of the A.T. was complete.

The Appalachian Trail has evolved since then, but it remains “a way, continuous from Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia, for travel on foot through the wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains.” ATC bylaws state as the purpose of the organization: “The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is a volunteer-based organization dedicated to the preservation and management of the natural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in order to provide primitive outdoor-recreation and educational opportunities for Trail visitors.”

#### **Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—In April 1995, ATC adopted the following policy on managing the Appalachian Trail for a primitive experience:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy should take into account the effects of Trail-management programs and policies on the primitive and natural qualities of the Appalachian Trail and the primitive recreational experience the Trail is intended to provide. Although these guidelines are intended to apply primarily to the effects of actions or programs on predominantly natural, wild, and remote environments along the Trail, they may apply to certain pastoral, cultural, and rural landscapes as well. Even in sections of the Trail that do not pass through remote or primitive landscapes, care should be taken not to inadvertently overdevelop or improve the Trail tread or facilities in these environments.

Trail improvements, including shelters, privies, bridges, and other facilities, should be constructed only when appropriate to protect the resource or provide a minimum level of public safety. Design and construction of these facilities should reflect an awareness of, and harmony with, the Trail’s primitive qualities. Materials and design features should emphasize simplicity and not detract from the predominant sense of a natural, primitive environment. The Trail treadway, when constructed, reconstructed, or relocated, should wear lightly on the land and be built primarily to provide greater protection for the Trail footpath or Trail resource values. Trail-management publications should include appropriate references to the potential effects of Trail-management activities on the primitive qualities of the Trail.

In developing programs to maintain open areas, improve water sources, provide sanitation, remove structures, and construct bridges, signs, Trailheads, and other facilities, Trail managers should consider whether a proposed action or program will have an adverse effect on the primitive qualities of the Trail, and, if such effects are identified, whether the action or program is appropriate.

ATC's policy also includes several questions that are intended to help managers in evaluating management actions. These questions are outlined below under Considerations for Planning.

**NPS Policy**—Visitor carrying capacity is the type and level of visitor use that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource and visitor experience conditions in a park unit. Superintendents should identify visitor carrying capacities for managing public use, and identify ways to monitor and address unacceptable impacts on park resources and visitor experiences (section 8.2.1 of 2006 NPS [\*Management Policies\*](#)).

The [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#) states:

Care must be taken, as the Trail is relocated or reconstructed, that its primitive quality is not lost. What are seen as Trail improvements may sometimes be steps in a progressive loss in simplicity of the footpath. Lands retaining a sense of the wild and primeval will be maintained with a special concern for these values.

Trail design, construction, and maintenance should reflect a concern for safety, without detracting from the opportunity for hikers to experience the wild and scenic lands by their own unaided efforts, and without sacrificing aspects of the Trail that may challenge their skill and stamina. Attempts to provide protection for the unprepared lead to a progressive diminution of the experience available to others.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club's local management plan should include a statement of policy or general principles on managing the A.T. for a primitive experience. A Trail club's policy statement may be as simple as: "We will emphasize simplicity and self-reliance in design and construction of the Trail footpath and Trail facilities. Each project that the club undertakes will be reviewed with respect to its impact on the primitive character of the Trail."

**Action Plan**—Clubs also should consider the effects of individual management actions (such as bridges, relocations, or other developments) on the primitive character of the Trail. The remote recreational experience provided by the Trail and the resources that enhance this experience should be carefully considered and protected. The following questions can be used to help evaluate the potential effect of a policy, program, or project on the primitive quality of the Trail:

1. Will this action or program protect the A.T.?
2. Can this be done in a less obtrusive manner?
3. Does this action unnecessarily sacrifice aspects of the Trail that provide solitude or that challenge hikers' skill or stamina?
4. Could this action, either by itself or in concert with other actions, result in an inappropriate diminution of the primitive quality of the Trail?
5. Will this action help to ensure that future generations of hikers will be able to enjoy a primitive recreational experience on the A.T.?

## CHAPTER 2 (K)

### Trail-Crew Safety and Skills Training

*Note: This chapter focuses on the Trail-crew safety and skill-training policy adopted by ATC in 1996. ATC strongly encourages the Appalachian Trail-maintaining clubs to adopt similar standards and practices for their Trail workers. Certain provisions of this policy may be required by federal management partners of all Trail volunteers under agency Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) or Volunteers-In-Forest (VIF) programs. ATC policy on sawyer training and certification is addressed in Chapter 2 (L).*

Since 1982, ATC has sponsored seasonal Trail crews to educate volunteers in proper methods and techniques of trail work and to assist Trail clubs in reducing the backlog of major construction and reconstruction projects along the Appalachian Trail. Worker safety has been a key component of this volunteer training.

Volunteers working on the Appalachian Trail are protected under federal Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) and Volunteers-in-Forests (VIF) programs, which require that volunteers work within the scope of their volunteer agreement, are properly equipped and trained for the tasks they are doing and the tools they are using, and that they are listed as members of the Trail club on whose section they are working or listed on a roster for a specific work trip. Additional information may be found on the [volunteer protection](#) section of ATC's Web site and in [Appendix K](#).

ATC's worker-safety policy addresses issues and practices among employees and volunteers engaged in construction and maintenance activities by ATC sponsored or supported Trail-crew programs: the Konnarock Trail Crew, Maine Trail Crew, Volunteer Long Trail Patrol (Vermont), Mid-Atlantic Crew, Rocky Top Crew, and S.W.E.A.T. Crew.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy Trail volunteers and employees are required to follow the applicable procedures and practices described in this policy. While ATC's policy is not binding on other volunteer workers on the Appalachian Trail, ATC strongly encourages such volunteers and Trail-maintaining organizations to adopt similar standards and practices to further enhance volunteer-worker safety along the Trail.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In 1996, ATC's Board adopted the following policy regarding Trail-crew safety and skills training:

**Personal Responsibility.** ATC recognizes the strong tradition of volunteer involvement in maintenance and construction activities along the Appalachian Trail. Although ATC or other club or agency sponsors of A.T. seasonal Trail-crew programs assume responsibility for providing certain safety training and equipment to crew participants as further described in this policy, each volunteer engaged in crew-sponsored maintenance and construction activities must assume personal responsibility for assessing his or her own physical condition and preparedness for engaging in the proposed Trail-work activities and for equipping themselves with clothing appropriate to the location, duration, weather conditions, and degree of difficulty associated with the proposed work project.



**Leadership.** Each work party associated with an ATC-sponsored or -supported Trail-crew program must have a designated leader. Normally, the leader will be a Trail-crew or ATC employee or his or her designee. The leader, in cooperation with appropriate ATC staff, will have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that a “job hazard analysis” [see [Trail Work Hazards and Safety Gear](#) chart] and a “project needs assessment” have been prepared in advance of the proposed work project and are documented on a “project logistics” form [[Appendix L](#)].
- To explain to members of the work party the nature of, and related potential hazards associated with, the proposed work.
- To ensure that all work-party participants do not exceed their physical capabilities and are equipped properly for the expected work conditions.
- To ensure that appropriate tools, equipment, and safety gear are available to each member of the work party, consistent with the proposed activities and hazards of the work project.
- To provide basic safety instruction to the work party in advance of engaging in the work project and to periodically monitor during the project the safety practices of, and use of appropriate safety equipment by, each member of the work party.
- To explain the requirements of any applicable federal programs, such as VIP or VIF [[Appendix K](#)].
- To ensure that required medical history, personal, and emergency-contact information is obtained from each member of the work party.
- To provide basic first-aid and other emergency-management assistance and to follow the prescribed “accident-response procedure” in the event of any injury of a work-party member.

**Training, Education, and Supervision.** Safety training and education must be a fundamental component of work-skills training in every aspect of Trail-crew operations. ATC-sponsored or -supported Trail-crew members must be properly trained in any task they are likely to be asked to perform in the context of a Trail-crew work project.

Each Trail-crew supervisor is responsible for training crew members under his or her supervision. The Trail-crew supervisor may request assistance from other ATC staff, from the sponsoring maintaining-club supervisor or coordinator, and/or from the cooperating federal or state agency, if the supervisor does not feel qualified to properly train the crew members in some aspect of the proposed work. However, the Trail-crew supervisor has field-level responsibility for ensuring that crew members are properly trained, equipped, and supervised for the work they will be asked to perform.

ATC and/or other program sponsors will provide opportunities for seasonal Trail-crew supervisors to obtain additional knowledge and safety training in all phases of Trail work, including certification, where appropriate, for certain specialized equipment and/or power tools. In addition, ATC and other program sponsors will require all Trail-crew supervisors to successfully complete a government-approved defensive-driving course and an American Red Cross, or equivalent, basic first-aid and CPR course. Trail-crew supervisors will receive full salary, housing, and travel-expense reimbursement during such training.

All crew members must receive basic training in Trail maintenance and construction practices, including proper use of tools and equipment; appropriate safety practices and gear; any potential hazards or risks associated with the specific work project or site; and precautions associated with the transportation of passengers, equipment, and fuels to or from the work site. Normally, such training will be provided at the outset of the work project, by the Trail-crew supervisor, during a worker-orientation session either at the crew base camp or at the work site. In addition, at the beginning of each day of the work project, or whenever a new project is initiated, the Trail-crew supervisor should conduct a “tail-gate safety session” to provide crew workers with a review of safety practices and an assessment of any new hazards or risks that may arise as a result of changing conditions at the work site. The Trail-crew supervisor also should monitor the work and safety practices of each crew member periodically during the course of the work project.

Training in specialized skills, such as operation of crosscut saws, chain saws or other power equipment, winches and associated rigging equipment, and rock drills, will be provided by ATC, the sponsoring club, and/or the cooperating public agency to each Trail-crew supervisor at the beginning of each crew season. *[Note: information on A.T. [sawyer certification](#) is included in Chapter 2 (L) and on ATC’s Web site.]* Opportunities for refresher training will be provided periodically throughout the season. Those sessions will be open to volunteer members of the Trail crew(s). Any operator of power equipment or winches must be trained properly in the use of that equipment or work under the direct supervision of a properly trained leader with the required skills. Chain-saw and crosscut-saw operators must be certified by an approved chain-saw and crosscut-saw certification program. Explosives may be handled and detonated only by state or federally licensed operators.

In addition to on-the-job and orientation training for Trail-crew supervisors and volunteers, ATC and/or the sponsoring club or agency will provide Trail-crew workers with information materials describing trail-maintenance and -construction practices and standards, safety precautions and equipment, and applicable requirements for VIP or VIF coverage by agency cooperators [\[Appendix K\]](#).

**Project Analyses and Other Documentation.** Each proposed Trail-crew work project should be analyzed in advance of commencement of work. This evaluation should include both a “project-needs assessment” and a “job hazard analysis” and will be documented on a “[project logistics](#)” form. The purpose of the “project-needs assessment” is to determine the objectives and scope of the work; the number of workers and estimated work hours required for the project; the tools, equipment, and materials necessary to complete the project; and the amount and type of safety equipment appropriate to the project.

The purpose of the “job-hazards analysis” is to assess potential risks associated with the proposed work project, given the type of work and tools and equipment involved in the project, physical and environmental conditions at the work site, and the degree of difficulty and technical knowledge associated with the work.

Normally, these analyses will be developed by the Trail-crew supervisor in consultation with the appropriate ATC field representative, the sponsoring-club coordinator, or a designated cooperating-agency representative. ATC will develop appropriate forms and instructional

materials to assist those responsible for preparing these analyses [including the [Trail Work Hazards and Safety Gear](#) chart, a [project logistics](#) form, and ATC's stewardship manual *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*].

Trail-crew supervisors are responsible for sharing information from the "project-needs assessment" and the "job-hazards analysis" during orientation and other training sessions with all volunteer Trail-crew workers and for maintaining and updating this information as the work project evolves or the work environment changes.

Trail-crew supervisors also will be responsible for ensuring that all crew workers have completed required personal and medical-history forms and any appropriate VIP or VIF forms in advance of the commencement of work. This information must be easily accessible to the Trail-crew supervisor in the event of a medical or other emergency. Federal-agency partners will be responsible for providing ATC and/or the sponsoring club with appropriate VIP and VIF forms and a summary of requirements for coverage. Packets of medical claims forms and instructions for the NPS VIP program are available upon request from the appropriate ATC regional office or the Appalachian Trail Park Office in Harpers Ferry. [Note: VIP and VIF claim instructions and most forms are posted on ATC's [Volunteer Protection](#) Web page.]

In addition, Trail-crew supervisors will be required to follow an "accident-response procedure" in the event of any accident or medical difficulty arising in connection with a work project or during a worker's stay at a base-camp facility. The intent of the "accident-response procedure" is to ensure prompt response to any medical incident or emergency; to ensure proper notification to responsible officials in ATC, the sponsoring club, and the cooperating agency; and to assist in analyzing the causes of such incidents and developing recommendations for corrective or preventive actions in the future. ATC will provide crew supervisors with the appropriate forms and description of the procedure process. ATC also will be responsible for maintaining a database of accident-report information to assist in evaluating crew operations and safety practices.

**Vehicle Safety.** Any operator of an ATC-owned or -leased crew-transportation vehicle must:

- Have a valid driver's license and driving record that meets ATC requirements;
- Understand and adhere to all applicable state and local traffic rules and regulations; and,
- Understand and adhere to these ATC "rules of the road" guidelines.

Any operator of a government-owned vehicle must have a valid government driver's license or written authorization from the appropriate government agency and must comply with any additional agency operating requirements.

A state-issued driver's license and proof of insurance (in the case of vehicles owned or leased by ATC) or a government driver's license (in the case of a government-owned vehicle) must be easily accessible at all times during which the vehicle is being operated.

Explosive or highly flammable materials may be transported only in accordance with U.S. DOT regulations, must be properly labeled, and must be carried in approved containers, separated from passengers during vehicle transportation.

**Federal Policy**—Both the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service have detailed policy guidelines regarding worker safety, which require proper training, safety equipment, and supervision (section 1.9.1.4 and 1.9.1.6 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

Federal Volunteers in Parks and Volunteers in Forests agreements strongly encourage and in some cases require safety training and the use of appropriate protective equipment (see [Trail Work Hazards and Safety Gear](#) chart).

### Considerations in Planning

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary, although Trail clubs may want to keep a list of power tools owned by the club, along with a maintenance log for each power tool. Clubs should keep a list of maintainers who have received training and certification for chain saws and crosscut saws and when those certifications expire. Valid sawyer certifications require current first-aid and CPR certifications, which clubs also should track. Clubs also may want to keep a list of volunteers with training in use of other tools, including power tools and rigging equipment. ATC's [volunteer clearinghouse](#) database may be used to track certifications.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club's policy statement should include the club's commitment that its officers, workers, and members follow ATC and agency requirements for all club-authorized work and work trips. Trail club policies should recognize the importance of volunteer worker safety and outline the steps that the club will take to provide safety and skills training for volunteers.

**Action Plan**—Trail clubs may wish to develop a "training needs list" and work with their ATC regional offices and agency partners to provide safety and skills training for club volunteers.

## CHAPTER 2 (L)

**Chain-saw and Crosscut-saw Training and Certification**

The National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and ATC recognize and support the essential roles of volunteers in the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Trail and its facilities in order to keep the Trail open and passable for public use. The safety of all Appalachian Trail workers is a principal concern of both federal agencies and ATC. The use of crosscut saws has been frequently and routinely required of Appalachian Trail workers in order to accomplish their roles since the beginnings of the trail; more recently, chain saws have often replaced the manual saws, except in designated wilderness areas. Federal agency partners and ATC recognize that a consistent program for the training and certification of chain-saw and crosscut-saw operators is necessary to ensure, to the extent possible, the safety of A.T. workers.

**Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—In 2003, ATC signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service providing a framework of cooperation regarding chain-saw and crosscut-saw training and certification. The [sawyer certification MOU](#) was renewed in 2008. To fulfill its obligations towards that MOU, in 2003 the ATC Board also adopted the following policy on chain-saw and crosscut-saw training and certification, which is applicable to all Appalachian Trail workers:

The ATC endorses the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service approach to the administration of their respective employee worker-safety programs and joins with those agencies in the administration of safety programs to protect volunteers and employees working on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. ATC appreciates and supports programs that protect Trail workers under the Volunteers in the Forests Act, the Volunteers in the Parks Act, and related agency sponsorship of training and safety programs.

In its authorization to equip and train A.T. workers, including volunteers, employees and workers from the maintaining clubs, as well as in its work with cooperating state agencies, ATC:

- Recognizes that individual Appalachian Trail workers have primary responsibility for their own personal safety and for compliance with the requirements for chain-saw and crosscut-saw operators. Furthermore, each volunteer engaged in club- or crew-sponsored maintenance and construction activities assumes personal responsibility for following crew-leader or club directions, assessing his or her own physical condition and preparedness for engaging in Trail-work activities, and coming properly equipped and clothed in a manner appropriate for the location, duration, weather conditions, and proposed work.
- Acknowledges that, through its agreements with the National Park Service and the Forest Service, A.T.-maintaining clubs have—through individual memoranda of understanding subdelegating to them leadership and control over their respective sections of the Appalachian Trail—the authority and responsibility to control all club volunteer-maintenance activities by their members and affiliates.

- Follows current individual safety requirements that apply to federal employees in those agencies but recognizes that volunteers may require additional time, resources, and assistance to meet agency requirements and goals. Those requirements can be found in the U.S. Forest Service [Health and Safety Code Handbook's](#) "Minimum Requirements for Chain Saw Operation" (FSH 6709.11, Section 22.48, pages 20-47 through 20-62) and "[OSHA General Requirements for Logging Operations](#)."
- Follows the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center's [curriculum](#), or its agency-approved successors, for chain-saw and crosscut-saw certification. In evaluating individual sawyer skills when certifying or recertifying sawyers, ATC-authorized instructors may consider equivalent course materials from other programs.
- Encourages Trail-maintaining crews and clubs to maintain current voluntary services agreements with their federal-agency partners. These agreements generally will list all volunteer workers and will outline any applicable medical coverage and tort-protection for incidents on the Trail arising from these groups' volunteer activities there. These agreements are authorized under agency-sponsored Volunteers in Parks (VIP) or Volunteers in Forest (VIF) programs at the local level. [[Appendix K](#)]
- ATC recognizes that, under the VIP and VIF programs, volunteers are considered "federal employees" for the purposes of medical and tort-claims protections. However, the Conservancy maintains that its organization, its partner Trail clubs, and its individual volunteer workers and employees are independent citizens working under private ATC or club auspices within the law, regulations, and policies set by the federal agencies.

To the extent financially feasible, ATC will:

- Seek public funding to fully implement training and equipment programs necessary for safety management.
- Seek instructor-certifiers who can be qualified under USFS and NPS auspices as instructors who can authorize local instructors and operators. ATC's regions, state partners, and Trail-maintaining clubs should encourage willing, skilled, regularly practicing sawyers with talents for teaching to become qualified as instructors by ATC's instructor-certifier.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) meeting current best management practices to its instructor-certifiers, its local instructors, its certified operators, and its trail-crew leaders.
- Reimburse approved volunteer expenses for first-aid/CPR training and PPE purchases.

- Encourage both agencies to recognize current certifications still in effect through their full three-year terms.
- Prepare “Current Best Management Practices” (BMPs), which will be summarized in a volunteer-friendly format.  
*[Note: These practices are encompassed in the Chain-Saw and Crosscut-Saw [Student Handbook](#) developed by the U.S. Forest Service’s Missoula Technology and Design Center, which is used for certification of A.T. sawyers.]*
- Work with the agencies to publish and distribute attractive and effective training- and safety-administration handbooks, videos, and other media and to minimize reporting requirements and other paperwork.

**Federal Policy**—Both the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service require chain-saw and crosscut-saw certification, training, safety equipment, and supervision under the terms of the [2003 Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw MOU](#).

### **Considerations in Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary. Clubs are encouraged to maintain an up-to-date list of certified volunteers, as well as a maintenance log on chain-saws and crosscut saws. Clubs should also determine whether ATC-provided personal protective equipment (PPE) will be Trail club property or will belong to its individual certified sawyers.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Club policy should recognize that chain-saw and crosscut saw operators should be trained and certified through an agency-approved certification program.

**Action Plan**—Clubs may want to develop a list of the volunteers who, because of their regular responsibilities, should have priority in receiving training and certification, and work with ATC and agency partners to organize training and certification workshops.

## CHAPTER 2 (M)

**Reassignment of Club Maintenance Responsibilities**

The first responsibility of the A.T. maintaining clubs is to ensure the quality of the Trail through proper maintenance, and pride in this duty makes reassignments uncommon. However, in the event where a club is unable to fulfill this responsibility, or finds another more suitable and efficient organization to take over a piece or the entirety of a section, responsibility must be officially reassigned.

A Trail club should ensure that the continuity of the Appalachian Trail is maintained across the section. The club must meet ATC's standards for marking, clearing, and treadway care as laid out in *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*. In addition to those minimum requirements, functions have been added in a manner that roughly parallels the functions that were added to the A.T. during its historical development, such as relocations, providing shelters; and so forth. Since the amendments to the [National Trails System Act](#) in 1978, land-management functions have been added, including preparation of preliminary corridor designs and optimal-location reviews in advance of NPS or USFS land acquisition, preparation of local management plans to address a host of issues accompanying land acquisition, and, more recently, evaluating work needs through the Trail-assessment procedure.

Core club responsibilities are articulated in individual memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between each Appalachian Trail clubs and ATC ([Appendix F](#)), contributing to the continuity of trail maintenance to ATC standards over the length of the Trail. If clubs are no longer willing or able to fulfill those responsibilities, those maintenance responsibilities can be reassigned.

**Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—In 2001, ATC's Board of Managers adopted a policy regarding the reassignment of Trail club-maintenance responsibilities. That policy was amended by the ATC Board of Directors on November 1, 2008 and now reads as follows:

A section of the Appalachian Trail that has been assigned by ATC to a particular maintaining club may be reassigned either with the consent of the affected club(s), or following determination that the club is unable to fulfill its management and maintenance responsibilities as defined in the ATC/club memorandum [[Appendix F](#)] of understanding.

In both instances, if the regional partnership committee chair is a member of the club whose section is being reassigned, that individual will recuse himself or herself from the proceedings to avoid a conflict of interest.

**Change of Trail Assignment with Consent of Maintaining Club(s)**—Any A.T.-maintaining club wishing to change its existing assignment shall submit a written request for that change to the regional director of the region in which the Trail section is located.

1. If the change would affect multiple A.T.-maintaining clubs, the written request shall be signed by the presidents of all affected clubs. The request should state the reasons for the proposed change, the specific location of the section to be reassigned, and the affected mileage.
2. If the request involves assignment of a section of the A.T. to a club that has had no previous Trail-maintenance assignment, the request should also contain information



to substantiate the club's capabilities to manage the Trail section, including the size of the club's membership; trail construction, maintenance, or management experience; and prior activities in behalf of the Appalachian Trail, if any.

Upon receipt of a request for change of Trail assignment by consent, the regional director shall review the proposal in coordination with affected agency partners and the regional partnership committee. The proposed change is subject to the approval of the regional partnership committee and ATC, in accordance with the ATC Policy for the Review and Approval of Management Plans and Project Proposals [see Chapter 1 (E)]. Following the reassignment, the regional director will report the changes to the affected clubs, the RPC, agency partners, the Stewardship Council and Board of Directors.

**Change of Trail Assignment without Consent of Maintaining Club**—If a request for change of Trail assignment is not accompanied by the consent of the maintaining club(s) affected by the requested change, or if the regional partnership committee chair or regional director is made aware of the need for a change of Trail assignment because of complaints from hikers, agency partners, regional field staff, or others, the regional partnership committee chair shall convene the regional partnership committee.

1. The RPC chair shall inform the maintaining club in writing of the request. The maintaining club will be asked if it is willing to relinquish the involved section of the Trail. If not, the maintaining club will be asked to provide the regional partnership committee with information to substantiate the club's capabilities to manage the Trail section, including the size of the club's membership; trail-building or -maintenance experience; and other management activities it has undertaken on behalf of the Appalachian Trail.
2. The regional partnership committee will evaluate the need for a change and will make a recommendation to the ATC Stewardship Council on whether to make the change. The primary considerations of the RPC shall be the condition of the Trail section and the manner in which the maintaining club carries out its management responsibilities as a maintaining club of ATC.
3. If the physical condition of the Trail section is the complaint, the regional partnership committee will conduct a site visit to assess the Trail section. At least one member of the RPC, one representative of the maintaining club, and the ATC regional director shall participate in the site visit. The RPC chair shall notify all parties of the date of the site visit.

After completion of its inquiry, the regional partnership committee in consultation with the regional director shall develop a written recommendation to the maintaining club on a course of action to cure the problem(s), an offer of assistance by ATC or other local maintaining clubs, and a schedule for correcting the problem(s).

In those rare cases where the RPC or regional director feel that all reasonable efforts to help a club meet its management responsibilities have not borne fruit, one or both may request that the chair of the ATC Board of Directors appoint a special committee of volunteers to evaluate the situation and make a recommendation to the Stewardship Council. The Council

will review the committee's recommendation, develop its own recommendation, and forward both recommendations and supporting information to the Board of Directors for a decision.

**NPS Policy**—No NPS policy currently exists regarding the reassignment of Trail club maintenance responsibilities except to note that, in the NPS-ATC delegation agreement, ATC is the sole agent that “sub-delegates” trail-maintenance assignments to the Trail clubs. Of course, any reassignment should fully take into account any existing MOUs between agencies to ensure that government partners at all levels are fully involved with maintenance reassignments.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The Trail club should keep current and available such information as to substantiate the club's capabilities to manage the Trail section, such as the size of the club's membership as well as records of trail-building or -maintenance projects and other management activities it has undertaken on behalf of the Appalachian Trail.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—No Trail club policy is required regarding trail reassignments.

**Action Plan**—No plan is required.

# **PART 3**

## **Public Use, Public Information, and Emergency Response**

## CHAPTER 3 (A)

### Emergency Planning and Coordination

Responses to law-enforcement, fire-control, and search-and-rescue emergencies are the responsibility of local, state, and federal public agencies. Those responsibilities are spelled out in state memoranda of understanding, which exist in about half the Trail states ([Appendix G](#)). They should be understood by state authorities in any case: states retain full responsibility for enforcing state and local laws and regulations. As private, volunteer organizations, ATC and the Trail-maintaining clubs have no legal responsibility to respond to emergencies. However, ATC and the clubs play a critical role in educating hikers, agency partners, and the public about the Trail and in managing the A.T. so as to reduce problems of this kind. As the on-the-ground managers, ATC and the Trail clubs must prepare contingency plans, be ready to assist the appropriate agency in responding to law-enforcement, fire, and search-and-rescue episodes, and act as an early warning system, or as “the eyes and ears” of agency partners, to prevent or mitigate problems. When authorized by agency officials, ATC or its affiliated clubs have occasionally (and provisionally) posted areas along the Trail that have experienced recurring law-enforcement problems in order to advise hikers of certain risks (*e.g.*, vehicle break-ins, harassment, *etc.*).

ATC’s goal for emergency planning and coordination requires a determination of clear, specific agency responsibility for law enforcement, fire control, and search-and-rescue response through the various jurisdictions crossed by the A.T. This can be a complex undertaking. Considerable time and effort are required on the part of ATC and Trail club planners and their state and local governmental agency partners to clarify responsibilities.

A key element of an appropriate emergency response is *jurisdiction*— the power or right to exercise authority over or administer the law in an area. In general, state and local jurisdictions retain their authorities and responsibilities for response to emergencies on the Appalachian Trail. The vast majority of federally acquired A.T. lands—including most recently acquired National Park Service lands and all national forest lands—are under *proprietary jurisdiction*. Under this form of federal jurisdiction, the United States, as owner, exercises all the rights of a private party. In addition, commissioned rangers of the National Park Service or U.S. Forest Service may legally enforce federal regulations. The police and emergency powers of the states should be exercised in connection with illegal acts of private persons to the same extent as they are exercised on privately owned lands, using state and local laws and regulations. States may not enforce federal regulations except to the extent that those regulations have been adopted by state legislatures.

In addition, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park have *either exclusive or concurrent jurisdiction* within their boundaries. In Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NPS rangers enforce both NPS regulations and state laws, and state law-enforcement jurisdiction is limited. In Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, C&O Canal National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, and Blue Ridge Parkway, both federal and state officers can enforce federal and state laws.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—The following policies and guidelines have been approved by ATC’s Board:

**Contingency Planning for Emergencies:** Law-enforcement, fire-control, and search-and-rescue jurisdictions must be contacted during preparation of local management plans by the

clubs and periodically thereafter. ATC and the clubs must establish basic familiarity with the Trail among all jurisdictions crossed by NPS corridor lands, so that there is less confusion and ambivalence when emergencies occur. Specific tasks consist of informing local authorities about the Trail's location by providing current maps and sharing phone-contact lists for emergencies. Frequently, meetings are needed to explain the A.T. to local jurisdictions so that contingency plans are prepared with local authorities and each partner's responsibilities are clear. (ATC Board of Managers, April 1987)

**Responsibilities and Disclaimers:** Authorized law-enforcement agencies have the primary responsibility for responding to and prosecuting crimes that occur on the A.T. or directly affect its hikers. ATC and its member clubs will cooperate in facilitating responses, if requested, but assume no legal responsibility. ATC and its clubs do not assume any duty to warn any hiker of any specific criminal risk on the Trail. (ATC Board of Managers, April 1984)

**Incident Reporting:** ATC will act as a central repository for reports of incidents to hikers' security, law-enforcement violations, fires, and search and rescue. ATC has developed an incident report form and guidelines that clubs are encouraged to use. [[Appendix M](#)]

ATC includes common-sense [personal safety tips](#) for hikers in some of its publications and on its Web site. Appropriate revisions are being made to all relevant ATC publications as they are updated or reprinted.

