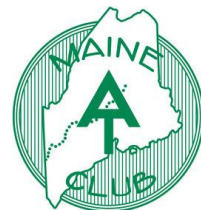


1st Edition; October 2015

Organized Group Management Manual



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Front Cover Photo

Group taking part in a Teen Wilderness program on the A.T. preparing to enter Osgood tentsite for the night.

Photo courtesy of Ryan Smith.

ORGANIZED GROUP MANAGEMENT MANUAL

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Organized Group Management Manual: Introduction and Executive Summary

Introduction: Why this Manual?

A powerful benefit of the Appalachian Trail Cooperative Management System is the ability to share knowledge and learn from others. With this spirit in mind, we created this manual to share what four New England Appalachian Trail Clubs, varying in organizational capacity and level of campsite use, have done to better manage and interact with large groups at campsites.

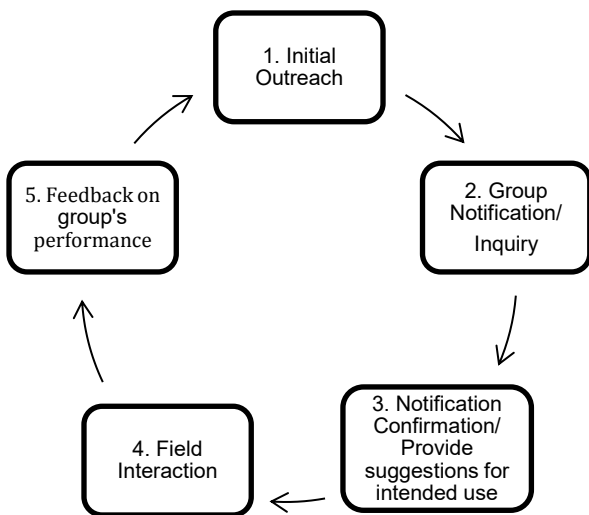
This manual represents the body of work of these four trail clubs. It contains general information, specific case studies, and the appendix provides examples of forms and tools used by the clubs. Importantly, it tells the story of how to develop a program that fits the capacity of the trail maintaining club, as the four clubs vary in size and volunteer structure. It is the hope that this manual can assist other clubs along the Appalachian Trail develop their own approaches to group management.

The desired outcomes in creating this manual were this:

- ◇ Provide the tools for a club to build their own group interaction and outreach program.
- ◇ Present the four unique programs and strategies in their own voices:
 - Massachusetts A.T. Committee
 - Green Mountain Club
 - Appalachian Mountain Club
 - Maine Appalachian Trail Club
- ◇ Show the benefits of group management and outreach programs.
- ◇ Provide additional resources to assist with group management, such as Leave No Trace information, and group campsite design.

Executive Summary:

Section 1: Group Interaction Strategies



The first section describes common strategies, many of which are used by the four clubs who worked on this manual. Through the 'Group Communication Cycle,' (shown to the left), trail clubs can build and maintain good relationships with groups that visit campsites.

Section 2: Case Studies

This section includes an in depth look at the four clubs. Each case study includes a brief history of group use specific to that club, why there was a need for a group management system, what the group management system is, and how that system has changed overtime as well as any future plans. The graphic on the following page shows how each club built their program from the elements of Section 1.

Section 3: Recommendations and Comparisons for Group Outreach

In addition to the ATC's Policy on Organized Group Use (March 2015), this section contains Leave No Trace information as related to group management. Recognizing that an important part of group management is campsite design, this section includes the Appalachian Trail Group Use Campsite Design Guidance as created by Jeff Marion and Tom Banks, with the addition of case studies showing the successes and challenges of on-the-ground campsite management related to groups.

	Initial Outreach	Group Notification	Notification Confirmation	Field Interaction	Group Feedback	Staff Managed	Volunteer Managed
AMC-MA	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
GMC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
AMC-NH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
MATC	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓

Section 4: Visitor Benefits and Group Outreach Program Testimonies

At this point in the manual, we switch to another side in the conversation, which is the campsite user themselves. To best explain how visitor experiences are positively impacted by group management by the trail maintaining club, we reached out to groups of all shapes and sizes who regularly visit campsites and use the current group management systems in place (college outing clubs, camp groups, professional guides like Outward Bound). Through the voice of the user, this section shows how and why, over time, a positive and symbiotic relationship forms between the groups and the trail club, with shared benefits for all.

Appendix: Documents from Trail Maintaining Clubs

To help clubs build their own systems, this section contains the tools needed such as feedback forms, outreach letters, feedback letters, and more.

Foreword

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy supports carefully managed organized group uses that do not result in significant adverse effects either to Trail resources or the Trail experience, while accommodating younger and older hikers alike, assuring protection of resources, providing recreation for both experienced and newly enthused backcountry travelers, and ultimately protecting the traditional and much revered “Appalachian Trail experience.”

Mindful of the Trail’s growing popularity in print media and now the movies, A.T. managers must invest in programs that will mitigate negative effects, lighten the footprints of thousands of visitors, teach our youth about the great outdoors, and enroll those same citizens in stewarding and protecting our public lands. Ultimately, ATC seeks to achieve these goals with education and voluntary compliance so that hikers and visitors themselves learn and practice Leave No Trace, becoming more a part of the solution and less part of the problem.

For almost two decades now, A.T. managers’ outreach to hikers in large, organized groups has grown in sophistication and effect, if not in outright cost savings, to ATC, federal and state agencies, and to four A.T.-managing clubs in New England. The Green Mountain Club (GMC) and the Appalachian Mountain Club-New Hampshire (AMC-NH) and their respective shelter and caretaker staff members started this process by working in complementary ways and comparing notes and systems between the Green and White Mountain National Forests. Both of their programs have capitalized on the long-standing successes of each club’s hands-on backcountry programs. Since the late 1990s, the dramatically increased advantages of email, real-time access to websites, and now 24/7 social media enable a system of unprecedented communication and monitoring.

As a result, improvements to pre-trip planning by both the group users and managers help predict and prevent highly damaging “peak-loads” at fragile backcountry campsites by spreading the use over space and time, and ensuring follow-up evaluations of organized groups and visitor behaviors. The result is a substantial improvement in the management of our national and state forests and parks along the Appalachian Trail.

This short manual describes the programs developed by GMC, AMC-NH, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, and the AMC-Berkshire Chapter to those ends. It is our hope that the history, case studies, and successes outlined here will inspire and enable other Trail clubs and land managers to create similar systems appropriate to their available resources and Trail sections. Much of what has been accomplished has been through the sharing of methodology and practices among colleague Trail clubs. May these programs continue to grow and evolve Trail-wide in that same spirit.

—Bob Proudman and Hawk Metheny
October 2015

Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Organized Group Management Manual

Preface – Purpose and Need

As the popularity of the Appalachian Trail continues to increase, some visitors participate in large group outings. Sometimes it is assumed that large groups will have a disproportionately higher impact to the Trail's physical resources and infringe on the experience of other visitors. However, this is not necessarily so. Organized group use, whether for profit or not-for-profit, can have many benefits, including promoting safe, responsible use of the Trail, advancing "Leave No Trace" practices, offering enriched appreciation of the outdoors through interpretation of the area's natural and cultural history, educating youth, promoting development of a conservation ethic through direct contact with wild-land settings, and helping people connect with nature and develop a sense of their own roles and responsibilities within the larger community of life. There is an opportunity for A.T. managers to influence visitor behavior through outreach and targeted management of large groups.

This *ATC Organized Group Management Manual* provides a detailed look at existing large-group management programs operating on the Appalachian Trail in New England. The manual serves as a guide of how those programs were established, how they currently operate, and what has been learned along the way. The programs, or elements of them, may be useful to other Appalachian Trail clubs and land managers as they consider enhancing their group management programs. It is not meant to be prescriptive, but merely a review of successes and challenges of four Trail clubs in New England and what has been learned along the way.

If a Trail club, local land manager, and ATC's regional office decide to develop a more formal group management outreach and notification system, this document will help to show ways in which participating clubs can interact with large groups traveling and camping along the Appalachian Trail. Proper management of groups directly benefits the visitors' backcountry experience while enabling Trail clubs and land managers to minimize visitor impacts.

This manual outlines general group interaction strategies for each stage of the visitor's experience. These strategies can be implemented in total or in part to improve upon a system already in place. The manual shows how the strategies have been implemented in a collection of case studies from four participating clubs in New England. In addition to the four case studies, the manual outlines the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Policy on Organized Group Use (Appendix A), group campsite recommendations, how to incorporate Leave No Trace into the group management practice, and concludes with testimonials from various organizations involved in participating Trail clubs group outreach programs.

How do you know this manual is for you?

If more than one of these apply to your club or agency's Trail section, then this manual may be a benefit to you as you consider starting or increasing group outreach and/or management efforts.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Group visitation has increased on your club's section of Trail and/or overnight sites.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Caretakers/Ridegrunners/Maintainers notice some groups' behaviors are impactful.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Visitors have expressed a desire to know campsite availability ahead of time.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Campsites are regularly filled over capacity.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Your club is looking to increase member or volunteer base.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recurring groups/organizations utilize the same campsites frequently

Section 1—Group Interaction Strategies

Section 1.1: Proactive Group Engagement

The key idea behind any effective group outreach system is that communication with groups should be proactive rather than reactive. As discussed in more detail in Section 1.3, the initial outreach to a group or organization sets the tone for all future interactions with that group. In order to get visitors on board with a group outreach program, they need to understand the benefits of participating in a notification system, not only for their overall experience, but for the greater good of the areas visited. Visitors who use a group outreach program and learn the benefits of participating in the notification system improve their overall experience and protect the areas visited. A more comprehensive list of group outreach benefits will be discussed in Section 4. Proactive and effective communication with groups help keeps them in the system, ensuring better educated visitors.

Section 1.2: Notification System Start-up

While the case studies discussed in Section 2 present a more comprehensive look at starting up a group notification system, there are a few simple steps a Trail club can take to create the foundation. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of three basic components.

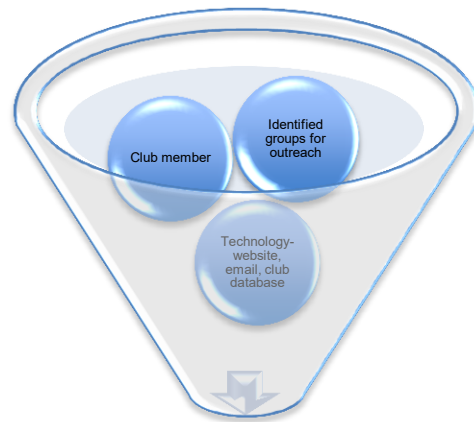


Figure 1 - Group Notification System

The first is identifying a list of groups to target for outreach. This can be determined by researching camps, colleges, Boy Scout troops, schools, or adventure programs that use the Trail and facilities. The next component is a staff member or volunteer who will manage group outreach and notifications. The final component is the technological piece to the puzzle. Clubs need a method to communicate with groups and vice versa. The communication method (website, email, telephone, fax, or mail) will depend on the resources and preference of the Trail club. A

simple start to a group notification system is to create an email address for use only by groups. From there, the Trail club can implement various ways of tracking groups at sites on the Trail. As demonstrated by the following case studies there are multiple ways to develop and manage a group notification system. However, these three components create the foundation for a system that can be shaped based on the Trail club's resources and needs.

Section 1.3: Group Communication Cycle

Unlike solitary hikers or social groups, organized groups tend to utilize the Trail annually, often visiting the same locations during the same period of time from one year to the next. Their recurring presence makes managing these groups much easier because of the opportunity for continual communication and feedback. This cyclical communication model helps land managers establish relationships with organizations. Those relationships not only allow land managers to monitor group behaviors, but also create more individualized visitor experiences. The "group communication cycle" (Figure 2) depicts the five stages for successful group communication. For many organizations, the cycle begins and ends at the corresponding beginning and ending of the busy season. While Figure 2 depicts the cycle in its fullest expression, it can be adapted to best fit the organization's mission and needs. A further exploration of how organizations have uniquely adapted the cycle is outlined in the case studies in Section 2.

1. Initial Outreach

When a club contacts an organization for the first time, the initial communication sets the foundation for expectations in the field and throughout the season. For many clubs, this stage of the cycle is carried out by a mass email or letter welcoming groups to the current year's season. This step also provides the opportunity to convey

general policies and expected behaviors along the Trail and at designated sites. A detailed explanation of general A.T. policies regarding group use is located in Section 3.1.

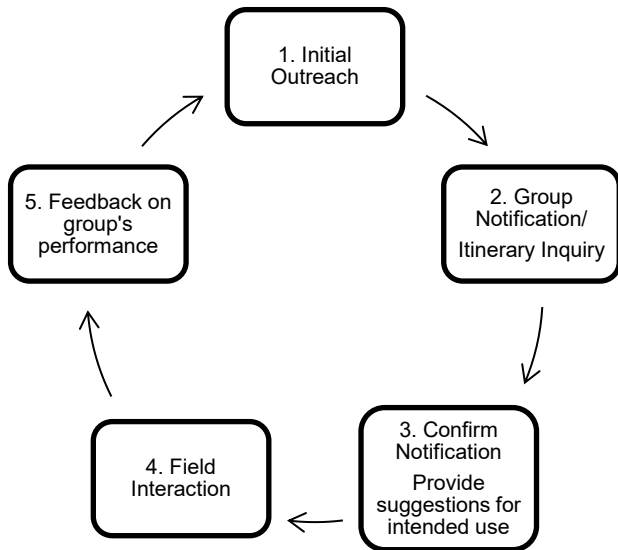


Figure 2 - Group Communication Cycle

There are many options for what information clubs may choose to distribute to groups. If the communication cycle repeats, a Trail club can take the major themes from the previous season's feedback and remind groups of tips for successful trips. Some general tips based on feedback might include:

- Maximum group size of 10 people
- Bring your own toilet paper
- Groups may want to utilize tarps to maximize space at campsites
- Any bear precautions recommended
- Social Impact reminders, and/or quiet hours at campsites
- Waste disposal procedures
- Leave No Trace Principles
- Recommendations for campsite selection
- Interacting with ridgerunners or caretakers

In addition to general tips for a successful trip, the group outreach personnel can also convey local emergency information and camping guidelines for situations where a group might have to camp in a nondesignated site (where permitted).

During the initial outreach stage, the leaders of the groups should be provided with information on how to access the Trail club's group notification system and/or group outreach contact person. Providing group leaders with campsite availability charts as well as information on amenities, water supplies, and privies allows groups to properly plan their trips. Once group leaders have established the initial connection to the Trail club, they can begin to create their itineraries based on the general guidelines and information provided. In some cases this initial outreach may be sent out several times throughout the season to update groups about changes to site availability.

2. Group Notification and Itinerary Inquiry

The next step in the group communication cycle occurs when a representative from an organization contacts the Trail club with a proposed itinerary or to ask questions regarding their intended use. Depending on the Trail club's system, the leader will contact the group outreach representative with all the necessary information. This generally includes:

- Group name
- Organization
- Group size
- Destination and date
- Request for programming (service opportunities, educational visits, etc.)

The Trail club must then begin to assess the group's eligibility for use. The main concerns for the Trail club are whether or not there is space at the site on the date the group intends to visit and if the group is an appropriate size. The Trail club must find a way to organize the incoming notifications to quickly approve any incoming requests. Many clubs use Excel data sheets and calendars to manually enter the group name or organizations and the number of people within the group. A detailed explanation of each club's notification system is available in Section 2.

In addition to notifications, groups will respond to the initial outreach with questions regarding itineraries and amenities along the Trail. The group outreach representative should be well equipped with the knowledge of their Trail club's section and its terrain, distance between overnight sites, campsite capacity, etc., to help groups determine the appropriateness of trips based on age, ability, and duration.

3. Follow up to Group's Request

After a notification or inquiry has been submitted, the group outreach personnel must follow up with confirmation or suggestions regarding the group's proposed itinerary. In order to meet the needs of the visitors and satisfy the policies set in place by the land managing agency, this stage in the group communication cycle must remain flexible and able to change.

Each notification or inquiry should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The Trail club's group outreach representative should provide guidance and education about state and federal land management policies and regulations. Group outreach representatives can find a balance between proposed itineraries and group needs with practicality and legal requirements. Groups generally appreciate the communication and dialogue with group outreach representatives so they can be more informed and help to ensure that their participants have a positive, high-quality recreational experience.

Follow-up with a group request can be in the form of an automated response via email, a personal email sent out by the Trail club's group outreach representative, or a phone call. If the notification or request has no apparent issues, confirmation can be sent to the group stating they have been added to the system. However, if there is an issue, such as group size, overcrowding at a site, or an unsafe itinerary, then a response must be sent out promptly and tailored specifically to that group.

Policies are best relayed when paired with alternative suggestions. For example, if a group has submitted a notification for 16 people at one campsite, the group outreach personnel can discuss the maximum group size policy while asking for more information. Some good questions include: "What are the reasons for your group size? Is it due to participant to instructor ratio? Do you have any flexibility to separate into two groups?" Or simply, "Tell me a little more about your group and its goals for the trip." The group outreach representative can then give suggestions based on the itinerary for alternative camping options if the group must remain whole, or two separate itineraries if there is the flexibility to split up.

The Trail club should try to provide groups with emergency information. This information can include backcountry guidelines, alternative route recommendations, and side trails in case planned itineraries need to change. Groups should be reminded to have the necessary emergency contact information, including that of the local land manager and search-and-rescue organization, as well as the locations of the nearest overnight sites and trailheads. Some groups may get on the Trail and realize they overestimated their group's ability and choose to camp at an unestablished site. Provided with information about camping in undesignated sites (where allowed) within the Leave No Trace framework (<http://www.appalachiantrail.org/home/explore-the-trail/leave-no-trace>), leaders will feel more prepared to make the best decision for their groups while working to maintain a small footprint.

It is most important when following up a group's request to acknowledge their goals for the trip and then to communicate effectively so as not to undermine their experience while trying to satisfy the Trail club's goals. Any anticipated group behaviors likely to have a negative impact on the Trail or site should be met with information designed to educate rather than with "orders" designed to force a change. While Trail clubs do not have any enforcement authority, they are recognized as experts on the Appalachian Trail and have the respect of Trail visitors.

4. Field Interaction

For many clubs, caretakers, ridgerunners, or the group outreach representative have the opportunity to interact with and observe groups in the field. In order to maximize the effectiveness of field interactions with groups, Trail club representatives should be trained in the soft skills necessary to educate visitors. They should understand how to be authoritative about Trail resources without appearing to "police" groups in the backcountry. Ideally, caretakers, ridgerunners, and group outreach personnel are comfortable with public speaking and understand how to provide quick and applicable advice based on the needs of each group.

The evaluation of a group allows a Trail club to establish a deeper relationship with that group and helps to ensure that the group will work to minimize its impact on the Trail and overnight sites. A common practice in New England is to evaluate groups based on the seven nationally recognized [Leave No Trace principles](#), which provide a holistic framework incorporating ecological and social considerations. In the efforts to maximize productive communication, an evaluation form can be filled out by a Trail club representative and submitted to the Trail club for review. Such an evaluation can help the club to provide specific feedback about a group's behavior to its sponsoring organization. The feedback process will be elaborated on in the next section.

While initial outreach is important to educate visitors and set them up for successful trips, field interactions can provide a more individualized approach to group management. Education is one of the best ways to promote conservation, especially if that education is tailored specifically to a group's trip. Interactions with individuals in groups to encourage responsible recreation directly benefits the Trail club and land managing agency because it creates a return on the Trail club's investment.

5. Group Feedback

Providing a group with the feedback reported from its visit is the final stage in the group communication cycle. There are various ways to record and report feedback depending on the resources available to the Trail club. Feedback can occur directly in the field in conjunction with education efforts, or it can be reported to the group outreach representative for distillation and sent out to groups in an end of season report. Reporting on a group's behaviors can be accomplished through phone calls, emails, letters or, if possible, in person after completion of the group's trip or organization's season.

For groups such as camps or colleges that send a large number of different groups, a feedback report can be compiled that evaluates each group separately. This allows the directors of organizations or outdoor programs to provide individualized feedback to group leaders. Feedback from the different groups can also be synthesized to emphasize appropriate practices as well as areas that need improvement. Combining an individualized report based on group leaders with providing feedback on the organization's overall performance helps the Trail club track yearly trends of the behaviors of high-use groups.

Summary

The group communication cycle is a complete strategy to promote responsible recreation in the backcountry while creating a sustainable relationship between groups and Trail maintaining clubs. The cycle most commonly unfolds throughout half of a year, with initial outreach occurring in the beginning of the club's busy season, and ending at the conclusion of the season. Certain stages of the cycle may occur multiple times throughout a season depending on the level of an organization's group use. For example, a camp group may notify the club throughout the season as its enrollment begins to take form. The Trail club's group outreach representative will then follow up on each request and update. Or, some groups may request mid-season evaluations on their performance to fulfill accreditations. The key to the cycle is to remember it is a live system that can be adjusted depending on the Trail club's resources and the group's needs. Ideally, the Trail club asks groups to "buy into the system" at the beginning of the cycle and then delivers tangible outcomes at the end of the cycle.

Section 2 – Case Studies

This section includes an in-depth look at the group management strategies of four Trail maintaining clubs in New England: the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) in New Hampshire, Green Mountain Club (GMC) in Vermont, AMC-Berkshire Chapter's Massachusetts Appalachian Trail Committee, and Maine Appalachian Trail club (MATC). Each case study will include a brief history of group use specific to that club, why there was a need for a group management system, what the group management system is, and how that system has changed over time, as well as any future plans. Figure 3 provides a graphic overview of the four clubs in relation to the different stages of the group communication cycle.

	Initial Outreach	Group Notification	Notification Confirmation	Field Interaction	Group Feedback	Staff Managed	Volunteer Managed
AMC-MA	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
GMC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
AMC-NH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
MATC	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓

Figure 3 - Summary of each club's group management system.

Section 2.1: AMC Berkshire Chapter Massachusetts Appalachian Trail Management Committee

History of Group Use

The A.T. in Massachusetts has been a popular destination for organized groups of hikers for many decades. The numerous road crossings, relatively moderate terrain with great "destination" views, relatively high density of local summer camps, and easy access from nearby metropolitan areas make it attractive for hikers as well as group administrators.

In the early part of the 1980s, as the A.T.'s popularity as a destination increased, Trail maintaining clubs in Massachusetts and Connecticut became concerned about the increased amount of use overnight sites were seeing—particularly in southern Massachusetts on the Taconic Plateau and leading south into Connecticut. At the same time, the Mt. Greylock area (also a destination with easy access and great views) was experiencing increased use of A.T. overnight sites.

As a result, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), then known as the Department of Environmental Management, began to find ways to monitor and educate Trail visitors at A.T. overnight sites. AMC, making use of funds donated by Trail neighbors in Connecticut, established a ridgerunner program to cover the A.T. in all of Connecticut and in southwest Massachusetts. A further explanation of the ridgerunner program will be discussed later in this case study.

As the land-owning agency of all but one of the A.T. overnight sites in Massachusetts, DCR also has the authority to issue special use permits (SUPs) to organized outing groups that utilize multiple overnight sites within DCR forest and park lands. To maintain Trail-wide consistency, overnight group size is limited to 10 as described in the [A.T. Local Management Planning Guide](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/docs/local-management-planning-guide/2009-local-management-planning-guide.pdf)¹ and regulated by [Massachusetts' Department of Conservation 302 CMR 12.00](http://www.mass.gov/courts/docs/lawlib/300-399cmr/302cmr12.pdf)². Primary seekers of DCR SUPs are college groups, and not all provide DCR with an itinerary in advance. SUPs do not provide for exclusive use of an overnight site, however, there is an expectation that there will be space available.

