



## ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy

### Agricultural Use on A.T. Corridor Lands

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

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

#### Policy

Recognizing the great diversity in agricultural practices and pastoral environments along the Trail corridor, it is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to support and promote agriculture within the Trail corridor in locations where such use has been long-established and provides a desirable and appropriate setting for the Trail. Agriculture can serve as an excellent management tool for maintenance of open areas. When properly conducted, it can provide visual diversity, a pleasing recreational environment that complements and is compatible with the surrounding community, a beneficial resource use, and good community relations with a minimal burden on volunteer time and energy.

Feedlots, hydroponics, pisciculture, greenhouses, and other high-intensity farming practices are normally considered incompatible with the Trail experience and will be discouraged. However, under most circumstances, pastures, hayfields, and croplands can provide a pastoral scene and a desirable measure of diversity in the Trail landscape while maintaining consistency with the purposes for which the Trail is managed. ATC will work with local Trail clubs and agency partners to preserve agricultural uses within the Trail corridor, where such uses enhance the Trail experience.

Croplands: Agricultural fields should be designed so that they can be farmed profitably using agricultural best-management practices, provided that such practices do not detract from the Trail experience or other Trail values. Pest-control measures should comply with integrated pest-management recommendations for the use of pesticides and herbicides as set forth by the land-



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managing agency (or its designee).

Pasture lands: Pastures should be managed so that overgrazing, erosion, or other resource damage does not occur. In the event of resource damage, permit conditions should be amended or permits suspended until a desirable forage cover is reestablished. Bulls and other potentially aggressive livestock should not be permitted in pastures crossed by the footpath of the Trail. Riparian areas should be protected.

The Trail footpath should be located in its optimal location through croplands, pasturelands, and hay meadows, but, as long as the recreational experience and resource values for which the Trail is managed can be maintained, some adjustments may be considered if needed to maintain a viable agricultural operation. Solutions to on-the-ground issues should be worked out among all interested parties, including the local Trail club, ATC, the land-managing agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the permittee or prospective permittee(s). Farm-management plans, soil-conservation plans, crop rotations, agricultural conversions, livestock densities, and duration of grazing should follow Natural Resources Conservation Service or managing-agency recommendations.

ATC supports terms of five years or more for permits for agricultural activities, in order to encourage long-term relationships and allow permittees a reasonable rate of return on any investments in Trail-corridor lands. Permits should not be considered as rights: They may be revoked for noncompliance, and they should be reviewed every five years to ensure that the agricultural operations provide a net benefit to the Appalachian Trail. While permit fees should be based on fair market value, ATC encourages adjustments in permit fees to provide funds for assessment, monitoring, and site improvements and to recognize benefits that may accrue to the Trail from cropland or pastureland management.

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

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