Information for hikers on [reporting incidents](#) and the [incident report form](#) are on the ATC Web site, and a simplified form is included in the *Appalachian Trail Data Book*. ATC will distribute reports of incidents that are reported to have occurred in their Trail sections to the Trail-maintaining clubs and land-managing agencies. Clubs are asked to share information on incidents that they receive with ATC and the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office and may use the form in [Appendix M](#) to do so. Incident reports may be mailed or sent by fax to ATC headquarters, or e-mailed to [incident@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:incident@appalachiantrail.org).

**NPS Policy**—The objectives of the NPS law-enforcement program are the prevention of criminal activities through resource education, public-safety efforts, and deterrence, and the detection and investigation of criminal activity and the apprehension and prosecution of violators. This function is not delegated to ATC and the Trail clubs: only federal, state, or local law-enforcement officials may carry out enforcement. NPS Appalachian Trail lands are administered under proprietary jurisdiction. Insofar as practical, the NPS seeks to acquire concurrent legislative jurisdiction for all NPS lands, which would allow NPS law-enforcement officers to enforce federal criminal statutes and assimilate state law when no federal law or regulation exists (section 8.3 and 8.3.5 of 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) states:

Managers will foster an unregimented atmosphere and otherwise encourage self-reliance and respect for Trail values by users. Hiker regulations will be kept as unrestrictive as possible and should be developed only to the extent they are proven necessary to protect the physical Trail, its environment, and the interests of adjacent landowners. In certain high-use areas along the Trail, the need for regulation has been demonstrated, and managers will give these areas special attention.

Enforcement should not detract, if possible, from the hiking experience and will be exercised only in a way that complements and reinforces educational approaches. Where the footpath is within the Appalachian Trail corridor purchased by the National Park Service, or is outside

the boundaries of existing public use areas, the Trail clubs and their agency partners will work with local law-enforcement officials to assure their understanding of law-enforcement needs and of the primary emphasis on education.

Examples of agreements and statements that have been developed to guide emergency-response actions on lands acquired by the National Park Service for the Appalachian Trail are listed below:

- The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement, and the Massachusetts Department of State Police shall be responsible for the conduct and coordination of law enforcement, fire control and search-and-rescue activities on such lands in accordance with applicable policies and procedures established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and shall advise the NPS as soon as possible of major emergencies or controversial events [Memorandum of Understanding Guidance Document for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, signed 2003].
- To the degree that NPS has a duty to meet law-enforcement responsibilities along the Trail, this is not transferable to ATC. ATC cannot be authorized to enforce Federal regulations nor to serve in a law-enforcement capacity. Of course, the [National Trails System Act](#) does not preclude, and may serve to encourage, state and local law-enforcement responsibilities (Solicitor's Opinion, U.S. Department of the Interior, March, 1983).
- The Solicitor, in a memorandum dated September 1, 1983, determined that both ATC and local Trail clubs are authorized to seek local law-enforcement assistance to protect Appalachian Trail lands and to register complaints for violations on those federal lands. Local law-enforcement authorities must recognize their responsibilities to enforce local and state laws on NPS property and understand the relationship of volunteer managers to these lands [letter from NPS Associate Director to ATC, September 1985].
- All incidents resulting in injury to persons, or damage to property in excess of \$300.00, must be reported by persons involved to the superintendent [the NPS Appalachian Trail park manager in the case of the A.T.] as soon as possible [*Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 36, Section 2.33].
- There is no plan for development of NPS law-enforcement capability along the Appalachian Trail outside of established units of the National Park System through which the Trail passes. Reliance has been and should continue to be on state and local laws to provide law-enforcement support when necessary. This system has proven successful in providing protection for the Trail and its users over the long tradition of the Trail [letter from NPS Associate Director to ATC, September 1985].

### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—Each Trail club should have a current list of emergency contacts that includes addresses and phone numbers of federal, state, and local officials responsible for dealing with emergencies. Since jurisdictions frequently overlap, it may be appropriate to include a map showing the respective jurisdictions of each agency. The inventory should be as comprehensive as possible and must be kept current in order to be of any use in an emergency situation.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Club policy should recognize the respective roles of federal, state, and local government authorities, particularly regarding law-enforcement issues. Clubs should take an active role in developing working relationships with local government officials so that roles are defined prior to an emergency. Determine the lead agency responsible for handling both the technical emergency response and the public-information aspects of an incident. Law-enforcement officials receive extensive training in this regard and would normally assume a lead role at the scene. Club policy should always include prompt notification of ATC and the NPS A.T. Park Office in the event of any major emergency on the Trail or on corridor lands.

**Action Plan**—An action plan should include a current inventory of emergency-response personnel and specific guidance on procedures to be followed in responding to different categories of emergencies. One or more members of the Trail club should assume responsibility for maintaining regular contact with appropriate emergency-response officials. It is recommended that regular (annual) informal meetings be held with local and state officials. The Appalachian Trail Park Office can help facilitate such meetings and ATPO staff should be included in them.

## CHAPTER 3 (B)

### Special Events and Large-Group Use

Use of the Appalachian Trail by large groups, commercial outfitters, sponsored spectator events, and races or endurance competitions generates impacts that are inconsistent with the concept of a simple footpath. Large groups can cause serious damage to soils along the margins of the foot-path and trample vegetation over wide areas when they congregate at views and lunch spots. An encounter with a large group of people on the Trail also can have a detrimental effect on the experience of a hiker seeking solitude or a small group of hikers seeking to “get away from it all.” These issues also exist with “[Trail Magic](#)” activities that draw and concentrate large numbers of hikers, such as hiker feeds.

Additionally, ATC, Trail clubs, and agency partners receive complaints about groups monopolizing shelter space, leaving no space available for others. The individuals registering these complaints often make reference to the Trail community’s emphasis on providing a Trail environment where individuals can seek solitude and personal accomplishment.

Policies on large-group use and commercial activities along the A.T. depend partially on the direction set by the land-managing agency. Restrictions on group size and purpose are most strict within established national parks and designated wilderness areas. Clubs should work closely with public landowning agencies to promote clear direction at the local level on special events and large-group use.

Although large-group use is generally inconsistent with the purposes of the Trail and should be discouraged in most cases, occasions might arise when such uses serve desirable ends and can be considered as a permitted use. In these instances, local A.T. managers should consider various approaches for minimizing the impacts of the proposed use upon the Trail environment and the experience of other visitors.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC’s Board of Managers adopted a group-use policy in November 1987. In November 1993, the policy was amended slightly to clarify the wording. The amended policy reads as follows:

- Local clubs should consider how to best accommodate groups by reducing group size or by other means that would allow use to take place while protecting Trail values.
- Groups spending one or more nights on the Trail should not exceed 10 members at any one overnight-use area, and day-use groups should not exceed 25 members at any one location, unless clubs designate otherwise in their local-management plans.
- Shelters along the Appalachian Trail normally provide space for no more than six to 12 individuals. As a courtesy to other users, groups whose numbers meet or exceed the capacity of a Trail shelter should make arrangements to camp in accordance with local policies.
- Trail clubs and agency partners should consider designating or constructing campsites specifically for use by groups of 10 or less in or near areas where group overnight use at Trail shelters has caused resource damage or resulted in frequent complaints from other Trail users.



- ATC and its member clubs should encourage organizations that simultaneously deploy multiple groups on the Trail (such as summer camps and college outing clubs) to consider their impact on the Trail and other users of the Trail. Where practical, ATC, Trail clubs, and agencies should assist these organizations in developing alternatives that meet their organizational goals, while preserving the Trail experience for other users.
- Clubs and agencies should develop education and outreach programs to inform users of this policy and to encourage peer pressure and voluntary compliance.
- All ATC guidebooks and other publications will be revised as appropriate to be consistent with this management principle.

ATC and the Appalachian Long Distance Hiker's Association (ALDHA) have endorsed and disseminated "[Suggestions for Providing Trail Magic](#)" that encourage Leave No Trace practices. ATC and ALDHA promote volunteerism as the best form of "Trail magic," and also point out that leaving unattended food or beverages on the Trail can have negative impacts on wildlife and on hiker's health and the outdoor experience.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service strictly limits special events, assemblies, military maneuvers, and commercial activities in national park units and often must do an environmental assessment before issuing a permit for such activities. These "special events" are prohibited unless "there is a meaningful association between the park area and the event, the observance contributes to visitor appreciation or understanding of the park, and a permit has been issued by the Superintendent." ([Code of Federal Regulations](#), Title 36, Section 2.50)

The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) states:

- Commercial endeavors designed to profit from visitor use are not an acceptable component in the Trail corridor.
- Management actions will discourage activities that would degrade the Trail's natural and cultural resources or social values, such as use by groups or organizations involved in promotion, sponsorship, or participation in spectator events or competitive activities, or by groups which by their size or commercial interest generate use which is inconsistent with the concept of a simple footpath.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Unless the Trail club has developed or plans to develop group-use sites, no inventory is necessary. If the Trail club does maintain any group-use sites, a short list of those sites and any restrictions that may apply is sufficient.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—In developing club policies for large-group use, Trail clubs should emphasize that large groups are in most cases incompatible with the purposes of the Trail. The club may wish to sanction large-group use on a case-by-case basis, but should consider the following questions:

1. Can organized groups use the A.T. in the "off season" (such as before Memorial Day or after Labor Day)?

2. Are there potential resource impacts to consider (such as impacts to soft soils, vegetation, or rare plants)?
3. Can large groups find their own overnight accommodations off the A.T.? Does the club maintain group-use sites where large groups can be accommodated?
4. Are there particular sections of the A.T. that have modest slopes, well-drained soils, and/or rocky treadways that can accommodate heavy use?
5. Does a particular group have good leadership and internal control to ensure responsible use?
6. Is the proposed use likely to conflict with popular use areas?
7. Does Trail-club literature request large groups to contact the club prior to going out on the Trail?

**Action Plan**—No action plan is necessary.

## CHAPTER 3 (C)

### **Public Information, Education, and Outreach Programs**

Although it was built and maintained privately at first, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail was always intended for use by the broad spectrum of the public and is now located almost entirely on public lands.

As stewards of the Trail, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Trail-maintaining clubs, and agency partners seek to make others aware of the Trail and its possible attractions for them, promote access to the A.T. for all, and motivate users to treat the Trail, its resources, and other users properly for the greater enjoyment of all. At the same time, greater awareness and use of the Trail increases the number of potential Trail club members (including a new generation of maintainers and managers) and ATC. Good community relations are an asset in corridor monitoring and land protection, as well as a means of strengthening the local organization with new talents for managing the diversity of activities now associated with the Trail project. Public information, or public relations, always supports some other purpose of the organization.

Trail users obviously want and need information about the Trail. The news media (and commercial publishers of travel and recreation books and other materials) are also interested—many will publish hike and work-trip notices; most are always interested in the type of “good-news,” local volunteer work that is the mainstay of A.T. club activities. Regular contact is also perhaps an organization’s best insurance against irresponsible reporting in times of crisis, minor or major.

#### **Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—ATC has an obligation as a nonprofit organization and as a cooperative management partner to provide full, factual, and unbiased information about the Trail as a national public resource. In fulfilling this obligation, a series of 11 official guides to the A.T. are published by ATC and three of the Trail clubs, supplemented by an annual summary of mileages between important points (the *Appalachian Trail Data Book*); a magazine for members; technical manuals for maintainers; promotional and educational brochures for the Trail user; and other books, posters, maps, and related merchandise. These materials, obviously, are intended for direct communication with users, potential users, and supporters.

ATC also engages in and encourages indirect communication through the news and educational media, the commercial publishing industry, and the entertainment business. In its day-to-day promotional activities, ATC seeks to leave a positive impression of both itself and the maintaining clubs and encourages media contacts with them. In emergencies affecting the Trail and its reputation, ATC also serves as the media liaison for the A.T. community.

ATC is reaching out beyond its traditional audiences to engage new volunteers in environmental monitoring through the A.T. MEGA-Transect and other programs, and to encourage future Trail users, volunteers, and supporters through a place-based educational program known as a [Trail to Every Classroom](#) as well as through [community partnerships](#) being nurtured along the Trail. ATC’s [volunteer clearinghouse](#) provides an online opportunity for Trail clubs to reach out to potential volunteers by posting work trips and other projects.

**NPS Policy**—The Park Service will provide timely and accurate information to the public and news media in accordance with applicable laws, departmental policy, and director’s orders. The NPS A.T. Park Office regularly makes itself available to the news media as the spokesperson for the federal interest in the Trail and underwrites a limited number of publications (brochures and maps) of interest to the

recreation-minded public at large. In addition, the NPS A.T. Park Office takes part in and provides a large portion of the funding for the NPS Junior Ranger program, which develops educational activities for youth, and the Trail to Every Classroom program that helps teachers use the A.T. as a resource both within and outside of their classrooms.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Basic elements of a Trail club public-information program might include a brochure, a means of responding to requests for information, and a list of news-media outlets within 50 miles of its Trail section. Agency partners, ATC, and appropriate legislators (federal, state, and local) should be added to the list for distribution of news releases. This inventory also should identify the person(s) within the club responsible for each public-relations activity. A basic “press list” for the area may be obtained from ATC, but local officials and other important persons who would be interested in Trail club activities should be added. *Any* club activity involving the Trail has the makings of a potential news release, from a relocation opening to the receipt of a grant.

Even if a Trail club does not currently sponsor outreach, education, or interpretation programs, an inventory of desirable sites for small-group hikes, particularly those suitable for novices and intermediate hikers, is a good first step towards a future program. Club representatives interested in outreach and educational programs may find that agency partners and ATC are able to provide technical or financial support.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail clubs should determine how best to inform and educate the public about their organizations and the Trail, and should develop strategies to recruit new members and volunteers. Consider whether the club should have its own brochure, whether its Web site is effective, and whether the club should have an active membership-recruitment program. One person should be identified as the spokesperson to the media for the organization. Club policy also should explain how to respond to requests for information. If appropriate, the Trail club should highlight its existing or potential role in Trail outreach and education programs.

**Action Plan**—The Trail club needs to recruit a club member or committee of members to assume responsibility for the execution of each of the elements of its program: developing a brochure, maintaining the club’s Web site, developing a press list, writing and distributing news releases when appropriate, responding to information requests, and maintaining informative ties with community leaders. If the Trail club has undertaken an education or outreach program, club members will need to assume roles in organizing programs, creating displays, attending community events, or developing guided hikes and activities.

## CHAPTER 3 (D)

### Ridgerunner and Caretaker Programs

ATC actively supports a number of ridgerunner and caretaker programs as cost-effective, educational, and preventative approaches to the protection of the Trail, its resources, and its users. In addition, many Trail clubs use [ridgerunner and caretaker programs](#) as part of their regular Trail-maintenance and management efforts. They can range from a few volunteers who provide basic information to hikers along the Trail to summer-long or full-time paid individuals who monitor and manage most aspects of a high-use site or Trail section.

Most often, ridgerunners and caretakers are paid employees who are hired in a cooperative effort by the local Trail club, a state or federal agency, and ATC. Each ridgerunner program operates differently, but all share the same basic objective—to educate Trail visitors and hikers. Occasionally, they may be asked by land-managing or other agencies to provide search-and-rescue support.

*Ridgerunners* spend most of their time out on the Trail doing a variety of tasks, the most important of which is providing information to hikers. Ridgerunners also provide the Trail club with a presence on their Trail section, helping to heighten hiker awareness of local programs and policies and acting as a deterrent to vandalism and resource abuse.

*Caretakers* generally manage overnight sites. Their duties may include collecting overnight-use fees, dispensing information, doing small Trail-work projects, discouraging destructive or disruptive uses, minimizing resource damage, or operating composting toilets. In some cases, they “rove” or move between two or more sites on a regular basis.

The primary mission of the ridgerunners (mobile) and caretakers (stationary at campsites and shelters) is to educate hikers, to help them practice Leave-No-Trace minimum-impact camping techniques (see [Appendix J](#)) and understand and adhere to local regulations; and to ensure that problems are solved before they become critical. They enhance the experience of novice hikers, while reducing the potential for problems.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC has no formal policy regarding the use of ridgerunners or caretakers; however, ATC is generally supportive of programs that inform and educate the public about appropriate use of the Trail. Ridgerunners or caretakers may be appropriate for specific situations where the need for an on-site presence exists. Most ridgerunner positions are club positions, but ATC may be able to assist with providing backpacking equipment, uniforms, first-aid supplies, and communications (cellular phones or radios). ATC holds an annual training course for A.T. ridgerunners. Anyone acting in a volunteer ridgerunner or caretaker capacity should be included in either the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) or Volunteers in Forests (VIF) program (see [Appendix K](#)) or provided with private liability insurance.

ATC has developed informal criteria for evaluating the need for ridgerunners or caretakers on sections of the Trail that may be helpful to Trail clubs considering whether or not to start a ridgerunner or caretaker program:

1. How much day and overnight use does the area receive?
2. Is there a history of vandalism, partying, or other people-problems that have affected hikers' perceptions about security on the A.T.?

3. Is there a history of abuse or overuse of the Trail and its facilities in this area that has affected visitors' enjoyment of the Trail or the A.T.'s reputation with the public or with land managers?
4. Is the area particularly sensitive or vulnerable because of its climate, soils, vegetation, topography, elevation, or weather?
5. Is there adequate financial support for the program from both the club and the agency partner?
6. Are there public-relations concerns with regard to local communities?
7. Is the club and/or agency prepared to provide adequate supervision, field support services, and emergency-response personnel in support of the ridgerunner or caretaker?

**NPS Policy**—Although the NPS has no formal policy with respect to ridgerunners and caretakers, the agency strongly supports the public-education and other objectives of the A.T. ridgerunner and caretaker program, which are similar to backcountry ranger programs in other national park units.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary for ridgerunner or caretaker programs. However, information from Trail registers on areas with high levels of use and information about specific problems from monitoring reports, Trail assessments, and other sources may be helpful in determining if and where a caretaker or ridgerunner is needed.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A ridgerunner or caretaker program should be focused on addressing a specific problem or problems that can be solved best by an on-site presence. A Trail club policy statement should indicate why the ridgerunner or caretaker is needed and what general responsibilities he or she will have.

**Action Plan**—Several questions should be addressed in a Trail club's action plan if a caretaker or ridgerunner program is implemented, including:

1. Will the position be volunteer or paid?
2. What will be the source of funds for expenses and/or wages?
3. What responsibilities should be included in the ridgerunner's or caretaker's job description? What will be the scope of the caretaker or ridgerunner duties?
4. Who will provide local supervision, training, and day-to-day field support for the ridgerunners or caretakers?
5. What accommodations, tools, and/or support are needed to allow the caretaker or ridgerunner to perform his or her duties effectively?
6. Will the position(s) be seasonal, weekends only, or for a specific event?
7. If it is a seasonal program, what are the starting and ending dates?
8. When will a ridgerunner or caretaker be likely to make the most visitor contacts?
9. When is a ridgerunner or caretaker most needed to act as a deterrent to inappropriate use?
10. What type of information will the ridgerunner or caretaker provide to Trail users?

## CHAPTER 3 (E)

### Trail Signs

Traditionally, ATC has encouraged the use of simple directional signs, in addition to blazing, to help hikers find their way and locate side trails, shelters, and drinking-water supplies. Informational and regulatory signs are used to inform hikers, Trail neighbors, and potential trespassers about restrictions that apply on the Appalachian Trail and corridor lands. Good planning can ensure that a sign system conveys the necessary information in a pleasing, unobtrusive manner.

“Sign pollution,” in which there are more signs than necessary to direct and inform hikers and other users of the Trail lands should be avoided. Trailhead signs, which are usually appropriate at major trailheads, can convey a significant amount of information to users without causing sign pollution. The other extreme also may cause problems: too few signs leave hikers and others inadequately informed.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC provides guidance on planning and establishing a sign system for the footpath in *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance*. ATC also has a booklet entitled [\*Planning and Building an Appalachian Trailhead Bulletin Board\*](#), which provides detailed guidance and plans for designing and constructing a Trailhead bulletin board.

The NPS delegation of management responsibility for A.T. corridor lands has necessitated regulatory signs to advise hikers, Trail neighbors and others about permitted and prohibited uses. Standard signs bearing basic user information and restrictions to aid Trail clubs in protecting corridor lands are available from ATC and may be ordered at no charge to the Trail-maintaining clubs from ATC’s *Appalachian Trail Corridor Management Signs* catalog ([Appendix N](#)). Many of the signs are suitable for use on other lands as well, provided the local Trail-maintaining club and agency partner agree that the signs are appropriate.

The following guidelines for developing or posting signs on Appalachian Trail lands were endorsed by ATC’s Trail and Land Management Committee in March 1995:

1. Identify the club’s needs for signs as part of the Trail-assessment or local management-planning process. It is important to consider alternative methods for conveying information, such as brochures, registers, or personal contacts.
2. Be certain that signs containing the National Park Service’s official arrowhead symbol are placed only on National Park Service lands.
3. Comply with state and local legal requirements for posting property.
4. Locate signs conspicuously, but not too conspicuously. Signs directed at Trail users will be less prone to vandalism if placed on the Trail, but just out of sight of roads. Signs that convey messages to others will be most effective if posted along roads and at other potential points of entry.
5. Avoid “sign pollution” by using only the minimum needed to do the job. If you need to convey more than one or two messages, consider using a Trailhead signboard or small “birdhouse” to post signs on.
6. Monitor signs regularly for damage, disappearance, and effectiveness. It helps to have a master sign list and inventory, so that signs can be replaced when needed.
7. If you need to develop additional signs, consider the following:
  - a) Your greeting should be friendly but authoritative.
  - b) Identify the Trail club and land-managing agency where appropriate.

- c) State prohibitions or restrictions in a positive way.
- d) Include names and phone numbers of emergency contacts where appropriate.
- e) Use international symbols where appropriate.
- f) The wording of regulatory signs or the use of the symbol of any land-managing agency *needs to be approved by* the land-managing agency.
- g) Posting of specific prohibitions, such as NO HUNTING or NO HORSES, requires a reference to the pertinent regulation to be properly enforced.

**NPS Policy**—The A.T. Park Office should be consulted about major signs at road intersections and trailheads that identify the Appalachian National Scenic Trail to the general public. That office has approved the wording of signs listed in ATC’s *Appalachian Trail Corridor Management Signs* catalog ([Appendix N](#)).

The National Park Service has developed extensive sign standards that are usually applied within existing national parks. Signs should be limited to the minimum necessary to provide information, warning, and regulatory needs and avoid confusion and visual intrusion. However, the agency also has endorsed the use of club directional signs along some sections of the Trail. Trail-maintaining clubs with Trail sections within units of the National Park system need to work with park managers to ensure a high-quality system within park boundaries that adequately serves A.T. users (section 9.2.3 of 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

In designated wilderness areas on National Park Service lands, only necessary signs intended for visitor safety, such as route direction and distances, should be posted. When signs are posted, they should be minimal in size and be compatible with the surrounding area (section 6.3.10.4 of 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—Many Trail clubs maintain an inventory of existing signs along the footpath of the Appalachian Trail. A master list can be developed or updated during a “walk-through” or Trail assessment.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club should indicate the general situations that require signs and the standards that the club will apply for their design, construction, and use. Regulations regarding wording and use of agency logos should be discussed with the land-managing agency prior to developing or posting signs.

**Action Plan**—Many Trail clubs already have individuals or sign committees in place who are familiar with existing needs and who maintain a list of signs that are needed. This list should be included in the local management plan and updated as part of the annual work plan. At Trailheads, posted information such as regulations and education material should be accurate and concise, and attractively displayed on some form of bulletin board. Bulletin boards should be checked at least annually.



## CHAPTER 3 (F)

### Minimum Impact Backcountry Use

The Appalachian Trail is a popular place to visit, with millions of visitors to the Trail each year. Most of this is day use or short-term overnight use, but the sheer volume of users creates many management challenges. Impacts on the Trail environment are often evident along high-use sections of the A.T. Litter, refuse, unsanitary conditions, trampling, bootleg campsites, fire rings, damaged trees, and shortcutting at switchbacks are resource impacts frequently reported by ridgerunners and Trail maintainers. Hikers also affect each others' backcountry experience—as the number of people seeking a primitive backcountry experience increases, the potential for solitude decreases.

Managers of backcountry and wilderness areas across the United States increasingly rely on visitor education to reduce the impact of visitors on backcountry and wilderness resources. This “soft approach” to educating visitors has largely replaced the more heavy-handed visitor-control methods of the 1960s and 1970s.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In 1998, the ATC Board adopted the following policy on minimum-impact backcountry use:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy actively supports the Leave No Trace (LNT) philosophy as a means of reducing the impact of A.T. visitors on the Trail environment. The Conservancy will work with [the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics], Trail-maintaining clubs, and agency partners to develop programs, brochures, signs, and other materials that convey the LNT message to Appalachian Trail users. Where appropriate, ATC guidebooks, maps, and other publications, will carry a Leave No Trace message.

Although ATC believes that communications with hikers should occur primarily through guidebooks and other literature distributed off the Trail, ATC encourages ridgerunners, caretakers, and volunteer and professional A.T. managers and maintainers to follow LNT guidelines while on the Trail and to take every opportunity to educate others.

ATC in particular supports efforts to develop and disseminate materials that are directed at inexperienced or novice backpackers and hikers, in that the behaviors and actions of those Trail visitors are likely to have a disproportionate impact upon the Trail environment.

ATC has basic [Leave-No-Trace](#) information on its Web site and in its visitor centers, and includes LNT materials at outreach events and activities whenever possible. ATC's booklet, [Step by Step—An Introduction to Hiking the Appalachian Trail](#), lists the LNT principles and integrates minimum-impact considerations throughout the text. The booklet can be downloaded from the ATC Web site or will be mailed on request. Trailhead signs with A.T.-specific LNT guidance are available to Trail clubs upon request (see [Appendix N](#)) and LNT practices for shelters are provided in ATC's guidance for locating and designing overnight sites ([Appendix L](#)). ATC also has [suggestions for providing Trail Magic](#) that incorporate Leave-No-Trace principles.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service is an official partner of the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. The National Park Service requires all visitors to designated wilderness areas to apply Leave-No-

Trace principles. Backcountry areas not officially designated as wilderness do not require the same standard, although NPS pledges to “identify acceptable limits of impacts, monitor backcountry use levels and resource conditions, and take prompt corrective action when unacceptable impacts occur” (section 8.2.2.4 of 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

### **Considerations in Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Some Trail clubs have developed brochures for Trail users that contain minimum-impact information. The Trail club’s local management plan should include a statement of policy endorsing the Leave-No-Trace ethic for the A.T. and its users.

**Action Plan**—Club representatives should consider how to incorporate Leave-No-Trace principles and practices into their education and outreach programs, including posting a minimum-impact message (see [Appendix N](#)) on Trailhead signboards.

## CHAPTER 3 (G)

### Advertising in the A.T. Corridor

Hostels, shuttle services, restaurants, and other services that cater to hikers have “advertised” in some fashion for years. Many of these businesses are noted in the *A.T. Thru-Hikers’ Companion* (published by ATC, with authorship rights held by the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association) and other such guides that are updated annually. Advertisements and signs are sometimes posted in the Trail corridor. Shelter registers often contain entries describing the services offered in nearby towns. It has become more common to find business cards for nearby businesses in shelters or attached to Trailhead signs.

ATC and its partners have responded by clarifying direction regarding advertising on A.T. corridor lands. In line with the position stated in the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) and long-standing NPS and USFS policies that prohibit advertising for commercial enterprises located outside park or forest boundaries, advertisements found on Trail corridor lands should be removed with prior notification to partner agencies.

The services provided to hikers by commercial businesses are valuable, and reliance on some of those services (such as hostels) have always been accepted as part of the Trail experience. In Maine, for example, the Trail originally passed a number of sporting camps that were considered part of the overnight accommodation system of the A.T. in the late 1930s and 1940s. Long-distance hikers in particular should be able to access information about services available in nearby communities. Appropriate ways of disseminating this information without affecting the natural and remote character of the A.T. must be found.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In 2001 the ATC Board adopted the following policy on advertising in the A.T. corridor:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy places a high value on maintaining the natural character of the Appalachian Trail corridor and is well-aware that small changes that diminish that character can cumulatively alter the Trail environment to the point where the A.T. is no longer a simple footpath passing through a natural setting. Those principles are embodied in numerous ATC policies.

At the same time, ATC recognizes that many A.T. hikers value the services (*e.g.*, lodging, restaurants, outfitters, and shuttles) that are available in many communities along the Trail. Those services may be commercial in nature or offered by Trail enthusiasts acting on their own initiatives, who provide free or for-cost assistance to hikers. Both commercial businesses and Trail enthusiasts make significant contributions to the over-all experience of hiking the A.T. and are important to many hikers, especially long-distance hikers.