Demand for group sites in mid- to late summer is the greatest challenge. Many college groups are in the field over the same few weeks, and there is an inevitable "piling up" of multiple groups as itineraries overlap. A few of those groups are now in regular communication with DCR and the A.T. Committee's group outreach coordinator and

¹ <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/docs/local-management-planning-guide/2009-local-management-planning-guide.pdf>

² <http://www.mass.gov/courts/docs/lawlib/300-399cmr/302cmr12.pdf>

make efforts not to monopolize campsites and tenting areas around the shelters. Many are aware of Leave No Trace principles.

Starting in 2011, the Massachusetts A.T. Committee, in order to better manage overnight site use, and to improve the A.T. hiking experience in Massachusetts for all visitors, began a group outreach and notification system. The remainder of this report will focus on this program, which works in collaboration with the existing DCR and AMC ridgerunning efforts.

What was the need for the Group Notification System?

Although there are established group size limits in both the Massachusetts A.T. Committee's Local A.T. Management Plan and in DCR's Code of Regulations, when more than one group arrives at an overnight site, those numbers are regularly exceeded. As a result, campsites physically expand as campers look for more room, and visitor experience on the Trail is compromised when large groups congregate and monopolize a facility.

What is the System?

Copying from the Green Mountain Club, our website amcberkshire.org presents potential visitors with an on-line chart (<http://amcberkshire.org/groupuse>) showing all Massachusetts overnight sites and dates from late May to mid-October. Groups voluntarily contact the group outreach coordinator (a volunteer), though contact information is found at the group use web page, with the dates and locations of their planned overnight stays. After approving the group's notification, the coordinator then updates the on-line chart. The box on the calendar with the corresponding date and site then displays a green, yellow, red, or blue color. Yellow indicates a site that generally experiences high use (weekends and holidays for example); red indicates a group has planned to stay at that site; and blue indicates two or more groups plan to stay at that site. Also available to groups is a useful trip-planning document entitled an "8 Step Guide to Hiking on the A.T. in Massachusetts" (Appendix B).

Once a group has successfully submitted a notification, field interaction is carried out by the AMC or DCR ridgerunners. The AMC puts approximately five ridgerunners on the Trail at the same time for the entire summer, producing a fairly consistent coverage of all the overnight sites between Jug End in Massachusetts and 10 Mile River in Connecticut. When meeting a group at an overnight site, an AMC ridgerunner engages the group, explains the best way to preserve the resource and the hiking experience, and obtains the sponsoring contact information from the group leaders. AMC communicates with group sponsors before the start of the season, outlining acceptable behavior, group size, etc. At present, no commitment to a schedule is requested from groups planning to use the A.T. in Connecticut.

In Massachusetts, two DCR ridgerunners stay at selected overnight sites every Friday and Saturday from approximately Memorial Day to Labor Day. They engage groups, as well as other hikers, in a manner similar to AMC ridgerunner, and also collect contact information from groups that would seem to benefit from communication directly with the sponsor. DCR does not utilize any feedback forms. If there are repeated issues with groups or noncompliance in the field after engagement with a ridgerunner, DCR will directly communicate with sponsor via phone, email or letter. Noncompliance in the field after discussion with a ridgerunner is rare.

How has the system changed over time?

The group management system has only been in place for two seasons. During the course of those two seasons the Massachusetts A.T. Committee has found that communicating directly with groups is the best way to provide information and suggestions about potential itineraries and appropriate group size and behavior. As the committee works to build a database of regular visitors, the outreach is anticipated to improve.

Vision for the future

The A.T. Management Committee cannot compel Trail visitors to use the system or even to keep to a previously indicated itinerary. In addition, visitors cannot be forced to read and follow the recommendations in our guide. Therefore, direct preseason connections to sponsors of group visits to the Trail and meeting groups in the field are our most useful tools. Moving forward, a closer connection between the club's group coordination efforts and DCR and AMC ridgerunners is an important goal. Knowing about high-use locations would help direct ridgerunners to the sites where their education and outreach efforts would likely be most beneficial. The group outreach coordinator will also inform groups that they will likely get a field visit from a ridgerunner during their trip.

To “close the loop,” ridgerunners should compile contact information from group sponsors and distribute to the club, DCR, and AMC so we can make preemptive contact with them at the beginning of the season. AMC does this well in southwest Massachusetts and Connecticut, and we should take steps to regularly emulate this effort for sites visited by DCR ridgerunners. Finally, a season-wide collation of the numbers and type of overnight visitors engaged by ridgerunners will be helpful in planning how to distribute our resources going forward.

In addition to the links included in this document, see attached draft of the new Group Use Brochure (Appendix C) that will be distributed starting the 2015 season.

Submitted by Cosmo Catalano, Massachusetts A.T. Committee

Other Contributors:

Jim Pelletier, AMC Berkshire Massachusetts A.T. Committee Chair

Hank Barton, A.T. Committee Group Outreach Coordinator

Rebecca Barnes, DCR Greylock Complex Team Leader (also Massachusetts A.T. Committee member)

Section 2.2: Green Mountain Club

Brief history of Group Management at the GMC

Group outreach at the GMC was originally developed as an offshoot of the education department during a time when the club employed a full time education coordinator. In 1998 the GMC contracted a group outreach intern as the first formal position to address group use on the Trail. The intern was seasonally employed from May to October and worked part time in group outreach and part time as a roving summit caretaker.

For several years before the creation of the group outreach program, the GMC’s field program had been collecting information on organized groups that were using the Long Trail (L.T.) by having summit and site caretakers record group information. According to the 1998 group outreach intern’s report, the information gathered by caretakers was “used along with the evaluation forms to contact problem groups and offer suggestions to limit their impact and enhance their own Trail experience. This system sometimes provides positive results but is a reactive response to problems that have already occurred on the Trail. With the Group Outreach Program it was decided to try a more proactive approach.”

In the spirit of proactive rather than reactive group management strategy, 1998 also saw the creation of a "voluntary notification system" (VNS), made in conjunction with the AMC. The VNS was a type of calendar that the group outreach intern used to plot group itineraries. By contacting groups and getting their itineraries ahead of time, the intern could then give feedback and Leave No Trace education to groups *before* they hit the Trail. The VNS was also the base model for future group notification spreadsheets and the current group notification calendar.

As the group outreach program and position developed in the early to mid-2000s, more effort was put into proactive group education. Partnerships were developed with Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) and the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) to create coherent group hiking guidelines, along with solidifying permit regulations and spreading awareness of the necessity of permits for groups traveling on state and federal land. The relationship between the GMC and FPR and GMNF has been very successful and continues to be an important tool in group management. Both FPR and GMNF have provided the GMC with clear permit guidelines so that the GMC can better notify groups of permit requirements and, conversely, so that groups can easily access permit information. Clear permit requirements and permit information can be found under “group hiking” on the GMC’s website and in the FAQ section on the GMC’s Group Notification Calendar website (www.greenmountainclubgroups.org).

Education programs designed specifically for group leaders were also developed as the group outreach program evolved, including Leave No Trace trainer courses. In an effort to make group hiking information more accessible for group leaders, the group outreach program compiled and published group hiking guidelines and group overnight sites in the Group Hiking section of the GMC’s *Long Trail Guide* book.

For a short time the group outreach specialist tried meeting groups in the field in addition to pre-trip workshops. However, this approach was impractical due to the demand it put on the group outreach specialist’s schedule, and it created an unnecessary formality and structure in many groups’ trips. After trying in-field visits, it was found that

an emphasis on pre-trip education was more effective than in-field visits and preserved a degree of freedom and spontaneity during group trips on the Long Trail that so many people seek.

A workshop was also developed during caretaker orientation in which the group outreach specialist spends time training caretakers on group management, mitigating group impact, and Leave No Trace principles. A workshop is also held for the Long Trail Patrol (trail crew) on Leave No Trace principles. Educating field staff on group impact and Leave No Trace principles is a crucial aspect of the group outreach program since caretakers and ridgerunners often have groups stay with them in the field and are the primary vehicle for educating the hiking public.

The Need for the VNS, Its Development, and the GMC Website Notification Calendar

By 1998, the GMC had collected a list of 300 groups and group leaders that were using the Long Trail system. When the group outreach program was created, the group outreach intern began contacting groups on that list and asking trip leaders to submit their itineraries to the GMC prior to their hikes. Thus the voluntary notification system (VNS) was born and became a tool that allowed the group outreach intern to work with groups prior to their trips, while providing an outlet for group leaders to ask questions before getting into the woods.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	CL	CM	CN	CO	CP	CQ	CR	CS	CT	CU
GMC Group Shelter and Campsite Calendar 2012																
Key to Land Manager and Site Capacity				Key to Group Campsite/Shelter Use												
DFP&R = Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation				Red: Group Use Itinerary Submitted												
GMNF = Green Mountain National Forest				Yellow: Caution, High Use Site or Holiday												
				Green: No Group Use Itineraries Submitted												
Site Capacity is represented as x \ y:				Purple: Two Groups at site												
x = shelter capacity; y = tent site capacity.				calendar date refers to group arrival day												
							17-Aug	18-Aug	19-Aug	20-Aug	21-Aug	22-Aug	23-Aug	24-Aug	25-Aug	26-Aug
Division	Site	Capacity	Fee?	Land Mgr.	Fire allowed?	Outhouse type ?										
5	Governor Clement	10	no	GMNF	Y	Pit										
5	Cooper Lodge	12/10	no	Private	N	Composting										
5	Pico Camp	12	No	Private	Y	Pit										
6	Rolston Rest	10	no	NFS	Y	Pit										
6	David Logan	8/10	no	GMNF	Y	Pit										
6	Sunrise Shelter	8	No	GMNF	Y	P										
7	Sucker Brook	10	No	GMNF	Y	Pit										
7	Boyce Shelter	8	No	GMNF	Y	Pit										
7	Skyline Lodge	14	Yes	GMNF	No	Composting										
7	Emily Proctor Shetler	10	no	GMNF	Y	Pit										
7	Cooley Glen Shelter	10	no	GMNF	Y	Moldering										
8	Battell	8	yes	GMNF	N	Composting										
8	Glen Ellen Lodge	8	no	DFP&R	N	Composting										
8	Theron Dean Shelter	5	no	DFP&R	N	Pit										
8	Birch Glen Camp	12/14	no	DFP&R	Y	Moldering										
9	Cowles Cove Shelter	8	no	DFP&R	N	Composting										
9	Montclair Glen Lodge	10	yes	DFP&R	N	Composting										
9	Hump Brook Tenting Area	20	yes	GMNF	Y	Moldering										
	Bamforth Ridge Shelter	15	no		N	Composting										
9	Duck Brook Shelter	10	no	DFP&R	Y	Pit										
9	Buchanan	10	no	DFP&R	Y	Pit										
10	Puffer Shelter	6	no	DFP&R	N	Moldering										
10	Taylor Lodge	10/10	yes	DFP&R	N	Moldering										
10	Twin Brooks Tenting Area	24	no	DFP&R	Y	Moldering										
10	Butler Lodge	14	yes	DFP&R	N	Composting										
10	Toll Lodge	24	yes	DFP&R	N	Composting										

Figure 4 - GMC Group Shelter and Campsite Calendar Database

As the GMC enhanced its computer capabilities, so too was the VNS enhanced, starting with its name. In the early 2000s the VNS became the "Group Notification System" (GNS) and was transferred to a spreadsheet in Excel. The Excel spreadsheet format prevailed until 2014. The GNS spreadsheet contained overnight site information such as: capacity in shelter and tent sites, fee (if any), land manager (GMNF, VT FPR, or private), if fires are allowed, and the type of privy. At the top of the spreadsheet was a key and directions on how to use each type of privy. An up-to-date spreadsheet was available on the GMC website. Group visitors would download the spreadsheet, enter their itinerary, and then send the spreadsheet to the group outreach specialist. The upsides to this style of notification system were:

1. Visitors could see all Long Trail sites at once, making it easier for groups sending in multiple itineraries or locations.
2. Groups could see crucial info about each site where they planned to stay.

Downsides to the spreadsheet notification system:

1. The process was relatively cumbersome because the group web page visitor would have to download the spreadsheet, fill out their itinerary, and send the filled out spreadsheet to the group outreach specialist, who then had to update the master spreadsheet on the website. Therefore it required constant maintenance.
2. The spreadsheet was very busy and a little confusing to navigate.
3. Only usable by visitors using Excel.

In 2014 the group outreach specialist created a new group notification calendar (GNC) through an independent website (www.greenmountainclubgroups.org). This new GNC is more user-friendly because it is in calendar format

rather than a spreadsheet. The new GNC also requires much less maintenance since visitors fill out their own itinerary and, if the group outreach specialist approves it, their notification appears immediately on the website for others to see. The administration page on the website actually has an “approve” button. In order to approve itineraries, the most important things to look for are appropriate group size, no overlap with other itineraries, and that groups are trying their best to stay at sites that can handle groups (listed in *Long Trail Guide*). However, the website requires that groups provide contact information in order to submit an itinerary, so if a group looks as if it may not be following group hiking guidelines, the GOS can contact the group leader and provide resources, education, and awareness of group hiking guidelines and permit information.

In an example of the notification system working, a group of 16 wanted to stay at Stratton Pond (the L.T.’s busiest overnight site) on Columbus Day weekend. The group submitted its itinerary to the calendar. Before approving it, the GOS contacted the group leader and spoke with him about permits, group size guidelines, and how busy Stratton can get on holiday weekends (limiting tenting opportunities)—all framed gently and as an educational opportunity for the group. The GOS recommended the group split up, with half the group starting at one end of their planned loop hike and the other half starting at the beginning. That way, each group would be at a separate overnight site. Although the group was unable to split up due to leader coverage, the group was made aware of resources such as the GNC and promised to follow group hiking guidelines in the future. Tact, understanding, and an educational framework were all crucial for making this a successful interaction. Although the outcome was not ideal, since the group did not end up splitting up to follow group size guidelines, the general outcome was positive in that education was given and group guidelines will be incorporated into future trips. The turn-around time between the trip leader posting the notification and the GOS approving it was two days.

The shelters are labeled:

Division (refer to Long Trail Guide) – Site Name – Site Capacity
(shelter/overflow tenting) – \$ (Indicates \$5 overnight use fee per person)
(Note: Stratton Pond & Griffith Lake Tenting Areas have 2 sets of availability)

Select Shelter or Campsite: 3all Stratton Pond North Shore Tenting 0/24 \$

January 2015							February 2015						
SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
25	26	27	28	29	30	31							

26 - Open 26 - In Use By Group 26 - Pending Confirmation

Organization or Group Name (required):

Email (required):

Phone:

Leaders: 1 Total Group Size: 3

Details:

☐ I understand that the group shelter use calendar is not a reservation system.

Figure 5 - GMC Online Calendar example of Stratton Pond

As the calendar site is fairly new, many groups still email their itineraries to the GMC. A similar process is followed when a group notifies by email. If there is a problem with the itinerary, the GOS will contact the group and provide education. If the itinerary is all set, the GOS will input the itinerary into the calendar for other groups to see.

The calendar site also contains information on Leave No Trace principles, maps and guidebooks, service trips, and it also has a FAQ section that includes important permit information. A downside to the calendar site in its current format is that it is inconvenient to use for organizations that want to add extended itineraries or notifications for many shelters and sites. The plan going forward is to keep the calendar format while making it easier to add multiple notifications. The GMC would also like to make the calendar more sustainable by incorporating it onto the GMC's main site rather than have it hosted on a separate website.

Group Outreach Specialist Position

As GMC's group outreach grew, it became clear that the program required year-round attention. In 2000/2001 the group outreach specialist (GOS) position became a year-round, full-time position supported by Vermont Housing and Conservation Board's (VHCB) AmeriCorps program. With the exception of one year, has been supported by AmeriCorps since. The GMC conducts interviews and sends their selection recommendations to VHCB, and the recommended individual is selected through AmeriCorps. The AmeriCorps program provides the GOS with a living stipend during their term of service, professional development opportunities, and an education award at the completion of the 11 months and a successful term of service. Year-long AmeriCorps service terms typically require 1,700 hours of service from the member over the year. The GOS position through AmeriCorps begins in September and ends in August of the following year. This schedule is advantageous for the GOS because the position begins around the time that the field season is ending and group outreach for that year is wrapping up. The new GOS has time to become familiar with the position responsibilities over the slower winter months and prepare for spring and summer, which tend to be the busiest seasons for working with hiking groups.

As the GMC's programs have evolved, so too have the responsibilities of the GOS. Along with the main responsibility of group outreach, the GOS also is the main education instructor at the GMC and works in conjunction with other GMC staff members on projects and events. Supervision of the group outreach program has changed from the education coordinator to GMC's director of field programs. Working closely with the field program provides the GOS with the opportunity to be better attuned to group needs and problems in the field from year to year. Just like the hiking season in Vermont, the responsibilities of the GOS have taken on a cyclic schedule that "begins" in spring.

GMC Group Outreach Yearly Cycle

Spring:

1. Spring Mailer (Appendix D) targeted at organizations that send groups out on the L.T. is distributed. The mailer highlights our group notification calendar, group education programs, group hiking guidelines, group membership information, spring workshops, and how to contact the GOS. This mailer also has a prepayment form for fee sites. Prepayment also offers a \$1 off per-person deal for prepaying. If an organization prepays, the GOS will send the receipt, which group leaders can then give to caretakers in the field as proof of payment.
2. In the Spring Mailer, we have previously sent out a Group Hiking Guidelines reference card and information about our Long Trail Bound program. In years past, we have also sent a Leave No Trace reference card.
3. Send out a spring mailer to local high schools that may utilize the trail systems on Mt. Mansfield or Camel's Hump. Since those peaks are both home to fragile alpine zones, this mailer highlights the importance of Leave No Trace, the "rock walk," and GMC education programs/workshops, which encompass Leave No Trace, hiker preparedness, map and compass, and Long Trail ecology.
4. The spring is also when the GOS begins getting most of the planned itineraries from organizations that send groups on the L.T. The GOS works with those organizations to make sure their itineraries utilize overnight sites that can handle groups/have group tenting areas. The GOS double checks itineraries against the group notification calendar. After the group's itinerary is approved, the group is billed for fee sites it has scheduled unless another arrangement has been made.
5. The GOS, director of trails, and the field supervisor coordinate service trips.

Summer:

1. The GOS hosts a workshop with caretakers highlighting Leave No Trace and group management and education. A Leave No Trace workshop is also provided to GMC Long Trail Patrol (trail crew).

2. The GOS maintains and updates the group notification calendar as needed, and continues to work with groups on improving their itineraries.
3. Collects caretaker feedback sheets.
4. Provides support for/leads service trips.

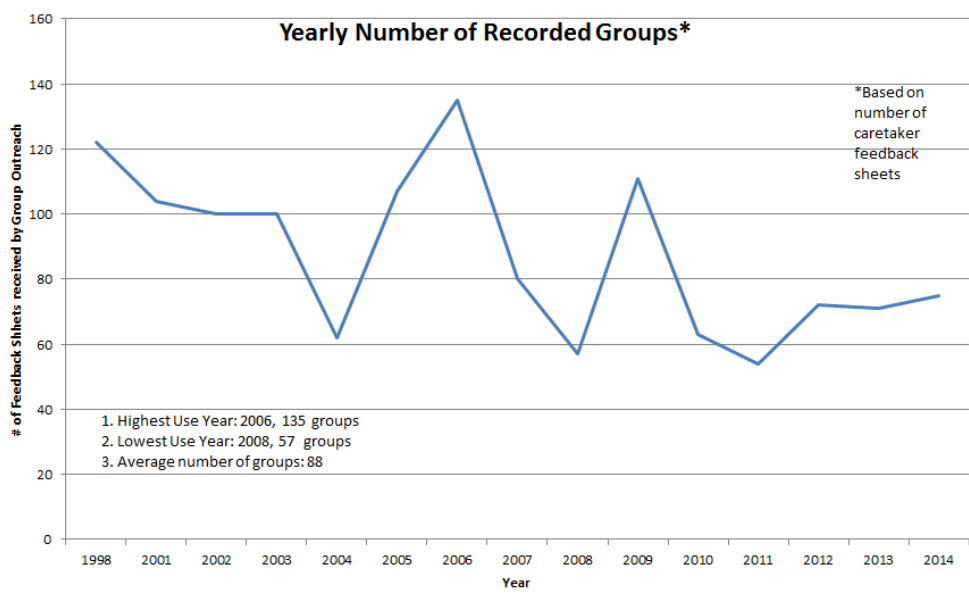


Figure 6 - Number of groups recorded through receipt of feedback sheets

Fall:

1. Collects and scans all caretaker feedback sheets into PDF format. Organizes the collected data by site, score, organization, and type of organization (camp, college, scouts, other).
2. Sends Fall Feedback Mailer (Appendix E). Mailer is split into constructive feedback and positive feedback to give organizations an idea of what they need to improve on for next season or what they do well in the backcountry. This mailer thanks organizations for their participation in the feedback program, thanks them if they participated in a service trip, encourages them to host one of our education programs, and highlights the group notification calendar.
3. GOS collects payment info sent from organizations (if they had previously agreed to pay at the end of the season) and creates invoices to bill organizations that did not pay.
4. Hiring/training of new GOS.

Winter:

1. The GOS uses the information collected from feedback sheets, caretaker shift reports, the group notification calendar, and submitted itineraries to write the group use end of year report. The report includes data on service trips.

Interaction with Groups

The contacted groups are based on what organizations contact the GMC themselves and what groups are recorded in the caretaker feedback sheets. Interactions with groups begin with the GOS receiving group itineraries throughout the year prior to hiking season. We also have groups that submit their itineraries directly to the GNC, which the GOS can then review and contact the group leader(s) if adjustments should be made.

The GMC provides workshops tailored specifically for

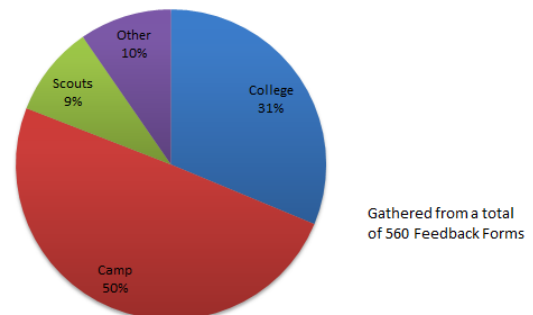


Figure 7 - Group Use by Category 2007-2014

organizations that send groups out on the Long Trail that center on Leave No Trace principles. Traditionally, the workshop consists of a morning or afternoon session in which the GOS travels to the organization and provides a discussion-based workshop with trip leaders on Leave No Trace for groups. There may or may not be an activity incorporated into the workshop. Although the workshops emphasize Leave No Trace, they may also cover hiker preparedness and backpacking basics depending on the needs of the group and what the GOS worked out with the organization coordinator beforehand. Trip leader experience varies from long-distance backpackers to first time hikers, so agreeing on a lesson plan with the organization prior to the workshop is crucial. Moving forward, the GMC's group outreach program is hoping to create more in-field trip leader workshops so that leaders can get hands-on field experience prior to taking their group out. In-field workshops will also give the GOS an opportunity to show trip leaders best Leave No Trace practices for different sites. Also, since participation in trip leader workshops really depends on the interest of the different organizations, the hope is that an in-field learning opportunity will garner more interest from organizations and therefore give the GMC more contact with a wider spectrum of trip leaders. We may also offer an overnight trip leader workshop as a Leave No Trace trainer course and introduction to backpacking basics.

