



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Geocaching

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Category: Non-hiking Recreational Use	Updated:

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 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'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.

Overview

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy seeks to preserve and protect the scenic, cultural, and natural resources of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail experience, as defined by the National Trails System Act and ATC policy. To this end, ATC seeks to cooperatively address geocaching with its agency partners, trail-maintaining clubs and other interested groups. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy recognizes that geocaching offers a unique and social approach to exploring the outdoors that may appeal to a growing segment of outdoor enthusiasts. At the same time, the Conservancy also recognizes the potential drawbacks of practicing this activity, which may include resource degradation, infringement of property rights, and/or conflicts with trail-use ethics. Therefore, to mitigate these concerns, the Conservancy acknowledges that geocaching and similar activities along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail may be appropriate, but only under the following conditions:



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Policy

1. Where geocaching is expressly permitted and managed by the appropriate land-management agency. Geocachers are responsible for knowing the ownership of the lands they intend to recreate on, contacting the land management agency (state, forest or park as appropriate) or private landowner and obtaining the necessary permits or written permission.
2. Where proper care is taken to avoid damage caused by digging or trampling to vegetation, archeological, cultural, or historic resources or other fragile resources in the area.

Additionally, any geocaching activities occurring within the A.T. corridor must conform to other ATC and agency policies. ATC strongly supports agency prohibitions where needed to protect Trail resources and the visitor experience.

ATC believes that all geocaches that do not meet the above criteria should be removed from Appalachian Trail lands.

The Conservancy's effort to manage geocaching along the A.T. will include the following elements:

- Working with appropriate land-management partners to ensure protection of Trail resources from the potential impacts of geocaching.
- Education and outreach for those engaging in geocaching along the A.T., including contact information for ATC regional offices.
- Providing guidance to Trail-maintaining clubs for dealing with geocaches and geocaching impacts.
- Monitoring and cataloging existing caches along the A.T. as well as newly placed caches.
- Working with geocaching organizations on integrating NPS, ATC and other land-management agency policy in their cache reviewing processes.

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.