Both the National Park Service and Forest Service prohibit advertising on federal lands. ATC and the clubs should take steps to ensure that those longstanding prohibitions in federal regulations are clearly disseminated, implemented, and understood by hikers, Trail neighbors, and affected area businesses or individuals.

In order to maintain the natural character of the A.T. corridor, it is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that advertising is incompatible with the Trail and should not take place within the A.T. corridor. Furthermore, ATC and the clubs should urge the

adoption of regulations prohibiting on-site advertising by states and municipalities that control Trail lands where such regulations do not now exist. If necessary, the availability of hiker services outside of the Trail corridor should be publicized through other means, such as publications and Trailhead signs.

For the purposes of this policy, advertising is defined as posting materials, such as signs, notes, or business cards, or distributing flyers, brochures, or similar materials designed to call specific services, both commercial and noncommercial, to the attention of hikers. Materials that promote membership in ATC or Trail-maintaining clubs or participation in volunteer Trail-management activities and materials that recognize the donations of commercial or noncommercial entities for the A.T. are not included in this definition.

**NPS Policy**—Commercial notices or advertisements generally will not be displayed, posted, or distributed on the federally owned or federally controlled land, water, or airspace of a park (section 9.3.5 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—In developing a policy on advertising, Trail clubs should emphasize the need to keep advertisements out of the Trail corridor, and identify strategies to this end. Strategies could include lobbying for the adoption of municipal and/or state regulations restricting advertising on Trail lands, providing alternative advertising solutions to local service providers, and any other means deemed appropriate by individual clubs.

**Action Plan**—Trail clubs may develop action plans to implement the strategies identified in their policy.

# **PART 4**

## **Conflicting Uses, Competing Uses, and Monitoring**

## CHAPTER 4 (A)

### Corridor Monitoring

Outside of existing national and state parks and forests, much of the A.T. footpath is laid upon a narrow corridor of public land that threads its way between privately owned lands. In some cases, the federal or state agency may have acquired only an easement. In other cases, the landowner was allowed to retain certain rights to lands that were conveyed to the government. Even within existing national and state parks and forests, the Trail is usually protected only by a narrow “management area” or protection zone.

The Appalachian Trail corridor is extremely vulnerable to encroachments and abuse, such as dumping of trash, off-road vehicle use and damage, timber theft, or illegal building of structures on A.T. lands. An active corridor-monitoring program is essential for detecting encroachments and easement violations and helps discourage many of these problems.

On lands specifically acquired by the National Park Service for the A.T., the Trail clubs and ATC have certain responsibilities under the NPS/ATC Delegation Agreement ([Appendix E](#)). While ATC serves as the “guarantor” to NPS that these lands are being properly cared for, the basic responsibility for corridor monitoring rests with the local Trail clubs and is included in the ATC/Trail club agreements referenced in Chapter 1 (A) and found in [Appendix F](#). ATC’s corridor boundary program, supported by the National Park Service, provides training and support to clubs with that responsibility.

Corridor monitoring refers to the act of visiting a selected section of A.T. corridor in the field and reporting on its condition. It includes walking the boundaries using survey maps and compass, inspecting survey monuments, noting the condition of the boundary blazes and signs, keeping a lookout for encroachments, and reporting all of this information. It is the primary line of defense in protecting the both the land base and the surveyed boundary line. Volunteer corridor monitors provide an essential role not only as watchful “eyes and ears,” but also as a valuable source of education to inform neighboring landowners and local communities of the purpose of the A.T. corridor and the values that these lands protect.

Protecting the Trail corridor involves three steps: monitoring, maintenance, and mitigation. Although only corridor monitoring has been delegated to the Trail clubs, many of the clubs with that responsibility have chosen to take on boundary maintenance—finding survey monuments, trimming vegetation and repainting blazes along the boundary line, and posting U.S. boundary and other trail-management signs as needed. A well-marked and maintained boundary, along with consistent documentation of problems over time, is essential to deterring and resolving problems. Trail clubs also can be invaluable in helping mitigate encroachments, working cooperatively with ATC and partner agencies to address problems.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC began developing a corridor-monitoring program in 1979 after the first NPS A.T. lands were acquired. Monitoring became ATC policy with ATC’s endorsement of the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) in June 1981. The 1984 delegation agreement made ATC the “guarantor” of the adequacy of Trail club monitoring and management efforts.

Club monitoring is facilitated by a system of ATC/NPS-supplied maps and deed information or tract files (sometimes known as “blue files” or “green files”). Clubs with Trail sections on NPS-acquired A.T. lands are responsible for inspection, record-keeping, and an annual report to ATC. ATC guidance on corridor monitoring includes:

*Special-Care Principles*—The special-care principles adopted by the ATC Board of Managers in 1984 include the following (“ATC” here refers to both Trail club and Appalachian Trail Conservancy managers):

- ATC can and does, by virtue of the delegation agreement, take responsibility for guaranteeing to the National Park Service that NPS-acquired lands are being sensitively and adequately monitored and managed.
- ATC can inform land users of state or federal laws and regulations and can develop cooperative relationships with local law-enforcement authorities.
- ATC can post lands and prepare informational signs and brochures after consultation with local, state, and NPS authorities.
- ATC cannot enforce state or federal laws and regulations.
- ATC can and should inspect and monitor boundaries on NPS lands, consult with adjacent landowners, and request an NPS survey, if needed.
- ATC cannot agree to or negotiate boundaries on NPS lands or reset corner monuments to the corridor
- ATC cannot give away, exchange, or sell public property, such as firewood, water rights, building salvage, or hunting rights.

*Minimum Requirements*—Inspection and reporting are the only requirements of club monitoring. Depending on local practices, some clubs will discuss the situation with violators directly, while others do not. The “eyes and ears” inspection and annual reporting functions constitute the basic program.

- *Inspection*—Protecting corridor lands requires vigilance. The monitoring program should be based on *priorities*, with the most susceptible or endangered lands receiving the most frequent inspections. Endangered areas—primarily from roads, power lines, easements, structures, and adjacent development—constitute high-priority monitoring sites, known simply as “hot spots.” Moderate- and low-priority sites may exist, depending on their remoteness, and are inspected less frequently.
- *Reporting*—Prompt phone reports are necessary for major problems. One annual summary report to ATC is required. [The current reporting deadline is February 15 for the previous year.]

**NPS Policy**—The NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office retains the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that A.T. corridor lands are managed and maintained adequately. The responsibility for monitoring these lands for abuse and illegal use has been delegated to ATC and the Trail clubs. However, the National Park Service is responsible for law enforcement and for other active measures to curtail illegal actions, such as dumping and encroachment on federal lands. Uses that are prohibited on NPS lands are discussed in Part 4, “Conflicting Uses and Competing Uses” of this *Planning Guide*. The NPS actively supports the ATC boundary maintenance program, which seeks to ensure that NPS boundaries are properly blazed, painted, and monumented.

## Considerations in Planning

**Inventory**—Trail clubs with monitoring responsibilities should assemble an inventory of tracts from their section of Trail. They (or their ATC regional offices) have copies of the NPS tract files (also known as “blue” or “green” files), which are detailed summaries of the acquisition history for each tract. (This information is not available for Forest Service lands, existing national parks, or state lands, since those lands are usually owned entirely by the agency.) ATC’s corridor-boundary program manager can assist Trail clubs with this process.

The second step is to list known problem areas, particularly “hot spots” with recurring problems. This can be accomplished best through a review of each of the tracts by club members familiar with the Trail section. In many cases, Trail clubs already have established effective reporting procedures that have identified existing problem areas.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club’s policy statement should include a commitment to monitor A.T. lands and, for NPS-acquired lands, acknowledgment of ATC inspection, reporting, and record-keeping requirements. Most clubs have assigned responsibility for oversight of their monitoring program to a volunteer monitoring coordinator, who is responsible for organizing volunteer corridor monitors and submitting an annual report to ATC and agency partners. The club may want to consider and take on the additional responsibility of boundary maintenance.

**Action Plan**—The basic elements of a corridor boundary monitoring program include appointing a monitoring coordinator, assigning specific sections to corridor monitors, providing training as necessary (ATC’s boundary program manager can help), making regular tract inspections, establishing regular reporting procedures, reporting annually to ATC, and adhering to ATC’s “Special Care Principles” listed above. Additional information on corridor monitoring can be found in the [Corridor Stewardship](#) section of ATC’s Web site. In forming a monitoring program, a Trail club should consider the following:

1. Has the club walked the approximate boundaries of the corridor and noted special “hot spots,” such as areas where active dumping or motor-vehicle use are taking place, or other intrusions, particularly where new development is occurring adjacent to the Trail corridor?
2. Have the highest priorities in need of the most frequent inspection and remedial management been identified?
3. Does the club have a designated monitor coordinator or corridor manager, and does that club officer have current segment maps, access to tract files, closing notices, maps, and copies of past club reports?
4. Do volunteer monitors know the areas that they have been assigned, and have they been trained to recognize unauthorized or inappropriate uses?
5. Does the club have procedures for notifying appropriate authorities of problems identified by monitors? Do local emergency officials know the location of the Trail and understand what generally is permitted or prohibited?
6. Does the club have procedures for assessing the information gathered through monitoring to plan permanent solutions?



## CHAPTER 4 (B)

### Motorized Uses

Motorized recreation has become increasingly popular on private and public lands over the past several decades. Unfortunately, despite clear prohibitions in federal and state regulations, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), four-wheel drive trucks and jeeps, snowmobiles, and other off-road vehicles (ORVs) are used on and damage A.T. corridor lands with some frequency. Easily accessible areas are particularly vulnerable.

The impacts on the Trail environment by motorized vehicles include damage to vegetation, increased erosion and siltation, noise and air pollution, disruptions in wildlife movement and destruction of wildlife habitat, and dramatic and direct impacts to the remote recreational experience and relative solitude available on the A.T.

Motorized recreation on the A.T. has been addressed in several ways. The most effective methods involve some combination of user education, regulatory signage, creative Trail-network design, physical closures, and cooperation with Trail neighbors to achieve solutions that provide alternative locations for motorized recreation. Trail club volunteers have proved invaluable in gathering information and discouraging further violations and by having conversations with Trail neighbors. When these methods fail, however, ATC and Trail clubs have asked agency partners to enforce prohibitions against motorized use.

Snowmobiling is a popular recreational activity, especially in New England and in New York. Early in the land-acquisition process, NPS and ATC representatives made assurances to state park agencies and snowmobile clubs, particularly in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, that the Appalachian Trail was not meant to be an arbitrary barrier to snowmobile routes. Although current NPS regulations prohibit snowmobile use on A.T. corridor lands, the NPS is considering a special regulation that authorizes several major snowmobile crossings of the corridor. A number of snowmobile crossings exist on U.S. Forest Service lands. Snowmobile routes and crossings may be approved under USFS guidelines, but many of these crossings are not authorized in the current forest plans.

Trail clubs and managing-agencies maintain good communications with snowmobile organizations, especially in New England. Several statewide snowmobile organizations maintain trails, publish maps, and encourage responsible, self-policing group conduct.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC fully endorses federal and state prohibitions against motorized vehicles on the Appalachian Trail. Constructive efforts to post the A.T. with regulatory signs and to communicate with Trail neighbors, landowners, and ORV clubs are preferred directions for ATC and local A.T. managers. Regulatory signs are available from ATC ([Appendix N](#)).

**NPS Policy**—Federal laws and regulations prohibit motor-vehicle use on Appalachian Trail lands, except for (1) administrative access by the landowning agency partner; and, (2) access by adjoining landowners when access rights have been reserved in the conveyance of the land. The [National Trails System Act](#), which is the principal law governing administration of the Appalachian Trail, states:

The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited and nothing in this act shall be construed as authorizing the use of motorized vehicles within the natural and historical areas of the national park system, the national wildlife system, the national wilderness preservation system where they are presently prohibited, or on other federal lands where trails are designated as being closed to such use by

the Secretary.

The [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#) states:

Motorized vehicles are specifically prohibited from the footpath by the National Trails System Act, except in emergencies or where specific crossings for land-owners have been arranged. Management plans and actions, using educational efforts or trail-design modifications and working with ORV user groups, will aim for the elimination of illegal motorized vehicle use.

Motorized vehicles are generally prohibited off of roads on National Park Service lands. Title 36 of the [\*Code of Federal Regulations\*](#) (CFR), which contains service-wide regulations regarding resource protection, use, and public recreation on all NPS-administered lands, states:

The use of motor vehicles off established roads and parking areas is prohibited, except on routes designated as open for that use (CFR, Title 36, Section 4.19).

Appalachian National Scenic Trail—The use of bicycles, motorcycles or other motor vehicles is prohibited. The operation of snowmobiles is addressed in paragraph (b). The special regulation spells out where snowmobiles may cross the Trail corridor on state-approved snowmobile routes and at three additional locations in New England. (CFR, Title 36, Section 7.100).

In short, all lands administered by the NPS A.T. Park Office and other national parks crossed by the Trail are closed to motor vehicles, including snowmobiles, except where public or private roads or rights-of-way exist or where the park manager or superintendent has designated an area as open to vehicular use. No areas on the Appalachian Trail currently have been designated as open to off-road vehicle use.

Recognizing the need to authorize certain snowmobile locations in specific areas, the NPS A.T. Park Office proposed a special regulation for the A.T., following endorsement by the ATC Board and adopted in the [\*Code of Federal Regulations\*](#) (see February 25, 2002, 67 FR 8481).

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The first step in controlling motorized-vehicle use is identifying where the use exists. Corridor-monitoring programs and Trail assessments are the most effective means for identifying motorized-vehicle use. The inventory should identify where the use is taking place, where the access points for ORVs are, and, if known, who the users are. A short inventory of existing snowmobile crossings of the Trail also should be compiled, if the Trail club plans to develop a policy on snowmobiles.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club's policy statement on motorized use should be worded as strongly as possible. The policy should identify: (1) general directions and actions the club will take to discourage ORV use on the A.T.; (2) coordination with agency partners who have the authority to enforce vehicle prohibitions and closures; and (3) exceptions, if any, under which ORV use would be permitted (such as in emergencies or snowmobile use on identified, approved crossings).

**Action Plan**—For each site identified in the inventory where ORV use exists, the Trail club, in cooperation with the appropriate land-managing agency partner, should determine what is needed to solve the problem. Low-profile methods (signing, information and education campaigns, and discussions with ORV organizations) should be explored first, but, if necessary, stronger actions (physical barriers, law enforcement) should be implemented. The Trail club's work plan should recognize that many ORV-use

areas are long-term problems that cannot be resolved quickly. ATC may be able to provide assistance for significant capital improvements, such as local publicity initiatives, gates and boulder closures, or cooperative law-enforcement efforts.

## CHAPTER 4 (C)

### Litter and Graffiti

Litter along any portion of the A.T. seriously detracts from the enjoyment of walking the Trail. The problem is most evident at road crossings, campsites, and popular destinations. Likewise, the intrusion of graffiti on the Trail environment detracts from the aesthetic experience of hikers. Both often occur at the most beautiful viewpoints or picturesque rock formations. Graffiti is not limited to vandals. Sometimes maintainers' use of blazing, arrows, and painted messages inadvertently encourage graffiti.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In November 1984, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy to provide direction in dealing with these problems:

The Appalachian Trail and the lands it traverses should remain completely free of litter, refuse, and graffiti along its entire length, and ATC and member clubs will make every effort to publicize a carry-in, carry-out litter policy to hikers and neighbors to the Trail.

Special efforts should be made with clubs and agency partners to remove accumulated litter and dumps at Trailheads and within the A.T. corridor, including taking steps such as educational signs, closure of dirt roads, and club ridgerunners and/or cooperative law enforcement to prevent future accumulation.

As noted above, nonstandard blazing such as arrows, other directional indicators, painted A.T. symbols or messages, should not be used to mark the A.T. Although well-intentioned, they often confuse hikers and deface the Trail environment [see Chapter 2 (A)].

**NPS Policy**—Littering and graffiti are illegal on National Park lands. However, such offenses are difficult to enforce because perpetrators must be caught in the act. If the offender is caught, a citation may be given to them. NPS citations include:

- Disposing of refuse, other than in refuse receptacles [[Code of Federal Regulations](#), Title 36, Section 2.14 (a) (1)].
- Destroying, injuring, defacing, or damaging property or real property [*CFR*, Title 36, Section 2.31 (a) (3)].

#### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—An inventory should include sites where there are repeated incidents of graffiti and litter.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club policy statement should recognize the extent of the problems faced by the club in these areas and provide general guidelines for directing club actions to address the problems. Options to consider in dealing with litter and dumping problems include trash receptacles (if regularly emptied), signing, and close monitoring and clean-up. A thorough clean-up of an area can be a long-lasting solution to a litter problem. Serious dumping problems may require intervention by a land-managing agency partner.

**Action Plan**—Routine trash pickup could be a part of a local maintainer's or monitor's responsibilities. Trash receptacles at Trailheads should either be checked routinely by a responsible agency partner to ensure that they are being emptied on a regular basis, or removed, with signs placed encouraging visitors to take their trash home. Large clean-up projects should be addressed in a Trail club's annual work plan. Agency partners often can provide dumpsters and manpower for major clean-ups.

## CHAPTER 4 (D)

### Hunting

Hunting has been a traditional use of the land along many sections of the Appalachian Trail, both on public and private lands. It is a use that continues to pose concern for the safety of hikers on the Trail.

The Trail passes through many different state and federal jurisdictions, most of which allow hunting. Hunting is permitted along more than 1,000 miles of the Trail across national forest lands. Approximately 150 miles of the A.T. are located on state game lands that are specifically administered for game species and hunting. Hunting also is permitted on more than 100 miles of state lands administered by state forests. Hunting is a well-established use on many privately owned lands adjoining the Trail.

Hunting is prohibited in five of the six national parks crossed by the A.T. (hunting is permitted in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area under its enabling legislation) and in most state parks crossed by the A.T., which collectively provide a home for more than 400 miles of the Trail. Hunting is prohibited by NPS regulation on approximately 100,000 acres of NPS-acquired lands, surrounding an additional 500 miles of Trail. Frequently, those lands are not posted, and a hunter may not be able to distinguish between lands that are open and lands that are closed to hunting. Posting those lands, which are interspersed with private, state, and other federal lands to the point where a hiker on the Trail might pass on or off NPS lands multiple times in a single mile, is virtually impossible.

After much debate, ATC has determined that education of both hikers and hunters is perhaps the only feasible way to address public-safety concerns. Advice on [hunting and the A.T.](#) and links to [hunting seasons](#) in the 14 Appalachian Trail states are available on ATC's Web site. ATC encourages Trail-maintaining clubs to post signs at A.T. Trailheads and other points of access advising hikers to wear “blaze orange” clothing during hunting season. In addition, the National Park Service A.T. Park Office issues periodic press releases advising the general public that National Park Service lands are closed to hunting.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In 1985, ATC recognized hunting as a traditional use in many areas and recognized previous commitments that hunting activities would be allowed to continue where possible to do so. In November 1992, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy on hiker safety during hunting seasons:

- ATC encourages Trail clubs and agency partners to inform hikers on the Appalachian Trail when they are in an area where hunting may occur, and to caution hikers on the Appalachian Trail to wear blaze orange during all hunting seasons, in particular during big-game hunting season.
- ATC (or the local Trail club) annually will collect information on hunting seasons in each state and provide this information for use in club newsletters, community contacts, press releases, brochures, and maps.
- ATC (or the local Trail club) also will provide game-management agencies in each state through which the Appalachian Trail passes with maps of the Appalachian Trail in that state and request that these agencies inform hunters (through game-management

publications and maps) that hikers on the Appalachian Trail and other recreational trails may not be cognizant of hunting seasons and may not be wearing blaze orange.

- ATC publications designed to inform the general public about the Trail, including guidebooks, will include a statement advising hikers to wear blaze-orange vests and hats and brightly colored packs or pack covers during hunting seasons.

In some areas, particularly high-use areas that are open to hunting, Trail-maintaining clubs and their agency partners may deem it desirable to include information on signs at Trailheads and other points of access to the Appalachian Trail promoting hiker safety during hunting season. ATC recommends the use of the “Wear Blaze Orange” Trailhead information sign.

**NPS Policy**—Hunting, trapping, or any other method of harvesting wildlife by the public will be allowed only in parks where it is specifically authorized by federal law. Where such an activity is authorized on a discretionary basis under federal law, it may take place only after the National Park Service has determined that the activity will not compromise public safety and that the proposed use is consistent with sound resource-management principles. (2006 *NPS Management Policies* 8.2.2.6)

NPS regulations (36 CFR 2.2) on hunting and trapping read as follows:

- a) The taking of wildlife is prohibited, except by authorized hunting and trapping in accordance with paragraph (b).
- b) Hunting shall be allowed in park areas where such activity is specifically mandated by federal law. Hunting shall be allowed in park areas where such activity is specifically authorized as a discretionary activity under federal statutory law, if the superintendent determines that such activity is consistent with public safety and enjoyment and sound resource-management principles. Trapping shall be allowed in park areas where such activity is specifically mandated by federal statutory law.

Where enabling legislation provides for hunting (such as in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area), special regulations must first be developed before the park lands are opened for hunting. Safety zones and other restrictions may be applied and enforced by the park superintendent. With the exception of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, no National Park Service lands along the A.T. have regulations in effect that allow hunting.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The Trail club should identify jurisdictions where hunting is prohibited and where it is permitted.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Policy on the issue of hunting is in a large part dictated by the laws and regulations of the land-managing agency. Each state also has laws and regulations concerning hunting. Club policy on hunting should consider the policies and regulations of its agency partners.

**Action Plan**—The Trail club can undertake numerous information and education-oriented approaches to the issue, including posting “no hunting” and “wear blaze orange” signs, conducting public-information campaigns, describing the situation in guidebooks, and contacting adjoining landowners. Designing, constructing, and posting signs should be closely coordinated with a club’s agency partners [see Chapter 2

(C)]. “No hunting” signs *may not* be posted on private lands (including lands where an easement has been acquired) without the written permission of the land owner. ATC’s sign catalog ([Appendix N](#)) has “No Hunting” signs for use by the Trail clubs, however, the pertinent regulations must be referenced for the prohibition to be enforceable.



## CHAPTER 4 (E)

### Horses and Pack Animals

Use of horses, llamas, donkeys, goats, and other saddle or pack stock is incompatible with the Appalachian Trail, which is designed, built, and maintained by hikers for foot travel. Their use is prohibited on the Trail, with the exceptions for horses detailed below.

Horses are permitted on a short section of the Trail in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where horse use existed prior to designation of the A.T. as a national scenic trail and was specifically referenced in the legislative history of the [National Trails System Act](#). Horses also are permitted on a three-mile section in Maryland where the Appalachian Trail coincides with the C&O Canal Historical Park towpath. Horse trails may *cross* the A.T. in other locations as long as signs and management efforts by the Trail club and agency partner deter trespass by saddle and pack stock and the agency has expressly authorized that crossing.

Because of their much greater weight and the relatively small area it is distributed on, horses in particular, cause greater erosion and put greater pressure on the treadway than hikers do—trails intended for horse use must be built to different standards, shored up and hardened to a much greater degree than hiking trails. As the A.T. was not built to this standard, horses seriously damage its treadway, give volunteer maintainers a sense of futility and discourage their efforts, and have a serious adverse effect on the hiker's experience.

Additionally, all hoofed mammals may spread the seeds of invasive and exotic plant species through their manure, which underscores the need to prohibit domestic livestock from the Trail.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In April 1985, ATC's Board of Managers passed a resolution reaffirming its support of prohibition of horses and pack animals on the A.T.

The exception to this rule is a 37-mile section of the Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park that is subject to a grandfather clause allowing horse use. Since 1995, this section has been subject to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and the three main equestrian clubs of the area (Backcountry Horsemen of N.C., Haywood Trail Riders and Smoky Mountains Trail Riders).

Through the framework of the MOU, riders have agreed to clear blowdowns, cut annual growth, pack in tools and equipment necessary for trail-construction projects and crews, and work on tread-maintenance projects in cooperation with hikers on the A.T. section open to their use. Standards for treadway and shelter maintenance and usage have also been agreed upon.

**NPS Policy**—The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) considers horse use a special concern that may result in damage to the Trail and may have an adverse effect on hikers' enjoyment. Riding is limited to those sections of the Trail which traditionally accommodated horse use. On other sections, managers should work with equestrian groups to seek alternative trails for horses.

Except for the aforementioned sections in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the C&O Canal Historical Park towpath, the NPS [Code of Federal Regulations](#) prohibits horses and pack stock on the Appalachian Trail on NPS lands [CFR, Title 36, Section 7.100 (a)(2)]. The A.T. Park

Office has not designated any other locations along the A.T. as open for use of horses or pack animals.

**Inventory**—Any existing areas along the A.T. that are currently being used by horses or pack animals, legally or illegally, should be listed in a short inventory. *(Note: Such use may be legal in some locations if reserved by deed or not expressly prohibited by a state agency land manager.)*

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—If horse use is prevalent in an area, the Trail club may wish to consider locations where horse trails may *cross* the Appalachian Trail corridor without damage to resource values or conflict with the primary use of the A.T. as a footpath. The Trail club should recognize that any such crossing must be closely monitored and that special precautions, such as fencing and signage, may be necessary to control horse use. An agency partner can and should play an important role in developing policies on horses and pack animals.

**Action Plan**—An action plan is only necessary if a current conflict exists or if the Trail club is considering making provisions for crossings of the A.T. corridor by a horse or pack-animal trail. If action is necessary, it should be closely coordinated with the land-managing agency that has the authority to enforce regulations controlling horse use for the area.

## CHAPTER 4 (F)

### Roads and Utilities

Roads, natural-gas pipelines, electric transmission lines, telephone trunk lines, communications towers and many smaller utility-distribution lines of all types already cross the Appalachian Trail in many locations. There also are microwave dishes, cellular transmission towers, airport hazard beacons, and wind-power generation towers that dot the landscape. Frequently, the most desirable location for such facilities is on the highest available terrain, often in direct conflict with the route of the A.T.

Utility sites are intensive, high-profile land uses. The visual and audible impacts (wind towers, for example, can be heard more than a mile away under the right conditions) of these facilities detract from the primitive recreational experience of hiking on the Trail. Roads that parallel or intersect the Trail in remote areas may lead to intrusions by off-road vehicles, increased vandalism, and other inappropriate or illegal uses on Trail corridor lands.

Other adverse impacts include lights, access roads, cleared swaths of land, off-road vehicle access on utility rights-of-way, guy wires, chain-link fences, use of chemical treatments for preventing growth of vegetation, and many others. Those ancillary impacts may be more intrusive than the utility lines or towers themselves. The cumulative impacts of the development of roads and utility facilities upon the A.T. environment are substantial.

Early involvement by the Trail community in public hearings and review processes often can eliminate conflicts between the A.T. and a proposed road or utility project. If a proposal is submitted for a site on public lands, the land-managing agency usually has some discretion to approve, deny, or approve a project subject to certain conditions (*i.e.*, protection of the A.T.). However, many of these facilities are located on adjacent private lands outside the jurisdiction of the land-managing agency. In those cases, it is up to ATC and the local A.T. maintaining club to convince local zoning boards, state agency representatives, Federal Communications Commission officials, and project proponents to consider alternative sites or other mitigating measures so that the project will have less impact on the scenic value of the Trail.

**National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETC)**—In 2008, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced its designation of National Interest Electric Transmission (NIET) corridors. That designation, allowed under a 2005 act of Congress, paves the way for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to issue permits for new transmission facilities within a NIET corridor if a proposed new transmission project does not receive site approval from a state within a year. The corridors will be subject to the use of federal eminent domain without regard for previously protected places such as parkland, historic areas or conservation easements. The states' previous authority to deny a transmission project was overridden by the statute that required DOE to craft corridors. Some information on [NIETC](#) may be found on ATC's Web site. The [DOE Web site](#) has information on NIET corridors.

**Wireless telecommunication sites**—In 1999, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and other organizations involved with national scenic trails signed a [resolution agreement](#) in 1999 with the wireless telecommunication industry's umbrella organizations, the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association and the Personal Communications Industry Association, which lays out voluntary guidelines to facilitate notice and cooperation when wireless communication sites are proposed near national scenic trails. This resolution focuses on early notification, cooperative review and consideration of alternatives for any proposed facilities within one mile of a national scenic trail.

**Wind energy**—Wind energy is addressed in Chapter 4 (G).

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—The first ATC policy on roads dated from 1983, when the Forest Roads Task Force convened and produced a one-page statement. In November 1988, the ATC Board of Managers adopted a policy statement on utilities and communications facilities. That policy was first amended in 1992 to address utility-line maintenance practices, amended again in April 1994 to include criteria for proposed utility-line crossings of the A.T., and a third time in April 1996 to address the more specific impacts of communications sites, airport beacons, wind-generation towers, and other mountaintop facilities. In 2000, the Board adopted a policy on roads and utility developments that replaces both previous policies, but retains many of the previous provisions. In 2007, the ATC Board adopted a specific policy on wind-energy that is summarized in Chapter 4 (G).