Once out on their trips, groups are responsible for themselves and free to experience the Long Trail. However, many organized groups often interact with GMC caretakers. The GOS posts a notification calendar near the field staff office to let caretakers know if and when groups will be staying at their site. They can also access the GNC online. When a group comes to stay at a caretaker site, the caretaker talks to the group and group leaders and may offer a short, informal Leave No Trace lesson on their specific site (food storage particular to that site, what not to put in the privy, etc.). The caretaker has the group leaders fill out the top half of a feedback sheet and, before handing in their paper work at the end of their shift, the caretaker will fill out the bottom half of the sheet to rate the group on their conduct in the backcountry and Leave No Trace skills. The caretaker hands in group feedback sheets weekly along with the rest of their paperwork. A copy of this form is located in Appendix F.

Conclusion and Future Plans for GMC Group Outreach

Over the past 17 years, the GMC group outreach program has grown into an integral part of GMC's field and education programs. Through partnership with VHCBA AmeriCorps, the GMC is able to host a group outreach specialist at little cost to the club and the turnover year to year of different GOS members has provided a diverse and dynamic range of group outreach initiatives. The program's focus on proactive group education has been crucial in producing successful group outreach seasons and spreading awareness of group hiking guidelines, group Leave No Trace ethics, and permit requirements. Many organizations that send groups out on the Long Trail year after year are well aware of the GMC, our message for groups, and details such as caretaker site fees. Also, by emphasizing our contact with groups as proactive, educational opportunities instead of in-field supervision or reactive criticism, many organizations welcome GMC trip leader workshops as an annual part of their wilderness programs.

There is always more work to be done in educating the hiking public on their role in backcountry preservation and every season sees new groups using the Long Trail. Often it takes several seasons for organizations to begin to adhere to group hiking guidelines and begin contacting the GMC with their itineraries. Trip leaders often change every year, program coordinators change, and the GOS changes as well, making it important to maintain steady contact with organizations and consistent pre-trip education so that each crop of new trip leaders is well informed on group hiking guidelines and Leave No Trace principles. Moving forward, the group outreach program will focus on:

1. Strengthening relationships with organizations that already use the GNC (local colleges, camps, etc.)
2. Creating in-field leader workshops and possibly offer Leave No Trace Trainer certification courses to trip leaders.
3. Continuing to modify and update the GNC, with the goal being to make it as convenient as possible to use and have it hosted on the GMC's website
4. Reaching out to groups that have scored poorly on caretaker feedback sheets and provide group hiking education prior to their next trips.
5. Reaching out to day-hiking groups (specifically local high schools) that utilize the Trail and educate those groups on group size guidelines and Leave No Trace hiking practices prior to the hiking season.

Section 2.3: Appalachian Mountain Club, New Hampshire

History of Group Management

While AMC has been staffing popular shelters and tent sites on the A.T. in the White Mountains since the early

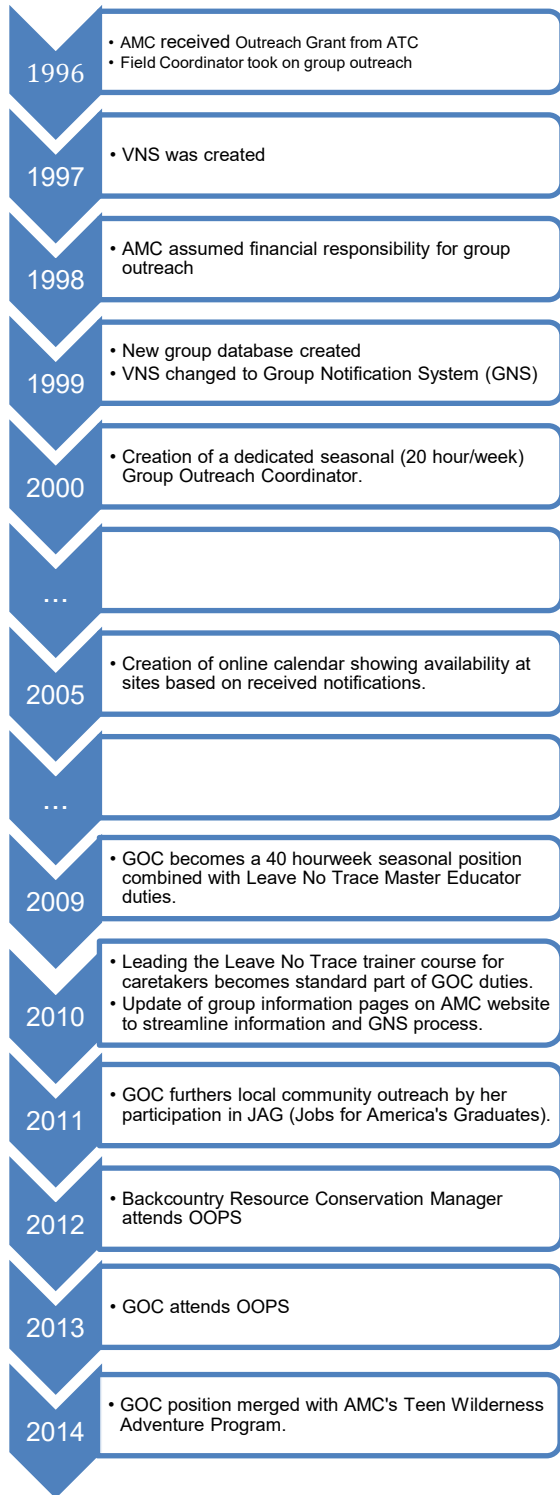


Figure 8 - History of Group Management

1970s, the comprehensive group management strategy of the AMC backcountry campsite program began in the mid-1990s in response to a substantial increase in organized groups using the designated campsites along the Appalachian Trail in the White and Mahoosuc Mountains. The group outreach program began with a small grant from the ATC and has evolved over time to include a dedicated seasonal group outreach coordinator, a computerized system for groups to notify AMC of their plans, and an array of outreach techniques.

In 1996, AMC received an outreach grant from ATC to develop a pilot group outreach program. That pilot program added outreach responsibilities to the backcountry campsite field coordinator¹, one of the two existing seasonal supervisors for the field program. For the first four seasons (1996–1999), group outreach was a portion of the backcountry campsites field coordinator's duties. In 2000, as the outreach program developed and use of AMC's campsites continued to rise, the scope of work was beyond the capacity of the field coordinator, leading to the creation of a dedicated seasonal group outreach coordinator position for 20 hours a week from May to October.

The startup of the program, with the help of the outreach grant from ATC, was focused on creating group use workshops for camp groups and an organized group database. Although no formal notification system was used during the first year of the program, evaluations for groups were still stressed to caretakers, and feedback was sent out at the end of the season. That first year was primarily about data collection. In the second year (1997), with continued support from ATC, the volunteer notification system (VNS) was established, providing groups with a form to fill out before their trip to notify AMC. The system met with better results than anticipated and allowed the existing group database to expand with new groups.

In 1998, AMC self-funded the group outreach program, and many advancements were made to the existing program through learning from other club's challenges and efforts. The backcountry management specialist² (the full-time year round supervisor of the caretaker program) and the GOC/field coordinator attended the ATC's Group Outreach Summit with GMC and representatives from the visitor groups to discuss effective tactics for group management. This resulted in the expansion of the information sent out to camp groups about the notification process, as well as updates to the group feedback system.

The 1999 season marked the establishment of the new group outreach database, which helped advance the existing group

information to include contact names and numbers of more types of groups. The VNS was changed to a group notification system

¹ The Field Coordinator's primary responsibility is to supervise and support caretakers in the field, primarily through visits to the field. Office work is customarily only about 10-15% of the position.

² This position is now the Backcountry Resource Conservation Manager.

(GNS), and language was included in mailings to highlight the necessity of group notification. The AMC continues to use the GNS, and the group management strategy continues to develop each season. Figure 8 details the progression of AMC's backcountry campsite group outreach system.

The 2015 season marks 15 years of success since AMC began using a dedicated seasonal employee as the GOC and the 10th season of the computerized group notification system (GNS) on the AMC website. The GNS is the main component of the AMC's group management strategy. It exists for the purpose of aiding potential groups using the sites in their preparatory and planning stages. In addition, the GNS helps caretakers better manage the site they are stationed at as it allows them to anticipate the number of visitors each night.

What was the need for group notification system?

Due to the large volume of use seen in the White Mountains, which is disproportionate compared to other areas in New England, recreation management is a critical part of stewardship. Over the years, the AMC and the U.S. Forest Service have developed techniques and programs in response to visitor use in order to better steward public lands.

The overuse that occurred and led to the creation of the GNS was due to multiple groups descending on the four most popular sites at once. Those groups were often excessively large and did not know much about what to expect at the campsites. Of the 14,000–15,000 visitors who spend the night at one of the staffed sites, approximately 50% of them go to the four busiest campsites. And, moreover, at one of these busiest sites over half of the use is by groups. This is the baseline for the demonstrated need in the case of the AMC.

The larger picture is this: Each year the AMC-managed backcountry sites in the White Mountains and Mahoosuc Range host an average of 20,000 overnight visitors year round. In 2014, nine of the most popular sites accommodated 14,593 visitors in the summer months. The individuals associated with groups totaled 4,556, or 32% of the total use. As use of these popular sites continues to be heavy, the impact on the forest, in terms of human waste, erosion of heavily used trails, and trampling of vegetation continues to be a challenge for Trail clubs and land managers.

To better manage these public wildlands so that all hikers continue to experience an uncivilized forest, the AMC emphasizes the use of the group notification system. Proper use of the GNS helps to prevent multiple groups from converging at a campsite on a given night and exceeding site capacity. This simple action helps the Trail club and visitors work together to lessen impacts on these beautiful areas, minimize overcrowding, and increase everyone's enjoyment of the backcountry.

AMC's Group Notification System

The Group Outreach Coordinator

The AMC's group outreach coordinator (GOC) is responsible for managing the group outreach and notification system. The GOC assists with management of the high volume of large groups that visit the backcountry areas of the White and Mahoosuc Mountains of New Hampshire and Maine. It is a 40-hour a week seasonal coordinator and support position within the backcountry campsites program. In 2014, the GOC began work at the end of April and continued through the beginning of November. 2014 also marked the first season the GOC worked in conjunction with the AMC's Teen Wilderness Adventures Summer Program. The GOC's time was split, devoting 20 hours a week to Teen Wilderness Programs and 20–30 hours a week for the backcountry campsite department.

Group outreach coordinator duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Managing the group notification system (GNS)
- Outreach and communications regarding land-use regulations specific to their proposed itineraries.
- Advocating for appropriately sized groups and offering Leave No Trace materials, information, and programming to all groups.
- Compiling and entering group information regarding specific groups and site usage. This information is garnered from feedback forms and registration cards kept in the AMC's business office.
- Outreach and communications to groups based on specific feedback from caretakers.
- General support for caretakers and backcountry campsite staff as needed, including morning radio call.
- Conducting site visits for nights with a high volume of notifications to help caretakers manage groups.
- Conducting a Leave No Trace trainer course for new caretakers.

The 2014 edition of the “GOC Order of Operations” chart can be found in Appendix G.

The Group Notification System and Tracking Database

By AMC standards, groups are defined as six or more people affiliated with an organization, such as summer camps, Boy Scouts of America, or college outing clubs (Figure 9). If a group wishes to use AMC managed campsites, they can find information pertaining to group use at <http://www.outdoors.org/lodging/campsites/>. All information pertaining to group policies and notifications can be found under the Resources & Information section. There, a visitor will be directed to the Group Notification System section, where a group representative can check the online availability chart and [online notification form](#). The information submitted through the online notification form is sent to the GOC. Notifications are predominantly received by use of the online GNS form. Contact information including telephone extension and email address is listed on the GNS webpage, and notifications are occasionally sent in via phone or direct email to the GOC.

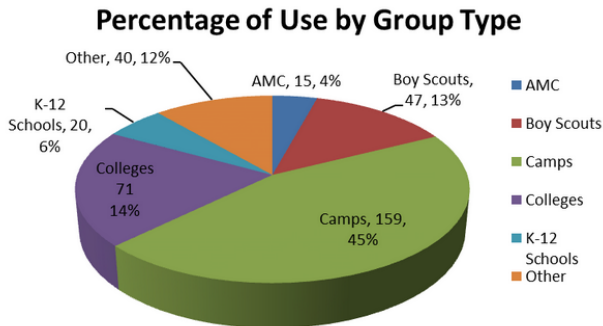


Figure 9 - 2011 Percentage of Use of Backcountry Campsites by Group Type

Once the GOC has received a notification, he or she enters it into the group tracking database. The database is an Excel spreadsheet detailing the group and number of people by date and site. This spreadsheet is color-coded to relay varying degrees of campsite availability. The color-coding is programmed into the spreadsheet and is tailored to both the capacity of each individual campsite and to busier periods of non-group use such as weekends. As the GOC enters group notifications the colors change. Green means there is space for groups, yellow signifies limited group space, red means the site is full, and black signifies the site is “crowded” or beyond capacity. The formulas in the spreadsheet adjust the color of a site on a given day when a group is added, so green becomes yellow once a group notifies and, depending on the site’s capacity, red with the addition of a second group. Weekends are always marked as having limited space due to the anticipated high use of individuals. Figure 10 demonstrates a week of entries in the GOC’s tracking database. The names of the groups have been altered for demonstration purposes. This Excel spreadsheet is edited to hide the identities of the groups, changed to a PDF document, and sent to the

July												
	Tuesday 7/1		Wednesday 7/2		Thursday 7/3		Friday 7/4		Saturday 7/5		Sunday 7/6	
Shelter	Group Name	Size	Group Name	Size	Group Name	Size	Group Name	Size	Group Name	Size	Group Name	Size
Eliza	Camp NH	10										
	Camp NH	10										
	Status	Crowded	Available		Available		Limited		Limited		Available	
Kinsman			Camp NH	10								
	Status	Available	Limited		Available		Limited		Limited		Available	
Liberty			Camp VT	10	Camp VT	10	Social Group Troop	5 7				
	Status	Available	Limited		Limited		Full		Limited		Available	
Garfield	Camp VT	10	Camp NH	10	Camp MA	10	Camp NH	12	Blaze	5		
	Camp ME	10	Camp MA	11	Camp NH	11						
	Camp NH	10										
	Status	Crowded	Full		Full		Limited		Limited		Available	
13 Falls	Camp VT	10										
	Status	Full	Available		Available		Limited		Limited		Available	
Guyot	Camp ME	8	Camp NH	10							Blaze	5
	Camp MA	11	Camp VT	10	Camp MA	8						
	Camp NH	10	Camp NY	11								
	Status	Full	Crowded		Available		Limited		Limited		Limited	
Ethan												
	Status	Available	Available		Available		Limited		Limited		Available	
Nauman												
	Status	Available	Available		Available		Limited		Limited		Available	
Imp												
	Status	Available	Available		Available		Limited		Limited		Available	
	Status	Available	Available		Available		Limited		Limited		Available	

Figure 10 - Group Tracking Database Spreadsheet

AMC’s web production associate, who posts it as the availability chart (Figure 11). The GOC sends a PDF version of the availability chart to the web associate twice a week, normally Mondays and Thursdays, and it is posted on AMC’s website. The chart may be updated more than twice a week if there is a major change to site availability.

A group leader may study the availability chart prior to notifying and contact the GOC with any questions regarding availability at a given site. Groups frequently contact the GOC directly asking about sites that are yellow or red (signifying limited or no availability).

AMC Backcountry Campsites Group Use Availability Chart July 2014

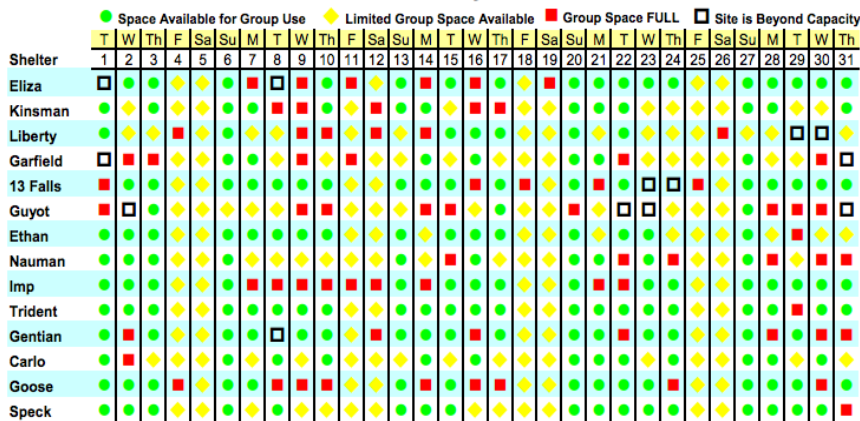


Figure 11 - GNS Availability Chart

The GOC then begins a dialogue with those prospective groups about their camping options. For some sites, the database becomes red (full) with the insertion of three groups, however, Garfield can accommodate roughly five groups as it is equipped with five large platforms that were specifically designed with groups in mind.

Therefore, if a group wants to stay at Garfield on a night marked red but there is limited overflow space, the GOC may inform them of the campsite's availability.

The group tracking database is also used to relay notifications to caretakers daily. The AMC backcountry campsite department coordinators communicate

group information during morning radio call to the 9 out of 14 sites staffed with caretakers. While caretakers cannot reserve tent sites for those who have used the GNS, they have a better idea of how many visitors will be at their site each night so they can place visitors accordingly.

Notifications for the remaining five sites in the Mahoosucs (Trident, Gentian, Carlo, Goose, Speck) and Eliza Brook campsite that are unstaffed remain documented in the database and monitored just the same for overcrowding. If one of those sites receives multiple notifications or if a particular group is seemingly needy, the AMC's Mahoosuc rover (similar to a ridgerunner) will attempt to reach those groups on the dates notified. The Kinsman Pond caretaker is also responsible for Eliza Brook and can be notified of overcrowding via morning radio call. At times the group outreach coordinator has covered unstaffed sites during high-use nights. Due to staff scheduling or backcountry location, it is not always possible to ensure an AMC staff member is present at the unstaffed sites during periods of high use.

Group Feedback and Interaction in the Field

AMC caretakers interact with groups in the field, and their role is to continue the good relationship started by the GOC through positive interactions and educational opportunities, to educate groups that did not go through the GNS about the program, and to provide feedback for all groups.

AMC caretakers are trained to interact with groups, and all visitors in the field, in a proactive and educational manner. They are skilled in one-on-one outreach and building trust, and are given the tools and information during caretaker training to successfully interact with hikers and groups in the field in a positive and nonconfrontational manner. They regularly lead Leave No Trace programming for groups and assist with backcountry living and travelling skills.

Caretakers also fill out feedback forms for each group, which they submit to the GOC. These forms have changed over time to better reflect what groups want to hear, and hone in on Leave No Trace ethics. The benefit of using a combination of a scoring system and a comment section is that it creates a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The downside is that the numerical association with "excellent behaviors" can differ among the caretakers, making it somewhat subjective. In situations of serious inconsistency, the GOC will reach out for clarification from the field coordinator, the backcountry resource conservation manager, or the caretakers themselves. See Appendix H for an example of the AMC's Backcountry Campsite Group Feedback Form.

The GOC receives feedback from groups and enters the scores into a feedback database and organizes it by group. At the conclusion of the season the GOC compiles the group feedback from each organization to provide individual leaders with feedback as well as an overall organization average score for each component of Leave No Trace. This feedback is sent out primarily to high-use college and camp groups, however feedback for social groups or low-use groups is sent out on an as-needed basis depending on their behaviors.

If a group does not use the group notification system, a caretaker will document this on the group's feedback form. Ideally, the caretaker informs the group of the notification system either verbally or by distributing the "How to Notify" sheet (Appendix I) to the group leader. The caretaker will then document which action was taken so the GOC can follow up with the group or organization with an email introducing him/herself and containing necessary links.

How has the system changed over time?

The Evolution of the Group Outreach Coordinator Position

The AMC's group management strategy and the group outreach coordinator position continue evolving. Since 2000, when the designated seasonal position of group outreach coordinator was created, it has adapted to specific variables per season. Shifting the group outreach duties from the backcountry campsite field coordinator to this designated seasonal employee allowed for a more focused approach to group management.

Since 2000, the group outreach coordinator position has adapted to unique variables per season, such as site use levels and need, funding, or employee schedules, therefore the AMC has adjusted the position's hours and length of season accordingly. The GOC has also been creatively combined with other seasonal positions and responsibilities. In 2014, the position merged with the AMC's Teen Wilderness Adventure (TWA) Program. The GOC's work with TWA blended nicely with the work for the backcountry campsite department, as both require a certain level of customer service and interpersonal relations with visitors to the White Mountain National Forest. Through the creation of this new position and blending the differing job responsibilities, the GOC could look at both departments' practices with group use at the backcountry campsites. Over time, this will prove to be instrumental in developing each department's sense of empathy and understanding for the other department by serving as a bridge between backcountry resource management and adventure recreation programming.

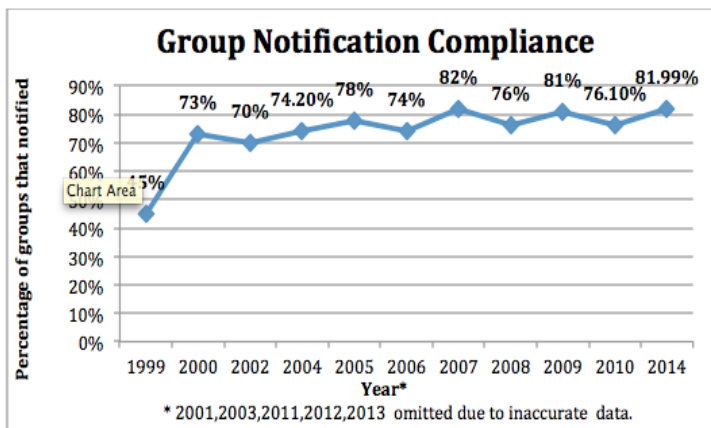


Figure 12 - AMC GNS Compliance Rate

Changes in the Outreach Process

One significant change to the AMC's group management strategy has been with the practice of carrying out initial outreach to groups. Presently, the percentage of group compliance with the group notification system is 81.99%. Figure 12 shows AMC's GNS compliance rate history. This compliance rate has developed from 14 years of active engagement with groups and the promotion of the GNS. During recent years (2010–present), the initial outreach to groups, with the exception of college groups, has become less of a priority. As the popularity of the GNS increases, the AMC has focused more efforts on field interaction and post trip communications.

Early in the creation of the notification system, mailings were sent out to select camp groups to raise awareness on the notification system (Appendix J). With recurring use of the AMC's backcountry campsites by many of the groups, the notification process has become integrated as a part of a visiting group's trip planning process. Initial communications with college groups have remained a priority because their attendance at AMC sites is concentrated to a few weeks, which requires a lot of planning on the part of both the AMC and the college groups to avoid overcrowding.

