



ATC Management Policy Bicycle Use Policy

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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 Trail-wide management.

Overview

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

ATC further encourages all agency partners to adopt and enforce similar prohibitions against bicycles on the Appalachian Trail.



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

Policy

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

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



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

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

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

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