The current policy on roads and utility developments reads as follows:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy seeks to preserve and protect the scenic, cultural, and natural resources of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail experience, as defined by the [National Trails System Act](#) and ATC policy. To this end, ATC seeks to avoid, minimize, or eliminate the visual, aural, and experiential impacts of roads and utility developments upon those resources and will support any and all measures that do so. Developments that are considered incompatible with the purposes and scenic values of the Appalachian Trail include public and administrative roads; power lines; pipelines; communications lines, towers, and buildings; wind-energy facilities; aircraft beacons; and roads and utilities serving these facilities.

It is the policy of ATC to oppose construction of any facilities of those types on Appalachian Trail corridor lands or those facilities on adjacent lands that could have an adverse impact on the viewshed of the Trail, unless they meet all of the following criteria:

1. The proposed development represents the only prudent and feasible alternative to meet an over-riding public need, as demonstrated in a thorough and detailed analysis of alternatives.
2. Any new impacts associated with the proposed development shall coincide with existing major impacts to the Trail experience.
3. Any proposed development of linear facilities shall be limited to a single crossing of the Appalachian Trail corridor.
4. Any adverse impacts of a proposed development shall be sufficiently mitigated so as to result in no net loss of recreational values or the quality of the recreation experience provided by the Appalachian Trail. To the extent practicable, mitigation shall occur on site.
5. The proposed development shall avoid, at a minimum: (a) wilderness or wilderness study areas; (b) National Park Service natural areas; (c) Forest Service semi-primitive non-motorized or designated backcountry areas; (d) natural-heritage sites; (e) cultural-

resource sites; (f) Trail-related facilities, such as shelters and campsites; and (g) alpine zones, balds, and wetlands.

ATC will work with agency partners to incorporate those criteria into agency plans and regulations and encourages its member clubs to do likewise.

During the planning and regulatory-review processes, ATC, Trail-maintaining clubs, and agencies should make every effort to avoid impacts that would impair the natural, scenic, social, or cultural values and resources of the Appalachian Trail.

The following areas may be considered for developments under this policy, provided no other reasonable alternatives exist and mitigation sufficient to achieve a “no-net-loss” condition has been incorporated into the proposal:

- Areas where the A.T. crosses an existing state or federal highway;
- Areas crossed by the A.T. that are already developed;
- Sites with an existing facility;
- Areas where Trail values, such as a sense of remoteness, would not be compromised.

ATC will participate, and encourage A.T.-maintaining clubs and agency partners to participate, in public-review processes for all road-and-utility development proposals located within the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail.

Following construction, impacted areas will be restored to the extent feasible. Restoration measures include installation of permanent erosion control and planting of native vegetation. Measures to avoid additional impacts, such as use of access routes by motorized vehicles, will be taken as necessary.

The developments covered by this policy are divided into two categories: linear (roads and all utility corridors) and site (communications towers and structures, wind-energy facilities, and aircraft beacons). In addition to the general policy direction provided above, more specific direction for the two types of development follows:

*Linear Developments*—A “no-net-loss” approach should be established as the minimum threshold for approval of any linear facilities that cross the Appalachian Trail. In other words, if it is determined that it is in the public interest for a project to cross the Appalachian Trail, then sufficient mitigation must be incorporated into the proposed project so that there is no net loss of Trail values or quality of Trail experience. Any analysis of the impacts of such a proposal must analyze the cumulative impact of similar linear facilities upon Trail resources and Trail values, including the sense of remoteness and connection to the primeval environment of the Appalachian Mountains that the Trail presently provides.

At points where utility corridors intersect Appalachian Trail lands, ATC advocates the use of utility right-of-way maintenance techniques that reduce the impacts of said maintenance on the aesthetic values of the Appalachian Trail. Such techniques include hand-clearing of vegetation, “feathering” of vegetation along the edges of the right-of-way, leaving low-growing vegetation, and avoiding the use of herbicides. ATC encourages A.T. maintaining

clubs and agency partners to contact utility companies to advise them of concerns associated with clearing right-of-way corridors that intersect the Appalachian Trail corridor.

ATC also supports efforts to establish procedures for utility companies and public agencies to provide notice to Trail clubs at least 30 days in advance of maintenance operations by agency, company, or contract crews, in order that on-site concerns may be addressed.

Signs should be placed on the exterior boundary of Appalachian Trail lands indicating that the responsible utility company and the local Trail club/ATC should be contacted for further information prior to clearing the utility right-of-way behind the signs. A generic ATC sign to this effect should be developed and offered to Trail clubs responsible for sections of the Trail that cross public lands acquired for the Trail. ATC also should collect and disseminate information to Trail-maintaining clubs and agency partners regarding utility corridor maintenance practices that protect Trail resource values.

*Site Developments*—The Appalachian Trail Conservancy opposes facility development on mountaintops, ridgelines, and other visible areas in the foreground and middle-ground distance zones as seen from the Appalachian Trail, unless the visual, aural and experiential impacts to the Appalachian Trail can be satisfactorily mitigated on-site. (Foreground and middle ground will be determined using the U.S. Forest Service Scenery Management System, as described in *Landscape Aesthetics*, Agriculture Handbook Number 701).

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy will recommend that governmental agencies take steps to encourage shared use of existing communications facilities, development of multi-user facilities, and removal of structures that are no longer needed, as solutions to the problem of proliferating communications towers and other structures dotting the landscape.

For proposed facilities within one mile of the Trail, ATC will request local, state, or federal regulatory bodies to include in any authorization a condition prohibiting development of new facilities, or any changes to existing facilities, without prior notification of and consultation with the organizations and agencies responsible for management of the Appalachian Trail.

**NPS Policy**—Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 obligates road-sponsoring public agencies that receive federal aid for highway construction to evaluate road-building proposals that impact public parks and to use park lands only when the proposed road is “*the only feasible and prudent alternative*.” That language has become a cornerstone of administrative and environmental law. It obligates the sponsoring agency to a standard of conduct that is greater than customarily applied to more routine administrative decisions regarding the location and design of major roadways.

Section 6(f) of the Department of Transportation Act also applies to proposed road projects that would cross lands that were purchased with Land and Water Conservation Fund monies (which includes most lands acquired to protect the A.T.).

The NPS will not permit public or private construction of new roads for access to inholdings unless specifically authorized by law (section 9.2.1.2 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)). In rare instances the NPS has allowed a reserved right-of-way for an existing road or for a landowner to access lands that would be “land-locked” by the Trail corridor. A reserved right-of-way is approved only for the minimum standard road needed to meet a given situation. Standards are in place specifically describing width, type

of surfacing, season of use, and other criteria for several road levels. Those standards are agreed to during the acquisition process, and a reserved right-of-way is granted only when the right-of-way has been determined to have no significant adverse effect on the Trail's natural and cultural resources or on visitor use of the Trail.

The NPS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to solicit and receive public input and analyze the potential impacts of constructing any road on NPS lands, and to disclose them to the public in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS).

Those laws, and the regulations and policies that implement them, ensure that federal agencies will carefully consider impacts to the Appalachian Trail associated with road improvements. If those impacts are significant and cannot be mitigated, the agency may deny a request to construct or improve a road crossing of the A.T.

Utility corridors and communications facilities that were acquired subject to existing rights for those facilities may be found on NPS-acquired lands. The NPS also has limited discretionary authority to grant rights-of-way for new public utilities and communications facilities, including power lines, telephones and telegraph lines, water lines, and communications sites, but specifically excluding oil or gas pipelines (new oil or gas pipelines crossing NPS lands can only be provided for by exchange of lands or by legislative action). The NPS must evaluate any proposal for a right-of-way to ensure that the proposed crossing would be in the public interest and that it would not be inconsistent with the purposes for which the Appalachian Trail was established. The NPS also requires a thorough environmental analysis to assess the impacts of any right-of-way proposal.

Rights-of-way over NPS lands are discretionary and conditional upon a finding by the NPS that the proposed use will not cause unacceptable impacts on park resources, values, or purposes (section 8.6.4.2 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)). If a right-of-way is approved, detailed mitigating measures would be required to protect or restore Trail values and resources to the greatest extent possible. In large part because of the cumulative effects of hundreds of powerlines, pipelines, and access roads that cross the Trail, the Appalachian Trail park manager has determined that if it is determined to be in the public interest, a proposed pipeline or powerline may cross the Appalachian National Scenic Trail once, and only once, in a location where (a) it is co-located with other similar types of facilities; and, (b) where impacts to the scenic, recreational, natural and cultural resources can largely be mitigated on-site. Further, any residual impacts to these resources should be offset by on-site or off-site mitigation to the extent that there is "no net loss" of the Trail's resource values.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—An inventory of utility facilities can be conducted as part of the Trail assessment process. This information will identify the location and type of utility, including telecommunications towers and powerlines. The deeds for individual rights-of-way and easements for utilities should be found in the deed files for NPS-acquired lands (also known as the "blue" or "green" files).

All roads and rights-of-ways for roads within the A.T. corridor should be identified. Sources for information include Trail assessments, maps, aerial photographs (available from the USFS or Natural Resource Conservation Service), deeds, and, of course, on-the-ground inspection. Road locations should be identified on a set of maps for the Trail section, and a list of road crossings should be included as an appendix to the local management plan. Ideally, the inventory should include: a brief description of the road (whether it is paved, graveled, or dirt, and how wide the running surface is) and the owner of the road right-of-way (the name of the individual owner or local, state, or federal government agency).

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail club policy should reflect the club’s over-all perception of the level of compatibility between utilities and the Appalachian Trail. It also should identify the circumstances, if any, under which the club would consider a utility crossing or communications site as an appropriate use. The policy should provide direction on how the club should respond to proposals for roads and utility developments and how to coordinate its actions effectively with other managing partners.

**Action Plan**—Proposals for major roads, interstate natural-gas or electric transmission lines require detailed planning and environmental documentation. Usually, several opportunities are available for formal public involvement in hearings held by state commissions or other regulatory agencies in which the perceived public benefits and impacts of the proposal are evaluated. ATC, the maintaining club, and the agency partner usually coordinate formal responses in these situations.

Smaller individual proposals for electric or phone service to residential home sites and new radio or cellular-phone relay stations may have significant impacts, and may be approved in a much faster time frame. ATC and the Trail clubs, as representatives of the Trail community, may be called upon to comment publicly at local zoning board meetings and other public forums for review of the proposals. The Trail club should advise local authorities of its interest in these issues and maintain a presence in local forums so that the club will be notified of pending actions in a timely way. Especially for smaller projects, getting involved at the outset and responding rapidly are key. Clubs should notify and work with their ATC regional office as soon as they become aware of proposals that may impact the A.T.

Trail clubs should contact agency partners regarding any potential road construction plans near the AT. Clubs also should maintain ongoing relationships with state and local transportation officials in their areas. Most state planning occurs at the regional level through a metropolitan planning commission or a regional council of governments. Those public organizations are responsible for developing a “transportation implementation plan,” which is then incorporated into the state long-range transportation program. Early involvement in these forums can often prevent a proposal from having a serious impact on the Trail.

Finally, if a utility or road project is authorized, ATC and Trail club representatives can play an important role in monitoring construction activities to ensure that the company builds the project in accordance with the terms and conditions of its right-of-way permit or other authorization, and follows through on agreed mitigation measures.



## CHAPTER 4 (G)

### Wind-Energy Facilities

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy seeks to preserve and protect the scenic, cultural, and natural resources of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail experience, as defined by the National Trails System Act and ATC policy. To that end, ATC seeks to avoid, minimize, or eliminate the visual, noise, and experiential impacts of all utilities, including wind-energy facilities.

ATC supports the need for increased renewable energy generation, energy conservation, and end-user efficiencies. The Conservancy recognizes that generating electricity from wind holds promise to mitigate or slow the negative impacts of air pollution and climate change on the Appalachian Trail environment and hiker health. However, like all forms of electric generation, wind-energy facilities can have impacts on the environment and on human values, including the scenic, auditory, ecological and recreational values associated with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Careful siting of wind-energy developments is crucial to the protection of the Appalachian Trail experience.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC's experience in several wind-farm proposals near the Trail in recent years, particularly the Redington/Black Nubble wind proposal in Maine, which led the ATC Board of Directors to adopt a policy in November 2007. The policy includes criteria to assist in evaluating proposals for wind-energy facilities that may affect the Trail. ATC will work with agency partners to incorporate these criteria into agency plans and regulations and encourages its member clubs to do likewise. ATC's policy on wind-energy facilities reads as follows:

ATC will participate, and encourage A.T.-maintaining clubs and agency partners to participate, in public-review processes for all wind-energy development proposals located within the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail.

Under the wind-energy facility policy, ATC may decide to oppose, to not oppose, or to endorse any proposed project. Decisions will be made using the following evaluation criteria:

1. **Appalachian Trail Lands:** Wind-energy facilities are not appropriate on any of the lands that are part of the Appalachian Trail corridor. The corridor is defined as those lands acquired by the National Park Service under Appalachian Trail authorities, Appalachian Trail Management Areas or Prescription Areas delineated in National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans, protection zones outlined in cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding with local, state or federal agencies, or any other instrument that defines protected areas of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.
2. **Visual Impacts:** The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is managed to preserve scenic integrity. The Conservancy has developed a body of policies designed to maximize natural or natural-appearing landscapes. Because of the size of modern wind turbines and the necessity of locating them on mountaintops, these facilities are visually prominent and can be serious intrusions on the desired natural character of the A.T. viewshed. ATC will use the USFS Scenery Management System to evaluate impacts of proposed wind turbines or wind farms on the Appalachian Trail

viewshed. In general, ATC opposes new wind-energy facilities in the foreground and middleground viewsheds (up to four miles). In the case of projects in the background viewshed (four miles to the horizon) visual impacts will be weighed based on the following factors:

- Height and size of the turbines: The height of the turbine will have a great deal to do with its visual prominence.
- Presence or absence of FAA Hazard Lighting: Currently, structures more than 200-feet tall are required to have FAA hazard beacons to protect against aviation collisions. Hazard lighting has a significant impact on visual integrity of a landscape, even at great distances. Lighting also may negatively impact or kill birds and bats. In some settings, turbines less than 200 feet that are not lighted may be acceptable where larger towers with aircraft hazard beacons may not.
- Scope of the project: The number of turbines and the length of ridgeline that is developed will affect the visual prominence and the number of Trail viewpoints from which the project will be visible. The siting of the associated infrastructure can also have a significant affect on the A.T. viewshed. Locations and construction of power lines and roads should be analyzed as part of any visual assessment.
- Landscape setting: Undeveloped landscapes are less acceptable for development than settings with other permanent signs of development such as cities and towns, roads, mountaintop developments such as telecom towers or ski areas, or permanent landscape alterations such as a mine or quarry. Temporary landscape modifications such as timber harvesting should not be used as a factor in deciding whether a landscape setting is suitable for wind-energy development.

An additional factor is the viewer's location on the Appalachian Trail. Viewing locations that offer sweeping long-distance vistas to A.T. hikers such as balds, open areas, alpine areas, cliffs or firetowers are considered more sensitive. Also, viewing locations that are in designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, National Recreation Areas, NPS Natural Areas and remote areas more than two miles from a trailhead or road crossing are considered more sensitive. The number of Trail locations from which a project is visible also will be a factor. If a project is visible from a single location it may be more acceptable than if it is visible from several prominent vistas over a longer section of the Trail.

3. Noise Impacts: Turbines make noise as they spin, particularly in high wind conditions. Turbines should not be heard from the Appalachian Trail footpath and its facilities on an ongoing basis.
4. Project Setting: The setting for a wind farm is crucial in determining the degree of impact on surrounding lands including A.T. lands.

The following settings are better suited to the development of wind-energy facilities:

- Ridges with existing high-standard roads, and/or with slopes suitable to road and turbine construction
- Ridges with existing developments such as telecom towers, ski areas, microwave relay towers, power lines and similar development
- Ridges in proximity to developed landscapes such as cities and towns
- Ridges with permanent landscape alterations such as mines or quarries, highway cuts, recovering areas, *etc.*

The following settings are not suited to wind-energy facilities:

- Wilderness areas and study areas
  - National Recreation Areas
  - Semi-primitive non-motorized areas (USFS lands) and roadless areas
  - Old-growth forests and habitat for rare species or exemplary natural communities
  - Cultural-resource sites or historic landmarks
  - Important bird or bat habitats and migration routes
  - Unique or important ecological or recreation sites identified by state, regional or township land-use plans.
  - Ridge tops with very steep slopes or soils ill-suited to road building and turbine construction.
5. Public vs. Private Lands: Wind-energy facilities are being considered on both public and private lands. ATC believes that wind-energy facilities are best suited to private lands. If a project is being considered on public lands, there should be no net loss of A.T. values as a result of the development. Mitigation, on or off-site, may be applied to achieve the no-net-loss of Trail values standard.
  6. Mitigation and Off-sets: Is there adequate mitigation or off-sets for any significant loss of Trail values? In cases where a mountain-top wind farm is proposed, achieving on-site mitigation may prove to be impossible. In those cases, off-site mitigation or off-sets may be considered. Examples of off-site mitigation or off-sets include additional conservation-land acquisition, removal of other developments, and designation of lands as off-limits to future development through conservation easements, among other techniques. The trade-offs of mitigation or off-sets require careful consideration for unintended consequences, *e.g.*, visual vs. wildlife.
  7. Also, because there are both societal benefits to renewable energy and significant adverse impacts associated with the installation of wind farms, the benefits of any individual project must be weighed in relation to the costs. Some of these factors include:
    - Source of power that is likely to be displaced by the wind farm: Will the wind displace fossil-fuel plants or other renewable sources? (This is a remarkably complex question, but in some circumstances it seems likely that wind will not displace fossil fuels, but rather will lead to closure of biomass generation or increased peaking of hydroelectric dams.)

- Power production in relation to the severity of impacts: Will the amount of power produced be in proportion to the severity of the impacts?

**Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**— Using GIS technology, ATC has inventoried sites with high potential for wind-energy facilities. This information will be shared with the Trail clubs that request it.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail clubs may want to adopt guidance or statements similar to ATC policy.

**Action Plan**—ATC encourages Trail clubs to participate in public-review processes for all wind-energy development proposals located within the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail.

## CHAPTER 4 (H)

### Road Closures and Access Control

Appalachian Trail lands are susceptible to encroachment due to the narrow, linear shape of the A.T. corridor. Encroachments usually are associated with some form of vehicular access. Careful planning and design of road closures and other means of access control can minimize improper or illegal uses, such as motorized recreation, timber theft, and dumping.

Access problems often are complex, requiring detailed site studies and planning. Access points must be located, valid rights must be recognized, and illegal and unauthorized access must be controlled, without obstructing legitimate access. Land ownership and legal access rights are key factors in any situation where a road closure is being considered.

If no legal rights for access exist, and the land-managing agency has no current use for a road, a permanent closure can prevent future management problems. The roadway can be rehabilitated and seeded, and a physical barrier constructed to discourage access. Depending upon the site, the most effective permanent barrier may be a boulder closure, a vegetative barrier of planted trees, a log barrier, a “tank trap” or excavated portion of the road, a gate, or a combination of the above.

If a private party retains a legal right-of-way for access within the A.T. corridor, or if a land-managing partner uses an access road for a purpose not in conflict with the A.T., gates are the most effective means of selective access control, although signs also may discourage some potential vehicle operators.

Problems also may arise where there is unrestricted access onto A.T. corridor lands from public highways and roads that are maintained by state highway departments or local road and bridge departments. The state highway department official or county road supervisor will usually be willing to look at an access control problem but may not be in a position to take corrective action alone.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC consistently has advocated closure of roads on A.T. lands whenever and wherever possible. Existing legal rights of access must be recognized, and close coordination with a land-managing agency partner is a prerequisite to any action. Counties, boroughs, and towns often have jurisdiction over roads and a formal decision under the appropriate authority may be required before a road may be closed by ATC and the Trail club.

ATC opposes the use of any kind of cable closing. Cable closings are exceptionally dangerous and have been the basis for liability claims and lawsuits.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service has regulations in force that prohibit the use of motorized vehicles on the Appalachian Trail. In general, the National Park Service is supportive of all road closures, provided valid existing rights are recognized.

#### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—The road inventory described in Chapter 4 (F) is sufficient. The Trail club should review the inventory and identify problem areas associated with roads and roads that need to be closed. A detailed site map may be necessary to identify “hot spots” where many points of access exist.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club policy for road closures and access control should be focused

on two primary objectives: (1) protecting the Appalachian Trail from vehicular access wherever possible; and (2) providing for valid existing rights of access. The policy statement should recognize the importance of coordination with land-managing agency partners, local jurisdictions, and adjacent landowners.

**Action Plan**—For each site identified by the Trail club as an access-control problem, the club should analyze means to control the problem. In some areas, this may be simply a matter of notifying the agency partner. In other areas, the club may need to take the initiative. The following steps should be considered in most situations prior to any action:

1. Does the land-managing agency partner or club have an active, ongoing need for the access road?
2. Are there any existing legal rights of access held by private parties or any existing or past designations of the road as a public road by a local government? (Often an old “town road” is still a public way even though it is infrequently traveled, and it will remain a town road until it is formally abandoned by the town.) Are parties with legal rights willing to agree to restrict access?
3. What is the best method and where is the best location, for constructing an access barrier
4. Is the closure going to be permanent or only designed to restrict access by the general public?
5. If use of an access road will be restricted by a gate, who will be given keys?
6. Are signs, information programs, or other measures also warranted?
7. Have local law-enforcement and emergency-response personnel been notified?
8. Will an agency partner contribute financial assistance, manpower, equipment, and/or materials?

## CHAPTER 4 (I)

### Special Uses

Special-use permits (SUPs) are used by the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and other agencies to allow and control temporary uses on lands they administer. Although these permits also benefit the permittee, they are issued primarily to serve a particular Trail management purpose, such as maintaining a view or protecting a structure.

On NPS-acquired corridor lands, the decision to issue a special-use permit is reserved to the NPS Appalachian Trail park manager, but it is usually based upon the recommendation of the Trail maintaining clubs and ATC. Within the boundaries of the existing national parks, park superintendents retain authority for issuance of special-use permits. Forest supervisors retain authority for special-use permits within their respective forests. On state park, forest, or game lands, state authorities are responsible for issuing special-use permits.

The National Park Service A.T. Park Office administers special-use permits that authorize use of corridor lands along the Appalachian Trail. The majority of them permit agricultural uses, including grazing, haying, and crop production. Most permits exist to maintain natural open areas or historical pastoral scenes for the benefit of Trail users. Some permits have been issued to accommodate preexisting uses, including maple sugaring and a hang-gliding site. Other permits may be issued for temporary uses, such as a weekend horseback event that requires a short crossing of the Trail corridor or weddings on Trail lands in the town of Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—General guidelines for issuing special use permits on NPS-acquired lands were developed jointly between the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office and ATC in 1983 (these guidelines also may be applicable to other Trail lands). Typically, Trail clubs and ATC play a greater role in administering and monitoring permits on NPS-acquired lands than on lands administered by other agencies. In general, these guidelines provide direction on the following aspects of review and approval of special-use permits:

**Decision-making process**—Coordination of initial issuance and renewals rests with the local managers, according to principles outlined in the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) and local management plans. These local managers usually include the local Trail club (which has the lead role), local management committee, agency partner, local municipality, and the ATC regional office staff. When a permit is contemplated, consultation occurs among partners, and permit language is drafted by ATPO. If all parties are in agreement with the permit, the final permit is signed by the park manager and issued from the ATPO. If there are major policy implications or controversy regarding the issuance or renewal of a permit, the local managers should establish a committee, to the extent that one does not already exist, to address the problem on a local level. In addition, if unique situations arise that are not covered by the guidelines, this committee approach should be used to seek a local solution.

**Standard Provisions**—All special-use permits must be considered temporary in nature and revocable at the discretion of the NPS A.T. park manager. Permits are not transferable. They may be issued for any period of time up to five years. All permits must have a specific description of the property involved, intended use, expiration date, and statement of liability.

**Appropriate Uses**—Permits should be issued only to accomplish management purposes or to continue existing uses until specifically addressed in the local management-planning process.

**Selection of Permittee**—If apparent qualifications among interested parties are comparable, land-use permits should be issued first to the former landowner, then to the adjacent landowner, then to local residents. Permits for occupancy of structures may more appropriately be based on interviewing of potential tenants. Renewals of permits may be offered first to the previous permittee, all conditions having been met.

**Fees**—Generally, fees should be charged for any use of public lands and documentation of fee determination kept on file. Managers should establish local rates for comparable rentals and apply standard deductions as appropriate. This function is handled by ATPO.

**NPS Policy**—The purpose of a special-use permit is to allow A.T. managers to manage corridor lands for the benefit of the hiking public and the resource. National Park Service guidelines are fairly restrictive about permissible uses on federally owned Appalachian Trail lands. The Park Service must evaluate each request for a permit and certify that it meets the criteria of being consistent with the purpose for which a park was established by Congress, and it must deny requests for permits upon a finding that the proposed activity would cause unacceptable impacts. NPS *Guidelines on Special Park Use* (NPS-53) state:

- A permitted use may not derogate the values or purposes of the A.T.
- A permit is temporary in nature and may not be issued for a period greater than five years.
- A permit is not transferable to another party.
- All permits are revocable at the discretion of NPS.
- The need for the permit must be described.
- The value of the permitted use must be established.
- The proposed use cannot be reasonably accommodated on lands outside the park.

Although the authority to issue a special-use permit for use of NPS-acquired lands rests with the A.T. park manager, the NPS park manager normally will refer any request for a special-use permit to the local Trail club for consideration. If there are major implications or controversy regarding the issuance or renewal of a permit, the NPS prefers that local managers establish a committee, if one does not already exist, to address the problem on a local level.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The Trail club should maintain an inventory of all special-use permits in effect on its section of the Appalachian Trail (this information can be provided by ATC). The inventory should identify: (1) the type of use; (2) the permittee; and (3) the starting date and termination date. A file also should be kept for each permit with a copy of the permit and any monitoring responsibilities undertaken by the club. Trail clubs may wish to identify sites or structures where special-use permits might help to improve the Trail environment. For example, a special-use permit for haying might maintain an open area.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail club policy should recognize the general circumstances under which a special-use permit may be issued by the National Park Service on NPS-acquired lands and add any criteria that the club wishes to use in evaluating proposals for allowing specific uses by permit. For clubs



that have Trail sections within national forests and national parks, club policies should recognize agency authority and regulation.

**Action Plan**—The maintaining clubs have two primary responsibilities with regard to special-use permits on NPS-acquired lands: (1) recommending where permits may be appropriate and what permit conditions should be applied; and (2) monitoring permittee use for compliance with the conditions of the permit.

In recommending approvals or continuation of special-use permits on NPS-acquired lands, the Trail clubs should ask:

1. What is the purpose of issuing the permit?
2. Is there a demonstrated benefit to the A.T.? What are the benefits?
3. Is the use temporary in nature?
4. Is there more than one potential permittee or interested party?
5. Exactly where is the special use to take place, and how many acres of Trail lands are involved?
6. What conditions should be required of the permittee in order to control the use?
7. How will the club monitor the permittee?
8. For what period of time should the permit be issued?
9. How does the proposed activity relate to the visitors' experience? Will the proposed use enhance that experience, or detract from it, or have no effect.
10. What would be the difficulties associated with terminating a permit for this use once it was issued?
11. What guidance for this type of use is provided in management planning and policy documents?
12. Can the proposed use be accommodated outside of the Trail corridor?
13. Would the proposed activity result in the exclusive benefit or enjoyment of the area by a few persons?
14. Would the issuance of this permit set an unacceptable precedent?
15. Is the permit being proposed solely because it is a preexisting use?
16. Does the proposed special use relate to the purposes for which the A.T. was established (for travel on foot through wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian mountains)?

Trail clubs may have less responsibility for assisting the USFS or existing national park units in evaluating and monitoring special-use permits. Clubs and their agency partners should clarify their respective roles regarding special-use permits as part of their cooperative agreements. Any active role undertaken by the club should be noted as a club action in its long-range plan.

## CHAPTER 4 (J)

### Structures and Dams

The National Park Service and, to a lesser extent, the U.S. Forest Service and several state agencies have purchased a number of man-made structures during the process of acquiring lands to protect the Appalachian Trail. These “incidentally acquired” structures range from relatively new residences and out-buildings to various dilapidated farm structures, old camps, billboards, concrete pads, fences, and small utility buildings. Many of them are vacant, deteriorating buildings of little or no value. In some cases, the National Park Service has acquired a fee interest in a dam or bridge. They are often an invitation to vandalism and a potential liability hazard.

When such a structure is acquired, a decision is made regarding its fate. The great majority of them have been determined to be incompatible with Trail values, and they have been removed.

When a decision has been made to remove a structure, ATC’s regional office staff usually coordinates the removal with the local Trail club and the land-managing agency. The agency typically has a number of regulations with which it must comply before the structure can be removed. Once the agency has completed its legal requirements, several possibilities exist for removing a structure. If local air-quality regulations permit, structures have been destroyed through controlled burning by the local fire department. They also have been salvaged by clubs or sold to local contractors for their salvage value. When contracting is required, it is helpful for local managers to identify potential bidders for the work. Agency partners and ATC often have funds earmarked specifically for removal of structures and rehabilitation of sites.