The emphasis on targeting college outing groups has developed as more colleges utilize the AMC sites for orientation trips. While the AMC experiences a high volume of groups from summer camps, the impact of college orientation trips tends to put more of strain on the Trail and sites because of the concentrated times in which the groups visit. College orientation weeks are normally mid-August to the first week of September, so it can be anticipated well in advance when these groups will occupy sites. Over the past several years, a system to reach out to colleges early with general behavior reminders and current campsite availability has become a necessity to accommodate all of the groups. Colleges are the only population to which the AMC sends monthly updates of campsite availability for the weeks of orientation trips, so trip leaders can create their itineraries accordingly. A copy of the "College Bonanza" emailing can be found in Appendix K. Since the AMC has placed such a large emphasis

on college orientation groups, it has become evident that these monthly updates and reminders with trip planning information are being included in the college trip leader trainings and itinerary planning procedures.

As a part of the effort to maximize effective communication with college groups, the AMC's backcountry campsite program has made an effort to attend the Outdoor Orientation Program Symposium (OOPS). The symposium is facilitated by Brent Bell, associate professor of outdoor education, who runs the University of New Hampshire's orientation program. It exists for the leaders and coordinators of collegiate outdoor orientation trips to discuss the particulars of such trips. Bell has expressed interest in working with the AMC backcountry campsites program to better prepare college groups for using the AMC campsites. In the past, participation in the backcountry campsite program has fluctuated and was limited to participating as an attendee. However, the AMC hopes to have a more constructive presence by serving as a presenter at the symposium in 2015 and in future years. This will allow the AMC and other Trail clubs to have more of a voice at the symposium, which will provide a platform to touch on specific issues regarding the relationship of land managing agency to visitor. By establishing a stronger presence at OOPS, the AMC will, ideally, conduct a constructive dialogue with orientation program directors to ensure a more positive experience for all parties involved.

Future recommendations

As the AMC's group management system continues to evolve and grow, a few shortcomings with the process have been observed. The overall execution of the group management strategy could be streamlined if the following steps were undertaken:

- Instead of having the GOC send an updated version of the campsite availability chart to the AMC's web associate at the Boston Office, he or she could have direct access to the website to update the chart as needed. This would decrease any lag time between emailing the PDF to the web associate and him/her posting it to the website. Visitors would then have access to the most current information. In order to accomplish this, AMC would need to change its web policy, which could occur as AMC continues to upgrade and change the website and staff access to it. Other programs at AMC (e.g., volunteer trail opportunities) also could benefit from the same access.
- The GOC could develop a more effective way to receive change in itineraries or notifications. With the advancement of technology, one idea worth entertaining would be to supply the GOC with an AMC cell phone that receives emails and texts, so if a group realizes they need to change their itinerary in the backcountry they would have the option to text/email the GOC. Another, perhaps more realistic, approach would be to remind groups to communicate changes in itineraries to caretakers so they can update the GOC and other caretakers about updated itineraries.

Section 2.4: Maine Appalachian Trail Club

Brief history of group use

The Maine Appalachian Trail Club is a volunteer, public service organization in its 78th year. Its mission is to build, protect, and maintain the Appalachian Trail in Maine. MATC maintains 267 miles of the A.T. and more than 40 miles of side trails, from Grafton Notch State Park in the south to Katahdin in Baxter State Park.

The club's group outreach program was developed as an extension of the caretaker program in the mid-90s, while the caretaker program itself had grown from the club's Trail crew program. In 1975, it was observed that Maine was experiencing an increase in use, but the club was not responding. In 1975, James Mitchell was installed as the caretaker at Avery Memorial Campsite in Bigelow Col (inhabiting the Col concurrently with the fire warden), after the AMC Trail Crew had done extensive work on the Fire Warden's Trail in the years previous, and as the AMC installed other caretakers in Maine at Speck Pond and at sites to the south in the White Mountains. James Mitchell moved to Horns Pond for the 1976 season to address higher use there. The Student Conservation Association (SCA) began to provide interns to join him in 1977, eventually forming a crew that included trail work and rotating caretakers at Piazza Rock and Gulf Hagas. Once that program of one direct employee and several SCA interns was in place, its oversight was transferred to MATC.

During the same time period, MATC established a volunteer caretaker program at Avery Memorial Campsite in Bigelow Col starting in 1977. That separate program comprised hundreds of volunteers who would head to the Col for weekends or whole weeks as available. That program had no connection to the Trail-crew/caretaker program

based on the same mountain. The system lasted from 1977–1990, when the SCA could no longer provide MATC with interns. In 1990, ATC suggested MATC utilize a Konnarock Trail crew model¹, which the club is still using.

With a new system of volunteers, the Trail crew and caretaker committees worked together on a unified front from 1990–1992. In 1992, the Trail crew and caretaker committee divided into separate entities to focus on matters more specific to each group. For the caretaker committee, this meant finding funding to pay for dedicated seasonal caretakers. A new position was in part created to write grants to fund the caretaker program.

With funding in place from various organizations and grants, the caretaker program stationed three caretakers. The three sites were identified for different reasons, but all were experiencing concentrated visitor impact. Horns Pond, the first of the staffed campsites, can accommodate approximately 50 people on a given night. Piazza Rock, while a smaller campsite, was identified as needing a caretaker to manage its popularity among groups. Lastly, Gulf Hagas is staffed with a caretaker or ridgerunner who spends time hiking highly impacted trails. The impact to Gulf Hagas is due to its popularity with day-use visitors.

In the mid-90s, caretaker Heather Mirczak expanded her role to incorporate Leave No Trace training. She took the initiative to reach out to groups and make herself available to teach Leave No Trace and backcountry skills. During that time, Heather also helped develop the group registration system, which then became a volunteer's responsibility.

That same volunteer has now managed MATC's group registration system for approximately 10 years. The group outreach program was initially created in response to the large numbers of summer camps utilizing the sites in the region. Initial outreach was made to targeted summer camp groups known to conduct trips on that section of Trail.

Due to the MATC's organizational structure, all group outreach is conducted by a volunteer, with group feedback follow-up carried out by the club's one part-time staff member, the club coordinator. The basic notion behind the implementation of the group registration system was to actively engage targeted groups and assist with itinerary planning. Early on, groups used several communication channels, including telephone and email. Now, the club has begun to streamline the communication process by emphasizing the importance of emailing itineraries to the group registration volunteer.

What was the need for the system?

The MATC reports that groups make up 40% of the Trail traffic in its area of supervision. In the mid-90s, caretakers were reporting an increase in groups as well as certain group behaviors that were impacting the sites and the Trail. The club therefore began to figure out what could be done to help educate groups about how to conduct themselves in the backcountry.

What is the system?

Information on the MATC's group registration system can be found at <http://www.matc.org/for-hikers/group-registration/>. The webpage provides the contact information for the MATC's group registration volunteer and directions for what to include in the email notification. Groups are asked to email the group registration volunteer (lesstraveledway@roadrunner.com) one week prior to their trip date and provide the organization name, contact information, the size of the group, and intended use dates and sites. This system is voluntary and does not reserve a site. However, it is a great communication tool. The MATC will inform the group if overcrowding is an issue and provide advice on itinerary planning.

The MATC's Caretaker and Ridgerunner Education Committee (CARE) is responsible for overseeing the club's outreach and caretaker/ridgerunner program for all visitors. The purpose of the CARE's outreach is to mitigate human impact on the Appalachian Trail in Maine, protecting alpine areas, water resources, wildlife habitat, and the wilderness experience for other hikers. The program piggybacks on the well-regarded national Leave No Trace

¹ Konnarock is the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's flagship crew program, founded in 1983 and named after its original base camp in southwest Virginia. The crew works on the Appalachian Trail from Rockfish Gap, near Waynesboro, Virginia, to the Trail's southern terminus at Springer Mountain in Georgia. The program is a joint venture of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the 12 southern Trail clubs, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service.

At Konnarock, volunteers of diverse ages, backgrounds, and experience levels work together to build durable trail that will last for generations. After five days of working as a team, learning new skills, and living in the backcountry both the crew and the trail is transformed. No experience is necessary, but you must be 18 years or older. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy provides training, equipment, and room and board. Crews are transported in U.S. Forest Service vehicles from the base camp in Sugar Grove to a primitive, backcountry tent camp near the project site.

program. More information regarding MATC's incorporation of Leave No Trace in the group outreach process will be discussed in Section 3.4.

During MATC's preseason outreach, the club coordinator mails out a wilderness packet to roughly 75 organizations that sponsor trips. The packets are mailed out in late May/early June, with the mailing to colleges occurring in July. The contents of the packets include a season's welcome letter with the contact information of the group registration volunteer, a brochure highlighting Leave No Trace principles, a ferry schedule, and A.T. guidelines. A copy of MATC's preseason outreach letter can be found in Appendix N. The organizations become connected to the club via personal connections with club leaders, email or phone requests, and from meeting the caretakers on the Trail.

Once the group registration volunteer receives and approves notifications, the group information is passed on to caretakers by cell phone. The volunteer also contact the groups preregistering to better disperse overnight groups if needed. This communication is primarily accomplished via email.

When advanced notice is not possible, last minute notifications may be made, either through the official system or unofficially, because cell phone coverage is good throughout this section of Trail. Some unofficial notifications come via Stratton businesses, others from regular cell phone calls between the caretaker and the Kennebec River ferryman, and still others from the Maine Department of Public Lands' recreation ranger, who is the only other seasonal resident of the Bigelow Preserve. The ranger is resident on the edge of Flagstaff Lake, and, as many groups canoe or kayak the lake in combination with their mountain hike, regularly encounters many groups headed for MATC campsites on the mountain.

Caretakers and ridgerunners are based at Horns Pond Campsite, Piazza Rock Campsite and Gulf Hagas. The Horns Pond caretaker is responsible for managing use at multiple sites across Bigelow Mountain, including Horns Pond, Cranberry Stream, Moose Falls, Avery Memorial Campsite in Bigelow Col, Safford Notch, and Little Bigelow. The Piazza Rock caretaker covers Saddleback Mountain and spends much time on the summit. The caretaker is expected to rotate not only during the day to "ridge-run" and check on the other sites, but also to actually stay overnight at those other sites. Naturally, the proactive caretaker will try to maximize the benefits of his or her presence to the public by going to the sites where the need is.

The caretakers and ridgerunners teach Leave No Trace workshops at the campsite, manage campsites, complete evaluations of groups, and ridge-run to alpine summits. Through the CARE program, caretakers become Leave No Trace Trainers, so they are equipped with the necessary skills to deliver Leave No Trace programming and provide feedback or suggestions in a positive, nonconfrontational manner. For a sample agenda of caretaker training see Appendix O.

In keeping with the MATC's tradition of group volunteerism, caretakers and club volunteers also lead youth groups in conservation projects. For example, for more than four years, MATC has led the Dixfield High School outing club in building tent platforms and repairing shelters. In addition, for many years, Camp Tékakwitha has been regularly volunteering for the MATC. They organize long hikes along the A.T., and send several groups to volunteer under the direction of MATC's district overseer. Often their projects involve the caretaker and occur on Bigelow Mountain. Last year, one group built tent platforms at Avery Memorial Campsite in Bigelow Col, while another carried supplies and built bog bridging near Horns Pond. Past MATC caretakers have also taken on the responsibility of organizing group volunteer projects because their flexible schedule in the field and full-time seasonal employment status allows for more efficient communication than does a volunteer's schedule. Caretakers have also supervised instances of unplanned group volunteer work, such as in 2012, when volunteers under the direction of the caretaker excavated and carried down over three thousand pounds of trash that had been left in Bigelow Col throughout Avery Memorial Campsite and in the Alpine Zone of Avery Peak by the Maine Forest Service.

The MATC's objective in successful group outreach is to build relationships that continue from year to year with organizations that sponsor groups, as well as to correct for behaviors that negatively impact Maine's A.T. section. Therefore, caretakers evaluate groups at staffed sites for their Leave No Trace skills and behaviors in the field. The evaluation is an education tool designed to provide groups with feedback on their backcountry impact. It rates leadership skills, Leave No Trace practices, and group etiquette. An example of the MATC Group Evaluation form is found at Appendix P. The club coordinator mails evaluations to organizations that sponsor trips. In these communications, the club coordinator follows up with positive feedback and correcting for behaviors that negatively impact the environment.

The MATC does not track group use or feedback data, but responds to issues as they arise and strives to continue communications with groups throughout the seasons.

How has the system changed over time and what is the future of system?

The group outreach and caretaker program has experienced a few organizational changes in terms of committee membership and volunteer turnover, however the registration system has not changed other than digitizing all group information and outreach 10 years ago.

MATC has identified a few issues with the current system that will be addressed in the near future:

- As with any organization that runs on the efforts of volunteers, it can be a struggle to fill positions that are crucial to the effectiveness of the system. If in the future the volunteer who has successfully run the system for the past 10 years decides to step down, the organization must find someone to fill that role in order to maintain a relationship with the targeted groups.
- The increase in social media platforms and technological advancements has proven to be a challenge for the MATC. The club identifies the need for personnel who are technologically efficient and can move freely between social media and other communication channels. In addition, most of the group leaders who utilize the Trail are in the generation where instant communication is expected. With the increase in cell coverage along the Trail, the MATC anticipates having to adjust to the visitor's need to be in constant contact with caretakers or club representatives.
- Considering the success of caretaker-group volunteer projects, some members of the MATC would like to see the club make an effort to reach out to well-known organized groups in order to plan volunteer projects to be arranged between those groups and caretakers, as the groups and the resource both benefit from such activity. Ideally, this would help establish an ethic whereby large organized groups specifically, and the hiking public in general, come to expect to lend a hand for the resource they enjoy. While practice of the Leave No Trace principles aims to decrease the visitor's impact, hikers can indeed have a positive impact. The removal of tons of trash from Bigelow Mountain by volunteers in 2012 suggests that the hikers' impact there and then was not only zero, but positive.

Section 3 – Recommendations and Comparisons for Group Outreach

Section 3.1: ATC Policy on Organized Group Use

Adopted by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in March 2015

Introductory Remarks Applicable to all Appalachian Trail Conservancy Policies

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), a §501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, works closely with Appalachian Trail clubs and public and private partners to ensure the protection and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and experiential resources of the Appalachian Trail National Scenic Trail (ANST, A.T. or the “Trail”). Approximately fifty federal, state, or other public agencies have authority or jurisdiction over lands and resources within the protected A.T. corridor. ATC has a central management role by virtue of its Cooperative Agreement with the USDI National Park Service and its close working partnership with the USDA Forest Service and other agencies. ATC’s mission is: “To preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail—ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow and for centuries to come.” ATC policies are meant to provide guidance for (a) dissemination to the public, (b) use and implementation by the ATC and A.T. clubs, and (c) managers of land-management and other agencies. It is the agencies, however, who work within their defined procedures to propose, administer, and enforce public policy. ATC policies are recommendations developed to support appropriate, coordinated management.

Policy Statement

Definition and Purpose

“Organized group use” is defined as recreation use sponsored by a nonprofit organization, business, or government agency. Anticipating shifting demographics in the United States and the growing need to ensure the relevancy of the Trail for visitors of all ages and backgrounds, ATC supports carefully managed organized group uses that do not result in significant adverse effects either to Trail resources or the Trail experience. Such carefully managed group uses (a) accommodate new users, (b) assure resource protection, (c) provide recreation opportunities for both existing and potential users, and (d) protect the opportunity for the traditional “Trail experience” as described in the 1997 [Policy on the A.T. Experience and Non-Hiking Recreational Uses of Trail Lands](#).

Benefits of Organized Group Use

Organized group use, whether for profit or not-for-profit, can have many benefits including promoting safe, responsible use of the Trail and advancing “Leave No Trace” practices, offering enriched appreciation of the outdoors through interpretation of the area’s natural and cultural history, educating youth, promoting development of a conservation ethic through direct contact with wild-land settings, and helping people connect with nature and develop a sense of their own roles and responsibilities within the larger community of life. Other potential benefits include assistance with monitoring Trail conditions, reporting illegal activity, and performing other essential A.T. management services such as trail maintenance, campsite restoration, and contributing to the economies of rural areas and A.T. Communities™.

Challenges Related to Organized Group Use

Poorly managed organized group use on the A.T. can disproportionately impact natural and cultural resources as well as the Trail experience for all hikers—especially along narrow, remote, or difficult sections of the Trail where hiker densities are relatively low. Impacts from group use can be particularly high at campsites and shelters. Since organized group use often may be serial—that is, a group sponsor might field multiple outings over the course of a season (e.g., weekly summer camp trips)—mistakes are potentially repeated at the same sites time after time.

Requirements for Organized Group Use

A voluntary trip-notification program and, where required, an agency-established permit, should be established for organized groups of 6 or more on overnight visits, and 15 or more on day visits. Consideration of social and natural-resource carrying capacities should be made before a permit is issued.

This Policy on Organized Group Use reaffirms the guidance on group size limitations contained in ATC's 1993 Policy on Special Events and Large Group Use, which states that camping groups should not exceed 10 persons at any one overnight use area, and day use should not exceed 25 persons at any one location, except when a land-managing agency regulation establishes a different limit. Organized groups should be well-acquainted with Leave No Trace practices and voluntary Trail stewardship opportunities prior to embarking on their trips, and should practice both while on the Trail.

Groups of 6 or more, whether "organized" or not, are strongly encouraged to use group campsites where they exist. Land-managing agencies, the ATC and A.T. clubs should work toward designating appropriate locations for group camping for groups of 6 or more. To avoid groups "taking over" the limited space available at shelters, any group of 6 or more should plan to camp in tents they carry, rather than staying in shelters.

Races, Competitive Events, Fundraising Events, Emergency Services Training Events, and other Special Event Group Activities

These activities tend to interrupt the normal use of the Trail, and/or cause significant adverse effects to natural, cultural, and experiential resources. To prevent those interruptions and adverse effects, these activities should be prohibited except:

1. at a time, location, and manner specifically allowed in law; or
2. with concurrence of the ATC and the relevant land-managing agencies, when an activity is an authorized administrative use of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST); or
3. when the relevant land-managing agency has issued a valid permit or written agreement authorizing the activity and the activity both supports the purposes of the ANST and will be conducted in a manner such that it does not cause significant adverse effects to the Trail's natural, cultural, or experiential resources.

Additionally, while ATC recognizes that many other organizations are interested in fundraising activities unrelated to the administration of the Appalachian Trail, fundraising of this sort should not occur within the boundaries of the Trail corridor or the Trail management area.

ATC shall work with clubs and land management agencies to develop procedures to implement this policy.

Section 3.2: Group Use Campsite Designs

This section is intended to provide guidance for campsite design as well as case studies from around New England that cover a spectrum of campsite management.

Appalachian Trail Group Use Campsite Design Guidance

By Jeff Marion and Tom Banks, with additions by Hawk Metheny and Sally Manikian

Purpose

This guidance has been developed to facilitate the selection, design, construction, and maintenance of sustainable group use campsites along the A.T., in concert with the 2015 [ATC Policy on Organized Group Use](#) (Appendix A). Organized groups provide an important service in connecting new visitors, principally youth, to protected natural areas. Improving the management of group use and providing group use campsites will improve conditions at existing non-group overnight camping areas and enhance the A.T. experience for all hikers.

Organized groups have a long history of A.T. use and participation, often in high use areas, and have occasionally been cited as contributing to crowding, conflicts, and resource impacts. However, many organized groups are active partners in teaching and ensuring the application of the best available Leave No Trace outdoor practices among thousands of new A.T. visitors. Organized groups can partner with the A.T. community and assist in Trail stewardship by helping to identify locations for new group use campsites and aid in their design, construction and maintenance.

Sustainable Group Use Campsites

This guidance is intended to support and complement the guidance previously provided in the November 3, 2007 ATC Stewardship Council document, ["Guidance for Locating and Designing A.T. Shelters and Formal Campsites"](#)

and the Leave No Trace information found at <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/hiking/hiking-basics/leave-no-trace-practices>, including the pamphlet, “Leave No Trace on the Appalachian Trail: Guidelines for Groups” (Appendix T).

The principal concerns with group use along the A.T. center around experiential and resource impacts at overnight shelters and campsites. Unless carefully managed, organized group use can contribute to overcrowding, conflicts related to camping capacity or noise, and resource impacts, particularly the proliferation and enlargement of campsites.

There is general agreement that organized groups should avoid use of A.T. shelters, and, whenever possible should camp in areas that are separate from other A.T. visitors. This guidance supports the development of new group use campsites placed in the areas most visited by organized groups, with a strong emphasis on avoiding or minimizing associated resource impacts. We acknowledge that often this work is happening within existing sites that have limitations such as terrain or property boundaries, and you may have to work with what you have. The dual objectives of developing group use campsites are to shift existing group use to more sustainable facilities, and to accommodate additional group use where appropriate and sustainable.

Land managers and A.T. club members are urged to reach out to the organized groups that commonly visit their area to enlist their support as partners in identifying where group use campsites are to be located, designed, constructed, and maintained. Such collaborations should also develop a long-term relationship that promotes A.T. stewardship and the training of organized group leaders and their participants in applying the best available Leave No Trace practices.

Location Guidance - Analysis of Supply and Demand

Typically, A.T. land managers and club members will begin by inventorying A.T. segments and overnight camping locations that have traditionally received high use by organized groups. These should be categorized with respect to amount of use and/or the perceived severity of experiential or resource impact problems. Some of these campsites may have already been “designated” for group use; others are sufficiently large and isolated from shelters and other campsites that they could be converted into designated group use campsites, provided they meet most of the criteria listed below. An inventory process should be conducted to identify these campsites. Protocols to guide such an inventory should be distributed to the A.T. clubs to ensure a uniform approach (see *Group Site Inventory Manual* [Appendix R] and A.T. Campsite and Recreation Site Assessment Monitoring Form [Appendix S]). Providing group use campsites in non-Wilderness areas that do not currently receive much group use might also be a good way to shift groups away from popular and overcrowded areas.

Next, land managers or club members should compile a listing of the most common organized groups in their area and contact them to enlist their support. The task is to identify where group use campsites should be designated or constructed. Potential locational guidance includes:

- Areas that have received the most substantial group use in the past or that have experienced the most resource or social impacts. Determine, usually with a NEPA categorical exclusion or an environmental assessment, whether continued use at this location will likely result in overall positive or negative effects on the combined natural, cultural, and recreation/experiential resource conditions. This determination will then lead to a conclusion whether to designate and improve the site for group use, or to rehabilitate the site and promote its return to natural, undeveloped conditions.
- Accessibility—ease of access to construct and maintain group use campsites, for safety/emergency reasons, or for close vehicle support (if appropriate) when using the campsites. *Note: while group use campsites should be relatively close to the A.T., they could be located outside the A.T. corridor on adjacent public lands.*
- Campsite sustainability is substantially enhanced when the campsites are located in areas of low site expansion potential, i.e., site enlargement is limited by topography or rockiness. Selecting an area with lots of available rock for creating campsite and trail borders is also quite beneficial. Vegetation loss can be minimized by placing campsites in open areas that have substantial grass cover.
- Campsites ideally should be located 0.3 to 0.5 miles off the Appalachian Trail. This minimizes resource impact through discouraging casual use by day hikers, as well as improves the privacy of the visitor experience at the site.
- Group use campsites should generally be located apart from existing A.T. shelters and campsites. However, co-location with existing shelters or campsites may be desirable to share facilities (water sources,

toilets, food storage), but only when they can be physically separated enough to avoid problems related to visitor crowding and conflict (e.g. noise).

- The presence of a permanent water source is highly preferred. The ability to locate, construct, and maintain handicapped accessible toilet facilities is almost always required, particularly for newly constructed facilities.
- Use of existing campsites should only be considered if they satisfy these requirements; developing new campsites is acceptable and may be preferred.
- Group use sites need to be located away from known areas of ecological, historic, or archaeological significance.

