

This categorical exclusion document (CE) serves as a formal record for routine facility maintenance activities for the years 2015-2016 at the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (APPA).

The Appalachian Trail (A.T.) was opened as a continuous trail in 1937, and designated as our nation's first National Scenic Trail in 1968. The A.T. is more than a 2,189-mile footpath from Maine to Georgia through the Appalachian Mountains; it is a 280,000-acre greenway averaging only 1,000 feet wide and extending across 14 states, 6 NPS units, 8 National Forests, a suite of more than 80 state and local jurisdictions, and 5 National Park Service (NPS) Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) networks. It is a unique and nationally recognized protected natural area managed by the NPS APPA in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), 14 states, and 31 maintaining clubs.

Trail and facility maintenance activities are necessary to ensure visitor safety and enjoyment, minimize resource damage, and to promote resource protection by encouraging use of the AT.

Activities covered under the scope of this project include:

- Opening the trail corridor to the proper width and height as outlined in the *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance, 2nd ed.* handbook and associated *Appalachian Trail Fieldbook, 2nd ed.*, including brushing and removing fallen trees, debris, and rocks from the trail corridor;
- Repairing / reestablishing trail tread in sections of the trail where erosion has compromised trail integrity;
- Maintaining, repairing, and replacing damaged/deteriorated trail tread, drainage, erosion controlling, and safety related structures,
- Rebuilding and repairing non-historic trail bridges (in-kind) including decking, railings, approaches, abutments, and stringers with on-site native materials (typically smaller than 12 DBH);
- Creating and/or replacing barriers to discourage trail shortcutting, trail widening, and use of social trails in order to allow vegetation outside the 4 x 8 foot trail prism to recover;
- Annually checking for and removing hazard trees near trail shelters, privies, parking lots, overnight facilities, viewpoints and other public gathering locations in coordination with land management partners and natural resource staff
- Maintaining and replacing (in kind) trail and campground structural elements such as tent pads, toilets, and fire-pits;
- Completing minor (200ft or less) trail relocations due to seasonal changes in the landscape, such as rockslides, erosion, natural drainage re-routes, downed trees, etc.
- Maintain, repair and/or replace wayfinding, regulatory, informational, etc. signs and blazes that contribute to the AT.
- The in-kind maintenance, repair or replacement of features associated with non-historic AT buildings, privies and shelters such as; windows, doors, painting/client, roofs, etc.
- Minor road and parking lot repairs such as crack sealing, pothole maintenance, restriping, drainage ditch cleaning, minor resurfacing, etc.

In addition to the guidelines provided in the *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance, 2nd ed.* handbook and associated *Appalachian Trail Fieldbook, 2nd ed.*, the following do not apply to a CE.

- Requires clearing in excess of 4 feet wide and 8 feet high or extensive disturbance outside the established trail prism
- Will involve significant or extraordinary reconstruction or rehabilitation of treadway.
 - Scope factors to consider
 - a. Requires mobilization of a trail crew
 - b. Days of labor
 - c. Cut slope will be greater than 4-feet away from edge of trail
 - d. Project is identified in annual trail assessment / FMSS.
- Takes place in a natural or cultural resource priority zone

This project only focuses on re-occurring cyclic trail maintenance. This CE is not intended to cover extensive trail reroutes, major off-trail drainage redirection, bridge abutment relocation, or activities occurring at a great distance from the trail footpath. Work performed under this CE must also occur without significant changes in technology, location, capacity, or appearance. Any new techniques or significant changes in the scope of work would trigger consultation with compliance staff, including any requests for an amendment to the CE to cover the proposed changes. The standard for determining a significant change is based on the potential for increasing environmental impacts, as determined by the Environmental Screening Form.

This programmatic CE is also subject to annual review during which time the facility manager and resource manager will discuss the annual work plan for all routine work to be performed under this programmatic CE and information regarding mitigations and best management practices will be shared and updated as necessary and appropriate. For routine maintenance activities not in the annual work plan (e.g., addressing problems that are discovered during the maintenance season, such as repairing recently damaged trail signs or washed out sections of trail), appropriate subject-matter experts will be contacted, as necessary.