Occasionally, an acquired structure has the potential to serve a Trail-related purpose. In such cases, costs of maintaining a structure need to be carefully evaluated. These costs are often prohibitive, particularly when the structure doesn’t meet national life and safety codes at the time it is acquired. A decision to retain a structure should take into account the costs of long-term upkeep and repairs, which are often significant. Structures on federal lands must meet national fire, life-safety, and electrical codes and also must be evaluated for their historical significance. Liability is also an important concern. Perhaps the most important consideration is whether or not the structure is compatible with the purposes and values of the Trail.

Interim management of structures may be necessary while decisions are being made. A temporary occupant may be needed to care for the building and prevent vandalism. Posting signs and boarding up all entrances to a vacant structure may be necessary to prevent trespassers or neighborhood children from entering the building.

Where a previous landowner has reserved the right to use the structure for a specific number of years or for his lifetime (called a “life estate”), some basic planning decisions can be made in the meantime. Periodic contact by the Trail club with the occupants is appropriate to ensure that the previous owner’s use meets the conditions of the deed reservation.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In November 1989, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy:

- 1) Each structure should be removed, and the A.T. corridor restored as near as possible to a natural condition, unless:
  - a. The structure must be retained for historic reasons. (Evaluations must be conducted on

- all structures more than 50 years old.)
  - b. The club, working with ATC, identifies a Trail-related need for the structure and is willing to assume responsibility for management and maintenance of the structure.
  - c. The structure is a contributing improvement (such as a bridge).
- 2) If possible, decisions regarding removal of structures should be made before the structure and land upon which it is situated are acquired by the agency.
  - 3) Any structure proposed for retention on NPS-acquired lands will usually require a safety inspection by the NPS resource protection specialist (or his designee) and a qualified inspector from a local or state agency prior to assignment to ATC and reassignment to the club, to determine to what extent the structure meets the fire, life-safety, and electrical codes and to make recommendations for modifications or improvements to comply with the codes.
  - 4) Prior to any decision to retain a structure, a financial analysis should be prepared to evaluate the costs necessary to bring the structure up to code. The analysis should include an estimate of the costs associated with long-term maintenance of the structure.
  - 5) Retained structures that are to be used in any way by the public must:
    - a. Have liability insurance in the club and ATC's name, to protect the club and ATC;
    - b. If located on NPS-acquired lands, be periodically inspected by the NPS resource-protection specialist (or his designee); and,
    - c. Have all necessary and appropriate local government approvals.
  - 6) Retained structures on NPS-acquired lands that are intended for use only to support the activities of Trail volunteers need an authorization under the NPS VIP program. Named individual volunteers acting as club caretakers should be under a direct VIP agreement with the NPS.
  - 7) Structures on federal lands intended for removal are the ultimate responsibility of the federal agency partner. If agency budget and contracting constraints preclude agency action in a timely manner, clubs and/or ATC may offer to assist with removal to the extent feasible. Federal agency standards for demolition, removal, and restoration should be followed.

**NPS Policy**—Several NPS requirements pertain to management of structures:

1. By law, any structure recommended for removal must be evaluated for its potential for historical significance, using the criteria established for eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Usually this requires contact with the state historic-preservation office and must be done prior to any action to demolish a building. If a structure is determined to be historically significant, an assessment is required before it can be removed or used for any new purpose. These actions would be coordinated by the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO).
2. If a recommendation is made to locate an occupant for a structure, a NPS special-use permit, with an attached caretaker job description, should be utilized to document arrangements with the tenant. Fees based on fair market value are involved with issuance of a permit, although adjustments may be made based on the benefits provided by the occupant (such as structure maintenance, monitoring of the site, water testing, *etc.*).

3. Clubs may utilize a structure for Trail-management purposes without issuance of a permit, but the structure needs to be assigned by the agency to ATC and the Trail club. The club's plans and the consent of the land-managing agency should be documented.
4. A Trail club cannot charge a fee for use of the structure and keep the proceeds, but voluntary donations are acceptable. The NPS may, under specific conditions, charge a fee for the use of a NPS-owned structure.
5. The NPS maintains records of all property acquired by the NPS. When demolition is considered, an internal NPS report (Report of Survey) is required to secure approval prior to removal. The NPS must also screen usable structures for possible relocation for use by other federal agencies, or for removal off-site for homeless assistance by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
6. All occupied structures on NPS corridor lands must meet the requirements of the Life Safety Code, a national fire and safety code, and other applicable state and local building and electrical codes. Before making a decision to retain a structure, a Trail club should request a hazardous materials inspection from NPS.

If a decision is made to retain a dam on NPS-acquired lands, the Appalachian Trail Park Office must follow specific procedures to ensure the structural soundness and safety of a dam. If possible, a dam should be "deactivated" by removing it or breaching it to a level where no maintenance is necessary, unless it contributes to the cultural, natural, or recreational resource of the Trail (section 9.5 of the 2006 NPS [\*Management Policies\*](#)). If a dam cannot be deactivated, the NPS has an obligation to maintain the dam to specific standards for public safety. All dams on NPS lands should receive an annual safety inspection. If the dam is rated as a significant or high-hazard dam, the NPS must prepare an emergency-action plan. The plan identifies contingencies for maintenance and monitoring that are particularly stringent if residences are located below the dam.

### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—The NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office has developed a comprehensive list of all known structures or improvements on National Park Service (and some Forest Service) A.T. lands acquired for protection of the Trail. Much of this information has been entered into a database and the Trail club may request information from ATPO. The club may discover other structures or man-made conditions during monitoring assignments or Trail assessments—any newly discovered structures should be reported to ATC and the land-managing agency as soon as practical). A list of structures in a Trail club's LMP should include the following information:

- Location/tract number
- A brief description of the structure and its condition
- An estimate of the age of the structure (if it is 50 years or older, it could be historically significant)
- Current use

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Ultimately, a decision on what to do with each individual structure must be based on its compatibility with the Appalachian Trail environment and the potential benefits and costs of long-term maintenance and upkeep of the structure. Trail club policy should recognize the factors that might be involved in a decision to keep or dispose of a structure. A club may wish to incorporate the

questions listed below under “Action Plan” into any policy statement or decision-making strategy that it develops.

**Action Plan**—The Trail club should decide, in consultation with ATC and its management partners, whether to retain or dispose of each structure. In evaluating each situation, the Trail club should consider the following:

1. Is the structure visible from the Trail?
2. Does the structure or improvement have a negative impact on the Trail? (Most structures, by definition, do have an adverse impact on the natural Trail environment.)
3. Does the former owner retain any rights of occupancy?
4. Does the structure serve a critical Trail-related purpose (*e.g.*, as an overnight facility for hikers or Trail maintainers, or as a storage facility)?
5. What is the condition of the structure?
6. Are there any safety hazards?
7. Does the structure comply with the national fire, life/safety, and electrical codes? If not, what would be the cost of bringing the structure up to code?
8. Does the structure contain potentially hazardous materials such as asbestos, lead-based paint, Freon (in appliances), PCBs (in electrical transformers), or pesticides? Are there any underground storage tanks or 55-gallon drums on the property?
9. What is the likelihood of vandalism?
10. What costs would be associated with needed repairs and ongoing long-term maintenance? (Retaining a structure is usually an expensive long-term financial commitment.)
11. What would it cost to obtain insurance on the structure if it were retained?
12. What steps would be required to remove the structure and restore the site?
13. Is there an interim use for the structure pending a final action or decision?

Any planned actions for managing a structure should be noted in the Trail club’s work plan. Long-range plans, including funding, should be developed for managing structures that are proposed for retention.

## CHAPTER 4 (K)

### **Military Maneuvers**

The armed forces have carried out or proposed military training maneuvers on Appalachian Trail lands with some frequency over the years. In 1945, the *Appalachian Trailway News* reported on an encounter with 500 Marines on a training mission. U.S. Marine Corps officers have asked for suggestions for suitable long-distance endurance hikes on the Trail for up to 600 Marines at a time. [ATC policy discourages groups of more than 25 day-hikers or more than 10 overnight hikers on the Trail—see Chapter 3 (B).]

For years, portions of the Appalachian Trail in Georgia were used for practice maneuvers by Army Ranger units. Hikers reported face-to-face encounters with infantrymen dressed in full battle gear, tripwires attached to small explosive devices stretched across the Trail footpath, and bunkers and foxholes were dug immediately adjacent to the Trail footpath. In 1990, in response to complaints and reports through the years of close encounters between hikers and Army Rangers, the Chattahoochee National Forest restricted the Army's use of the A.T. management area to a single crossing of the Trail.

Low-level training flights by military aircraft also can impact the Trail experience. In 1989, a proposal by the Strategic Air Command of the Air Force would have resulted in approximately 6,000 low-level flights per year by F-111s over five miles of the A.T. on Peters Mountain in Pennsylvania. The Air Force withdrew the proposal in response to criticism from the Trail community, local citizens, and the congressional delegation from Pennsylvania.

### **Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—In November 1989, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy statement:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy recognizes and endorses the valuable assistance provided by units of the armed forces during search-and-rescue missions along the Appalachian Trail, the use of military aircraft to airlift materials for shelter construction projects in remote areas, and other actions undertaken by military personnel at the request of a club or agency partner for the benefit or management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. This statement of policy is not intended to discourage these mutually beneficial cooperative activities, which have significantly enhanced the management capabilities of the Appalachian Trail management partners.

The physical impacts of military training exercises, including ground disturbances created by infantry training exercises and the noise disturbances created by both ground and aerial training exercises, can significantly detract from the experience of hiking the Appalachian Trail and may also create safety hazards for hikers. It is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that military maneuvers should not be permitted on, or in the low-altitude air space above, Appalachian Trail corridor lands, except in unusual circumstances.

Low-level over flights, particularly repeated over flights, intrude on the quiet and solitude that have always been considered essential to the A.T. experience. Consistent with Federal Aviation Administration recommendations for flights over national park units, a minimum floor of 2,000 feet above ground level should be required for all aircraft, including military aircraft, for the entire length of the Appalachian Trail.

ATC and the Trail-maintaining clubs should be consulted during any formal or informal consideration of a proposal for military-training exercises on A.T. lands. ATC will assist agencies to the extent possible in identifying alternative locations for conducting military training exercises. If an authorization is under consideration for military training use of the Appalachian Trail or Appalachian Trail lands, ATC would urge its land-managing partners to issue authorizations only when a determination has been made by the appropriate agency officials that the training exercises are essential for national defense and that it is not feasible to conduct the exercises at any other location. If a special-use permit is issued by a land-managing agency for any military training exercise on the Appalachian Trail or Appalachian Trail lands, the permit at a minimum should state that:

1. No ground disturbance (including construction of bunkers, foxholes, tent platforms, *etc.*) and mechanized or motorized use should not be permitted (and is prohibited in “wilderness” and “wilderness study” areas);
2. Activities authorized under the permit must not interfere with hikers on the Trail;
3. All reasonable efforts will be made to notify hikers and other users of Trail corridor lands that such activities are occurring;
4. No weapons should be used or be visible to observers;
5. No activities may be conducted which put any hikers or other civilians at risk or in fear of their safety;
6. No activities may be conducted which would exceed the limits for group use set forth in the ATC group-use policy (“Groups spending one or more nights on the Trail should not exceed 10 in the same organization and day-use groups should not exceed 25 in the same organization unless clubs otherwise designate in their local-management plans”);
7. No explosive materials will be permitted;
8. No activities should be permitted near shelters or other Trail facilities; and,
9. The Trail club and ATC should be notified by the land-managing agency at least 48 hours in advance of any pending activity.

Though this policy does not have the force of law or regulation, it is intended to encourage agency partners to look carefully at the inherent conflicts between military maneuvers and the backcountry recreational experiences provided on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

**NPS Policy**—In general, military activities are discouraged in parks, except for study of military history at related NPS sites. Periodically, an armed services unit may request the use of park areas for noncombat exercises such as search-and-rescue and outdoor survival. Determining when and where military units may conduct such activities is a discretionary decision of the superintendent. A permitted military activity must conform to the following conditions:

- A permit will be issued that clearly states all necessary conditions or stipulations to protect park resources and visitor safety.
- All applicable park rules and regulations will be followed.
- No weaponry will be carried, displayed, or used, except for ceremonial purposes or authorized public demonstrations.
- The activity will be conducted away from visitor use locations and out of public view (except where a public demonstration is specifically authorized).
- The military organization will designate a liaison officer who will be available to the superintendent throughout the exercise.
- Permittees will be educated about how the purpose, mission, and regulations of the park differ from their own missions, especially in regard to resource protection and visitor use and enjoyment.

National security and law enforcement agencies, such as the Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, and state police, may wish to conduct similar exercises. These requests should be evaluated in the same way as military special use requests (section 8.6.9 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

The NPS will work cooperatively with the Department of Defense to address congressionally mandated missions of all agencies. The NPS will prevent or strive to mitigate any unacceptable impacts associated with military training or operational low-level overflights. The NPS park manager is responsible for communicating with base commanders and developing formal agreements that mitigate identified impacts (section 8.4.5 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#)).

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary. Any incidents involving conflicts between recreational use of the Trail and military maneuvers on or over Appalachian Trail lands should be documented and reported to an agency partner or ATC.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Clubs may want to take a proactive stance and develop basic policy guidelines on when, where, and under what conditions military maneuvers would be acceptable. Care should be taken to reflect the positive and mutually beneficial arrangements that have taken place in many locations along the Trail where National Guard units and other military personnel have assisted in Trail projects, as well as any adverse situations that may have occurred.

**Action Plan**—No action plan is necessary unless a specific concern exists. Clubs may want to advise officials at nearby military bases if the Trail club adopts a policy affecting Appalachian Trail lands that have been used in the past for military maneuvers. The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club has appointed a club member to serve as a liaison to an Army Ranger camp that conducts maneuvers on national forest lands near the Trail.



## CHAPTER 4 (L)

### Bicycles

Bicycles can cause (and, in some instances, have caused) extensive damage to Trail treadway by creating ruts, displacing soils, and destroying water bars and other erosion-control structures. In areas with wet or poor soils, extensive reconstruction or relocation of the Trail treadway may be necessary to repair the damage caused by wheeled vehicles. Such projects are often beyond the capabilities of the local Trail clubs. In addition, hikers complain of safety hazards associated with meeting individuals riding mountain bikes on the Trail.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC adopted the following policy on bicycle use in November 1991:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy believes it is necessary to state clearly that the Appalachian Trail was conceived, designed, constructed, and intended for use as a footpath. This intent is an overriding emphasis of virtually every aspect of the Trail, which is managed to provide an opportunity for “travel on foot through the wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains” (from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s *Appalachian Trail Management Principles*). Recognizing that certain sections of the Trail coincide for limited distances with multiple-use trails, such as the Virginia Creeper Trail and the C&O Canal towpath, the Conservancy supports broad federal-agency regulations and administrative prohibitions against use of the Trail by bicycles in all but the most unusual circumstances. ATC further encourages all agency partners to adopt and enforce similar prohibitions against bicycles on the Appalachian Trail.

In short, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s position is that the Trail footpath should be closed to bicycle use except where open by specific administrative decision of the land-managing agency, with such a decision being made only after consultation with the affected Trail club, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the National Park Service A.T. Park Office. ATC believes that each of the following conditions (in addition to any site-specific criteria) must be met for ATC to endorse bicycle use on the Trail as an exception to this policy:

1. Bicycle use of the Appalachian Trail would only take place upon a short (generally less than one-mile) section of the Trail that is located on an existing surfaced or hardened roadbed, railbed, or other hardened surface previously used and designed for use by wheeled vehicles, and where bicycle use clearly would not result in resource damage, displacement of soils or vegetation, or impact to the Trail tread, water-diversion structures, or other Trail facilities.
2. Bicycle use would only take place upon a segment of the Trail that coincides with or intersects a segment of an existing, established multiple-use trail.
3. Bicycle use on the segment of Trail can be physically restricted to that segment of Trail by signs and physical barriers, without the need to actively control bicycle use on adjoining segments of the Trail.

4. Bicycle use of the segment of Trail would not adversely affect the recreational experience of hikers on that section of the Appalachian Trail or conflict with efforts of the local management partners to create a primitive recreational experience for that section of Trail.

In those isolated circumstances, bicycle use should be authorized only by temporary, revocable special-use permit. In circumstances where bicycle use has been authorized but such use is contributing to resource damage, adverse impact to the recreational experience of the Trail for hikers, or illegal use of adjoining segments of the Trail, such authorization should be revoked by the land-managing agency on its own initiative or at the request of the Trail club, the Conservancy, or the National Park Service.

The Conservancy recognizes the use of bicycles (including mountain bikes) as a legitimate recreational use of appropriate public lands and encourages its affiliated Trail clubs and agency partners to foster a cooperative relationship with bicycle user groups, to educate bicycle users about existing prohibitions against use of bicycles on the Trail, and to support bicycle users in their efforts to identify other areas, including rail trails and woods roads, that are better suited to bicycle use.

This policy statement is not intended to apply to those portions of the Trail that are located along open public roads or where specific rights of vehicular access have been reserved by prior landowners.

**NPS Policy**—Bicycles are prohibited on National Park Service Appalachian Trail corridor lands by regulation:

Appalachian National Scenic Trail—The use of bicycles, motorcycles, or other motor vehicles is prohibited. ([Code of Federal Regulations](#), Title 36, Section 7.100).

The following regulation restricts bicycle use in other national park units, including those crossed by the Appalachian Trail:

The use of a bicycle is prohibited except on park roads, in parking areas, and on routes designated for bicycle use. Routes may only be designated for bicycle use based upon a written determination that such use is consistent with the protection of a park area's natural, scenic, and aesthetic values, safety considerations, and management objectives, and will not disturb wildlife or park resources (*CFR*, Title 36, Section 4.30).

### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—The first step in planning for control of mechanized uses, including bicycles, is identifying where such use exists. Corridor-monitoring programs and Trail assessments are the most effective means for identifying bicycle use. The inventory should identify where the use is taking place, where the access points are, and, if known, who the users are.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club's policy statement on bicycles should be clear and unequivocal: bicycles should not be permitted on the Appalachian Trail, which is designed to accommodate foot travel only. The policy should identify: (1) general directions and actions the club will take to discourage bicycle use on the A.T.; (2) coordination with agency partners who have the authority to enforce the

prohibition of bicycles; and (3) exceptions, if any, under which bicycle use would be permitted. Trail clubs should encourage biking clubs to work with the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and state agencies to develop alternative biking or multiuse trails. Some biking organizations have successfully constructed new bike trails that minimize user conflicts and resource damage.

**Action Plan**—For each site identified in the inventory where bicycle use exists, the Trail club should determine what is needed to solve the problem. This should be done in cooperation with an agency partner. Low-profile methods (signing, information and education campaigns, and discussions with biking clubs or other organizations) should be explored first, but, if necessary, stronger actions (*e.g.*, law enforcement) should be implemented. The Trail club's work plan should recognize that mountain biking is an outdoor recreational activity that is here to stay, and all-terrain bicycle use on the A.T. could become a long-term problem if it is not carefully monitored.

## CHAPTER 4 (M)

### Hang Gliding

Hang gliding is defined by the U.S. Hang Gliding Association as “low-speed, light-weight, un-powered, human flight in devices which are capable of being foot launched and are capable of gliding and soaring flight.”

Concerns about hang gliding in relation to the A.T. include the potential for congregation of large groups of people at launch sites (which usually coincide with A.T. overlooks), conflicts with hikers seeking solitude, and vehicular access. However, hang gliding usually is a low-impact, individual form of recreation and under the right circumstances those potential impacts can be fully mitigated.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In April 1996, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy on hang gliding:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy believes that hang gliding (including paragliding), being a non-motorized and non-mechanized pursuit, may be suitable in certain locations along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The remote recreational experience of the Trail and the resources that enhance that experience should be carefully considered and protected. Management of hang gliding launch and landing sites along the A.T. must be coherent with the over-all management direction for the A.T. corridor, and must not harm the Trail’s resources or the experience of A.T. hikers. In order to meet this objective, *all* of the following criteria must be met:

- The hang gliding site must be administered and maintained by a hang gliding organization recognized by the U.S. Hang Gliding Association and be covered by a permit or cooperative agreement between that organization and the land-managing agency. The Trail-maintaining club and the land-managing agency must endorse the use of the site.
- In cooperation with, and under the guidance of, the Trail-maintaining club and land-managing agency, the hang gliding organization will be responsible for maintenance of the site and management of hang gliding use at the site. New sites should not be cleared and vegetation at existing sites should not be removed without explicit written permission from the land-managing agency. Permission for clearing of vegetation should not be granted unless such action clearly enhances Trail values and does not degrade any natural resources that may be present. The Appalachian Trail footpath should not be modified in any way to accommodate use by hang gliders.
- Use of the site and improvements to the site should not adversely affect the natural and cultural resources present at the site and should be consistent with the Conservancy’s policy on managing the Appalachian Trail as a primitive resource.

- The hang gliding organization will be responsible for preventing resource abuse and conflicts with hikers, and the site may be closed if any abuse cannot be rectified or any conflicts cannot be resolved.
- The hang gliding site should be physically separate from Trail shelters and other overnight facilities, and no activities associated with use of the site should be permitted that would affect any shelters or overnight facilities.
- Hang gliding sites will not be used for any motorized use and will not promote such use. Access to any hang gliding site must be on foot, unless vehicular use is available *via* an existing public road.
- Sites will not be used for commercial or competitive events. Specific conditions, such as limitations on group size, noise, and equipment, should be included in any authorization for a hang gliding site, to ensure that hikers are not adversely affected.
- Hang gliding should not be permitted in designated wilderness areas or other areas where it is prohibited by law, regulation, or managing-agency policy.

The frequency of hang gliding sites, level of use, availability of alternate sites, and cumulative impacts on the primitive recreational experience and remote character of the Trail will be significant factors in determining whether new hang gliding sites should or should not be authorized.

**NPS Policy**—In 1996, the Appalachian Trail Park Office secured a special regulation that gives the A.T. park manager the authority to permit hang gliding as a special use on lands administered by that office. The special regulation reads as follows:

The use of devices designed to carry persons through the air in powerless flight is allowed at times and locations designated by the Park Manager, pursuant to the terms and conditions of a permit [36 [\*Code of Federal Regulations\*](#) 7.100 (c)].

The terms and conditions of a special-use permit for hang gliding will prohibit in all cases stunt flying, commercialization, advertising, publicity, contests, meets, demonstrations, and motor-vehicle access on nonpublic roads. In addition, the A.T. park manager may require as a standard condition of the permit that all hang gliders using the designated site be licensed by the United States Hang Gliding Association. The frequency of launch sites, level of use, cumulative impacts on the remote recreational experience and character of the Appalachian Trail will be significant factors in determining whether new launch or landing sites will be designated.

### **Consideration for Planning**

**Inventory**—The first step in planning for control of mechanized uses, such as hang gliding, is identifying where the use exists. Corridor-monitoring programs and Trail assessments are the most effective means for identifying hang gliding use. The inventory should identify where the use is taking place, where the access points are, and who the users or user groups are.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club's policy statement on hang gliding use should be worded as

strongly as possible. The policy should identify: (1) the club's philosophy regarding hang gliding on A.T. lands; (2) coordination with agency partners who have the authority to prohibit or allow hang gliders; and, (3) sites where hang gliding may be appropriate, if any, through the issuance of a NPS special-use permit or other cooperative agreement.

**Action Plan**—For each site identified in the inventory where hang gliding occurs, the Trail club should determine if the use is consistent with overall management objectives for the area. This should be done in cooperation with an agency partner. If necessary, low-profile methods (signing, information and education campaigns, and discussions with hang-gliding clubs or the U.S. Hang Gliding Association) should be explored first, but stronger actions (*e.g.*, law enforcement) may need to be implemented.

## CHAPTER 4 (N)

**Nonhiking Recreational Uses of Trail Lands**

Since the beginnings of the Trail in the 1920s, technology and culture have evolved and combined to bring new forms of recreation to trails and the lands they traverse. The A.T. is no exception, and the partners of its cooperative management system have met and addressed the changes to the best of their ability, through policy statements that define the criteria under which activities could be carried on in conjunction with the trail, if at all. Examples include the advent of hang gliding and mountain biking, for which specific policies were adopted.

ATC and its partners realize that this process will continue—new recreational pursuits will come into existence that cannot be predicted and will possibly impact the Trail and its corridor. This policy provides a blanket response to such developments, serving as insurance against the time lag that is sure to occur between the appearance of a new activity and the specific policy response.

**Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—In 1997, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy on nonhiking recreational uses of Trail lands:

The Appalachian Trail is, first and foremost, a footpath open to any and all who travel on foot. Its sole purpose as a recreational resource is to provide an opportunity for “travel on foot through the wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains.” Except in isolated instances where historically recognized nonconforming uses are allowed by legislative authority, the footpath of the Trail should not be used for any other purpose. This policy is intended to provide a framework within which other recreational uses will be evaluated. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy may develop additional policy direction for specific uses as needed.

The lands acquired and managed for the Appalachian Trail, and lands designated within the A.T. management zone, not only protect the footpath itself, but provide primary protection of the Trail experience. The Trail experience, as used in this context, is intended to represent the sum of opportunities that are available for those walking the Appalachian Trail to interact with the wild, scenic, pastoral, cultural, and natural elements of the Appalachian Trail environment, unfettered and unimpeded by competing sights or sounds and in as direct and intimate a manner as possible. Integral to this Trail experience are:

- Opportunities for observation, contemplation, enjoyment, and exploration of the natural world;
- A sense of remoteness and detachment from civilization;
- Opportunities to experience solitude; freedom; personal accomplishment; self-reliance; and self-discovery;
- A sense of being on the height of the land;
- Opportunities to experience the historic and pastoral elements of the surrounding countryside;
- A feeling of being part of the natural environment; and
- Opportunities for travel on foot, including opportunities for long-distance hiking.

Other recreational uses of these lands should be considered compatible if they do not require any modification of design and construction standards for the Trail footpath or Trail facilities; cause damage to the treadway or Trail facilities; require an engine or motor; or adversely impact the Trail experience or the cultural, natural, or scenic resources of the Trail.

Some recreational uses may affect the Trail experience because of an inherent conflict between different user groups' expectations in a specific environment. Some might affect the Trail simply because they result in increased use of Trail lands. Other uses might affect the opportunities for solitude and reflection that certain sections of the Trail provide. The potential for conflict between other uses and the Trail's sole recreational purpose increases as the users' sense of remoteness and distance from the developed environment increases. While some activities may be appropriate along a rural or pastoral section of the Trail where other aspects of civilization are clearly evident, they may be entirely inappropriate in a designated wilderness, primitive area, or other remote area, where they may affect the experience significantly for people who have hiked to that location. Trail maintaining clubs and agency partners should apply these guidelines as they develop use-specific policies and address proposals for non-hiking recreational use of Trail corridor lands.

**NPS Policy**—NPS response to nonhiking recreational uses of trail corridor lands is dictated by the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) and the local management plans. The *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes hiking as the primary activity for which Trail lands were set aside: incompatible activities are to be controlled primarily by educational efforts and failing this, by enforcement of laws and Trail regulations when applicable. Agency partners are to work with Trail clubs and local law enforcement officials when necessary to control incompatible activities.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Clubs should include a policy statement on nonhiking recreational uses of the Trail. If and when appropriate, Trail clubs may identify any non-hiking recreational uses of the Trail in their area that are not covered by other policies, and state their position towards these uses. As appropriate, Trail clubs may identify strategies to deal with the uses at issue.

**Action Plan**—As appropriate, Trail clubs may coordinate with agency partners or other partners to address non-hiking recreational uses. Suitable actions may include (but are not limited to) education, outreach, and advocating for appropriate regulatory development and enforcement.



## CHAPTER 4 (O)

**Impacts of Land Development in the Vicinity of the A.T.**

This chapter addresses the impacts of land-development projects beyond roads, utilities and communication projects, which provide public services to significant segments of the population. Projects such as ski areas and quarries, as well as residential and commercial developments, are most often proposed by private companies that will profit from their implementation. However, their impacts can easily reach beyond the populations they serve.

The natural features and remote character of the A.T. that we seek to protect are in many cases the very things that draw such development to unprotected lands bordering the A.T. corridor. For example, wooded ridges are attractive areas to build residential developments with beautiful views. Lands abutting the A.T. corridor are very popular, as they provide access to the Trail and protect at least one side of the property from other development. Unfortunately, the enjoyment of the few can greatly diminish that of the many. The Appalachian Trail and the benefits it provides are intended to be protected and maintained for the benefit of all citizens and of future generations. The qualities of the Trail are dependent not only on a buffer of agency-protected lands, but also on the state of lands outside the jurisdiction of those agencies. Protecting the wider Trail experience and not just the footpath is a major challenge. However, there are opportunities for ATC, the maintaining clubs and the partner agencies to influence the outcomes of private development projects. Such projects must go through a review process and public consultations, and involvement in the early stages can mitigate some of the impacts, if not stop the project itself.

**Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—The ATC Board has adopted or amended policies that address the impacts of development within the Appalachian Trail viewshed on several occasions since the late 1980s. Those policies have helped ATC, its agency partners and the maintaining clubs to respond to proposals for utility rights-of-way, highways, telecommunications facilities, wind turbines, ski lifts and trails, and other impacts. Many of those proposals have been tabled for locations on or near the Trail.