Design Guidance

Design considerations should take into consideration the capacity of the maintaining club to both build and maintain. This section addresses new site construction and work within existing sites.

New Site Construction

Involving the local organized group leaders in the campsite design process can help ensure that campsites will address the groups' needs and facilitate their support in fundraising, construction, and ongoing maintenance. One of the most important considerations in designing group campsites, as well as ensuring they are well-separated from shelters and non-group campsites, is to ensure that they will not expand over time. Site expansion and traffic can be restricted by taking advantage of topography, employing sidehill construction, using raised or clearly marked tent pads, or embedding large rocks or anchored logs to mark trail and campsite borders. Sufficient capacity should be provided to accommodate the intended amount of use, configuration of campsites, and number of tent pads.

Carefully design traffic flow within the group camping area through placement of campsites and trails. Employ side-hill trail design whenever practical, as this better contains traffic to the designed tread and assures improved drainage of water off the trail. Decide on the need and type of campsite infrastructure such as toilet facilities, food storage boxes or cables, and rock work to harden stream/spring access. For example, in the group site diagram below, note the arrangement of facilities and trails that prevent traffic through campsites and facilitate access to the creek for water. Designs will vary but they should always try to anticipate and provide for optimal traffic patterns that avoid campsite expansion or the proliferation of visitor-created informal trails (also called "social trails").

Where fires are legal, campfire pits should be located within the campsites but at a sufficient distance from tent pads so that embers do not ruin tents. Large flat rocks can also be placed in the vicinity of the campfire ring to facilitate the concentration of stove cooking activities in the same area, which separates the cooking and tenting areas in bear country as well as along all of the A.T.

Finally, if the campsites are to be accessible by vehicles, a clearly defined parking location needs to be developed—preferably out-of-sight and more than 100 yards from the campsites to promote a backcountry setting.

Modification of existing sites:

- Identify average use and peak use. Average use will set the level of infrastructure to be built, and peak use will set the level of overflow availability.
- Relocate platforms if possible to incorporate sustainable design considerations above.
- Group sites should be located at the beginning of a linear site, and as separate as possible from single sites. Separation can be created through vegetation screening and taking advantage of natural features.



- Rehabilitate impacted areas by transplanting trees to the area, adding brush, and/or planting rock ("ice-berging"). Add a sign if necessary and appropriate.
- Have an on-site educational presence (volunteer or staff or land manager partner) during busy weekends to help manage use.

Construction Guidance

The time invested in the construction of impact-resistant campsite infrastructure is redeemed later when the good design eliminates the need to later restore impacted resources and reconfigure sites and trails. Use the

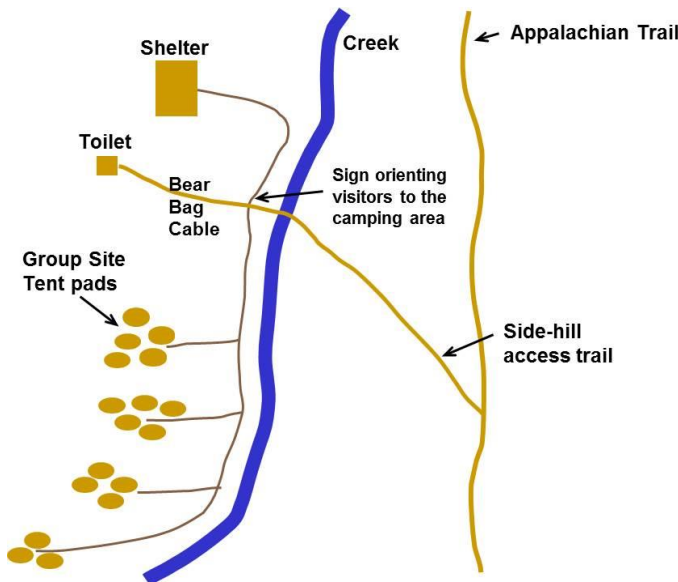


Figure 13 - Example of Overnight Site with Group Tent Pads

largest available or movable rocks when constructing borders, and use rocks instead of wood whenever possible. When logs are used as borders select the largest available rot-resistant materials, such as cedar, and anchor the logs with rebar (avoided within designated Wilderness) so that visitors cannot move or burn them. Facilities should be primitive and rustic in appearance, avoiding use of dimensional lumber within Wilderness and elsewhere when possible. Site boundaries should be sinuous and natural, not straight or angular.

Campsites and trails should be constructed to sustain heavy traffic during all seasons and for several decades of use. Full-bench construction of trails and tent-pads is preferred, and native mineral soil mixed with gravel provides the most durable substrate. Do not use organic soils or mulches as these are easily displaced, stay wet, or decompose to muck. Carefully consider and plan for good drainage during heavy rainstorms, using rockwork to channel water and prevent erosion. All tent pads should be smooth and gently sloped or crowned to provide comfort and good drainage. Fire rings should be small (~2.5 ft. diameter) to limit campfire size and securely anchored to prevent movement.

Maintenance Guidance

Like trails, campsites require routine annual maintenance, including:

- Cleaning of drainage ditches and channels
- Smoothing and restoring tent pads
- Rockwork to address soil displacement and erosion or to establish trail and campsite boundaries, including embedding "ice-berged" rocks to discourage site expansion and tenting in adjacent off-site areas,
- Fixing broken facility infrastructure
- Cleaning out fire rings
- Managing toilet waste decomposition
- Installing/updating signs about site use and Leave No Trace practices
- Removing litter

Visitor Management

It is recommended that group campsites be managed under a voluntary (or mandatory, where necessary) registration system, whereby all groups can check a website to see if there is space available for their group. Some regulations should be considered, such as limitation on the number of groups, group size, and restricting tents/tarps/hammocks to the designated sites (an overflow area may be possible, particularly if there is an open meadow nearby). Direct motorized access, campfires outside of steel fire rings, and woods tools (axes and saws used for chopping trees or collecting too-large firewood rather than for trail maintenance) should be prohibited. Safe food and trash storage should be required.

Organized group leaders should be trained in Leave No Trace at the Trainer or Master Educator level, and they should be expected to teach and ensure the application of Leave No Trace practices by all campsite visitors. It may even be possible to require the signing of a “declaration” to this effect by any leader who desires to reserve a group use site. The most comprehensive A.T. Leave No Trace 11"x17" sign should be posted at each group use campsite and a supply of generic Leave No Trace hangtags might also be placed in a dispenser box for campers to take (except in Wilderness). All campsite visitors should be asked to leave a clean campsite and fire pit.

Section 3.3 - Group Use Campsite Case Studies

Examples of group use management at campsites have been grouped into three general categories:

- The exemplary site: These are sites that have great site designs, a level of development that matches the use and visitor actions, and are enjoyable for the visitor and easy for the maintainer to maintain.
- The good-but-not-perfect site: These sites are middle-of-the-road. There are some nagging problems (e.g. site design or location), but, for the most part, techniques were developed to moderate some of these problems. These sites are often sites that were modified over time to “work with what we got.”
- Sites that are an ongoing challenge and pose difficulty: These are sites that just don’t work for anyone. They are not pleasant for the visitor experience, use of the site inevitably leads to impact to the resource, and it is difficult for the steward to stem the tide of impact.

Many of these examples are examples of modifications of existing sites, as New England campsites have been used for over a hundred years. These examples, from the Green Mountain Club and the Appalachian Mountain Club, are organized by the categories listed above.

Exemplary sites:

These are sites that have great site designs, a level of development that matches the use and visitor actions, and are enjoyable for the visitor and easy for the maintainer to maintain.

Little Rock Pond (GMC)

Infrastructure:

Two overnight sites

- Shelter site on west bank, intended for individuals or small groups
 - Three-sided “Nantahala” shelter with covered porch (fits 16)
 - 3 single platforms (8'x10')
 - Composting outhouse
 - Washpit
- Tenting area on north bank, intended for organized or large groups
 - 1 single platform (8'x10') and 1 double platform (10'x16')
 - Moldering outhouse
 - Washpit

Average annual use: 450

On-site caretaker early July–mid October.

Until relatively recently, overnight use at Little Rock Pond was concentrated at two small shelters, one at each end of the pond but both on or near the L.T./A.T. There was no designated group use area, and the “perfect storm” of A.T. thruhikers, L.T. thruhikers, local section hikers, and camp or college group use frequently overwhelmed the site’s capacity. In 2010, both shelters were removed. A new 16-person shelter was built near the A.T. on the west bank with three nearby tent platforms. Materials from one of the old shelters were used to create an additional

tenting area with two platforms on a spur trail on the north bank. The large shelter provides space for thruhikers, section-hikers, etc., with the surrounding platforms creating a durable option for those who want to escape from black flies. The separate tenting area is ideal for group use, as it isolates a large group from both other overnight traffic staying at the shelter and other hikers who are traveling on the A.T.

Imp Campsite (AMC)

Infrastructure:

- Four sided shelter (fits 12)
- 5 platforms
 - 4 single (8'x10')
 - 1 double (10'x16')
- Composting outhouse
- Bear box, wash pit

Average annual use: 800

On-site caretaker June–early September.

Imp campsite is an example of a rebuilt, relocated, and redesigned campsite. The original use was visitor-created sites around a shelter. The site was relocated and rebuilt to include the ideal aspects of campsite layouts as described above. Imp has a linear design, separates groups and single parties, is located off-trail, and side-hills across the slope. Visitor use is concentrated in the summer months, but during lower use seasons there is no on-site presence. The design of the site has prevented major erosion or impact in the absence of an authoritative presence.

Good but not perfect sites:

These sites are example of the middle-of-the-road. There are some nagging problems (e.g. site design or location), but for the most part techniques were developed to moderate some of these problems. These sites are often sites that were modified over time to "work with what we got."

Goddard Shelter on Glastenbury Mtn (GMC)

Infrastructure:

- Three sided timber-frame shelter built in 2005 (sleeps 12)
- 0 platforms but plenty of tenting available
- Moldering outhouse
- Bear box

Average annual use guestimate: 600-700. This site is less than ½ mile from a fire tower, so it is immensely popular. No on-site caretaker, monitored and maintained by volunteer adopters and roving field assistants.

Goddard is a site that has not been modified over time but does provide some vertical separation of private campsites. Much of the use is associated with A.T. and L. T. travel, but the Glastenbury Wilderness, with its rare loop-hike opportunity, sees its share of additional use. The site layout is less than ideal, in that much of the camping is to either side of the hiking trail above the shelter, with the east side of the trail directly above the spring. The privy is appropriately located downhill of all of the camping area and situated adequately to the west of the spring. Some use is diverted to the summit, thanks to the fire tower. Most southern Vermont high summits are quite flat and make attractive bootleg camping areas. The fir forest at the summit has many openings, likely owing to generations of campsite use. The site is also accessed by a snowmobile trail in winter. Technically, the shelter and the fire tower are just outside the Wilderness boundary. This site can absorb a lot of use, however, ideally we would visit more regularly to patrol for trash. We will have to figure out how to access the privy pile when its time comes due. The shortest administrative access is approximately a 4-mile trip each way with a high potential of puncturing an oil pan.

Carlo Col (AMC)

Infrastructure:

- Four sided shelter (fits 10)
- 5 platforms
 - 3 single
 - 2 double
- Composting outhouse
- Bear box

Average annual use: 600–700

No on-site caretaker, monitored and maintained by roving caretaker.

Carlo Col campsite is a site that has been modified over time to protect the resource and promote visitor experience. Like most sites, Carlo Col initially was a shelter that attracted sprawling use. When the shelter was rebuilt and relocated, the open and impacted area of the old shelter site was hardened into a tent site. The site layout is less than ideal, while it is a mostly linear design, the site curves around and promotes shortcuts between the double platforms behind the shelter to the outhouse. A large flat area next to one of the double platforms often becomes over-used by large groups as a cook area, as well as travel between the platforms that are near each other and on a flat plane. Because of this, there is not a lot of undergrowth and thus not a lot of privacy between some of the platforms. However, the low levels of use and somewhat helpful site design prevents total erosion of the organic soil layer.

Sites that are an ongoing challenge and pose difficulty:

These are sites that just don't work for anyone. They are not pleasant for the visitor experience, use of the site inevitably leads to impact to the resource, and it is difficult for the steward to stem the tide of impact.

North Shore Tent site (GMC)

Infrastructure:

- Four platforms
 - 3 single
 - 1 double
- Composting outhouse
- Washpit
- Central fire ring

Average annual use: 850 (cumulative between shelter and tenting area)

Stratton Pond shelter caretaker, based on the south side of the pond, monitors and maintains the site

The North Shore tenting area on the north side of Stratton pond is both an overflow site for the Stratton Pond shelter, located on the southern end of the pond, and the designated group-use site in the area. North Shore regularly sees overnight use by 15–20 people in 5 to 10 distinct groups. Chronic overuse has created a dozen visitor-made impacted camp sites and a thick network of social trails connecting them. This is largely a product of the extremely flat topography of the site, which makes it viable to wander widely and pitch a tent almost anywhere. A large central fire-pit encourages human browsing for fuel, further reducing obstacles in the understory that might discourage further expansion and impact. The site caretaker is based more than a mile away, and opportunities for Leave No Trace engagement are comparatively rare.

The GMC is currently working with the ATC and Green Mountain National Forest to close and dismantle the North Shore site, redirecting group and tent use to the Stratton View site on the west shore of the pond. This site is higher and farther from the waterline, increasing environmental sustainability, and tenting will be based along a side-hill woods road, limiting opportunities for rogue expansion.

Full Goose Campsite (AMC)

Infrastructure:

- Three sided shelter (fits 12)
- Five platforms
 - 3 single
 - 2 double
- Composting outhouse
- Bear box

Average annual use: 1,000–1,200

No on-site caretaker, monitored and maintained by roving caretaker

Full Goose Campsite anchors the far end of the spectrum for AMC's campsites. The layout is best described as a spider web or circle. Platforms were laid out in response to where visitors had been camping on flat areas. The organic soil has been worn down in many places with significant root exposure. The tall trees have been browsed for firewood. The site is also located directly on the Appalachian Trail and sees a high amount of day use. Its trail location at the end of Mahoosuc Notch also leads to crowds of hikers gathering either before or after their trip through the Notch. Black cord has been used to keep visitors on the designated paths. Rockwork is difficult as there are no large rocks nearby. The site itself occupies a small hill. The topography is the only saving grace of the campsite, as it is hemmed in by the water source and the Trail itself, and sits on the flat top of a small hill. In other words, while the impact has been intense, it is not expanding.

Section 3.4: Leave No Trace and Group Management

The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics has established seven principles to help guide visitors to recreate responsibly in the outdoors. These principles help inform the way Trail clubs interact with and manage groups. This section will discuss the various ways Leave No Trace is integrated into successful group management strategies.

The seven principles for Leave No Trace are:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Leave What You Find
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Each principle has specific guidelines that are unique to how groups conduct themselves in the backcountry. For a detailed look at group expedition behaviors in relation to Leave No Trace please see the *ATC Leave No Trace on the Appalachian Trail Guidelines for Groups* found in Appendix T.

The majority of group use occurs during the Trail club's peak season. Since use of the Trail and sites are already high with individual use, groups have an even higher chance of placing a strain on resources and creating a larger impact. The Leave No Trace principles create a structured way that Trail clubs can approach issues with groups by providing the opportunity for education and evaluation.

In referring back to the four case studies, all of the participating Trail clubs use Leave No Trace to inform their feedback procedure for groups. In the field, groups are observed and offered feedback based on these principles as a means in which to educate visitors. Direct field interaction and education on Leave No Trace help spread awareness of the principles, which in turn benefits the land management agency.

Trail clubs can use the principles as a framework for feedback forms. For most clubs, the information from the forms is relayed to groups after the conclusion of their trip. As noted in the case studies from AMC, GMC, and MATC, feedback forms are filled out by the Trail club's caretakers and submitted to the group outreach personnel. The forms are structured so the groups receive a score on each of the Leave No Trace principles or receive a score based on the various impacts related to Leave No Trace.

For example, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club structures its group evaluation form (Appendix P) as a chart in which the caretaker checks whether or not procedures related to each Leave No Trace guidelines were Excellent, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, or Not Applicable. The chart lists each principle as well as desired behaviors on behalf of the leaders. After the caretaker checks one of the four categories for each principle, there is room to comment on the specific behavior or the reason for that score.

In contrast, the Appalachian Mountain Club structures its feedback form (Appendix H) based on four different categories that encompass Leave No Trace principles: ecological impact, proper disposal of waste, social impact upon others at campsite, and space management at campsite. The first section of the form asks the caretaker to rate the group's sensitivity to Leave No Trace and site-related issues for each category using the following ratings: 1 for excellent, 2 for good, 3 for satisfactory, 4 for needs improvement, or 0 for not applicable. At the bottom of the form, caretakers may record comments on ways in which the group excelled and ways in which groups could improve based on Leave No Trace-related issues or interactions with the caretaker. At the season's conclusion, high-use organizations are sent a feedback report (Appendix M) that lists each group's feedback, as well as a combined average for the impact survey for that organization.

Both feedback forms utilize the Leave No Trace principles as the standards by which groups are evaluated. The difference between the two systems is that MATC outlines a more structured approach, ensuring all Leave No Trace principles are touched on, whereas the AMC gives a general sense of the group's impact while providing a platform for the caretaker to write about direct experience with the group. No matter how a feedback form is structured, the recipient of that feedback should be able to synthesize the group's sensitivity to the different aspects of Leave No Trace.

Leave No Trace is also promoted in the initial stages of group outreach, through educational literature, workshops, and trainings. Many of the Trail clubs include pre-trip brochures that expand upon Leave No Trace and how it

relates to groups. In addition to the ATC brochure referenced above, the AMC-Berkshire Massachusetts Appalachian Trail Committee sends out a "Group Hiking Brochure" (Appendix C). The GMC sends out a Leave No Trace reference card in its spring mailer, and also provides information on Leave No Trace on the group notification calendar webpage. The AMC in New Hampshire sends out a "Group Use" brochure (Appendix L) that not only outlines the Leave No Trace principles, but also provides groups with land management agency contact information and information about each AMC campsite. The MATC mentions Leave No Trace in its preseason outreach letter and includes a brochure that outlines the seven principles (Appendix Q).

In order to conduct an effective field interaction with groups, it is important to equip the Trail club staff members and group outreach volunteers with the necessary skills to implement educational programming. Many of the staff members at each Trail club have gone through some sort of workshop or training with Leave No Trace, but there are benefits to having the group outreach person equipped with a higher level of Leave No Trace training. For example, both the AMC and GMC strive to have a group outreach coordinator/specialist who is a Leave No Trace Master Educator or Trainer. At the AMC, the GOC is expected to be a Master Educator so he or she can conduct trainer courses for the caretaking staff. Having caretakers certified as Leave No Trace Trainers ensures all staff who interact with groups have a basic understanding of how and when to conduct Leave No Trace specific trainings in the field. At the GMC, the group outreach specialist hosts a workshop highlighting Leave No Trace and group management techniques. By having the group outreach person conduct the training, he or she is able to call attention to Leave No Trace in relation to group management at the caretaker's sites during this training.

The seven Leave No Trace principles have been adopted by most land management agencies in the United States. Therefore, Trail clubs can utilize the familiar set of ethics when interacting with groups before, during, and after their trips. In addition to providing a framework for initial outreach documents and feedback forms, Trail clubs can use the certifications and trainings offered by the center to ensure their staff is prepared to effectively interact with groups in the field. Effectively communicating the Leave No Trace principles to groups will result in a larger audience reached and awareness spread promoting responsible recreation.

Section 4 – Visitor Benefits and Group Outreach Program Testimonials

The benefits of a group management program not only extend to the Trail club, but also to the visitor and sponsoring organizations. This section expands upon an excerpt from [ATC's Policy on Organized Group Use 2015](#) (Appendix A) on the benefits of group outreach by offering supporting statements from various group management systems. The relevant section of the policy reads:

Organized group use...can have many benefits including promoting safe, responsible use of the Trail and advancing "Leave No Trace" practices, offering enriched appreciation of the outdoors through interpretation of the area's natural and cultural history, educating youth, promoting development of a conservation ethic through direct contact with wild-land settings, and helping people to connect with nature and to develop a sense of their own roles and responsibilities within the larger community of life.

This section will explore the various aspects and benefits of the group management systems from the point of view of the visitors. The first section will thematically address the use of feedback, how a land ethic can be developed, and the importance of pre-trip information for trip planning and excellent communication for trip execution. The second section includes direct unedited quotes from visitors.

How feedback is used and welcomed by groups

Group feedback forms and reports are an effective educational tool for an organization to reflect upon its environmental and social impact. They provide an opportunity for programs to grow and improve. Bryan Lehrer, the head coordinator at Bates College of an annual outdoor program known as AESOP, responded to the AMC's 2014 group feedback report with the following comment:

To talk specifically towards these behaviors [from caretaker feedback report]—I spent a good chunk of time during our training week briefing leaders on best campsite practices with hopes of hearing back sterling reviews from you and caretakers. It seems like our groups were generally good patrons, but AESOP strives for much more than just good, so rest assured that we will be addressing the specific issues you brought up in the form of more detailed training before next year's trips.

This is evidence of an organization using Trail club feedback to help correct or perfect backcountry behaviors. The feedback report will be used in future trainings to help leaders establish a conservation ethic. A similar testimony from Brown University's Associate Director of Leadership Development Shelley Adriance reads, "The feedback that we received from the AMC staff has also helped us in our training program for providing feedback to our current leaders. We use the feedback while training new leaders each year."

Promoting a land ethic

In order to develop that conservation ethic, group outreach programs must "help people to connect with nature and to develop a sense of their own roles and responsibilities within the larger community of life." This can occur through the basic experience of an extended wilderness experience, but also through trail work. The GMC's focus on initial outreach and trainings for organizations that sponsor trips allows groups to develop a deeper connection to the land they interact with. The article written for *Long Trail News* by Nika Meyers offers a unique narrative from the perspective of both the GOS and trip leader to better explain the importance of the Trail club and trip leader relationship.

In addition to extended backcountry trips, direct experiences working with Trail clubs on conservation projects allows groups to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the natural world. The 2012 informal volunteer backcountry clean up monitored by the MATC caretakers explained in section 2.4 created a unique opportunity for visitors to deepen their commitment to their conservation ethic. Ian Fitzmorris, the MATC caretaker who helped supervise this clean up reports the overall volunteer response:

Many groups even expressed gratitude for the opportunity to give back during their hike. Without the willingness of these groups to help, the project could not have been brought to such a conclusion. More importantly, involving youth in the removal of several tons of old batteries,

shingles, broken glass, and metal wires from sensitive environment provided an outstanding platform for hands-on Leave No Trace education.

This is a great example of groups acting on their conservation ethic and upon their sense of responsibility towards the area they feel connected to. This act of voluntary clean-up was rewarding for the visiting groups, but also benefitted the MATC's conservation efforts.

Group Outreach and Successful Trips

Pre-trip information and trip planning:

An effective group outreach program not only serves as an educational tool, but also as a trip planning resource. Much of the feedback received from group leaders responds to the usefulness of a group notification system and communications with a group outreach personnel. Ted Teegarden, director of outdoor education and assistant dean of students at The White Mountain School, states that AMC's "group notification system allows us to plan ahead, reserve and manage the costs of our outdoor trips." The reported ease of an online calendar system allows groups to check campsite availability on their own time without having to rely upon direct contact with the group outreach coordinator. Hurricane Island Outward Bound Land Program Manager Andy Bartleet explains, "[the AMC's online availability chart] is a clear way to present the information. I use that when my staff are looking at expedition plan options so I can steer them away from shelters and campsites that I know are going to be busy."

Communication and good relationships

When groups do need direct contact with the Trail club's group outreach personnel, they not only have reported the benefits of an open communication channel between Trail club and sponsoring organization about availability, but also in planning itineraries. The testimony from Shelley Adriance of Brown University further details how Brown's relationship with the AMC has helped her carry out effective and safe trips during adverse conditions.

Each year, I have appreciated the AMC's efforts to review our program's plans for trail use during the peak period for college programs. Along with being able to adjust plans ahead of time to avert issues with crowding, we have solved issues that would occur due to trail closures, maintenance or high water levels for river crossings.

After Hurricane Irene, we had three group routes that were destroyed and through working with the AMC Outreach/Shelter Coordinators, we were able to develop new routes that work well for the program and do not increase the impact we have on the trails, shelters or huts...

The AMC staff have been great to partner with and through developing our relationship, it has increased and improved our communications with one another. When we reach out to one another, it is with a sense of familiarity and partnership that we work together, which makes the exchange a really positive one.

We will be adding two new routes to our programs plans this year to reach 18 groups, and in January (8 months before we depart), I will be reaching out to my AMC contact for their review, input, advice and a helping hand. The help and expertise with the trails have been invaluable.

A component of our emergency protocols and preparations includes providing our route plans with the AMC and Ranger staff. Our student leaders have turned to AMC staff for radio support to relay an evac message, provide advice or help in some way. For many of our students, this is their first backpacking experience and for many leaders, this is their first time leading a trip. Our students often share stories about the kindness and connection they made with the AMC Hut staff. The impact of these interactions has opened their minds and hearts for continued outdoor pursuits and professions in outdoor education.

This testimonial demonstrates the use of a group outreach program as a planning and education tool. The symbiotic relationship between this college and the AMC benefits each organization by allowing the flexibility with one another to accomplish the organizational goals.

Conclusion

Effective group outreach programs should ideally be a win/win/win scenario for the visitor, Trail club, and environment. By providing groups with tools to better equip them in planning and implementing their trips, the Trail club in turn benefits in terms of site management and visitor impact awareness. Therefore, there are immense benefits to the visitor group themselves, through an improved experience because of excellent pre-trip communication, continual improvement to their own programs through the feedback cycle, and opportunities to connect with the landscape and develop a stronger land ethic. As demonstrated through several visitor testimonies, a group notification system and group outreach contact person can be instrumental in carrying out successful backcountry trips.

Section 4.1: Additional testimonials from organizations that use the systems

To talk specifically towards these behaviors [from caretaker feedback]—I spent a good chunk of time during our training week briefing leaders on best campsite practices with hopes of hearing back sterling reviews from you and caretakers. It seems like our groups were generally good patrons, but AESOP strives for much more than just good, so rest assured that we will be addressing the specific issues you brought up in the form of more detailed training before next year's trips.

—Bryan Lehrer, Head Coordinator of AESOP Bates

The group notification system allows us to plan ahead, reserve and manage the costs of our outdoor trips. Because of the ease of just emailing [the Group Outreach Coordinator] personally and not with an automated system, I am able to be sure our reservations are accurate and any questions I have are answered. As we travel with a group and things are always changing, it is easy to update you on our numbers, whether it is more or less so our group does its best to reduce the impact on others.

—Ted Teegarden, Director of Outdoor Education and Assistant Dean of Students at The White Mountain School

We have used the AMC Group Notification Process since its inception. We generally find it easy to use and the web site informative and helpful. Certainly the availability of campsites is so much better to know in advance and helps us plan our trips for our campers. We have found the communication with the group outreach coordinator for the most part helpful, and the caretakers at most campsites have been flexible, helpful (especially with regard to educating our campers with the Leave No Trace ethic), and accommodating. We also find our current system of "guessing," early in spring, which sites we will likely use to be invaluable, as campers sign up for trips during the first week of camp, typically late June, otherwise it would be impossible to give adequate notice to the coordinator.

—Geoff Ashworth, Campcraft Director, Camp Walt Whitman

I really like the group use availability chart PDF (with the calendar and colored dots). That is a clear way to present the information. I use that when my staff are looking at expedition plan options so I can steer them away from shelters and campsites that I know are going to be busy. We don't want our groups to feel that they part of a big crowd, and I don't want to add the crowds at busy sites. The email notification system seems to work well from my end, it is nice when I get an acknowledgement, thanks! What also helped me in my planning was when you let me know when the PDF was not current and there were other groups going there.

—Andy Bartleet, Hurricane Island Outward Bound Land Program Manager

Each year, I have appreciated the AMC's efforts to review our program's plans for Trail use during the peak period for college programs. Along with being able to adjust plans ahead of time to avert issues with crowding, we have solved issues that would occur due to Trail closures, maintenance or high water levels for river crossings.

After Hurricane Irene, we had three group routes that were destroyed and through working with the AMC Outreach/Shelter Coordinators, we were able to develop new routes that work well for the program and do not increase the impact we have on the trails, shelters or huts.

The feedback that we received from the AMC staff has also helped us in our training program for providing feedback to our current leaders. We use the feedback while training new leaders each year.

The AMC staff have been great to partner with and through developing our relationship, it has increased and improved our communications with one another. When we reach out to one another, it is with a sense of familiarity and partnership that we work together, which makes the exchange a really positive one.

We will be adding two new routes to our programs plans this year to reach 18 groups, and in January (8 months before we depart), I will be reaching out to my AMC contact for their review, input, advice and a helping hand. The help and expertise with the trails have been invaluable.

A component of our emergency protocols and preparations includes providing our route plans with the AMC and Ranger staff. Our student leaders have turned to AMC staff for radio support to relay an evac message, provide advice or help in some way. For many of our students, this is their first backpacking experience and for many leaders, this is their first time leading a trip. Our students often share stories about the kindness and connection they made with the AMC Hut staff. The impact of these interactions has opened their minds and hearts for continued outdoor pursuits and professions in outdoor education.

—Shelley Adriance, Associate Director for Leadership Development at Brown University



ATC Policy on Organized Group Use

Adopted March 4, 2015 by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Introductory Remarks Applicable to all Appalachian Trail Conservancy Policies

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), a §501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, works closely with Appalachian Trail clubs and public and private partners to ensure the protection and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and experiential resources of the Appalachian Trail National Scenic Trail (ANST, A.T. or the "Trail"). Approximately fifty federal, state, or other public agencies have authority or jurisdiction over lands and resources within the protected A.T. corridor. ATC has a central management role by virtue of its Cooperative Agreement with the USDI National Park Service and its close working partnership with the USDA Forest Service and other agencies. ATC's mission is: "To preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail—ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow and for centuries to come." ATC policies are meant to provide guidance for (a) dissemination to the public, (b) use and implementation by the ATC and A.T. clubs, and (c) managers of land-management and other agencies. It is the agencies, however, who work within their defined procedures to propose, administer, and enforce public policy. ATC policies are recommendations developed to support appropriate, coordinated management.

Policy Statement

Definition and Purpose

"Organized group use" is defined as recreation use sponsored by a nonprofit organization, business, or government agency. Anticipating shifting demographics in the United States and the growing need to ensure the relevancy of the Trail for visitors of all ages and backgrounds, ATC supports carefully managed organized group uses that do not result in significant adverse effects either to Trail resources or the Trail experience. Such carefully managed group uses (a) accommodate new users, (b) assure resource protection, (c) provide recreation opportunities for both existing and potential users, and (d) protect the opportunity for the traditional "Trail experience" as described in the 1997 Policy on the A.T. Experience and Non-Hiking Recreational Uses of Trail Lands.

Benefits of Organized Group Use

Organized group use, whether for profit or not-for-profit, can have many benefits including promoting safe, responsible use of the Trail and advancing "Leave No Trace" practices, offering enriched appreciation of the outdoors through interpretation of the area's natural and cultural history, educating youth, promoting development of a conservation ethic through direct contact with wild-land settings, and helping people connect with nature and develop a sense of their own roles and responsibilities within the larger community of life. Other potential benefits include assistance with monitoring Trail conditions, reporting illegal activity, and performing other essential A.T. management services such as trail maintenance, campsite restoration, and contributing to the economies of rural areas and A.T. Communities™.

Challenges Related to Organized Group Use

Poorly managed organized group use on the A.T. can disproportionately impact natural and cultural resources as well as the Trail experience for all hikers—especially along narrow, remote, or difficult sections of the Trail where hiker densities are relatively low. Impacts from group use can be particularly high at campsites and shelters. Since organized group use often may be serial—that is, a group sponsor might field multiple outings over the course of a season

APPENDIX A: Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Policy on Organized Group Use

(e.g., weekly summer camp trips)—mistakes are potentially repeated at the same sites time after time.

Requirements for Organized Group Use

A voluntary trip-notification program and, where required, an agency-established permit, should be established for organized groups of 6 or more on overnight visits, and 15 or more on day visits. Consideration of social and natural-resource carrying capacities should be made before a permit is issued.

This policy on Organized Group Use reaffirms the guidance on group size limitations contained in ATC's 1993 Policy on Special Events and Large Group Use, which states that camping groups should not exceed 10 persons at any one overnight use area, and day use should not exceed 25 persons at any one location, except when a land-managing agency regulation establishes a different limit. Organized groups should be well-acquainted with Leave No Trace practices and voluntary Trail stewardship opportunities prior to embarking on their trips, and should practice both while on the Trail.

Groups of 6 or more, whether "organized" or not, are strongly encouraged to use group campsites where they exist. Land-managing agencies, the ATC and A.T. clubs should work toward designating appropriate locations for group camping for groups of 6 or more. To avoid groups "taking over" the limited space available at shelters, any group of 6 or more should plan to camp in tents they carry, rather than staying in shelters.

Races, Competitive Events, Fundraising Events, Emergency Services Training Events, and other Special Event Group Activities

These activities tend to interrupt the normal use of the Trail, and/or cause significant adverse effects to natural, cultural, and experiential resources. To prevent those interruptions and adverse effects, these activities should be prohibited except: (1) at a time, location, and manner specifically allowed in law; or (2) with concurrence of the ATC and the relevant land-managing agencies, when an activity is an authorized administrative use of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST); or (3) when the relevant land-managing agency has issued a valid permit or written agreement authorizing the activity and the activity both supports the purposes of the ANST and will be conducted in a manner such that it does not cause significant adverse effects to the Trail's natural, cultural, or experiential resources. Additionally, while ATC recognizes that many other organizations are interested in fundraising activities unrelated to the administration of the Appalachian Trail, fundraising of this sort should not occur within the boundaries of the Trail corridor or the Trail management area.

ATC shall work with clubs and land management agencies to develop procedures to implement this policy.

APPENDIX B: AMC- MA Eight Step
Guide to Group Hiking on the A.T. in Massachusetts

AMC Berkshire's A.T. Committee's Eight Step Guide to Group Hiking on the A.T. in Massachusetts

--help us preserve the A.T. experience for everyone--

1. Limit Group Size to Ten.

This helps make sure there will be room for other hikers, and reduces “campsite creep” and increasing impacts on natural resources.

2. Be Informed:

Check the Group Use page on the AMC/Berkshire Chapter website for group hiking guidelines and information: <http://amcberkshire.org/atgroup hike>

3. Plan Ahead:

In the busy season (Mid-May to Mid-October) check the Group Use Notification Page <http://amcberkshire.org/group use> to see which shelter/campsites have been put on another group's itinerary.

4. Help Us Help You:

At any time during the year, notify our Group Outreach Coordinator [Hank Barton <habarton@charter.net> (413) 527 4568] of your leader's contact information, planned itinerary, and group size.

5. Leave it Better Than You Found It:

Follow *Leave No Trace* principles while on the hike.

6. Remember the Golden Rule

7. Have A Good Walk

8. When You Get Back:

Let us know if you had any problems with the trail or campsites--or if you just had a great time. We can be reached here: <at@amcberkshire.org>

From amcberkshire.org:

**>TRAILS menu >Appalachian Trail >Group Hiking on the A.T. >Group Use
Notification Page**

APPENDIX C: AMC-MA Group Use Brochure

More than 30 AT clubs, with more than 4,500 volunteers, provide countless hours of service along the AT.

If you are interested in becoming an AT volunteer, contact us at at@amcberkshire.org or contact the person who gave you this brochure.



Mass Appalachian Trail Management Committee (AT Committee)

PO Box 2281

Pittsfield, MA 01202

978-821-2916 / 413-454-4773

www.amcberkshire.org/at



Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC)

Regional Office

PO Box 264

South Egremont, MA 01258

413-528-8002

www.appalachiantrail.org



Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Regional Office

PO Box 131

South Egremont, MA 01258

413-528-8003

www.outdoors.org



Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Region 5 Office

PO Box 1433

Pittsfield, MA 01202

413-499-7003

<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/>

Brochure content and design
By
Volunteer Members of the
Massachusetts Appalachian Trail
Management Committee



Information For Groups Hiking on The Appalachian Trail In Massachusetts

Welcome to the Appalachian Trail (AT)

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail runs 2,175 miles from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. 90 miles of this long-distance footpath are in Massachusetts, following the ridges and traversing the valleys of Berkshire County.

Conceived in 1921 by Massachusetts native, Benton MacKaye, the trail was designed to provide a continuous green corridor along the ridge of the Appalachian chain of mountains and hills. In 1968, the footpath was officially designated a National Scenic Trail, and in 1969, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation enacted legislation to protect the Appalachian Trail.

The Appalachian Trail in Massachusetts provides a broad array of hiking opportunities for both the long distance hiker and the day hiker. Lodges, cabins, shelters, tent platforms, and campsites with outhouses are found along the trail for overnight and extended trips.

APPENDIX C: AMC-MA Group Use Brochure

GROUP HIKING PROCEDURES

- Share Leave No Trace Guidelines with your group.
- Keep overnight groups to 10; day groups to 25.
- Plan your itinerary.
- Check the Group Use Notification Page on the net:

<http://amcberkshire.org/groupuse>

- Contact the group outreach coordinator with your itinerary and planned overnight stays.

atgroupoutreach@amcberkshire.org

IMPORTANT THINGS FOR MEMBERS OF YOUR GROUP TO REMEMBER

- Do not drink untreated water. Filter or use a chemical purifier.
- Carry in and carry out.
- Stay on the treadway and off surrounding vegetation.
- Camp only at designated campsite/shelter areas.
- Shelters are for long distance hikers. Plan to tent.
- Tent on existing cleared areas or tent platforms. Do not clear new areas.

SOME LEAVE NO TRACE GUIDELINES

Plan Ahead:

- Minimize impact: bring trash bags, and camp stoves. Leave all woods tools (hatchets, axes, etc.) behind.
- Bring water proof bags and enough line or rope to hang food and trash bags, or carry bear-proof containers; use bear boxes at campgrounds.

Stay on Durable Surfaces:

- Avoid faint trails and off-trail traffic to protect plants and soils.
- Travel single file in center of the trail.

- Avoid sensitive areas such as wet soils, stream banks, and fragile plants like ferns, wildflowers, seedlings, moss.

Dispose of Waste Properly:

- Leave the area free of trash and food scraps.
- “Pack it in; Pack it out” Don’t burn, bury, or leave litter or extra food.
- Use the privy for human waste (feces) only. *Do not* add trash, including leftover food, disposable wipes or hygiene products, none of which biodegrade easily.
- Wash dishes, bodies, and clothing 100 feet away from water sources. Use bio-degradeable soap sparingly, or not at all. Strain dishwater to remove food scraps and pack them out with your trash.
- Disperse toothpaste, cooking water, dishwater and urinate at least 100 feet away from water sources, shelters, and campsites.
- Inspect your campsite and lunch areas carefully for trash or food scraps before moving on.

Leave what you find:

- Leave cultural artifacts, plants, and other natural objects where you found them for others to enjoy.
- Don’t leave graffiti, your name or other mark on trees, rocks, signs, or shelters.
- Don’t build structures or dig trenches around tents

Minimize Campfire Impacts:

- Use stoves for cooking.
- If you need a campfire, build one only where legal. Always use an existing fire ring. Keep campfires small and burn them for a short time to conserve wood. Collect only dead and downed wood that you can easily break by hand.

- Do not try to burn trash, including foil, plastic, glass, cans, tea bags, food or anything with food on it. Such items do not burn thoroughly.
- Avoid burning large quantities of paper. Burn all wood completely to ash before putting the fire out. Leave fire rings clean by removing others’ trash.

Respect Wildlife

- Keep food, trash, and scented articles out of reach of animals. Carry ropes for hanging food, bear canisters, or plastic food containers to keep rodents away.
- Pick up all food scraps even dropped crumbs, and pack them out.
- Keep a respectful distance from wildlife so as not to cause a change in their behavior.
- Observe animals from a distance.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors:

- Be aware of others. Move off the trail to a durable surface to allow other hikers to pass.
- Remind your group that voices can travel long distances.
- Do not use cell phones or audio equipment within sight or sound of other hikers, and turn ringers off.
- Do not monopolize water sources, viewpoints, or other areas of interest.



APPENDIX D: GMC Spring Mailer

Dear Group Program Coordinator,

Happy spring from Vermont's Green Mountain Club (GMC)! As the GMC gears up for another beautiful hiking season, I want to make sure group leaders that use the Long Trail and Vermont's Appalachian Trail have all the resources they need to have safe, successful, and fun group trips. Every trip on the trail provides a unique opportunity to tread lightly and set examples for others to help protect the precious places we hike. I've detailed some important and helpful information below so that your group can have the best trip possible!



Group Hiking Guidelines

Groups come in a variety of types and sizes. They can be made up of children, teenagers, or adults led by camp counselors, teachers, scoutmasters, or professional guides. They can also be an informal group of friends. In all cases, keeping group size small reduces damage to the resource and minimizes impacts on other visitors' experiences. The maximum group size for an overnight trip, and for trips to designated wilderness and alpine summits, is 10 people including the leaders. 20 people for day hikes. Your group may also need a **permit** from VT Forests, Parks and Recreation or the Green Mountain National Forest depending on where you will be hiking.



The **Group Notification Calendar** is a resource to help reduce over-crowding on the trail. You can check it out to see if another group has submitted an itinerary and is planning to use the same site! You can view sites and enter your itinerary at www.greenmountainclubgroups.org. This site also has helpful FAQs, trip planning resources, and permit links. If your organization has extensive or multiple itineraries, you can always send them to me to be uploaded. Be sure to check out the Group Use section of our Long Trail Guide for a list of group appropriate overnight sites. Please note that this is not a reservation system and that all LT/AT shelters are first come, first serve.

Group Education & Service Projects

Whether on the trail or in the classroom, Green Mountain Club educators deliver programs that will help your group prepare for safe and exciting outdoor experiences. We have programs designed specifically for trip leaders on **Leave No Trace practices**, **Hiker Preparedness**, and **Long Trail Ecology**. Check in with me to find out about certifying your trip leaders as **Leave No Trace Trainers** or hosting an **Awareness Workshop**!



APPENDIX D: GMC Spring Mailer

If your program is interested in giving back to the mountains of Vermont, the GMC always has trail projects that need the help of enthusiastic volunteers. Contact me for more information about organizing a service trip with your group!

Group Membership and Prepayment

If your group is planning on staying at Caretaker staffed sites, you may be interested in our prepayment program! Groups that prepay will receive \$1 off per person, per night at staffed caretaker sites. See enclosed form. Also, your organization can support the club with a one year Group Membership to get discounts at individual stores, lodging, on education programs, and the



knowledge that you're helping to protect Vermont's hiking trails! Caretaker sites have a \$5 per person overnight use fee. Without prepayment, please plan to pay in field with cash or check.

As GMC's Group Outreach Specialist, I am available to provide you with information regarding route planning, itineraries, permits, and Leave No Trace ethics that will help your group have a fun, safe, and memorable hike on the Long

Trail and Appalachian Trail. We love to be included in the planning stages of group trips to help us better manage the trails, so please contact me with any questions or concerns, or visit our website at www.greenmountainclub.org. Thank you for helping ensure that present and future generations can enjoy hikes in the Green Mountains of Vermont. I can't wait to get you out on the trail!

Happy Hiking,

Caitlin Miller
Group Outreach Specialist
Green Mountain Club
VHCB AmeriCorps
(802) 241-8327
groups@greenmountainclub.org

Help us go paperless! If you would like to receive this mailing electronically in the future, please send me an email with the name of your organization and contact person.

APPENDIX E: GMC Fall Feedback Mailer

Dear Trip Coordinator,

Greetings from the Green Mountain Club! We are the founder, maintainer, and protector of the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail System (LT/AT) in Vermont. As the days become shorter and another hiking season comes to a close we wish to thank you for your participation in our Group Feedback and Notification Program this past summer and autumn. The group information we collect from our site Caretakers not only helps us improve hiking experiences on the LT and AT, but allows us to measure the success of our educational efforts.

Our intention is to improve everyone's experience on the Long Trail while educating hikers on their role in helping to protect such a wonderful resource. We ask users of the LT/AT to help us reduce overcrowding at popular overnight sites and day hiking destinations by using our new **Group Notification Calendar** on our website: www.greenmountainclubgroups.org. If you are using it, thank you! If you have not yet used it, we ask all groups using these trails to advise us of their itinerary so we can review it and work with you to minimize overcrowding during peak hiking times, making for the best possible Long Trail experience.

Our caretaker feedback sheets indicate that your group(s) scored a ____ on group space management and could benefit from one of our **Leave No Trace** or **Hiker Preparedness** workshops prior to your next backcountry trip. Our experienced educators would be happy to work with your group or group leaders on minimum impact hiking and camping skills.

The LT/AT are footpaths beyond compare; by working together we can ensure that present and future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy them as we have. If you are interested in hosting one of our pre-trip educational workshops, planning a new trip, or have any questions, comments, or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you and I look forward to working with you again in the future!

Sincerely,

Caitlin Miller

GMC Group Outreach Specialist

VHCB AmeriCorps

groups@greenmountainclub.org

(802) 241-8327

GROUP OVERNIGHT USE FORM

Welcome! Please take a moment to fill out the top of this form & return it to the caretaker in residence.
Your cooperation helps improve the experience of all who use & enjoy the Long Trail!

Organization / Institution / Corporation	Date	Shelter or Campsite name	# in Group

☐ Camp ☐ University/College ☐ School (K-12) ☐ Scouts ☐ Other _____

Group Leaders _____

Contact Name & Title _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____

Leaders _____ #Participants _____ Total # Nights for trip _____

☐ GMC Member ☐ Used online Group Shelter Use Calendar ☐ Received Group GMC Education

Comments:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & ENJOY YOUR STAY! -GMC

The section below is for the use of GMC staff.