In April 2000, the Board adopted a policy that addressed the impacts of roads and utility developments. However, it became clear that a distinction had to be made between certain types of public facilities (such as roads and utility corridors, discussed in Chapter 4 (F) and other developments, such as ski areas, quarries, landfills, housing, and commercial construction. The ATC Board adopted this policy on impacts of land development in the vicinity of the A.T. in 2001:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) seeks to preserve and protect the scenic, cultural, historical, and natural resources of the Appalachian Trail and features in the surrounding environment that contribute to the Appalachian Trail experience, as defined by the National Trails System Act, the [\*Comprehensive Plan for the Protection, Management, Development, and Use of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail\*](#), and ATC policy. To that end, ATC seeks to avoid, minimize, or eliminate the visual and aural impacts upon those resources caused by development within the A.T. corridor and on adjacent lands in the vicinity of the corridor and will support any and all measures that do so.

Developments that are considered incompatible with the purposes and scenic values of the Appalachian Trail and covered by this policy include ski lifts and trails, all buildings, observation towers, golf courses, subdivisions, and mineral or gravel extraction operations, *etc.* ATC's Policy on Roads and Utility Developments separately addresses public and

administrative roads; power lines; pipelines; communications lines, towers, and related utility buildings; wind energy facilities; aircraft beacons; and roads and utilities serving these facilities. Those developments also are considered incompatible with the Appalachian Trail.

The goal of this policy is to ensure that there is no net loss to the recreational and conservation values or the quality of the recreation experience provided by the Appalachian Trail as a result of development.

ATC recognizes that its ability to influence specific development proposals may be limited, making this goal difficult to achieve. The Conservancy opposes development on mountaintops, ridgelines, and other visible areas in the foreground and middle-ground distance zones as seen from the Appalachian Trail, unless the visual impacts to the Appalachian Trail can be satisfactorily prevented or mitigated. Potential visual impacts will be assessed using the U.S. Forest Service's scenery management system, as described in *Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management*, Agriculture Handbook Number 701, 1995.

The Conservancy may also use the ATC Land Trust's Land Protection Criteria (LPC) as an objective means of weighing the relative merits of protecting areas or specific properties near the Trail through easements, purchase, community outreach and planning, or other means. The LPC can be used to proactively identify high-priority areas that are threatened by incompatible development, to reactively become engaged in new projects that arise due to external threats, and to work toward the protection of areas to prevent or avoid adverse development.

Further, the Conservancy opposes development that will result in aural impacts to the Appalachian Trail that cannot be prevented or mitigated. ATC will use [NPS Management Policies](#), 4.9, *Soundscape Management*, as guidance when addressing potential aural impacts.

Any developments covered by this policy within the viewshed and soundscape of the Trail should meet all of the following criteria:

1. Any new impacts associated with the proposed development should coincide with existing major impacts to the Trail experience.
2. No linear facilities associated with development subject to this policy should be permitted to physically cross the Appalachian Trail or be located within the Appalachian Trail corridor or management area unless a reserved right for such a crossing already exists.
3. Visual impacts in the foreground should meet or exceed a scenic integrity objective of "very high integrity," and those in the middle-ground should meet or exceed a scenic integrity objective of "high scenic integrity." In terms of aural impacts, ATC will seek to preserve, to the maximum extent possible, the existing natural soundscape of the A.T.

4. At a minimum, any proposed development should avoid impacts to the following elements of the Appalachian Trail experience: (a) wilderness or wilderness study areas; (b) National Park Service natural areas; (c) Forest Service scenic areas, semi-primitive non-motorized areas, or designated backcountry areas; (d) natural-heritage sites; (e) cultural-resource sites; (f) Trail-related facilities, such as shelters and campsites; and (g) alpine zones, balds, wetlands, and riparian zones.

ATC will encourage agency partners and local and regional planning jurisdictions to incorporate those criteria into agency, local, and regional plans and regulations and work with its member clubs to do likewise.

ATC will participate, and encourage Trail-maintaining clubs and agency partners to participate, as early as possible in public review processes for all development proposals with the potential to result in significant visual or aural impacts on the viewshed or soundscape of the Appalachian Trail.

In cases where development proposed in the vicinity of the A.T. will take place, any adverse impacts should be sufficiently mitigated to meet the goal of this policy. Mitigation should occur on site.

For development proposed in the vicinity of the Trail, ATC will request local, state, or federal regulatory bodies to include in any authorization necessary mitigation to reduce or eliminate the impacts of such facilities on the Appalachian Trail, including a stipulation prohibiting development of new facilities, or any changes to existing facilities, without prior notification of, and consultation with, the organizations and agencies responsible for management of the Appalachian Trail. Furthermore, such stipulations should include requirements for removal of development intrusions when their useful lives have passed and define the methods and required reimbursement of costs for this removal and related rehabilitation of affected lands.

ATC recognizes that certain existing developments along the Trail have important cultural value and should be preserved. In general, those developments would be recognized by inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Examples include fire towers and structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

**NPS Policy**—As stated in the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#), the protection of trailway values beyond the official corridor lands lies in the hands of private citizens as well as local and state governments. The Park Service agrees to help facilitate local solutions to protect Trail values. In addition, the National Park Service pledges to “preserve the natural resources, processes, systems, and values of units of the national park system in an unimpaired condition,” and recognizes that such resources and values can be affected by activities outside Park land boundaries. In such cases NPS will work with local groups to discourage deleterious activities and find alternative solutions.

For more information, see the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#), p. 25–26, and sections 1.6 and 1.7 of the 2006 Park Service [Management Policies](#).

## **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary. Clubs may wish to keep a current list or files on development proposals in the vicinity of their section of Trail, as well as a record of actions or communications pertaining to these proposals.

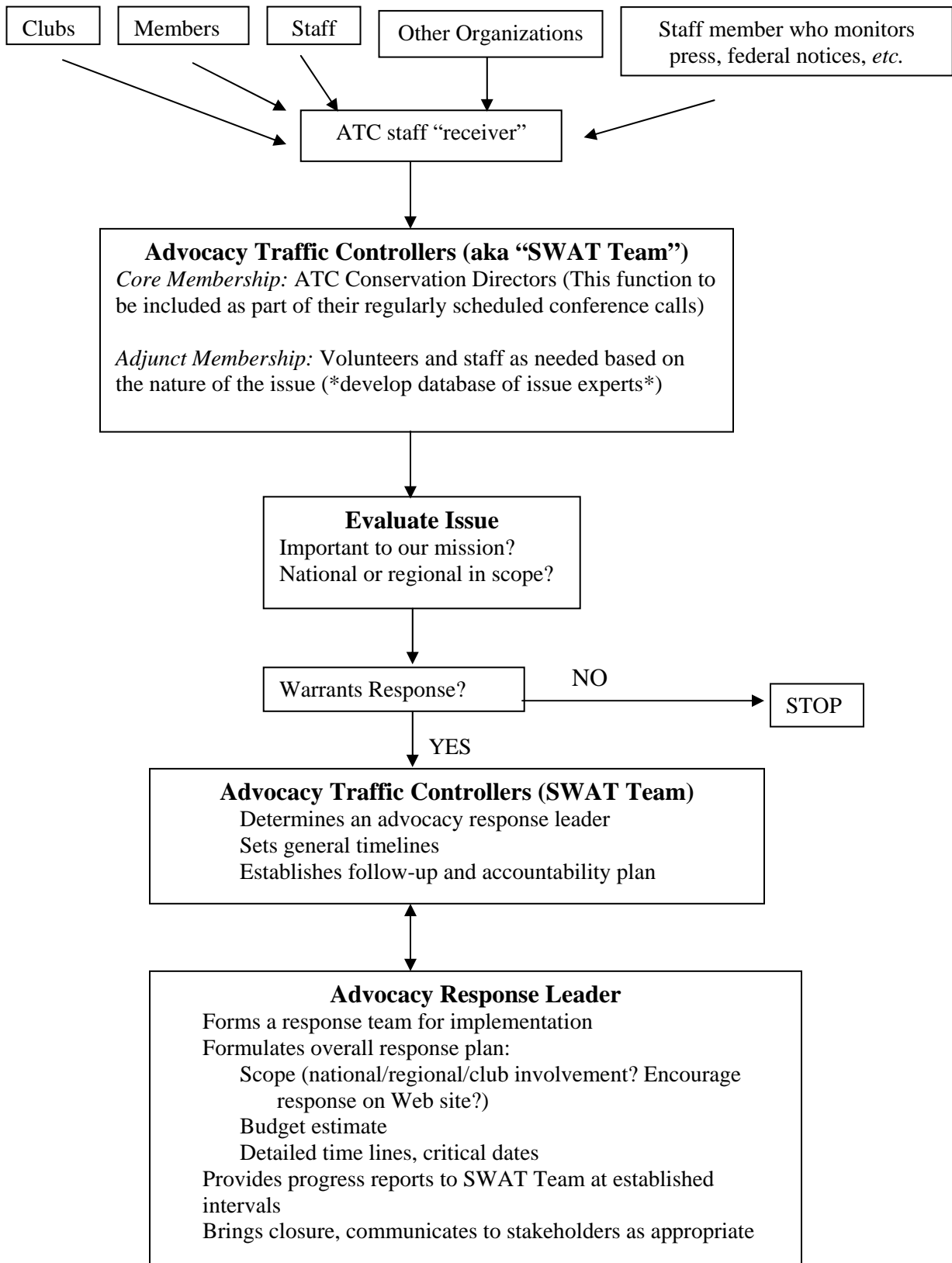
**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club policy statement should provide the club with direction on how to respond to development proposals and how to coordinate its actions effectively with other managing partners.

**Action Plan**—The Trail club may want to respond to development proposals by gathering information, attending planning board meetings and zoning hearings, as well as participating in public hearings on the proposed projects. Clubs should contact appropriate agency partners and ATC regional offices as soon as possible regarding development proposals in order to coordinate a response most effectively.

In 2007, the need to respond to numerous potential threats to the Trail each year led the Stewardship Council to develop the “ATC Advocacy Process Flow Chart” on the next page. It displays schematically how the Conservancy views the necessary steps and inputs from among the regions, Trail clubs, and cooperating agency partners.

## ATC Advocacy Process Flow Chart

### Multiple “Antennae” for issues of interest:



## CHAPTER 4 (P)

### Geocaching

Geocaching, described by [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) (the most popular geocaching site) as “a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world,” involves participants hiding a cache (a stash of goods) in a remote location and recording its exact position using a hand-held global positioning system (GPS) unit. The coordinates, along with a few helpful hints, are posted online for other geocachers to look up. Then, armed with a GPS unit, enthusiasts seek a route to the site to search for the hidden cache.

Because finding the route and the “treasure” at the end of it is a large part of the attraction of the activity, with the participants multiplying through the power of the Internet, impacts from geocaching are growing. Over the last few years, thousands of new caches have been placed and posted world-wide, and both the number of Web sites dedicated to the activity and the number of participants have grown rapidly. Impacts on sensitive environments or rare plant populations by behaviors such as criss-crossing and trampling an area in order to place or find a cache, or disturbing resources such as Revolutionary or Civil War encampment walls and stone piles are of great concern. Damage to specific natural and cultural resources resulting from geocaching can be significant, as well as broader impacts such as visitor created trails and trampling.

Geocaching has raised a debate among land managers across the country regarding both the appropriateness and legality of placing caches on federal, state, or local park and forest lands. Some states, such as Maryland, have adopted interim rules allowing this activity with prior permits; others are still evaluating their options or ignoring the issue. Because federal regulations prohibit abandonment of property, disturbance of or damage to natural features, and, in some national parks, off-trail hiking, most NPS units do not permit geocaching. Both the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management are also providing varying levels of policy and/or guidance for managing geocaching.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—The ATC Board of Directors adopted the following policy on geocaching on November 1, 2008, following a recommendation by the Stewardship Council.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy seeks to preserve and protect the scenic, cultural, and natural resources of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail experience, as defined by the National Trails System Act and ATC policy. To this end, ATC seeks to cooperatively address geocaching with its agency partners, Trail-maintaining clubs and other interested groups.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy recognizes that geocaching offers a unique and social approach to exploring the outdoors that may appeal to a growing segment of outdoor enthusiasts. At the same time, the Conservancy also recognizes the potential drawbacks of practicing this activity, which may include resource degradation, infringement of property rights, and/or conflicts with trail-use ethics. Therefore, to mitigate these concerns, the Conservancy acknowledges that geocaching and similar activities along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail may be appropriate, but only under the following conditions:

- a) Where geocaching is expressly permitted and managed by the appropriate land-management agency. Geocachers are responsible for knowing the ownership of the

lands they intend to recreate on, contacting the land-management agency (state, forest or park as appropriate) or private landowner and obtaining the necessary permits or written permission.

- b) Where proper care is taken to avoid damage caused by digging or trampling to vegetation, archeological, cultural or historic resources or other fragile resources in the area.

Additionally, any geocaching activities occurring within the A.T. corridor must conform to other ATC and agency policies. ATC strongly supports agency prohibitions where needed to protect Trail resources and the visitor experience. ATC believes that all geocaches that do not meet the above criteria should be removed from Appalachian Trail lands.

The Conservancy's effort to manage geocaching along the A.T. will include the following elements:

- Working with appropriate land-management partners to ensure protection of Trail resources from the potential impacts of geocaching.
- Education and outreach for those engaging in geocaching along the A.T., including contact information for ATC regional offices.
- Providing guidance to Trail-maintaining clubs for dealing with geocaches and geocaching impacts.
- Monitoring and cataloging existing caches along the A.T. as well as newly placed caches.
- Working with geocaching organizations including GroundSpeak on integrating NPS, ATC and other land-management agency policy in their cache reviewing processes.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service considers geocaching to be a special use that must either be addressed through a permitting system that includes environmental compliance, or be prohibited. As with other special uses, a permit granted by NPS can be revoked if the activity is found to create unacceptable impacts to the resources. The Office of NPS Policy is now providing guidance to national parks for their consideration in permitting such activities. The NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office prohibits geocaching on A.T. lands under its jurisdiction.

Other relevant laws and regulations include federal law prohibiting the abandonment of property on federal lands, and the laws and regulations concerning disturbance of or damage to natural features. Proposed activities that may cause disturbance or damage to natural resources must go through environmental compliance processes, including impact assessments and monitoring.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary, however Trail clubs may examine their sections for areas that they believe are particularly inappropriate for geocaching, using criteria such as existing natural and cultural resources and intensity of use, and highlight these areas of particular concern in their local management plans. Clubs are encouraged to work with partner agencies in highlighting such trail management concerns for their consideration. Trail clubs may determine that certain unrestricted areas are appropriate for geocaching and may work with partner agencies to highlight opportunities and consider options.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**— A Trail club policy statement should provide the club with direction on how to respond to geocaching requests and inquiries and how to coordinate its actions effectively with other managing partners. On non-NPS lands, the Trail club may want to consider a policy statement that encourages land-managing agencies either to manage and monitor geocaching or to prohibit it. The club policy may include statements on how it intends to work with its partner managing agencies on this issue and how to respond to geocaching requests and inquiries. ATC has provided a [geocaching guidance](#) document to assist the Trail clubs.

**Action Plan**—The Trail club's action plan should include a process for responding to geocaching requests and inquiries and designate contacts within the club to respond to them. It should advise maintainers and other Trail workers on procedures to follow if they come across geocaches (or geocachers) on the club's Trail section. Discoveries of caches should be reported to partner agencies and the ATC regional office.



# **PART 5**

## **Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources**

## CHAPTER 5 (A)

### Resource Management

The Appalachian Trail contains many outstanding natural, cultural, and scenic features that need to be preserved and protected. There are many species of flora and fauna, some of which are threatened, or endangered, and a multitude of cultural and historic features characteristic of the Appalachian landscape.

Those natural, cultural, and scenic resources can be dramatically affected by human actions and natural processes. Damage may be caused by overuse, misuse, or poor design and maintenance of the footpath or its associated overnight facilities. External activities also may adversely affect the Trail by infringing on scenic and other values. Communication towers, timber harvests, and access roads on adjacent lands can have a significant effect on a view from the Trail. Such activities may affect water quality or bring incompatible uses onto corridor lands. Natural events like gypsy moth infestations can change the Trail's character. Resource values also can be enhanced by human actions, such as the maintenance or restoration of an open area or establishment of a vista.

Effective resource management can be defined as a set of actions, guided by an overall policy, taken to maintain or achieve a desired natural, cultural, or scenic condition. Resource management may involve active on-the-ground measures, or it may simply mean leaving an area alone and protecting it from external influences in order to allow natural processes to take their course. Although the federal and state land-managing agencies have primary responsibilities for managing natural and cultural resources on their lands, ATC and the Trail clubs play an important role in how these resources are managed along the Trail.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In November 1988, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy for resource management:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy seeks to manage the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of the Appalachian Trail in a manner that preserves and protects these resources, while meeting its responsibilities for promoting the use and enjoyment of the footpath, its related facilities, and its surrounding corridor lands.

This policy is based on the following principles:

1. The Appalachian Trail footpath is itself a resource of greater significance than component parts of the corridor. Preserving the continuity and integrity of the footpath and its environs is an essential consideration in management of individual natural, cultural, and scenic resources. This consideration should not cause other resource values to be overshadowed, however. The use and enjoyment of the footpath and surrounding corridor lands and the protection of individual resource values should serve as goals that complement and enhance each other. In the vast majority of cases, traditional Trail-management practices have served and will continue to serve to maintain and enhance the natural, cultural, and scenic qualities of the Trail environment.
2. Management decisions should reflect a conscious awareness that activities and use levels on and adjacent to corridor lands affect Trail resources. In those rare instances where unique or key natural or cultural features are jeopardized by the

footpath's presence, adjustments in location or use will be made to protect resource values.

3. Trail lands shall be managed to promote their primitive, natural character. Exceptions may be made to manage the land for other special or distinctive resource values (*e.g.*, open areas, vistas, farmland, historic sites, sensitive species sites, *etc.*). In areas that have been adversely affected by human-caused disturbance (*e.g.*, a gravel pit, dump, *etc.*), management activities to restore an area to its original condition are encouraged.
4. The diverse character of Appalachian Trail lands is fundamental to the Trail experience. Preserving and promoting the broad range of traditional landscapes that the footpath passes through is essential. Resource management planning choices will consider the long-term diversity of the landscape (*e.g.*, open areas vs. forest) as well as the diversity (or richness) of plant and animal species.
5. Some activities are inappropriate on Appalachian Trail lands because of their adverse effect on resources and hikers. In order to preserve the quality of the Trail experience, measures will be taken to protect the footpath and surrounding corridor lands from improper uses. Minimum responsible land stewardship entails protecting the corridor from encroachments and uses that degrade Trail values (*e.g.*, dumping, timber theft, unauthorized roads, vehicle usage, *etc.*). Use of corridor lands for interpretation and other non-consumptive uses, including scientific use, will be encouraged when it is in keeping with primitive Trail values and consistent with club local management plans.
6. The cooperative management system provides the framework for volunteers, ATC staff and public land-management agency professionals, acting as partners, to manage natural, cultural, and scenic resources as integral components of the Appalachian Trail. Local clubs develop statements of resource management policy in their local management plans and, where appropriate, identify actions for the protection and enhancement of natural, cultural, and scenic resources within their Trail sections. The capacity of volunteers and partners to undertake management may vary. This requires balancing the physical possibilities with the limitations of people and budgets. ATC will continue to serve as a guarantor to public-agency landowners to ensure that minimum stewardship standards are met.

ATC's Board also stated that detailed, specific policies should be developed for the following resource values: threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, wilderness, wildlife, vegetation management, and management of unique geologic features and biotic communities.

In 2007, ATC launched the A.T. [MEGA-Transect](#) program, a Trail-wide environmental monitoring initiative aiming to:

- 1) Monitor key indicators of environmental health along the Trail;
- 2) Understand the meaning of available data by analyzing, synthesizing and modeling; and,
- 3) Share this knowledge to inform and engage others in the management and protection of the A.T. environment.

**NPS Policy**—The natural-resource policies of the National Park Service are aimed at maintaining,

rehabilitating, and perpetuating the integrity of the natural-resource values inherent in the parks, and providing the American people with the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from natural environments that have evolved through natural processes minimally influenced by human actions. These resource values include plants, animals, water, air, soils, topographic features, geologic features, paleontologic resources, and aesthetic values, such as scenic vistas, natural sounds, and clear night skies. The National Park Service will strive to understand, maintain, restore, and protect the inherent integrity of the natural resources, processes, systems, and values of the parks while providing meaningful and appropriate opportunities to enjoy them. The NPS recognizes that natural processes and species are evolving, and will allow this evolution to continue—minimally influenced by human actions.

The National Park Service also manages cultural resources to preserve and foster visitors' appreciation of archaeological and historical-resource values. Natural and cultural resources along the Appalachian Trail are protected and managed in accordance with the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act, [National Trails System Act](#), and a host of environmental and other laws, including the [Endangered Species Act](#), the [National Environmental Policy Act](#), the [Wilderness Act](#), and the [National Historic Preservation Act](#).

Specific information on natural and cultural resources for the A.T. is found in the NPS [Appalachian Trail Resource Management Plan](#), September 2008.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Inventories of specific physical resources (such as open areas, historic sites, *etc.*) can be developed. More specific guidance is contained in the following chapters of the *Planning Guide*.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—While Trail clubs are not expected to have an over-all resource-management strategy, they should develop individual management policies on the specific resource values addressed in the following chapters. Clubs may wish to develop a short over-all statement of policy that acknowledges natural, cultural, and scenic resources as integral components of the Appalachian Trail and that emphasizes the club's desire to protect these resources.

**Action Plan**—No action plan is necessary, other than specific actions to address the resource-management issues outlined in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 5 (B)

**Climate Change**

Climate changes as a result of natural factors. However, human activities, primarily emissions of carbon dioxide as the result of the use of fossil fuels and changes in land use, and other greenhouse gases (methane, nitrous oxide, *etc.*) also are impacting the climate system. Human-induced climate change and the mitigation measures proposed to respond to it pose both short- and long-term concerns for management of the Appalachian Trail. Short-term concerns focus on the impacts of proposed mitigation measures, including the location of wind-energy projects and electric utility lines, and our own “carbon footprint.” Longer-term, climate change could significantly alter the ecosystems through which the Trail passes and dramatically change the recreational experience it offers.

ATC first became involved in air-quality issues in 2001 when it helped form Hikers for Clean Air, a coalition of hiking organizations that was created following discovery of unhealthful levels of midsummer ozone along the higher elevations of the Appalachian Trail. The coalition worked on issues relating to the Clean Air Act and other relevant policies.

Since then, the broader issue of global climate change has gained worldwide attention and recognition. The energy and climate change subcommittee of the Stewardship Council—formed in 2006 to address wind power and the increasing numbers of proposals for energy developments such as powerlines and pipeline-crossings being proposed along the Appalachian Trail—began to address climate change following the Board’s adoption of a [policy on wind-energy facilities](#) in 2007 [see Chapter 4 (G)].

While some scientists remain skeptical, there is widespread international scientific consensus that the ongoing buildup of human-caused greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere threatens the stability of the climate system. Unless controlled in the next few decades, climate change would cause profound changes on all continents.

Climate effects are particularly noticeable in national parks like the Appalachian Trail because of their predominantly natural condition. ATC, its maintaining clubs, longstanding maintainers and staff have already noticed the incremental, but inexorable, effects of climate change. Ten of the hottest years recorded since 1850 have occurred in the last 15 years, with obvious, if anecdotal, impacts on our favorite places, plants, animals and pastimes. ATC has concluded that the potential impacts of global climate change, including long-term drought, extreme weather events, increased forest fires, and changes in the timing of the seasons may cause major disruption to the Appalachian Mountain ecosystem and threaten the health and sustainability of the Trail’s flora and fauna. Furthermore, those impacts likely already are directly affecting and almost certainly will continue to affect the Trail footpath itself, due to increased treadway erosion and blowdown obstruction from severe storms, increased invasion of exotic species, and loss of water sources due to drought. Ultimately, climatic shifts and changes in the timing of seasonal events could alter and compromise the Trail experience.

Since its inception, ATC has advocated for the protection and preservation of diverse forest, bog, and other important and diverse ecosystems along the length of the A.T. It has fought to protect thousands of acres of forest lands and supports the protection of national and state forests and parks and designated wilderness areas. It will continue to work through its agreements with the National Park Service and other partners to achieve the highest standards of protection of the Trail and its corridor greenway.

## Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—Recognizing that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy has an obligation, as do all individuals and organizations, to help control greenhouse gas emissions, the ATC Board of Directors in November 2008 adopted a [resolution regarding climate change](#) that was recommended by the Stewardship Council. The resolution commits ATC to:

- Reduce its carbon emissions by implementing cost-effective energy technology and behavioral changes in its own operations.
- Educate ATC members and Trail visitors on climate and its wide-ranging effects on the A.T., and on the availability of mass-transit and other low carbon transportation alternatives for travel to trailheads.
- Monitor climate-change indicators and collect climate-relevant data through the A.T. MEGA-Transect project and other environmental monitoring programs.
- Recognize the value of A.T. forest lands for carbon sequestration, climate modification, and as a corridor to allow wildlife to adapt to climate change.
- Support policies of energy conservation and renewable energy technology where consistent with ATC's other policies.
- Work with like-minded organizations to promote carbon-reducing efforts and climate change education programs.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service teamed up with the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Climate Change to develop its "Climate Friendly Parks" initiative in 2004–05. To date, ten parks are participating and have introduced shuttles, increases in bicycle use and walking, and training of both employees and the visiting public. However, as of February 2009, there has not been definitive guidance on climate change from agencies of the federal government or the Congress.

## Considerations for Planning

Driving personal vehicles to reach the A.T. for Trail work and for recreation constitutes the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from ATC operations and the visiting public. While much driving is unavoidable, ATC will promote carpooling wherever possible and the use of shuttle services for long-distance hikers. Furthermore, it will examine ways to reduce the number of miles driven for maintenance activities and urges the Trail clubs to address this challenge. In this way, the clubs and ATC will work to reduce GHGs cost-effectively without reducing our effectiveness in caring for the Trail.

A list of some [transportation options](#) to get to the Trail is available on ATC's Web site.

## CHAPTER 5 (C)

### Open Areas and Vistas

From the Appalachian Trail's beginning, the scenic vistas provided by open areas have been considered one of the most important features of the Trail experience. Over the years, many of those views have been lost through reforestation and abandonment to natural succession from former agricultural uses. Presently, trees and shrubs are rapidly growing in many areas along the Trail that were once open fields and meadows. The concern is that, unless active measures are taken to maintain these open areas, the landscape's diversity will be diminished and, with it, the Trail experience.

Management of open areas and vistas often requires active measures, including mowing, grazing, and controlled burning. Careful planning is needed in order to ensure that the desired results for these landscapes are achieved. Some Trail clubs have found a site-specific plan particularly helpful for open-areas projects. In some cases, agencies issue special-use permits for haying, grazing, and crop production to maintain views or pastoral landscapes.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**— In 1995, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy on open areas and vistas:

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 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.

**NPS Policy**—The [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#) states:

Open areas and vistas are a particularly pleasing element of the Appalachian Trail. Management activities needed to preserve these characteristics are encouraged, so long as they reflect sensitivity to other Trail values.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Open areas and vistas should be located for the club's Trail section using maps, guidebooks, knowledgeable people, and field trips. If possible, the Trail club should identify the relative importance of the site as a scenic resource and whether or not active measures are needed to keep the site open.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail club policy should state the club's general approach to determining which areas it intends to keep open and what methods it intends to use to keep each area open.

**Action Plan**—Maintenance of an existing open area can be carried out by Trail club volunteers, work crews, or local farmers under special-use permits. These activities should be noted in the Trail club's annual work plan. Reestablishment of a grown-over area that was once open, or an area that is only partially open, requires a significant amount of advance planning. Since vegetation management by cutting, burning, or grazing involves active intervention, surveys for cultural and biological resources often are required before any on-the-ground work. Often a year or more is needed to coordinate with all of the parties involved in a large-scale, open-area restoration project. A Trail club needs to assess its capabilities for undertaking a project. Many clubs have requested scientific and technical assistance, as well as money, equipment, and crew support. Agency partners and ATC can assist both financially and technically in open-areas projects.



## CHAPTER 5 (D)

### Timber Management

Prior to the Trail-protection effort, the lands adjacent to the footpath were managed primarily for timber products such as saw timber, pulpwood, and firewood. In many areas adjacent to the Trail corridor, timber management remains the predominant use of adjoining private and public land.

A well-planned timber harvest near the Appalachian Trail can have little or no discernible impact upon the Trail. If poorly planned or carried out, however, a timber harvest can have dramatic, long-term effects on water, soils, and visual-resource values. The removal of vegetation and the soil disturbance associated with careless construction of roads and skid trails can cause a substantial increase in water run-off and erosion. The removal of part or all of the vegetative overstory in an area that can be seen from the Trail also can have a significant effect on the scenic environment of the Trail. Timber access roads can create visual scars or allow access to the Trail for all-terrain vehicles, horses, and other incompatible activities.

Most of the Trail is located on National Park Service or national forest lands that are managed specifically to protect and provide a premier backcountry recreational experience. The National Park Service does not allow consumptive utilization of park resources, including timber resources, on any lands within the National Park system. The U.S. Forest Service classifies lands within the A.T. management or prescription area as unsuitable for commercial timber production. The intent of both agencies is that the lands in the Trail corridor are to be managed for their recreational values, not their timber values.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—Appalachian Trail Conservancy guidance is consistent with and supportive of federal agency policies regarding timber management near the A.T. ATC policy guidelines for national forest lands recognize that timber harvest is a legitimate use of adjacent national forest lands, provided Trail values are taken into account during the planning process. ATC encourages Trail clubs and local ATC representatives to work with land-managing agencies to review, comment on, and modify area-specific plans for management of individual timber stands adjacent to or visible from the Trail.

In June 1989, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy statement regarding timber management on national forest lands:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy endorses the use of the U.S. Forest Service Visual Resource Management [*now Scenery Management*] System and the consultation procedures described in the *Forest Service Manual Supplement for the A.T.* (FSM 2353) and used by the U.S. Forest Service, ATC, and the Trail-maintaining clubs for assessing the impacts of timber management activities upon the Appalachian Trail. ATC will participate and encourage participation by Trail-maintaining clubs in review of forest plans and proposals for management actions on national forest lands.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy recognizes that timber harvesting is a legitimate use of national forest lands. However, it is the position of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that timber harvesting has the potential to cause adverse impacts to the scenic, aesthetic, recreational and natural resource values of the Trail, and that timber harvesting should only take place in a manner that does not detract from Trail values.

Vegetative management activities that are designed for the purpose of enhancing or maintaining the scenic, aesthetic, or recreational values of the Trail, including vista maintenance, balds clearing, and wildlife habitat improvements, should only take place after consultation between the appropriate management partners. Timber harvests, in contrast to vegetative manipulations designed to enhance Trail values, should be prohibited within the foreground area (as defined in *National Forest Landscape Management*, Volumes 1 and 2, U.S. Department of Agriculture Numbers 434 and 462) of the Appalachian Trail.

Protection of the scenic environment of the Trail may require modification of proposed timber management actions in the middle-ground and background zones (also as defined in *National Forest Landscape Management*, Volumes 1 and 2). ATC will support recommendations that protect and enhance the visual quality of the Trail.

ATC will work toward a consistent, Trail-wide interpretation of the USFS [Scenery Management] System that ensures maximum protection of the scenic and aesthetic values of the Trail and endorses a cooperative program to map the visual zones from the “optimal route” of the Appalachian Trail, as determined by the Optimal Location Review process, for the entire length of the Trail where the viewshed encompasses national forest lands.

In 1982, ATC adopted the following guidelines with respect to NPS corridor lands. Guideline 5 was amended by the Board in 2008:

1. Forest-resource management to enhance the Trail (*i.e.*, noncommercial vegetation manipulation for vistas, balds, *etc.*) is an integral part of corridor land management. Local clubs shall have the discretion to practice such activities as they feel are necessary to manage the forests to protect the Trail and its environs.
2. Management of forest resources to protect and enhance the A.T. corridor shall be considered as part of local management planning to ensure that such activities are compatible with the goals of the ATC and take into consideration other noncommercial forest resource-management activities.
3. Local clubs should consult periodically with the ATC and the NPS on forest resource-management activities, practices, and plans to ensure that they continue to be consistent with over-all A.T. corridor planning and management.
4. Forest resource management for timber (*i.e.*, commercial harvest of firewood, saw timber, or pulpwood) will be allowed only under exceptional circumstances and only when local clubs can show that such activity is consistent with the goals of the ATC.
5. Plans by local clubs to undertake timber management activities must be incorporated into an approved local management plan for the affected area.
6. Before any club can undertake forest-resource management for timber (*i.e.*, commercial timber harvesting), the ATC and the NPS must resolve the question of who may collect and use the proceeds from any such commercial activity.

7. This policy shall apply specifically to corridor lands owned in fee by the National Park Service.

These guidelines are subject to NPS rules and regulations regarding such management.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**NPS Policy**—As a general policy, NPS does not allow *consumptive* utilization of nonrenewable or renewable park resources, including timber resources. This policy does *not* prohibit vista clearing, management of open areas and meadows, removal of exotic species, restoration of natural plant communities, or removing trees to protect the safety of Trail users.

**Inventory**—No specific inventory of timber types is necessary. Sensitive or unique forest resources, such as old growth stands, should be noted. A summary of land-managing agency policies regarding timber management would assist the Trail club in developing policy.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail club policies should be developed in consultation with the club's land-managing agency partner. In general, Trail club policies should seek to limit any timber activity that would adversely affect the Trail.

**Action Plan**—In areas where neighboring landowners or land-managing agencies have active timber-management programs on adjoining lands, a Trail club member or several club members should keep up to date on those programs. Club members can ask to be placed on U.S. Forest Service mailing lists for notification of upcoming timber harvests and can obtain copies of environmental assessments and other documents on request. Club members can also contact state agencies with active timber-management programs and request notification of any timber-harvest proposals.

## CHAPTER 5 (E)

### **Pest Management**

Attempts to control pest outbreaks present one of the most controversial aspects of management of Trail lands. Many types of native and introduced pest species are present on Appalachian Trail lands and lands adjoining the Trail. Forest pests are the cause of some of the most dramatic naturally caused impacts to the Trail environment. Defoliators such as the spruce budworm, hemlock woolly adelgid, and gypsy moth go through cyclic outbreaks or spread to new geographic regions. Diseases such as Dutch elm disease progress in much the same fashion as did chestnut blight 60 years ago, resulting in the disappearance of tree species from their natural range. Other than the obvious negative visual effects that insect and disease outbreaks can have on the Trail environment, significant economic impacts to surrounding areas occur as timber inventories drop. Nearby residential owners are frequently outspoken in their demands that control measures be undertaken.

Pest management in agricultural areas, such as the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania, is also a significant concern for local Trail managers. Pesticides are an important component of many ongoing farming operations, including many adjacent to or on Appalachian Trail lands with reserved rights or special-use permits. Use of pesticides has the potential for serious conflict with the recreational use of the Trail.

#### **Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—ATC has no formal policy on pest management, other than a brief reference as part of its policy on agricultural use (see below). In past statements on specific pest-management controversies, ATC has represented the general interests of hikers by seeking to ensure that precautions are taken before aerial spraying of pesticides. ATC has supported active measures to protect Trail users, including posting temporary signs during aerial spraying and protection measures for open water supplies. ATC also has advocated the use of biodegradable pesticides, manual, site-specific application of pesticides, and other approaches that minimize adverse environmental impacts.

As part of its policy on agricultural use [see Chapter 5 (L)], ATC adopted the following statement on pest management:

Pest-control measures should comply with integrated pest-management recommendations for the use of pesticides and herbicides as set forth by the land-managing agency (or its designee).

**NPS Policy**—Pests are living organisms that interfere with the purposes or management objectives of a specific site within a park or that jeopardize human health or safety. Decisions concerning whether or not to manage a pest or pest population will be influenced by whether the pest is an exotic or a native species. Native pests will be allowed to function unimpeded, except as noted below.

The NPS may control native pests to: (1) conserve threatened or endangered species, or unique specimens or communities; (2) preserve, maintain, or restore the historical integrity of cultural resources; (3) conserve and protect plants, animals, and facilities in developed areas; (4) prevent outbreaks of a pest from invading uninfested areas outside the park; (5) manage a human health hazard when advised to do so by the U.S. Public Health Service (which includes the Centers for Disease Control and the NPS public health program); and (6) to otherwise protect against a significant threat to human safety (2006 NPS [\*Management Policies\*](#), 4.4.5.1).

The National Park Service conducts an integrated pest management (IPM) program to reduce risks to the public, park resources, and the environment from pests and pest-related management strategies. Integrated pest management is a decision-making process that coordinates knowledge of pest biology, the environment, and available technology to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage by cost-effective means while posing the least possible risk to people, resources, and the environment.

In control of gypsy-moth populations, NPS has supported the use of Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), a biological-control agent, where its use will be effective. Generally, Bt is considered most effective when treating isolated outbreaks or areas with lower gypsy-moth population levels. Chemical use for control of gypsy moth has been discouraged, although there have been instances when the chemical Dimilin has been used in conjunction with Bt on NPS-acquired Trail lands.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Gaining access to information regarding insect and disease problems and proposed control activities is an important first step in management planning. The local Trail club needs to be aware of what agencies are responsible for carrying out pest-management programs at the state and local level, and what current pest problems the agencies are working to control.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club should identify in general terms when and where it would concur in application of pesticides on Trail lands (if at all) and what general response it will have regarding pesticide use on adjoining lands. The Trail club also should identify actions it would undertake to provide suitable warnings to hikers of pending aerial pesticide spraying.

**Action Plan**—In many areas, Trail clubs can encourage public agencies not to treat sections of the A.T. by aerial spraying because of human health and safety conflicts on adjoining private lands. In vast areas of forest land, such as Maine, it is difficult to delineate these areas so that they can be identified and avoided from the air. If spraying is to occur, hikers should be warned of potential hazards. This can be accomplished by posting temporary notices at Trailheads, shelters, or other appropriate places and by placing notices in local papers. Other than noting actions that the Trail club is willing to perform, no further action plan is necessary.

## CHAPTER 5 (F)

### Threatened and Endangered Species

The terms “threatened” and “endangered” pertain to the specific legal status of a plant or animal species as designated by the secretary of the interior, under the authority of the [Endangered Species Act](#) of 1973, following a recommendation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

An endangered species is one that is close to extinction throughout all or a significant part of its range. A threatened species is one likely to become endangered in the near future. The Endangered Species Act prescribes specific procedures for determining the eligibility of a species for threatened or endangered status. The process is a long one, requiring publication of a notice in the *Federal Register*, consultation with governors of affected states, and other safeguards. Other terms are used to describe the relative population of a species, including “rare,” “relict,” and “sensitive” species. These latter terms do not give a species any legal protection under the Endangered Species Act. They do, however, provide a general indication of the size of a local population.

Threatened and endangered species are provided expansive protection from federal action under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, which states in part:

*All federal departments and agencies shall, in consultation with and with the assistance of the Secretary [of Interior], utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of this act by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered species and threatened species... and by taking such action as is necessary to insure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them do not jeopardize the continued existence of such endangered species and threatened species or result in the destruction or modification of habitat of such species which is determined by the Secretary, after consultation as appropriate with the affected states, to be critical.*

This provision imposes significant constraints on federal activities, including actions that take place on federal lands and actions that might require federal permits, licenses, or funds.

Between 1989 and 2001, ATC, ATPO, and the U.S. Forest Service administered comprehensive natural-heritage inventories (often prepared by state natural-heritage offices under ATC contract) along the Trail. More than 2,100 populations of rare, threatened, and endangered species (plants and animals) and rare or exemplary natural communities have been identified at approximately 520 sites along the Trail. Monitoring programs, primarily for rare, threatened, and endangered plants, have been established in each of the 14 A.T. states, and more than 200 A.T. volunteers have been trained to monitor and report on those populations.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**— In April 1989, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy recognizes the importance of maintaining and enhancing the continued existence of threatened and endangered species and the obligations imposed by federal statute upon federal agencies (and by state law upon state agencies) for protection of threatened or endangered species. It is the policy of ATC to support and endorse efforts to ensure and promote the existence of federally listed, state listed, locally listed, and candidate threatened or endangered species. ATC also believes that its principal

mission, which is to protect and promote the Appalachian Trail, can aid efforts to maintain and enhance the existence of threatened and endangered species. As a matter of policy, ATC is confident that the Trail can coexist with occurrences of threatened or endangered species without adverse impact to the species. Should conflicts arise, ATC will resolve matters on a case-by-case basis through consultation with its management partners and other concerned parties.

ATC will seek to ensure that its actions and the actions of Trail-maintaining clubs do not destroy, modify, or adversely affect threatened or endangered species or their habitat. ATC will support and cooperate in efforts by federal agencies, state agencies, and other concerned parties to inventory occurrences of threatened or endangered species on Trail corridor lands. Except in unusual circumstances where public notification is necessary to promote the existence or reestablishment of threatened or endangered species (such as a peregrine falcon hacking project), ATC will not publicize, or make available to the general public, information regarding the existence or location of any population of threatened or endangered species. ATC will further emphasize cooperation with agency procedures for review of proposed surface-disturbing activities (such as relocations or shelter-construction projects) and ensure that Trail planning and design take into account any potential for impact to threatened or endangered species prior to surface disturbance.

In November 1987, ATC adopted the following policy statement with respect to peregrine falcons:

The Board of Directors of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy applauds and supports efforts, both public and private, to reintroduce and protect the peregrine falcon on A.T. lands and urges the A.T. community to support this effort. The Board of Directors recognizes that protection efforts may require temporary relocations of short sections of the Trail and or short-term limitations on access to certain sections of the Trail to hikers. In selecting sites for release efforts, the responsible organization(s) should consider: (1) limiting potential conflicts with other users, and (2) potential problems in controlling public access to the release site. The Board of Directors requests that, when falcon release or protection efforts potentially involve A.T. lands, the responsible organization(s) include representatives of the Trail community at the earliest stages of the decision-making process. This is in recognition, not only of the responsibilities of ATC and the Trail community for Trail lands, but also in recognition of the assistance the Trail community can give in site selection and efforts to limit disturbance at a site.

**NPS Policy**—The NPS will survey for, protect, and strive to recover all species native to national park system units that are listed under the [Endangered Species Act](#). The NPS will fully meet its obligations under the NPS Organic Act and the Endangered Species Act to both proactively conserve listed species and prevent detrimental effects on these species. To meet those obligations, the NPS will:

- Cooperate with both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Fisheries to ensure that NPS actions comply with both the written requirements and the spirit of the Endangered Species Act. This cooperation should include the full range of activities associated with the Endangered Species Act, including consultation, conferencing, informal discussions, and securing all necessary scientific and/or recovery permits;
- Undertake active management programs to inventory, monitor, restore, and maintain listed species' habitats; control detrimental nonnative species; manage detrimental visitor access; and

reestablish extirpated populations as necessary to maintain the species and the habitats upon which they depend;

- Manage designated critical habitat, essential habitat, and recovery areas to maintain and enhance their value for the recovery of threatened and endangered species;
- Cooperate with other agencies to ensure that the delineation of critical habitat, essential habitat, and/or recovery areas on park-managed lands provides needed conservation benefits to the total recovery efforts being conducted by all the participating agencies;
- Participate in the recovery planning process, including the provision of members on recovery teams and recovery implementation teams where appropriate;
- Cooperate with other agencies, states, and private entities to promote candidate conservation agreements aimed at precluding the need to list species;
- Conduct actions and allocate funding to address endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate species.

(2006 NPS [\*Management Policies\*](#), 4.4.2.3)

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The Trail club should contact the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office to determine if there is a natural heritage inventory for its Trail section. ATPO can provide additional information on the natural heritage inventory and monitoring program to interested members of the Trail community.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club policy should note that the club will check with agency partners prior to any major action, such as a relocation, shelter construction, or open-areas project, to ensure that its actions do not affect threatened or endangered species. (This is done automatically on National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service lands as part of the environmental assessment review of major projects.)

If the Trail club is monitoring natural heritage sites as part of its A.T. management responsibilities, it should be stated in the Trail club's local management plan.

**Action Plan**—The Trail club's monitoring program for natural heritage sites should be included as part of the club's annual plan. A detailed site-specific action plan must be developed if it is necessary to take any direct action (such as mowing or prescribed burning) to protect a population of a threatened or endangered species. Normally, such plans would be developed by the land-managing agency partner in consultation with the state natural-heritage program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



## CHAPTER 5 (G)

### Wildlife Management

The natural habitats along the Appalachian Trail support a great variety of wildlife. In most cases, the narrowness of the Trail corridor precludes management practices that will significantly enhance habitat to a point of improving a species' over-all health, distribution, or range. However, in areas where there is increasing pressure from development, the corridor may provide an important source of forage and cover that sustains populations of small mammals and birds. The corridor can provide critical nest and den sites for species such as eagles, hawks, falcons, and waterfowl. The Appalachian Mountain ridgeline is also an important flyway for the migration of raptors. Several significant observation points, such as Pennsylvania's Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, are located along the Trail.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—ATC does not have a formal policy regarding wildlife management. In general, ATC is supportive of agency programs and practices for maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, provided these activities do not conflict with primary Trail purposes. ATC provides information on sites along the Appalachian Trail where exceptional wildlife viewing opportunities exist to the authors of state wildlife viewing guides. The A.T. MEGA-Transect program includes wildlife monitoring.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service policy is to perpetuate native species (those that occur due to natural processes and not species that have been moved into the area). Natural processes are relied upon to regulate populations of native species to the greatest extent possible. Nonnative species are not allowed to displace native species if this displacement can be prevented by management. Native animal life in the NPS system is protected against harvest, removal, destruction, harassment, or harm through human action, except where (1) hunting or trapping are permitted by law; (2) fishing is permitted by law for either sport or commercial use or is not specifically prohibited; (3) control of specific populations of wildlife is required for the maintenance of a healthy park ecosystem; or (4) removal or control of animals is necessary to safeguard human health and safety.

#### Considerations for Planning

**Inventory**—Clubs may wish to identify important habitats and exceptional wildlife-viewing areas. They may want to participate in wildlife monitoring projects with ATC or their agency partners. Club members should be aware of state hunting seasons and regulations, and may wish to contact state wildlife officials to ensure that they are aware of the status of hunting on Trail lands [see Chapter 4 (D)].

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club policy statement on wildlife simply needs to recognize the jurisdictions of the land-managing agencies and indicate general club policy on measures to improve habitat on A.T. lands.

**Action Plan**—Unless the Trail club plans to undertake an open areas project for wildlife habitat improvement, no action is necessary.

## CHAPTER 5 (H)

### **Vegetation Management and Reclamation**

Vegetation management—the removal, control of, or in some cases, the promotion of plant species—plays a large role in Trail construction and maintenance. Vegetation management involves the manipulation of plant species or habitat in order to meet a desired goal, which may range from simply keeping the footpath passable to maintaining an open landscape. It may mean encouraging the conditions necessary for a desired species (such as some flowering plant or rare species) to thrive or the control or removal of exotic or unwanted plants (poison ivy or nettle) on the footpath or around a shelter.

Restoration or reclamation of disturbed sites is a less well-known area of land management. Here the goal is to return disturbed, eroded, or otherwise damaged areas to as near their previous appearance as possible. Reclamation projects on the Trail may range from mowing open areas to reseeding overused campsites, cleaning silted springs and polluted streams, repairing erosion caused by poor Trail design, and returning abandoned farm fields to woodland or meadow.

Trail managers may employ a variety of vegetation-management methods and tools, including manual methods (scythes and brush cutters), mechanical methods (mowing, brush-hogging), chemical methods (application of herbicide), prescribed fire, and biological methods (livestock grazing). In areas heavily impacted by overnight use, camping may be prohibited or restricted to designated areas to give damaged vegetation an opportunity to recover.

#### **Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—ATC encourages the use of vegetation-management practices that will protect, enhance, or restore an environment surrounding the Trail that is compatible with Trail values. In April 1989 the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy statement:

- The most common vegetation-management practice on Appalachian Trail lands will be to take no action, other than routine actions necessary to keep the footpath open.
- Landscapes and plants will be modified only when necessary to meet approved objectives as identified in the local management plan for the area. Active vegetation-management practices may be necessary to maintain, protect, or restore significant cultural landscapes, scenic resources, or plant and animal habitat. Examples include agricultural lands, open areas, vistas, and sensitive-species habitat.
- Vegetation-management practices should minimize long-term negative impacts to the aesthetic qualities of the Trail. At the same time, the selection of the most appropriate practice must minimize the negative effects to natural resources, such as soil and water.
- Selection of vegetative management practices must recognize the limitations of volunteer personnel and funding levels.
- When active vegetation-management methods (beyond routine maintenance actions) are to be employed, a site-specific plan that takes into account local physical, biological, and social conditions will be developed.

- In areas that have been adversely affected by prior human activity, active measures may be employed to restore an area to a natural condition. These sites may include dumps, structures, gravel pits, roadbeds. Native plants will be used in the restoration process, except in extraordinary circumstances where management objectives dictate the use of nonnative species.
- In general, measures will not be undertaken to repair damage caused by landslides, floods, hurricanes, or fires, unless required for hiker safety, for reconstruction of the footpath or a related facility, or for protection of soil and water resources.
- Active measures may be used to control the invasion of nonnative (exotic) species, particularly when they are a threat to a significant natural resource, scenic resource, or cultural landscape.
- Native vegetation may be planted or cultured to screen the Trail from negative visual influences and noise caused by nearby residences, roads, commercial centers, and utility structures.
- Herbicides should not be used for routine maintenance. Herbicides may be used in exceptional circumstances, for site-specific purposes only, where other methods are deemed ineffective for achieving a desired condition. Herbicide use shall require consultation and approval by the local Trail club, ATC, and the agency partner. Herbicides shall be used only in a manner and under circumstances specifically approved by the land-managing agency.
- Hikers should be notified of any major vegetation-management activities (balds and open-areas clearing projects, prescribed burns, *etc.*) by use of temporary signs, ridgerunners, and other public notification procedures as appropriate.
- Activities will be coordinated among the local Trail club, ATC and the local agency partner.

**NPS Policy**—As opposed to areas damaged by man, NPS directs that repair and reclamation of natural disturbances (fires, landslides, and floods) be kept to a minimum. The agency considers such events to be part of the natural cycle of things and will let areas recover naturally whenever possible.

The National Park Service will reestablish natural functions and processes in parks unless otherwise directed by Congress. Landscapes disturbed by natural phenomena, such as landslides, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires, will be allowed to recover naturally unless manipulation is necessary to protect other park resources, developments, or employee and public safety. NPS will seek to return such disturbed areas to the natural conditions and processes characteristic of the ecological zone in which the damaged resources are situated.

The following vegetation management actions may be undertaken if specific criteria are met:

- Encouragement of certain types of plants for aesthetic, wildlife, or vegetation-management purposes;
- Maintenance of certain types of vegetation for desired agricultural or livestock purposes;

- Vegetation management to increase the ability of heavily used areas to withstand recreational use;
- Retention or development of open areas, meadows, and vistas;
- Removal of man-made features, repair of natural slopes, and replanting of native plants; and,
- Repair of areas damaged by fire-fighting activities.

In addition, reclamation may be undertaken to remove exotic species, contaminants, and nonhistoric structures or facilities, restore abandoned mineral lands, abandoned or unauthorized roads, areas overgrazed by domestic animals, or disrupted natural waterways, and reclaim areas disturbed by management activities (such as hazard-tree removal, construction, or sand and gravel extraction) or public use.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Restoration that may be required because of overuse, poor treadway or facility design, or even natural calamity should be done in close consultation with the other management partners. Identification of sites needing work, such as heavily eroded Trail sections, overused and trampled campsites, landslides, or eroding stream banks, should be identified through the Trail-assessment process.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail club policy should follow agency guidelines and mandates. The Trail club may wish to identify its view of the future appearance of the Trail and recognize that active measures may be necessary to stabilize soils and maintain a specific vegetative cover. Local Trail managers must evaluate and determine whether natural changes will be permitted or whether they desire to manage vegetation in an area towards a specific goal, such as converting an overgrown pasture into an open landscape.

**Action Plan**—Reclamation efforts should involve site-specific plans and actions. Areas needing work will fall into two general types: restoration due to man-caused damage and overuse, and actions to restore or change existing habitats. Plans should emphasize long-term solutions, reducing soil erosion, use of native plants, and directing hikers away from the site. Corrective measures should involve proper Trail and facility design and construction. The actual reclamation of a site should be developed through a plan involving the Trail club and the agency partner. The agency partner is most likely to have much of the technical expertise to make sure a workable plan is developed.

## CHAPTER 5 (I)

### Cultural Resources

The lands crossed by the Appalachian Trail have a rich history. Parts of the Trail were major travel routes for Native Americans and for settlers pushing west to explore the new frontiers of our country in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of the springs, campsites, gaps, and lookouts along the Trail were used by earlier travelers and settlers. Those sites, and the objects and other physical evidence left behind by these travelers and settlers, are an important part of our cultural heritage.

Cultural resources can range from individual artifacts—arrowheads, tools, bullets, housewares and other items for human use—to structures and large areas of land. Historic campsites, farms, battlefields, and other broad areas of human occupation or use also are important to the historian or archaeologist. The Appalachian Trail itself is an important part of our nation's heritage.

Although cultural-resource sites are vulnerable to gradual destruction from exposure to the elements, the most significant impacts usually result from man's activity. Cultural sites can be affected by surface-disturbing activities, such as constructing treadway for a relocation or building a new shelter. They can also be affected simply by opening a new area to public use.

The most dramatic impacts result from vandalism. Vandalism can take many forms—graffiti [see Chapter 4 (C)], removal of artifacts, or destruction of unoccupied buildings and other structures. Amateur “pot hunters” can often make substantial profits by removing and selling artifacts from an archaeological or historic site on public lands. As a result, professional archaeologists are often cautious about releasing information on the location and importance of known cultural sites.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In April 1989, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy statement regarding protection of cultural resources:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) seeks to preserve and protect cultural-resource sites, including those that are nominated, eligible, or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. To this end, ATC will seek to ensure that its actions, in concert with the actions of Trail-maintaining clubs and agency partners, do not adversely affect any cultural-resource site eligible or potentially eligible for such designation.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy recognizes cultural resources as an integral part of the Trail environment and the obligations that are imposed by federal statute upon federal agencies (and by state law upon state agencies) for protection of cultural resources. It is the policy of ATC to support and endorse efforts to protect and enhance cultural resources located on or adjacent to the Appalachian Trail. ATC also believes that its principal mission, which is to protect and promote the Appalachian Trail, can aid efforts to protect cultural resources. As a matter of policy, ATC is confident that the Trail can coexist with and provide protection for cultural-resource sites. Should conflicts arise, ATC will resolve matters through consultation with its management partners. If a situation arises where protection or use of the Trail has the potential to affect a cultural-resource site, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy will enter into formal consultation procedures with the involved agency partner(s), Trail-maintaining club(s), and the State Historic Preservation Office prior to

undertaking any action that could adversely affect a significant or potentially significant cultural resource.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy will further cooperate with Trail-maintaining clubs and agency partners in efforts to promote and interpret important cultural-resource sites, where appropriate, and efforts to prevent vandalism, damage, or destruction of identified sites and artifacts.

The structures review process [see Chapter 4 (J), Structures and Dams] also allows for consideration of historic values as part of determining what to do with acquired structures.

**NPS Policy**—The Antiquities Act of 1906, the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) of 1966, the Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979, and several other laws provide legal protection for cultural resources on federally owned lands. The key provision of this body of legislation is Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which states:

The head of any federal agency having direct or indirect jurisdiction over a proposed federal or federally assisted undertaking in any state and the head of any federal department or independent agency having authority to license any undertaking shall, prior to the approval of the expenditure of any federal funds on the undertaking or prior to the issuance of any license, as the case may be, take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The head of any such federal agency shall afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation established under Title II of this Act a reasonable opportunity to comment with regard to such undertaking.

That applies to all properties listed or eligible for the National Register *and to properties that may be eligible*, including those properties that have not been discovered. As a result, federal agencies, including the National Park Service, must take into account the potential impact of their actions upon known and unknown cultural resources. Prior to any undertaking on federal lands that involves surface-disturbing activity, such as construction of a Trail relocation or shelter, a qualified archaeologist must determine if cultural resources are present and if they will be impacted. This is normally done as part of the overall evaluation of a proposal in an environmental assessment prepared by the federal agency.

The National Park Service has further internal policy direction. The National Park Service *Cultural Resource Management Guidelines* (NPS-28) require each park manager to take affirmative actions to locate, identify, evaluate, preserve, manage, and interpret cultural resources so that they may be passed on to future generations in unimpaired condition.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—There are thousands of important cultural sites along the Appalachian Trail. Some are identified in the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#), others may be listed in inventories conducted by Trail club volunteers, agency partners, and local historical societies. The NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy coordinated two statewide cultural-resource inventories, in Pennsylvania (1999) and Connecticut (2002). Another helpful resource is the Cultural Resource Context for the Appalachian Trail, completed in 2004. The National Park Service has recently focused on conducting "cultural landscapes inventories." The first on the Appalachian Trail, in Shenandoah National Park, was completed in 2007, and the second, in western Massachusetts, was completed in draft form in 2008. The historic preservation officer for each state may be able to provide information on other known cultural

resources within the Appalachian Trail corridor.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—A Trail club policy statement should identify the need for a cultural-resource survey by a qualified archaeologist prior to surface-disturbing activities. (A cultural-resource survey does not necessarily require on-the-ground review). The club should also consider whether or not it wants to identify and interpret sites to the public. Finally, the club should recognize that structures on federal lands must be investigated by a qualified cultural-resource specialist prior to any major restoration or demolition.

**Action Plan**—A Trail club needs to consider the need for archaeological surveys as part of its over-all work plan. Proposed shelter sites and relocations should be reviewed by a professional archaeologist prior to actual on-the-ground work. (This review, which is often referred to as “Section 106 compliance” because it is done to comply with the provisions of Section 106 of the [National Historic Preservation Act](#), is usually done by federal agencies as part of the environmental-assessment process). The Trail club also should consider the potential impacts to identified cultural sites that would result from making them more accessible to the public. Actions that publicize the location of a cultural site, including guidebook notations and interpretive signs, should be coordinated closely with an agency partner.