☐ Paid in field ☐ Pre-Paid (must have receipt) ☐ Billed \$ _____ ☐ GMC Arranged Service Trip
☐ Shelter ☐ Tentsite ☐ Overflow
1-Excellent 2-Satisfactory 3-Needs Improvement

____ Plan Ahead & Prepare: Appropriate gear, safety awareness and knowledge of route

____ Dispose of Waste Properly: Food scraps, trash and human waste picked up & taken care of correctly

____ Minimize Ecological Impact: Use of established trails & campsites. Responsible treatment of water, fire, wildlife & vegetation

____ Be Considerate of Other Users: Respectful to others. Quiet at an appropriate time

____ Space Management: Kitchen and sleeping areas set up appropriately allowing room for other campers

Caretaker _____

APPENDIX G: AMC-NH “GOC Order of Operations”

AMC- NH Group Outreach Coordinator Tasks

Task	Frequency	Reasoning	Steps
Mass email to interest groups	Beginning of season	To encourage proper use of system, proper adherence to LNT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble list of attachments: Group Use Brochure (updated 2014), “How to Notify” form, LNT info and links, link to website availability chart, reminders Assemble contacts from master list (updated 2014), send to BSA troops, camps, colleges, and schools. Tailor each mass email to specific type of group
Update Group Tracking System	Beginning of season	Excel spreadsheet to manage group notifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a new Group Tracking Database for the season by updating corresponding dates with days May-October Add any notifications that came in over the winter
Check for notifications	Daily	People don’t always notify 2 weeks in advance; itineraries often change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email (Outlook), voicemail (x8150, Password: 8150), snail mail (rare, but check) Update Group Tracking Database with new or updated itineraries
Update purple clipboard calendar	Daily	Keep most current records of where groups are going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use PENCIL to write in name of group, number of visitors, make sure itinerary is filed somewhere you can find to reference if more details are necessary. Keep accessible for other shelter staff
Continued correspondence	As needed	To stay current with itinerary changes, address overcrowding issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email when possible to prevent phone tag, follow up with a call as needed File emails in necessary Outlook folders: Group Notifications (year), etc.
Email AMC Campsite Availability .pdf to Web Associate at Joy Street	Every Monday and Thursday	So groups can view ahead of time which sites are available, nearing capacity, crowded, or overcrowded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a folder for Availability PDF’s only in your GOC folder on the S drive Open your season’s Group tracking Database excel sheet and SAVE as a PDF. Save that PDF with the corresponding date it was created to ensure you send the most up to date Email this PDF to the Web Associate at Job Street
Collect Campsite Registration Cards	Weekly	To get them out of the business office, collect green group cards for most accurate counts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upstairs in the Trading Post, ask Denise where they are stashing them Sort by groups that notified and groups that didn’t Update the master contact list with any new groups or group information

APPENDIX G: AMC-NH “GOC Order of Operations”

AMC- NH Group Outreach Coordinator Tasks

Process group evaluations	Weekly or biweekly	To get feedback to groups and to track Group Feedback Data (created 2014, will need to create a new one for your season)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the GOC hanging mailbox outside the Shelter’s office for feedback forms • Enter group feedback information in the feedback excel sheet (steps follow) • Separate forms by campsite and scan into the computer: scanning is done in the trading post, the destination to scan to is the GOC email address saved in the address book • Save scanned images of feedback forms on S drive under feedback form folder for your season. Sheets can be filed in cabinet or recycled.
Organize group feedback database	Weekly	To reduce the sorting through data for season report and keep up to date information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in excel work book (S:\Trails\Shelter Dept Files\GroupOutreachCoordinator\GOC_2014\Group Feedback\Group Feedback FINAL • Create a new workbook for your season copy and paste format from 2014. • Each organization gets their own sheet, enter information for each group, at the end of the season total the averages for the organizations respect of LNT overall.
Update Site Use Numbers	Weekly	To keep track of campsite use and reduce the amount of data collection for report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect Caretaker reports in the Business Office: bottom drawer of the file cabinet at the far end of the office • Enter data from individual use, # of individuals in groups, work for stay, overflow (use 2014 site numbers form: (S:\Trails\Shelter Dept Files\GroupOutreachCoordinator\GOC_2014\Site Use Numbers.xls) • Record data for May-October * remember to change corresponding dates/days for your season.
Track Monthly Use of GNS/Add to master contact list	End of each month	Keep data current and available for report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record groups you were in contact with • Record if group used GNS or not (green cards, feedback forms, communication with leaders)
Track the LNT-related contacts you make or field experiences	Weekly/ as needed	To record your efforts in the field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a little chart to overview the type of interaction (LNT awareness course, Master Ed., fill-in caretaking, etc.)
End of year report	September to October	To account for program efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I suggest using the format from 2009 GOC report (similar format used by others in the department)

APPENDIX H: AMC – NH Backcountry Campsite Group Feedback Form

AMC BACKCOUNTRY CAMPSITE GROUP FEEDBACK FORM

SITE and CARETAKER _____ ARRIVAL DATE _____ Total # nights in field _____
GROUP NAME _____
LEADERS _____
GROUP CONTACT PERSON/TITLE (if different from leaders) _____
CONTACT PERSON'S PHONE (____) _____ - _____
GROUP ADDRESS, TOWN & STATE _____
ZIP _____ PHONE _____
EMAIL _____

How was the group accommodated? TENTSITE ☐ SHELTER ☐ OVERFLOW ☐

NUMBER OF LEADERS _____ TOTAL GROUP SIZE _____

The recommended maximum overnight group size on the Appalachian Trail and in Alpine Areas is 10.
The maximum group size allowed in designated Wilderness Areas for day trips or overnights is **10** (USFS regulation).

For each category please **rate** from 1 to 4 the group's sensitivity to Leave No Trace and Site-related issues: (**1** excellent, **2** good, **3** satisfactory, **4** needs improvement, or **0** not applicable)

_____ **Ecological impact around campsite** (re-vegetation areas, use of site trails, water source)

_____ **Proper disposal of waste around campsite** (kitchen area, around platforms, privy)

_____ **Social impact upon others at campsite** (quiet hours, common courtesies, response to caretaker)

_____ **Space management at campsite** (platform usage/tenting strategy, cooking location)

In what way(s) could this group improve? Comments may continue on reverse.

In what way(s) did this group excel? Comments may continue on reverse.

[Can be filled out by GOC if not known]: WAS THE GROUP NOTIFICATION SYSTEM USED? YES ☐ NO ☐
WAS THERE A CHANGE IN THE ITINERARY AFTER NOTIFYING YES ☐ NO ☐

APPENDIX I: AMC- NH “How to Notify” Sheet

AMC Group Notification How-to

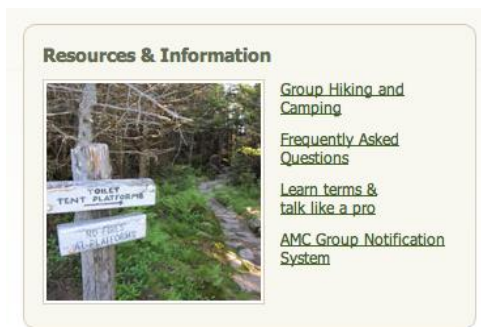
- ★ Notifications can be submitted by emailing or calling the AMC’s Group Outreach Coordinator at:

- amccampgroups@outdoors.org
- 603-466-8150

- To submit notifications online go to www.outdoors.org
- Click on or move your cursor to the “Lodging” tab at the top of the AMC’s website home page.
- Once the drop down menu appears click “Camping/ Tentsites”



- Under the section entitled “Resources & Information, click “AMC Group Notification System”



- Once you have read through the information provided about the GNS you will notice a link entitled “easy online form”
- This link will direct you to an online form to record and submit your group notifications. Please fill out all necessary information and click submit.
- ★ These notifications are sent to the AMC’s Group Outreach Coordinator, who will enter them into the system and follow up with confirmation.

Thank you for using the AMC’s Group Notification System!

APPENDIX J: AMC- NH Group Outreach Mailing Example

August 7, 2012

Mary Smith
Director, Camp Fun
4 Camp Rd
Downhome, ME 00055

Dear Mary,

I am writing in regards to your camp group's recent stay at AMC's Speck Pond campsite on July 23rd, I hope your group found their stay enjoyable. Overall your group received excellent feedback from our on-site caretaker. I just wanted to take this opportunity to make you aware that the AMC has a Group Notification System that we encourage all groups of six or more to use before embarking on their trips. I did not receive a notification from you so I assume that you are unaware of this process. Luckily, it is very easy.

We ask large groups to notify us of the number of people in your group, and the campsite locations and dates of stay. Additional information such as number of tents further helps us assist the caretakers with the site management. A notification for your group can be submitted electronically through our website, www.outdoors.org, via email (amccampgroups@outdoors.org), or by calling (603-466-8150).

The reason we ask for pre-notification from large groups concerning which sites they plan to use is to lessen impacts on backcountry areas and minimize overcrowding at high-use sites such as Speck Pond. The notification system enables groups to view when sites are expected to have space and plan their itinerary. It also helps prepare the on-site caretakers so that they can evenly distribute visitors within the campsite to help increase everyone's enjoyment while at the site.

However, this notification is *not* a formal reservation. All sites are managed on a first-come, first-served basis. We hope that use of the Group Notification System will prevent the need for a more formalized reservation system, which would mean more regulations and fees. Your compliance helps us protect the resources we all value. I am hoping you share our perspective and view this information as mutually beneficial.

Enclosed is the Backcountry Group Use Guide to further explain this procedure; I hope you will find it helpful in planning future trips. Thank you for your interest in AMC's backcountry campsites and for exposing the next generation to the forest they are inheriting.

Best Regards,

Laura Kathrein
Group Outreach Coordinator/Leave No Trace Master Educator
AMC Backcountry Campsite Program
361 Rt. 16, PO Box 298
Gorham, NH 03581
(603) 466-2721 x 8150
amccampgroups@outdoors.org

APPENDIX K: AMC- NH “College Bonanza” Email

Dear College Orientation Group Coordinators,

First of all, thank you for continuing to bring students to the White Mountains & Mahoosuc Ranges and sharing these special places with a new set of students every year. Your efforts to work with the AMC truly help to reduce ecological and social impacts and ensure that our backcountry campsites retain that special character that can inspire generations to come.

I am excited to introduce myself as the Group Outreach Coordinator for the AMC’s 2015 field season and open the line of communication in preparation for what is arguably our busiest time of the summer. In addition, I have included a list (attached in this email) of some common feedback collected from our caretakers based on their past experiences during “College Bonanza!” While we will continue to provide specific feedback as the season closes, I strongly suggest using this list as a general set of recommendations in your preparations with any leaders or logistics staff. Please be sure to note that, above all, our most common feedback for all groups is to **bring toilet paper**.

Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in notifications of your itineraries. I process notifications daily and our online calendar is updated every Monday and Thursday. You should see change reflected at those times, but if you have any questions about your schedule, please do not hesitate to contact me. Otherwise, I will contact you if I have any further questions or recommendations regarding your itinerary. **For those of you who have not notified, please do so soon**. While we would like notifications as early as possible (2 weeks in advance is ideal), we need **at least 48 hours’** notice in order to inform our caretakers.

With the current notifications, a few of our sites are beginning to reach capacity. I have attached a chart that outlines the availability and amount of notified groups at each site during the orientation trip season. I would ask that you please try to avoid the sites that are listed as “Full” or “Over-Capacity” when working out your itineraries. I also included a chart depicting the number of group platforms available at each tent site.

Please understand that there may be un-notified groups from additional schools showing up at any of these sites on any given night. Group notifications are by no means reservations and we cannot guarantee available space. In 2014, however, the AMC had an 82% compliance rate with notifications. The better we utilize this system together, the more we can reduce our impacts and trust in its accuracy. Regardless, our caretakers at staffed sites are talented folks who will do everything in their capacity to accommodate as many people as the site can safely, socially, and ecologically handle.

We understand that the logistics involved in safely getting hundreds (and in some cases thousands) of new students into the woods are difficult. We hope that we can help you in planning itineraries that will balance use and ensure that there is space for everyone.

Finally, when drafting out routes, I ask that you use your best judgement when considering your groups’ abilities to follow intended itineraries. From my experience leading trips, I understand that itineraries can change once a group is assessed in the field. While it is important to do what is best for the group, keep in mind the effects of last minute changes on the already-delicate balance of accommodating this amount of visitors to backcountry sites. Please pass this important message on to all of your group leaders.

APPENDIX K: AMC- NH “College Bonanza” Email

I am looking forward to a great season working with all of you and I wish you safe and successful journeys this year! Thank you for taking the necessary steps to decrease our footprint in the beautiful White Mountains and Mahoosuc Ranges. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any concerns; I am here to help!

Happy trails,

Jack Markoski

Camp Site	Number of Group Platforms
Eliza Brook (unstaffed)	1
Kinsman	2
Liberty	3
Garfield	5
Guyot	2
13 Falls	0 (9 Single Platforms)
Ethan Pond	2
Naumen	3
Imp	1
Trident Col (unstaffed)	0 (4 Single Platforms)
Gentian Pond (unstaffed)	1
Carlo Col (unstaffed)	2
Full Goose (unstaffed)	1
Speck Pond!	3

Thank You...

If you have used the Group Notification System in past years, thank you for your continuing support. If you are just learning about the system, thank you for working with us to take care of the forests and mountains of New England.

The AMC has a **Group Outreach Coordinator** available during the late spring through early fall hiking season to assist you with trip planning and Leave No Trace practices. Feel free to call or email questions or concerns as you prepare for your trip (see Contacts).

Leave No Trace Courses



The AMC is a provider of **Leave No Trace Trainer and Master Courses** for trip leaders. Scheduled courses are available as well as custom courses for groups of 5 or more, taught by the Group Outreach Coordinator – please call for more information.

Leave No Trace Principles

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

Trip Planning Checklist

- Check the AMC's Group Outreach *group use availability* website at <http://www.outdoors.org/lodging/campsites/campsites-notification.cfm>
- Here you will find a color coded chart in the form of a PDF file: Green indicates the date/site is available to group use, Yellow indicates limited availability and Red indicates group space is full.
- If group space is available call, write, email or go on-line to notify the Group Outreach Coordinator of:
 - DATE(S)** of trip
 - WHERE** you intend to stay
 - HOW MANY** leaders and participants in your party

Let us know as soon as this information is available, preferably 2 weeks in advance.

 - Create trips that include no more than 10 participants including leaders (policy on the Appalachian Trail, required in Wilderness areas, encouraged elsewhere).
 - Apply for a Forest Service permit, if needed (see below).
 - Advise your participants of Leave No Trace principles.

NOTE: This is not a reservation system and does not guarantee you a spot at the site. It is a chance for our staff to better accommodate the large numbers of individuals and groups who use our backcountry campsites.

Fees and Permits

9 of the sites have an \$8/person/night fee from Memorial Day to Columbus Day – see chart on back for specific site information.

You will need to apply for a *Forest Service Outfitter Guide Permit* if you are traveling in the National Forest and your group is a commercial venture, such as a camp, college or guide service. Boy Scouts, church groups and other voluntarily-led trips **do not** need to apply for a permit. Fees vary – contact the Forest Service for more information.

US Forest Service Recreation Passes are required for trailheads located in the National Forest. They can be purchased at ranger stations, AMC roadside facilities, local businesses and some self-pay stations at isolated trailheads. The cost is \$3/day; \$5/week; \$20/year or \$25 for two individual year-long passes.

Who to Contact...

To Notify the AMC:

Write us: AMC Backcountry Campsite Program
P.O. Box 298
Gorham, NH 03581
(603) 466-2721 x8150

Or call us: (603) 466-2721 x8150

Or email us: amccampgroups@outdoors.org

Or go on-line: www.outdoors.org

- Lodging
- Backcountry Sites

For Leave No Trace Course Information:

AMC LNT Coordinator
P.O. Box 298
Gorham, NH 03581
(603) 466-2721 x8128

To Obtain a Permit Application:

Outfitter Guide Permits
U.S. Forest Service
719 Main St
Laconia, NH 03246
(603) 528-9529

Other Notification Contacts:

For Trips in Vermont:

Green Mountain Club
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Rd
Waterbury Center, VT 05677
(802) 244-7037
fax: (802) 244-5867
groups@greenmountainclub.org

For Trips in Maine:

Maine ATC
P.O. Box 283
Augusta, ME 04332
(207) 664-2504
www.matc.org

AMC BACKCOUNTRY CAMPSITES

SITE	SHELTER	SINGLE PLATFORM	DOUBLE PLATFORM	CARETAKER \$8 FEE	COMPOSTING OUTHOUSE	BEAR BOXES FOR FOOD
		8'x10'	10'x16'			
ELIZA BROOK	YES	3 tent pads*	1 tent pad*	NO**	YES	YES
KINSMAN POND	YES	2	2	YES	YES	YES
LIBERTY SPRINGS	NO	7	3	YES	YES	NO
GARFIELD RIDGE	YES	2	5	YES	YES	NO
GUYOT	YES	4	2	YES	YES	NO
13 FALLS	NO	9 tent pads*	0	YES	YES	YES
ETHAN POND	YES	3	2	YES	YES	YES
NAUMAN	NO	5	2	YES	YES	YES
IMP	YES	4	1	YES	YES	YES
TRIDENT COL	NO	4 tent pads*	0	NO**	YES	YES
GENTIAN POND	YES	3	1	NO**	YES	YES
CARLO COL	YES	3	2	NO**	YES	YES
FULL GOOSE	YES	3	1	NO**	YES	NO
SPECK POND	YES	3	3	YES	YES	YES

* Tent pads are hardened dirt surfaces, supported by rock borders that provide a durable surface for tenting
** These sites are visited by a roving caretaker

PLEASE NOTE: Visitors are strongly encouraged to travel with tents or tarps in the backcountry and should not expect to find room in the shelters, large groups in particular. The shelters were originally designed to accommodate solitary hikers and small informal groups so please be courteous and leave the limited shelter space to them. As always, the sites are first come, first served and caretakers will continue to accept hikers at the sites until they are absolutely full. All hikers and groups should have a “plan B” in the event that space is not available.

BACKCOUNTRY
GROUP USE GUIDE



Greetings from the AMC Backcountry
Campsites Program

The Appalachian Mountain Club manages 14 popular backcountry campsites in the White and Mahoosuc Mountains. In 2010 these sites accommodated over 12,000 overnight visitors, 35% of which were organized groups, such as your own. Each summer, one of the Backcountry Campsite Program’s biggest challenges is to minimize the impacts that such high use has on these well-loved sites – impacts on water quality, trails, and plant and wildlife habitat. Your use of the **Group Notification System** described in this brochure helps us better manage our sites and improve backcountry experiences for all.

Thank you for helping protect our
public wildlands!

APPENDIX M: AMC- NH Group Feedback Report Example

Camp Brookwoods/Deer Run

Leader: George Bowling

Contact: George Bowling [george@christiancamps.net]

6/16/2014

Imp

Group Size: 9

- 1 Ecological Impact
- 1 Proper Disposal of Waste
- 1 Social impact
- 2 Space management

Comments:



Used dragonfly stove on tent platforms



Very Polite Respectful of site

Leader: Chris Seely

Contact: George Bowling [george@christiancamps.net]

6/17/2014

Imp

Group Size: 10

- N/A
- 1 Ecological Impact
 - Proper Disposal of Waste
 - 1 Social impact
 - 1 Space management

Comments:



N/A



N/A

Leader: Jessie Woodring/Trevor Ashley

Contact: George Bowling
[george@christiancamps.net]

6/30/2014

Imp

Group Size: 10

- 3 Ecological Impact
- 1 Proper Disposal of Waste
- 3 Social impact
- 1 Space management

Comments:



Left food in dishwash area, set up cooking/hanging out on trails and public bench,
walked through a lot of revegetation areas

APPENDIX M: AMC- NH Group Feedback Report Example



Very nice, easy to accommodate in overflow

Leader: Kory Schweitzer & Colleen McClare

7/1/2014

Guyot

Group Size: 9

Contact: George Bowling
[george@christiancamps.net]

- 1 Ecological Impact
- 1 Proper Disposal of Waste
- 3 Social impact
- 1 Space management

Comments:



Were a little noisy



Kept to one platform. Nice group of kids

Leader: Paul Joge

7/10/2014

Guyot

Group Size: 11

Contact: George Bowling
[george@christiancamps.net]

- 1 Ecological Impact
- 1 Proper Disposal of Waste
- 3 Social impact
- 1 Space management

Comments:



Group arrived far too late at night (9:30pm) made a lot of noise at first, but quieted down. Not prepared with proper utensils for opening their food, had to ask for can opener. Did not notify and luckily caretaker left a platform for another notified group that did not show up, otherwise they would have been sent to overflow.



Leader: Amy

7/27/2014

Speck

Group Size: 10


Contact: George Bowling
[george@christiancamps.net]


- 2 Ecological Impact
- 1 Proper Disposal of Waste
- 1 Social impact

APPENDIX M: AMC- NH Group Feedback Report Example

2 Space management

Comments:

 If it had been a busier night, the group would have needed better space management with the number of platforms used and in the bear box.

 Group did a superb job cleaning up, particularly in the kitchen area where they left the dishwashing area spotless. The group was attentive to my instructions and were respectfully quiet in the evening & early afternoon.

Camp Brookwoods Averages:

Ecological Impact:	1.5
Proper Disposal of Waste:	1
Social Impact:	2
Space Management:	1

* The above rating system records the group's sensitivity to Leave No Trace and Site-related



1 = Excellent

2 = Good

3 = Satisfactory

4 = Needs improvement

0 = N/A

 Specifies caretaker's comments for ways in which group could improve
 Specifies caretaker's comments for ways in which group excelled

APPENDIX N: MATC Pre-season Outreach Letter

Group Contact
Company/ group name
Address
City, ST Zip code

August 6, 2015

Dear Trip Organizer:

Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC)'s mission is to build, protect and maintain the Appalachian Trail (AT) in Maine. Many summer camps, colleges and high schools have active, successful outdoor programs. Groups are often on the Trail at the same time and use popular campsites. This can cause higher than usual impact to our backcountry ecosystems. By working together we can protect fragile alpine summits, clear streams and critical wildlife habitat.

MATC has a **Group Registration System**. This system is voluntary and does not reserve a site. However, it is a great communication tool. We will inform you if overcrowding is an issue and provide advice on itinerary planning. Go to our website www.matc.org and leave your itinerary on the Group Registration form at least a week before the trip.

MATC has Leave No Trace educators out on the trail. Caretakers and Ridgerunners are based at Horns Pond Campsite, Piazza Rock Campsite and Gulf Hagas. The Caretakers and Ridgerunners teach Leave No Trace workshops at the campsite; manage campsites; complete evaluations of groups which will be mailed back to your organization; and ridge-run to alpine summits.

The Appalachian Trail, one of Maine's few long distance hiking opportunities, is a resource which we all cherish. Enclosed is a brochure which illustrates Leave No Trace practices and ethics. Thank you for reviewing these skills with your students, as well as issues listed on the back specific to the AT in Maine.

Please call or email if you have any questions. Thank you for helping us in the stewardship of the Appalachian Trail.

Very truly yours,

Holly Sheehan, Club Coordinator

(207) 518-1779

email - matc@gwi.net

Website - www.matc.org

APPENDIX N: MATC Pre-season Outreach Letter

Practices Specific to Maine's Appalachian Trail

Limit group size to 10 (including leaders). This is the national standard for backcountry camping. Campsites are designed for small groups.

Protect alpine plants and sub-alpine zones. The AT passes over many summits in Maine, all unique and fragile environments. Harsh elements, a short growing season and climate create pockets of rare species. For these reasons staying on the Trail or durable surfaces (rocks) at summits is vital (this includes dogs).

Bring tents and camp at designated tent-sites. Lean-tos are designed as a common area for all campers. They cannot be reserved and should not be used as a sleeping area by groups.

Fires in Maine are permitted only at designated campsites. *Avery Col. Horns Pond, Cranberry Stream, and Moose Falls in the Bigelow Preserve are no fire sites.* Over 8,000 hikers visit these sites each summer. These environments cannot sustain grazing for firewood on a nightly basis. Please bring portable stoves for cooking.