## CHAPTER 5 (J)

### Wilderness

Designation of wilderness areas is based on federal law. On September 3, 1964, the United States Congress passed Public Law 88-577, commonly known as the [Wilderness Act](#). The act defined wilderness as an area that:

*In contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain,... an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.*

In the Wilderness Act, Congress directed the secretaries of interior and agriculture to study and evaluate all lands under their jurisdictions for their wilderness potential and to recommend areas suitable for wilderness designation to the president. The president, in turn, must advise Congress of his recommendations with respect to designation of wilderness areas, and his recommendations become effective only if endorsed by Congress. In recent years, Congress also has introduced wilderness bills on its own. Congress has designated 26 wilderness areas that encompass or are adjacent to the A.T. ([Appendix O](#)), usually with explicit language regarding administration of the A.T. Today, more than 100 miles of the Trail pass through or are immediately proximate to designated wilderness, mostly in national forests. Several other areas, including a large portion of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, have been recommended for formal wilderness designation and are currently being managed as wilderness.

Within a wilderness area or area being managed as wilderness, the following activities are prohibited by law, unless provided for by special exception: roads, commercial enterprises, motor vehicles, motorized equipment, motorboats, landing of aircraft, and any other form of mechanical transport, structures, and installations. Special exceptions may be provided for the following activities:

- Existing private rights;
- Measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area;
- Activities and structures that are the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness;
- Use of aircraft and motorboats, where already established;
- Measures necessary in the control of fire, insects, and diseases;
- Any activity, including prospecting, for the purpose of gathering information about mineral or other resources, if carried on in a manner compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment;
- Continued application of the U.S. mining and mineral leasing laws until December 31, 1983. As of January 1, 1984, the minerals in lands designated as wilderness areas are withdrawn from appropriation and are subject only to existing rights.



- Water-resource development authorized by the President where he determines that such use will better serve the interests of the United States and the people thereof than will its denial;
- Livestock grazing, where already established;
- Commercial services necessary for activities that are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the areas;
- Adequate access to surrounded state and privately owned lands (or such lands shall be exchanged for federally owned lands);
- Access to surrounded valid mining claims and other valid occupancies.

The Appalachian Trail, because of the shelters and other improvements associated with the Trail, has been excluded from officially designated wilderness areas in only one instance. In the Great Gulf Wilderness in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the A.T. footpath enters the wilderness, but the shelters have been excluded from the designation. In all other cases, the Appalachian Trail and designated wilderness coexist. Though the terms of this arrangement are not always articulated in detail, the legislative history of the specific acts of Congress that designate many of these areas as wilderness contain specific references to the fundamental compatibility of the A.T. and wilderness. Even in cases where this language is not present in the legislative history, it is clear that the A.T.'s basic purpose and character are primitive in nature and generally consistent with the management of areas as wilderness.

### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—The Appalachian Trail Conservancy has generally supported initiatives to designate wilderness areas next to or encompassing sections of the Appalachian Trail. Often, ATC has recommended and Congress has incorporated specific language in several designating wilderness acts (or in the legislative history of these acts) to ensure that traditional Trail maintenance and management practices will be allowed to continue.

ATC has maintained consistently that no basic incompatibility exists between the Appalachian Trail and federally designated wilderness. Where the A.T. passes through or along the boundaries of designated wilderness areas, ATC and the maintaining clubs maintain the A.T. in accordance with the [Wilderness Act](#), and individual area wilderness-management plans. Mechanized or motorized tools will not be used for maintenance, except as expressly allowed by the land-managing agency. ATC also has encouraged federal agencies to deal with specific shelter and Trail-marking issues on a case-by-case basis in wilderness-area management plans.

In April 1991, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy:

It is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to support wilderness-area designation, wherever such designation enhances the protection and management of the Appalachian Trail and its side and connecting trails. This support is based upon the belief that the Appalachian Trail and its related facilities are fundamentally compatible with designated wilderness and that the preservation of wilderness in the vicinity of the Appalachian Trail can significantly enhance the experience of Trail users.

ATC believes that the Trail and its related facilities represent a desirable existing use that is compatible with wilderness designation. ATC further believes that traditional management practices should continue, including Trail marking and maintenance, but that Trail maintainers should acknowledge and must comply with agency constraints on types of tools, equipment,

materials, and methods. Maintenance of shelters and footbridges should be permitted and is desirable for the protection of wilderness values and the health and safety of persons using the Appalachian Trail within designated wilderness.

Where the A.T. passes through designated wilderness, ATC and the Trail-maintaining clubs should maintain the A.T. in accordance with the Wilderness Act, specific wilderness-area designating acts, and individual wilderness-area management plans. Decisions by agency partners regarding wilderness management that could potentially affect the Appalachian Trail should be developed in consultation and coordination with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, affected Trail-maintaining clubs, and other organizations and individuals. ATC encourages federal agencies and Trail-maintaining clubs to deal with specific shelter and Trail-marking issues on a case-by-case basis in wilderness-area management plans and club local management plans.

ATC endorses the following principles for management of the Appalachian Trail within designated wilderness and for areas encompassing the Trail that are to be designated as wilderness:

*Trail Marking.* The Appalachian Trail should be marked in designated wilderness by 2-inch by 6-inch white vertical paint blazes, as described in the ATC stewardship handbook, *[Appalachian] Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*.

Signs should be used only where necessary to provide basic information essential for navigation and public safety. Signs along the Trail within wilderness should be used to identify direction and distance to shelters and water sources, precautions for use of water, and only such other information as is necessary to protect wilderness values. In general, if a regulatory or educational sign is needed to inform users, it should be placed outside the wilderness area boundary at the Trailhead or point of entry into the wilderness area. Signs should be simple and as small as possible, be made of natural wood, and be designed to minimize their contrast with the natural environment.

*Trail Shelters, Overnight Use Facilities, and Structures.* The system of Trail shelters spaced at approximate one-day hiking intervals is an integral component of the Appalachian Trail environment. In general, Trail shelters in designated wilderness areas should be rustic Adirondack-style lean-tos constructed of lumber, logs, or rocks, with a normal use capacity of six to 10 people. Existing shelters within designated wilderness should be maintained, repaired, and restored as necessary. Materials used during repair or restoration should reflect a sensitivity towards wilderness values. Relocation of existing shelters should be considered only when adverse impacts to wilderness values can be reduced *and* where Appalachian Trail values are enhanced by such action. The historic integrity and value of the shelter, if any, should be maintained during any repair, restoration, or relocation.

Privies should be considered as an option if necessary to address sanitation concerns, but only when necessary to prevent resource damage and provide a minimum standard of public safety. Privies cannot be constructed without express authorization from the appropriate official of the land-managing agency.

*Use of Motorized Equipment.* In all circumstances, use of power tools in wilderness areas must be specifically authorized in advance by the appropriate official of the land-managing agency.

Certain wilderness-area designating acts may provide specific exemptions for use of power tools during certain time periods. The authorized official of the land-managing agency may also approve use of power tools under certain conditions, such as in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the wilderness area. Emergencies may include search-and-rescue operations, wildfire suppression where human life may be at risk, clearing of severe blowdowns from the Trail treadway (where use of two-man saws may create an unacceptable safety hazard to the operators), aircraft accident investigations, and other emergencies as determined by the appropriate official of the land-managing agency.

*Tread Improvements.* Water bars, bog bridging, and other treadway structures along the Trail should be constructed and reconstructed to ensure adequate tread stabilization, erosion control, and prevention of resource damage. In isolated areas, bridges may be necessary to provide a minimum level of safety for Trail users crossing hazardous streams and rivers along the Trail and should be constructed or reconstructed when necessary to provide an adequate level of user safety and to protect the wilderness resource. The design of any reconstructed bridge or erosion-control structure along the treadway should emphasize rustic materials and workmanship with sensitivity to wilderness values.

**NPS Policy**—Most of the lands within the boundaries of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, including the land traversed by the Appalachian Trail, are managed by the National Park Service as wilderness, even though no formal designation has been approved by Congress. The preservation of wilderness character for these lands is the primary management objective, and activities that are inconsistent with that objective are prohibited. Administrative use of motorized equipment is authorized only if determined by the superintendent to be the minimum tool needed by management to achieve the purposes of the area; or in emergency situations involving human health or safety or the protection of wilderness values. The Trail skirts the edges of several wilderness areas in Shenandoah National Park, and, in several cases, the footpath enters the wilderness areas for short distances. Those areas are managed in accordance with the [Wilderness Act](#). Chapter 6 of the 2006 NPS [Management Policies](#) provides extensive guidance on management of wilderness areas within NPS-administered units.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The Trail club should identify those sections of the Appalachian Trail that lie within or adjacent to designated wilderness areas, potential wilderness areas, and areas that have been recommended or are being studied for wilderness designation. If there are no such areas within a club's section, the Trail club should simply note in the local management plan: "No wilderness areas or areas being considered for wilderness."

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—This is only necessary for Trail clubs that maintain and manage sections of the Trail in or near wilderness areas or potential wilderness areas. For those Trail clubs that need to develop a wilderness policy, the policy should identify what restrictions and activities will be endorsed by the club within wilderness areas (particularly those restrictions and activities that differ from those on lands outside wilderness areas). Any active management proposal (treadway relocation, bridge construction, *etc.*) should be closely coordinated with the Trail club's agency partner.

**Action Plan**—No Trail club action plan is necessary, but club members are encouraged to participate in the agency planning process for individual wilderness-management plans.

## CHAPTER 5 (K)

**Special and Unique Areas**

A number of sites along the Appalachian Trail are special or unique because of their biotic, geologic, cultural, and/or scenic values. These sites, even if they do not qualify for specific protection under the [Endangered Species Act](#), the [National Historic Preservation Act](#), or the [Wilderness Act](#), still deserve special recognition and management. Land-managing agencies often give these areas special designations, such as the Gulf Hagas Preserve in Maine, and manage them with a higher level of protection from use and development.

These areas may require special emphasis to protect the natural resources from over-use by hikers as well as from abuse by others. A designation of a special or unique area can afford a higher level of protection for an area and allows a Trail club to alert its management partners to the presence of resources and features along the Trail that are important to the Trail community.

Areas that might be identified as special or unique areas include:

- Stands of old-growth timber or virgin timber, such as the old-growth white pine stand in The Hermitage in Maine.
- Areas above timberline or alpine tundra sites, such as Mt. Washington in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.
- Sites of historic events, such as Fox Gap and Turner Gap in Maryland.
- Unusual geologic formations and landforms, such as McAfee Knob on Catawba Mountain in Virginia.
- Areas where unusual flora or fauna exist, such as the azalea gardens on Wayah Bald in North Carolina.
- Scenic areas, such as Laurel Fork Gorge in Tennessee, Sterling Forest in New York, or Mt. Pleasant in Virginia.

The preservation of these features is essential to the quality of the Trail experience, and steps should be taken to ensure that the resource values are protected. Many methods exist to protect these resources, including signage, ridgerunner programs, and, as a last resort, law-enforcement action. Some resources may be unable to withstand intensive use, and it may be necessary to relocate the Trail away from a special or unique area.

**Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—ATC has no official policy concerning the identification and management of special or unique areas, other than to encourage individual Trail clubs to recognize the importance of such areas and include them in the local management plans.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service recognizes four management zones on its lands: natural, historic, park development, and special-use zones. Of these, the natural and historic zones are most applicable to the Appalachian Trail and are identified in the individual resource-management plans for each of the existing national park units.

NPS recognizes that special designations apply to parts or all of some parks to highlight the additional management considerations that those designated areas warrant. These designations include: research natural area, experimental research area, wilderness area, national wild and scenic river, national natural landmark, biosphere reserve, and world heritage listing. These designations do not reduce the Service's

authority for managing the parks, although in some cases they may create additional management requirements or considerations. The NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office will consider proposals for special designations of areas on a case-by-case basis.

Many national parks identify management zones to describe desired resource and visitor experience conditions. No specific zones have been identified for lands acquired by the Appalachian Trail Park Office, which relies on the local management plans of each Trail club to define management objectives for each section of the Trail. Virtually all of these lands, however, would be classified as natural “backcountry” under the National Park Service planning system. ATPO will consider proposals for special designations of areas on a case-by-case basis. The National Park Service uses the term backcountry to refer to primitive, undeveloped portions of parks. This refers not to a specific management zone, but rather a general condition of land that may occur anywhere within a park. Backcountry use should be managed in accordance with a backcountry management plan (or other plan addressing backcountry uses) designed to avoid unacceptable impacts on park resources or adverse effects on the visitor enjoyment of appropriate recreational experiences.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Many special and unique areas are identified in Appendix C of the NPS [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#). A Trail club can begin with that inventory list and add or delete areas, as appropriate, to develop a current list. The Trail-assessment process provides another opportunity.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail club policy should document the club’s intent to give these areas a higher level of protection. The club also needs to identify any special management principles, such as locating the Trail footpath closer to or away from a special or unique area, that will apply in identified special and unique areas. Any programs developed by agency partners should also be recognized.

**Action Plan**—Designation is the first step for long-term management. Some areas may require little or no action; others must be policed for litter and vandalism, monitored for evidence of over-use, or noted and publicized in guidebooks and other publications to enhance the Trail experience. Those actions would normally be part of a long-range plan.

## CHAPTER 5 (L)

### Agricultural Use

Agricultural uses provide an important component of the Trail environment. The [\*A.T. Comprehensive Plan\*](#) states: “Open areas and vistas are a particularly pleasing element of the A.T. Management activities that preserve these characteristics are encouraged, so long as they reflect sensitivity to other Trail values.”

However, not all agricultural activities are compatible with the Trail environment—for example, feedlots, broad-spectrum applications of herbicides, hydroponics, and other high-intensity agricultural practices. And, even low-intensity agricultural uses can have an adverse effect on the Trail environment or Trail visitors.

In the late 1980s, the National Park Service began purchasing lands to protect the Appalachian Trail across the Cumberland Valley. During a highly contentious and controversial public review process, representatives from local Trail clubs, ATC, and the National Park Service gave assurances to local communities and farmers that the Appalachian Trail and agricultural use were fundamentally compatible activities, and that the Trail community would do everything possible to protect the farmland scene and be responsive to the concerns of the agricultural community.

In 1992, the Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Management Association (now the Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club) accepted the assignment of the Appalachian Trail section through the Cumberland Valley and began working closely with the farming community, ATC regional staff, and the National Park Service to develop and implement a strategy for managing agricultural uses within the Trail corridor. Farm conservation plans were developed; recommendations for soil testing, liming, fertilizing, and contour-stripping were carried out; Integrated Pest Management procedures were implemented; and ATC and the National Park Service amended their cooperative agreement to fund agricultural erosion-control measures and ATC’s monitoring of pest-control and other farm-management activities.

Many of the lessons learned in the Cumberland Valley are potentially applicable in other locations along the Trail where agricultural use is present within the Trail corridor.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In April 1996, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy statement to guide ATC programs with respect to agricultural use on Appalachian Trail corridor lands:

Recognizing the great diversity in agricultural practices and pastoral environments along the Trail corridor, it is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to support and promote agriculture within the Trail corridor in locations where such use has been long-established and provides a desirable and appropriate setting for the Trail. Agriculture can serve as an excellent management tool for maintenance of open areas. When properly conducted, it can provide visual diversity, a pleasing recreational environment that complements and is compatible with the surrounding community, a beneficial resource use, and good community relations with a minimal burden on volunteer time and energy.

Feedlots, hydroponics, pisciculture, greenhouses, and other high-intensity farming practices are normally considered incompatible with the Trail experience and will be discouraged. However, under most circumstances, pastures, hayfields, and croplands can provide a pastoral

scene and a desirable measure of diversity in the Trail landscape while maintaining consistency with the purposes for which the Trail is managed. ATC will work with local Trail clubs and agency partners to preserve agricultural uses within the Trail corridor, where such uses enhance the Trail experience.

*Croplands:* Agricultural fields should be designed so that they can be farmed profitably using agricultural best-management practices, provided that such practices do not detract from the Trail experience or other Trail values. Pest-control measures should comply with integrated pest-management recommendations for the use of pesticides and herbicides as set forth by the land-managing agency (or its designee).

*Pasture lands:* Pastures should be managed so that overgrazing, erosion, or other resource damage does not occur. In the event of resource damage, permit conditions should be amended or permits suspended until a desirable forage cover is reestablished. Bulls and other potentially aggressive livestock should not be permitted in pastures crossed by the footpath of the Trail. Riparian areas should be protected.

The Trail footpath should be located in its optimal location through croplands, pasturelands, and hay meadows, but, as long as the recreational experience and resource values for which the Trail is managed can be maintained, some adjustments may be considered if needed to maintain a viable agricultural operation. Solutions to on-the-ground issues should be worked out among all interested parties, including the local Trail club, ATC, the land-managing agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the permittee or prospective permittee(s). Farm-management plans, soil-conservation plans, crop rotations, agricultural conversions, livestock densities, and duration of grazing should follow Natural Resources Conservation Service or managing-agency recommendations.

ATC supports terms of five years or more for permits for agricultural activities, in order to encourage long-term relationships and allow permittees a reasonable rate of return on any investments in Trail-corridor lands. Permits should not be considered as rights: They may be revoked for noncompliance, and they should be reviewed every five years to ensure that the agricultural operations provide a net benefit to the Appalachian Trail. While permit fees should be based on fair market value, ATC encourages adjustments in permit fees to provide funds for assessment, monitoring, and site improvements and to recognize benefits that may accrue to the Trail from cropland or pastureland management.

**NPS Policy**—Agricultural uses and activities are authorized in national parks in accordance with the direction provided by a park's enabling legislation and general management plan. Agricultural activities, including demonstration farms, prescribed to meet a park's management objectives will be allowed if: (1) they do not result in unacceptable impacts on park resources, values, or purposes; (2) they conform to activities that occurred during the historic period; and (3) they support the park's interpretive themes. Agricultural uses that do not conform to those in practice during the historic period may be allowed if: (1) they are authorized by the park's enabling legislation; (2) they are retained as a right subsequent to NPS land acquisition; (3) they contribute to the maintenance of a cultural landscape; or (4) they are carried out as part of a living exhibit or interpretive demonstration.

The National Park Service may issue leases or special-use permits [see Chapter 4 (I)] to individuals or organizations to conduct agricultural activities that are allowed on park lands under the criteria listed in the preceding paragraph. Agricultural livestock grazing will use best management practices to protect

park resources, with particular attention being given to protecting wetland and riparian areas, sensitive species and their habitats, water quality, and cultural resources.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—The Trail club should maintain an inventory of special-use permits issued for agricultural use on its section of the Appalachian Trail (this information can be provided by ATC). The inventory should identify: (1) the type of agricultural activity; (2) the permittee; and (3) the starting date and termination date. A file should be kept that includes a copy of the agricultural permits and any monitoring responsibilities undertaken by the club [see Chapter 4 (I)].

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Trail club policy should recognize the general circumstances under which an agricultural SUP may be issued by the National Park Service on NPS-acquired lands and add any criteria that the club wishes to use in evaluating proposals for allowing specific uses by permit.

**Action Plan**—As with any SUP, the maintaining clubs have two primary responsibilities with regard to NPS-acquired lands: recommending where permits may be appropriate and what permit conditions should be applied; and monitoring permittee use for compliance with the conditions of the permit.

In recommending approvals or continuation of special-use permits, Trail clubs need to ask:

1. What is the agricultural purpose of issuing the permit (grazing, farming, haying, maple sugaring, *etc.*)?
2. Is there a demonstrated benefit to the A.T. (*e.g.*, continuation of a pastoral scene)?
3. Is the use temporary in nature?
4. Is there more than one potential permittee or interested party?
5. How many acres of Trail lands are involved?
6. What conditions should be required of the permittee (prevent overgrazing, erosion control, riparian area protection, pesticide management) in order to control the use?
7. How will the club monitor the permittee?
8. For what period of time should the permit be issued?
9. How does the proposed activity relate to visitors' experience? Will the proposed use enhance that experience, or detract from it, or have no effect?
10. What would be the difficulties associated with terminating a permit for this use once it was issued?
11. What guidance for this type of use is provided in management-planning and policy documents?
12. Can the proposed use be accommodated outside of the Trail corridor?
13. Would the proposed activity result in the exclusive benefit or enjoyment of the area by a few persons?
14. Would the issuance of this permit set an unacceptable precedent?
15. Is the permit being proposed solely because it is a preexisting use?

Any active role undertaken by the club should be noted as a club action in its long-range plan.



## CHAPTER 5 (M)

### **National Environmental Policy Act Compliance**

The [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA) of 1969 directs federal agencies to consider the potential impacts of a proposed action or policy upon the environment before implementing the action or policy. “NEPA compliance” is the term used to describe the process of evaluating and documenting the potential impacts of an action upon the environment. Each federal agency must follow this process for any proposed agency action (or action on agency lands) with the potential to affect the environment.

Procedural compliance with NEPA is a responsibility that cannot be delegated to ATC or the Trail clubs. As a result, when ATC or a Trail club proposes an activity that has the potential to affect the environment, the federal agency must conduct an environmental assessment (EA) in order to meet its obligations under NEPA. Normal Trail maintenance and most other maintenance activities undertaken by ATC and the Trail clubs do not have the potential for significant environmental impact and do not require preparation of an environmental assessment. For undertakings like a major relocation of the footpath or construction of a new shelter, however, NEPA compliance must be done before construction starts.

Federal agencies also are required to prepare environmental assessments or environmental-impact statements (EIS) for other proposed activities on federal lands, including proposals for pipeline rights-of-way, road-construction projects, and timber sales. NEPA provides an opportunity for Trail clubs, as well as the general public, to identify and respond to potential impacts of such projects on the Appalachian Trail and other resources.

#### **Existing Policy**

**ATC Policy**—ATC has no formal policy regarding compliance with the [National Environmental Policy Act](#); however, in practice, ATC supports federal and state agency compliance with NEPA. ATC frequently participates in review and comment upon environmental assessments and environmental-impact statements for projects that might affect the Trail, and encourages Trail clubs to do the same.

**NPS Policy**— Many actions taken by the National Park Service and its partners require compliance with the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (which in turn requires compliance with the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) and other natural- and cultural-resource protection laws).

The NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office requires preparation of an environmental assessment for the following activities on NPS-acquired lands:

- Construction of a new shelter;
- Construction of a major bridge (more than 35 feet long or requiring significant excavation);
- Construction of a parking lot with the capacity for more than 10 vehicles;
- All relocations of the footpath;
- “Open-areas” projects;
- Any other action that includes a significant amount of soils disturbance or removal of vegetation.

The NEPA compliance process includes consultation with interested parties, the general public, and individuals who are recognized experts in environmental and natural-resource fields. The NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office prepares an environmental assessment that describes the proposed action, any alternatives that are being considered, and the known environmental consequences of each course of

action. The assessment is distributed to individuals and organizations with an interest or expertise in the area. Interested parties are normally given 30 days to comment upon the assessment. Upon receipt and evaluation of their comments, the Appalachian Trail park manager issues a “finding of no significant impact” (FONSI) if there are none, or issues a statement that a formal environmental-impact statement is necessary because there is the potential for significant environmental impact. If a FONSI is issued, work on a project can begin. Certain conditions, or “mitigating measures,” may be identified in the process to reduce identified impacts to the environment, and these measures need to be included in the project.

Other NPS park units, such as Shenandoah National Park and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, have similar criteria for determining when an environmental assessment is required. The park superintendent should be consulted prior to initiating any new surface-disturbing activity.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—No inventory is necessary.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—Club policy should recognize the legal obligations that federal agencies have for compliance with NEPA. The policy should recognize those activities that have the potential for significant impacts to the environment and when an agency partner normally is required to prepare an environmental assessment. The Trail club also may wish to identify the types of activities that might occur on adjacent federal lands, such as timber harvests, road-construction projects, and utility-line projects, that the club would like to comment on during the agency’s NEPA review process.

**Action Plan**—Any proposed Trail club activity that will require preparation of an environmental assessment should be noted as such in a club’s annual work plan, and lead time should be allocated for the agency to conduct an environmental assessment.

## CHAPTER 5 (N)

### Exotic Species

Invasive exotic species have been taking hold in the Appalachians for decades, even centuries before the A.T. was built, but they have only recently been recognized as a threat to the Trail experience. Probably the most widespread identification of invasive exotic species along the Appalachian Trail began in 1989, with the undertaking of the Appalachian Trail natural-heritage inventories. Those state-by-state reports identified invasive exotic plant and animal species because they frequently represented a threat to populations of rare and indigenous plants and animals found along the Trail. The most extensive identification of exotic species along the A.T. occurred in the Virginia survey, where exotic species were documented as a threat to 51 of the 74 identified sites.

Much remains to be learned about the presence and extent of invasive exotic species along the A.T. However, it is becoming increasingly evident within the scientific community that invasive exotic species represent one of the most significant threats to biodiversity worldwide, second only to habitat loss. This threat is recognized by the federal government, which has formed an interagency task force to address the problem. The Trail environment is no exception. From Georgia to Maine, invasive exotic species are threatening to displace native species—and, in some cases, rare species—from their habitats.

Eradication of most invasive exotic species is next to impossible. Most are firmly established as part of the ecosystem, some are favorites of many people, and even draconian solutions would not eliminate them. Even control is difficult in many cases, especially in an area as lengthy and exposed as the Appalachian Trail. In the face of such a challenge, establishing criteria for when and where to devote funds as well as volunteer and staff time for control of invasive exotic species is an adaptive strategy that ensures the most return for the resources spent. In addition, partnerships with other groups interested in protecting native species and limiting the impact of invasive exotic species on the environment can often increase the capacity and efficiency of control efforts.

#### Existing Policy

**ATC Policy**—In 2002, the ATC Board of Managers adopted the following policy on exotic species:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and its member clubs recognize the potentially adverse impacts of invasive exotic plant and animal species upon the ecosystems through which the Trail passes. Proliferation of these species may significantly alter the natural communities along the Trail and threaten biodiversity.

Exotic species are defined as species, either plant or animal, that occur in a given place outside of their native ranges as a result of human actions. Exotic species that pose a threat to the native species of the area they occupy are considered invasive.

The Conservancy will work to manage invasive exotics in cooperation with its agency partners, Trail maintaining clubs, and other interested groups. This effort will include the following elements:

- **Education**—ATC will incorporate information on invasive exotic species and the threats they present into its public-information efforts. As part of this effort, the Conservancy will seek to raise the collective awareness of its members, volunteers,

and staff regarding the potential harm caused by invasive exotic species, their rate of expansion, and methods that can be employed to control them effectively.

- **Monitoring**—The occurrence and spread of invasive exotic species will be monitored as resources permit. Priority will be given to those areas where threatened and endangered species are at risk and in natural communities that are most vulnerable to invasion.
- **Control**—To the extent feasible, invasive exotic species will be controlled with priority given to those areas (1) where invasive exotic species have the potential to do the greatest harm; and (2) where actions to control invasive exotic species will do the greatest good and have the highest likelihood of success. Control methods will utilize the best scientific management practices available and will not be implemented until approvals have been obtained from appropriate land management and regulatory agencies. Control methods that have adverse impacts on nontarget species will only be used where there is a clear, long-term benefit to the natural community or its component species.

**NPS Policy**—The National Park Service recognizes the introduction of exotic species as a form of human disturbance, one that sometimes has far ranging and very destructive impacts on natural systems. As it seeks to reestablish natural systems and processes on park lands whenever possible, the NPS has resolved to control the spread of exotic species using the best technologies within available resources, and help reestablish native plant and animal populations in disturbed landscapes. Among other cases, the NPS has determined that management action is necessary when, as a result of human influences, a population occurs in an unnaturally high or low concentration (a typical effect of invasive exotic species) and when it is necessary to protect threatened or endangered species.

For more information, see 2006 NPS [\*Management Policies\*](#), section 4.4.4. All exotic plant and animal species that are not maintained to meet an identified park purpose will be managed—up to and including eradication—if control is prudent and feasible, and the exotic species:

- interferes with natural processes and the perpetuation of natural features, native species or natural habitats;
- disrupts the genetic integrity of native species;
- disrupts the accurate presentation of a cultural landscape;
- damages cultural resources;
- significantly hampers the management of park or adjacent lands;
- poses a public health hazard as advised by the U.S. Public Health Service (which includes the Centers for Disease Control and the NPS public health program); or
- creates a hazard to public safety.

### **Considerations for Planning**

**Inventory**—Ideally, an inventory of exotic species present along the Trail and in the Trail corridor should be kept current. The Trail club is encouraged to record as much information as is feasible, such as the location and approximate size of exotic species populations, on a regular basis, especially before and after exotic species control activities. Any control activities should also be documented and recorded so as to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods used.

**Setting Trail Club Policy**—The Trail club is encouraged to include objectives and strategies for education, monitoring and control of exotic species in its statement.

**Action Plan**—The Trail club may wish to coordinate with ATC and agency partners to train volunteers in exotic plant species recognition and monitoring, as well as with any organization that may already be conducting monitoring efforts. The Trail club is encouraged to set standards for monitoring as well as control methods, and to record activities as described above in the inventory section.