Use designated privies at campsites. These toilets have been located at a safe distance from the water source, and guarantee that your waste will not contaminate it. Make sure all hikers pack out TP from trail side pee stops.

Kennebec River Ferry Crossing. A free ferry service is provided for safe crossing. This is a one man operation. Groups need to prearrange your crossing by calling Fletcher Mountain Outfitters at 672-4879 or email maineguide@Live.com. The ferry operates May through October.

The 2015 ferry schedule is as follows:

July 10 - September 30:	9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
October 1 - October 12:	9 a.m. to 11 a.m. only

Use the Group Registration System at lesstraveledway@roadrunner.com

Thank you for protecting Maine's Appalachian Trail
and safeguarding a wilderness experience for all to enjoy!

APPENDIX O: MATC Caretaker Training Sample Agenda

Maine Appalachian Trail Club's Caretaker and Ridgerunner Training Agenda Bigelow Lodge * May 17-20, 2015

Sunday, May 17

12:30 Welcome/introductions

- House keeping – Steve
- Review of training schedule – Holly

1:00 Potluck Lunch with CARE Committee

1:30 Gear - Tom and Barb

2:30-4:30 Role of the Caretaker/Ridgerunner at each site:

- Power Point of program overview - Holly and all
- Piazza Rock/Saddleback Caretaker– Grace and Dan
- Horns Pond/Bigelow Mountain Caretaker – Audrey, Dan and Steve
- Gulf Hagas Ridgerunner – Janice and Audrey

7:00 Leave No Trace – icebreaker, the seven principles overview and assignments - Holly

Monday, May 18

8:00 The CARE program/MATC in detail:

- Maine Appalachian Trail Club – history, mission, programs, wind – Bill & Dan
- Manual review - Holly
- Program policies and procedures – Bill & Dan
- What a Caretaker is Not, personal time – Bill & Dan
- Paper work: time sheets, counting hikers, environmental impacts – Steve, Dan, Holly
- Social media content – Bill & Dan

10:30 Break

10:45 Leave No Trace – Plan ahead and prepare (with scenarios)

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Kennebec River Ferry, Dave Corrigan

1:30 Leave No Trace hike an scenarios

- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly

APPENDIX O: MATC Caretaker Training Sample Agenda

- Respect wildlife
- A.T. corridor and natural resources within the working forested landscape of Maine

Tuesday, May 19

8:00 Teaching and communication techniques - Holly

- Group workshops
- Group evaluations
- Registration system
- Service projects
- Scenarios

9:45 Break

10:15 Personal Safety – Steve

- Working with Law Enforcement and other emergency personnel
- ATC Incident Report
- First-aid expectations
- Scenarios

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Baxter State Park - Jean Hoekwater

- BSP regulations, guidelines and unique challenges
- Natural History of Maine Mountains
- The alpine zone

2:30 Leave No Trace hike and scenarios

- Minimize fire impacts
- Leave what you find
- Be considerate of other visitors

Wednesday, May 20

8:00 Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Claire Poflus

9:30 “Final” questions, fill out time sheets and closing activity

11:30 Clean-up

1:00 Lunch

APPENDIX P: MATC Group Evaluation Form

MATC Organized Groups Evaluation

For group registration, please contact: lesstraveledway@midmiane.com

The boxed area below is to be completed by the group leader:

Group Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____ _____
Email Address: _____
Group Phone Number: (____) _____
Leaders' Names _____ _____
Leaders' Cell Numbers: (____) _____

The remainder of this form is to be completed by the caretaker:

Site: _____

Date: _____

Caretaker: _____

in group: _____

Trip Route: _____

Registration System Used? Yes ____ No ____

In what ways did this groups excel?

In what ways can this group improve their experience and their impact on others' experiences and the environment?

APPENDIX P: MATC Group Evaluation Form

Evaluation of Group's Implementation of Leave No Trace Skills and Ethics					
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Not Applicable or Observed	Comments
<i>Plan Ahead and Prepare</i>					
Appropriate gear					
Safety awareness					
Appropriate route					
Appropriate arrival time					
Appropriate group size					
<i>Other LNT Skills and Ethics</i>					
Travel on durable surfaces					
Camp on durable surfaces					
Proper use and protection of water source					
Appropriate campsite space used					
Carry-in carry-out					
Proper human waste management					
Impact to site					
Minimal campfire impacts					
Respect for wildlife and plants					
Respect for other hiker and campers					
<i>Leadership</i>					
Leaders' awareness of group actions					
Ability to relay information to groups					
Group responsiveness to leader					
Group responsiveness to caretaker					

*Thank you for practicing Leave No Trace Skills and Ethics! -The Maine Appalachian Trail Club * MATC.org * LNT.org*

MATC Mailer Insert

FRONT

GROUPS HIKING THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN MAINE

The Maine Appalachian Trail Club recommends these steps to create a positive experience while protecting backcountry ecosystems.

Register your group's hiking trip. This will not reserve a site, but it helps MATC caretakers manage campsites. Go to MATC's website, www.matc.org, click on Group Hiking/Camping Registration Form and submit your itinerary.

Limit group size to 10 including leaders. A.T. campsites are designed for small groups.

Bring tents and camp at designated tent-sites. Lean-tos are designed as a common area for all backpackers. They should not be used as a sleeping area by groups.

Build fires only at designated campfires. Use a portable stove at the following no-fire sites: Avery Memorial, Horns Pond, Cranberry Stream, and MooseFalls in the Bigelow Preserve.

Protect alpine plants. The A.T. passes over summits in Maine with unique and fragile environments. Stay on the trail or durable surfaces (rocks) at summits.

Use designated toilets at campsites which have been located at a safe distance from the water source. Pack-out TP from trail-side pee stops.

Use the Kennebec River Ferry Crossing. This free service provides safe crossing. Groups must prearrange crossing by calling Fletcher Mountain Outfitters at 672-4879 or email maineguide@live.com.

BACK



Leave No Trace Principles

- Plan Ahead & Prepare
- Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

The 2015 ferry schedule:

May 22 – July 9: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. only

July 10 – Sept. 30: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Oct. 1 – Oct. 12: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. only

For more information

Email MATC Club Coordinator matc@gwi.net

Maine Appalachian Trail Club www.matc.org

Facebook@MaineATC Twitter @MaineATC



APPENDIX R: ATC Group Site Inventory Manual

Group Site Inventory Manual

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

ver. 2/17/2015

This manual describes procedures for conducting inventories of potential existing or new locations for group campsites located along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.). Further guidance for implementing this inventory is provided in the document: “Appalachian Trail Group Use Campsites,” written by Jeff Marion and Tom Banks. This form is designed to be completed for each individual existing campsite or at proposed campsite locations. Note that several group use campsites can be co-located at one general location.

Materials

(Check before leaving for the field)

- ☐ Topographic and detailed road maps
- ☐ Digital camera w/charged battery
- ☐ GPS w/fresh batteries
- ☐ Clipboard, monitoring manual, blank field forms (some on waterproof paper), small notebook, pens

Inventory Indicators

- 1) **Site Number:** Assign a unique number to each campsite (which may have a cluster of tent pads).
- 2) **Inventoried by:** Print the initials of the field personnel assessing the site.
- 3) **GPS:** GPS coordinates for site, WGS84 datum. Record near the center of each individual campsite.
- 4) **Date:** Month, day, and year the site was evaluated (e.g. July 1, 2015 = 07/01/15).
- 5) **Location:** Record an area name (e.g., Bigelow Preserve, N base of W peak).
- 6) **Site Type:** Existing Regular campsite, Existing Side-hill campsite, Proposed Regular campsites, Proposed Side-hill campsite

Note: Proposed sites – entirely new location for campsite construction. Side-hill campsites are constructed with cut-and-fill excavation work to create small well-drained tent pads within terrain sufficiently sloped to prevent future campsite expansion (e.g., 8-15% grade).

- 7) **Site Expansion Potential:** The ideal group use campsite should stay its designed size forever, with adjacent offsite areas that are not conducive to tenting or other camping activities due to sloping topography or substantial rockiness. Disregard woody vegetation as this can change over time due to forest succession, wildfires, or insect kills. Examine the adjacent off-site areas up to 100 ft away from the existing or proposed campsite

APPENDIX R: ATC Group Site Inventory Manual

boundaries in a 360° arc - record the percentage of this area that would inhibit nearly all tenting activity. For example, an estimate of 70% indicates that 30% of the offsite areas are sufficiently flat that tenting activity could occur there (disregard all current vegetation). The best campsite locations should score above 85%.

- 8) **Tree Canopy Cover:** Imagine that the sun is directly overhead and estimate the percentage of the site that is shaded by the tree canopy cover. The best campsite locations should score a 1 because open areas support grass cover that tolerate substantial traffic, or support dense off-site woody shrub and herb cover that can inhibit site expansion. 1 = 0-25% 2 = 26-50% 3 = 51-75% 4 = 76-100%
- 9) **Campsite Substrate:** The substrates can be worked with relative ease to provide a sufficient number of optimal tenting spots (i.e., not impeded by rockiness or large tree roots). Consider that you may need to do a bit of digging in various places to determine the level of rockiness in the soil; also consider the relative ease of bringing in some soil from a nearby location. Substrates are: **Excellent, Fair, Poor**
- 10) **Availability of Rock:** Within the surrounding area or suitable carrying distance evaluate the amount of usable rock (preferably uphill) for shoring up side-hill campsites and creating campsite and trail borders. The best campsite locations will have a plentiful supply of locally available rock. **None/very little, Some, Fair amount, Plentiful**
- 11) **Water Source:** **Close** (< 200 ft), **Proximate** (200–600 ft), **Intermediate** (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft) If possible, record a GPS waypoint at the closest water source location, label it as WS#, with consecutive numbers if more than one.
- 12) **Distance to Shelter/Campsites:** **Close** (< 200 ft), **Proximate** (200–600 ft), **Intermediate** (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft) Some separation from shelters and designated (formal) campsites is generally good, unless there is a need to share water sources, toilets, road access, and/or food storage facilities.
- 13) **Road Access:** **Close** (< 200 ft), **Proximate** (200–600 ft), **Intermediate** (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft) If possible, record a GPS waypoint at the closest road access location, label it as RA#, with consecutive numbers if more than one.
- 14) **Proximity to Rare Species/Sensitive Areas:** **Close** (< 200 ft), **Proximate** (200–600 ft), **Intermediate** (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft) Sensitive areas can include locations with easily damaged vegetation and soils, important wildlife habitat, or historic/archaeological resources. If unknown this can be assessed by ATC or APPA staff.
- 15) **Accessibility:** The access trail is universally accessible: **No, Yes**
- 16) **Comments:** General comments concerning the campsite and its location or attributes.

APPENDIX S: A.T. Campsite and Recreation Site Assessment Monitoring Form

A.T. Campsite and Recreation Site Assessment Monitoring Form

ver. 2/17/15

General Site Information

- 1) **Site Number:** _____ 2) **Inventoried by:** _____
- 3) **GPS:** _____ 4) **Date:** ____/____/____
- 5) **Location:** _____
- 6) **Site Type** (circle): **Existing Regular** campsite, **Existing Side-hill** campsite,
 Proposed Regular campsites, **Proposed Side-hill** campsite
- 7) **Site Expansion Potential:** _____%
- 8) **Tree Canopy Cover** (circle): **1** = 0-25% **2** = 26-50% **3** = 51-75% **4** = 76-100%
- 9) **Campsite Substrate** (circle): **Excellent**, **Fair**, **Poor**
- 10) **Availability of Rock** (circle): **None/very little**, **Some**, **Fair amount**, **Plentiful**
- 11) **Water Source** (circle): **Close** (< 200 ft), **Proximate** (200–600 ft),
 Intermediate (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft) GPS waypoint: WS#_____
- 12) **Distance to Shelter/Campsites** (circle): **Close** (< 200 ft), **Proximate** (200–600 ft),
 Intermediate (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft)
- 13) **Road Access** (circle): **Close** (< 200 ft), **Proximate** (200–600 ft),
 Intermediate (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft) GPS waypoint: RA#_____
- 14) **Proximity to Rare Species/Sensitive Areas** (circle): **Close** (< 200 ft),
 Proximate (200–600 ft), **Intermediate** (600–1000 ft), **Distant** (>1000 ft)
- 15) **Accessibility** (circle): The access trail is universally accessible: **No**, **Yes**
- 16) **Comments:** _____

Leave No Trace on the Appalachian Trail

GUIDELINES FOR GROUPS



The Appalachian Trail is managed to protect its natural resources and provide a specific "Trail Experience," including opportunities for quiet contemplation and solitude. To protect the natural and experiential conditions along the Trail, organized group leaders are encouraged to teach participants low impact practices and ethics.

Leave No Trace is an educational program that combines outdoor knowledge, judgment and ethical responsibility. Outdoor organizations provide training, equipment, expertise, and logistical support for everyone from novices to experienced travelers. Groups play a critical role in shaping the lifelong skills and ethics of their participants. Many were first introduced to camping on a church group or scouting trip, at a summer camp, with a hiking club, or through a trip with a school.

Large organized groups have earned a bad reputation which is sometimes deserved, and sometimes not. Noise, crowding, trash, poor sanitation, tree damage, and other impacts are often blamed on organized groups. The practices a group uses, and how it behaves in the outdoors, are more important than actual group size in determining the effects it has on the land and other visitors.

This brochure teaches ethics and practices that preserve the Appalachian Trail’s resources and the quality of outdoor experiences. Please familiarize your group with these practices. *Please make **Leave No Trace** part of your group’s training, and help protect the Trail.*

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Outdoor visits can be enhanced by taking the time to improve outdoor skills, learning about the area to be visited, planning the trip carefully, and bringing the right gear. Match your group’s physical conditioning and experience with the terrain and distance to be hiked. Choose leaders who are experienced in outdoor skills, teaching, and Leave No Trace practices. Enroll your group leaders in a Leave No Trace Master Educator course or Trainer course. Develop sufficient leadership to break the group into small, independent teams to travel and camp. Teach Leave No Trace principles to the entire group before heading into the outdoors so everyone knows what is expected. Avoid lectures by using experiential teaching and teachable moments.

Helpful hints:

- Check with land managers and A.T. guidebooks for guidance on camping policies, group size limits, and whether permits are needed. Ask about the most suitable camping locations, or scout them out in advance.
- Please visit in the smallest possible group size. If your group is large, recruit enough leaders so

you can break into smaller groups to travel and camp, for example, in groups of up to 8 or 10.

- Carry tents or tarps and leave shelters for solo hikers and groups of 4 or less.
- Avoid or stay only a short time at popular features, or visit them during times when they are less crowded.
- Reduce trash by repackaging food and planning your meals so you don’t have leftovers.
- Bring equipment that facilitates low-impact practices: trash bags, camp stoves, trowels for digging cat-holes and strainers for dishwater. Leave all woods tools (hatchets, axes) at home.
- Bring waterproof bags and at least 50 feet of rope to hang food, trash, and other scented articles, or carry bear-proof food containers.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Trampled plants and soils sometimes recover slowly. Avoid impact in popular areas by concentrating your traffic on the most durable surfaces available and dispersing your traffic in pristine areas so visible impacts do not occur. Stay on durable surfaces that show little sign of your visit, such as non-vegetated rock or gravel, barren soils on established trails and recreation sites, or dry, short grasses.

With novices, it is best to stay on trails and established campsites until they have the skills necessary to travel in pristine areas with minimal impact. Off-trail travel requires more experience and scrupulous attention to Leave No Trace techniques. Failure to adhere to these practices can cause lasting environmental impacts. Only groups highly skilled in Leave No Trace should venture off the beaten path.

Helpful Hints:

- Stay on well-established trails when traveling and when moving around camp. Avoid faint trails and off-trail traffic to protect plants and soils. Traveling single file near the center of the

trail will avoid trail widening, particularly along muddy or rutted sections. Remove branches from the trail, rather than going around and creating new trails.

- Choose a campsite large enough for your group, or divide into smaller groups and use two or three smaller, durable sites.
- Concentrate all activities on the most durable or previously disturbed surfaces and avoid trampling plants.
- Gather as a large group only on durable surfaces, such as rocks, snow, gravel, and grass.
- Describe both durable and nondurable surfaces for your group. Help them recognize areas sensitive to human traffic such as wet soils, stream banks, and fragile plants like ferns, wildflowers, tree seedlings, moss, and alpine plants such as heather.

Dispose of Waste Properly

Leave the area free of trash and food scraps. Anything with a food smell attracts wildlife and alters their natural behavior with serious long-term effects. There is no "acceptable" waste, not even that which is biodegradable, such as apple cores or pieces of dropped food. Perform some community service by carrying out food or trash left by others.

Think carefully about the maturity of your group when considering how you will dispose of human waste. With children and novices, you will need to be extremely diligent about instruction and compliance, and with them, it is usually best to camp near toilet facilities.

Helpful hints:

- “Pack it in; Pack it out.” Don’t burn, bury, or leave litter or extra food. Leave any food or equipment “donations” at hiker boxes at hostels and motels in town, rather than at shelters.
- Use the privy for human waste (feces) only. *Do not* add trash, including leftover food,

- disposable wipes or hygiene products, none of which biodegrade easily.
- Waste and toilet paper placed under rocks decompose more slowly and are frequently uncovered by other visitors or wildlife. If there is no privy, dispose of human waste by burying it in a “cat-hole” 6-8 inches deep and at least 200 feet (80 steps) from campsites, shelters, trails, and water sources. Or better yet, during the day find an isolated spot to “take care of business” a long distance from water and miles from any camp or shelter. Use a stick to push toilet paper to the bottom of the “cat-hole” (to discourage animals digging it up) – or even better, double-bag and carry it out. Used tea bags or crushed aspirin will absorb odors.
 - Wash dishes, bodies, and clothing 100 feet away from water sources. Use biodegradable soap sparingly, or not at all. Strain dishwater to remove food scraps, and pack them out with the rest of your trash.
 - Disperse toothpaste, cooking water, dishwater, and urinate at least 100 feet away from shelters, water sources, and campsites. This will reduce odors from these liquid wastes, and decrease the likelihood of wildlife being attracted into camp.
 - Inspect your campsite and lunch areas carefully for trash or food scraps before moving on.

Leave What You Find

Youth love to build dams and take home captured animals or insects as pets, or load their packs with interesting rocks, feathers and arrowheads. In the outdoors, these activities change the aesthetics of a site, may have a lasting impact on the ecology and the cultural record, and may be illegal. Consider the cumulative impact if everyone took home a memento.

Help your group recognize the magic of unaltered nature. Keep people active so they don't get bored and start elaborate construction projects. Inspect

- your campsite before you leave and do your best to restore the site.
- Helpful Hints:**
- Leave cultural artifacts, plants, and other natural objects where you found them for others to enjoy.
 - Supervise your group around sensitive plants, animals, or cultural sites. Crushed vegetation or damage to an historic foundation or stone wall can happen very quickly with energetic youth, no matter how well-meaning they are.
 - Don't leave graffiti, your name or other “mark” on trees, rocks, signs, or shelters.
 - Green wood burns poorly; don't damage live trees for firewood. Leave dead standing trees and dead limbs for the wildlife.
 - Don't build structures or dig trenches around tents.

Minimize Campfire Impacts

Campfires have their role. Many groups bond by telling stories, roasting marshmallows, or just hanging out around a campfire, but campfires can cause problems. Too many areas have campfire pits overflowing with charcoal and trash, damaged and felled trees, and areas stripped of wood.

Helpful Hints:

- Use stoves for cooking. Substitute candle lanterns for campfires, or experience nighttime without any lighting, watching the stars.
- If you need a campfire, build one only where it's legal and in an existing fire ring. Keep campfires small and burn them for a short time to conserve wood. Leave hatchets and saws at home—collect only dead and downed wood that you can easily break by hand.
- Do not try to burn trash, including foil, plastic, glass, cans, tea bags, food, or anything with food on it. These items do not burn thoroughly. They create noxious fumes and residues, attract

- wildlife like skunks and bears, and make the area unsightly.
- Avoid burning large quantities of paper. Burn all wood and charcoal completely to ash before putting the fire out. Leave fire rings clean by removing others’ trash and scattering cold coals and ashes 200 feet away from camp.

Respect Wildlife

Help wildlife stay wild. Animals face threats from loss and fragmentation of habitat, invasive species, pollution, exploitation, poaching and disease. Protected lands offer a refuge from some, but not all, of these problems. Consequently, wildlife need hikers who will promote their survival rather than add to the difficulties they already face.

Helpful hints:

- Carry the gear needed to store food, trash, and scented articles out of reach of animals. This may require ropes for hanging food, bear canisters, or plastic food containers to keep rodents away.
- Pick up all food scraps, even dropped crumbs, and pack them out with your garbage so animals don't associate humans with food.
- Keep a respectful distance from wildlife so as not to cause a change in their behavior. If you are hiking with a dog, keep it on a short leash.
- Observe animals from a distance. Carry binoculars or a telephoto camera lens to enhance your viewing.
- Supervise youth around wildlife. Educate them on the rationale for not chasing, disturbing, feeding, or getting too close to animals.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

A primary argument for limiting group size is that large groups can have profound social impacts on other visitors. Such impacts can be avoided or reduced by responsible behavior.

Helpful Hints:

- Gather and camp as a large group only in locations out of sight and earshot from other visitors. Groups of 5 or more should not camp within shelters (except in areas that use reservations) and camp away from shelters whenever possible.
- Be aware of others. Move off the trail to a durable surface for breaks and to allow other hikers to pass.
- Let nature’s sounds prevail. Remind your group that voices can travel long distances.
- Do not use cell phones or audio equipment within sight or sound of other hikers, and turn ringers off.
- Remember: a group size limit of 10 means that your group never congregates in numbers greater than 10. If your group is larger than the area’s group size limit, break into smaller subgroups to travel and camp.
- Visit and enjoy, but don't monopolize, water sources, viewpoints, or other areas of interest.

Learn More: The national Leave No Trace program is managed by the non-profit Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. For more information, visit www.LNT.org or phone 1-800-332-4100 for educational materials, training opportunities and much more. For video links and details on Leave No Trace practices for the Appalachian Trail, see the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Leave No Trace web page, www.appalachiantrail.org/Lnt. Visit “Appalachian Trail Leave No Trace” on Facebook.

Your help is needed: The Appalachian Trail is maintained by volunteers and managed in partnership by A.T. clubs, land-managing agencies, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. You are urged to enlist your group to do trail or campsite maintenance work, or other stewardship projects. Please contact the local land management agency or A.T. club for volunteer opportunities: www.appalachiantrail.org/volunteer.

APPENDIX U: List of Acronyms

AMC	Appalachian Mountain Club
AMC-MA	AMC Berkshire Chapter Massachusetts Appalachian Trail Committee
AMC-NH	Appalachian Mountain Club in New Hampshire/White Mountains
ANST	Appalachian National Scenic Trail
A.T.	Appalachian Trail
ATC	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
DCR	Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
DEM	Department of Environmental Management
FPR	Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation
GMC	Green Mountain Club
GMNF	Green Mountain National Forest
GNC	Group Notification Calendar
GNS	Group Notification System
GOS	Group Outreach Specialist
L.T.	Long Trail
MATC	Maine Appalachian Trail Club
CARE	Caretaker and Ridgerunner Education Committee (Maine Appalachian Trail Club)
OOPS	Outdoor Orientation Program Symposium
RR	Ridgerunner
SCA	Student Conservation Association
SUP	Special Use Permits
TWA	Teen Wilderness Adventures (Appalachian Mountain Club)
VHCB	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
VNS	Voluntary Notification System