

## **ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Invasive Species and Pest Management**

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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 (ATC) and its member clubs recognize the adverse impacts of non-native and invasive plant, animal and pathogen species upon the ecosystems through which the Trail passes. Proliferation of these species threatens native biodiversity and has the potential to significantly alter the natural communities along the Trail, jeopardizing habitat resiliency and compromising the Trail experience.

Invasive species, as defined by Executive Order 13751, means, with regard to a particular ecosystem, a non-native organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human, animal, or plant health.

Non-native species, as defined by Executive Order 13751, means, with respect to a particular ecosystem, an organism, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that occurs outside of its natural range. Non-native introductions are often a result of (intentional or unintentional) human actions.

### **Policy**

The Conservancy will work to manage non-native invasive species in cooperation with its agency partners, Trail maintaining clubs, and other interested groups. This effort will emphasize an early detection and rapid response (EDRR) approach to invasive species management, focused on managing new and emerging species before they become widespread and severely damaging. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail Invasive Species Action Plan should be consulted during the

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planning of invasive species focused activities. The following elements will be included in the effort to quickly recognize and control infestations of non-native invasive species along the Trail.

- **Education/Prevention** – ATC will incorporate information on non-native invasive species and the threats they present into its volunteer and public-information efforts. As part of this effort, the Conservancy will seek to raise the collective awareness of its members, volunteers, users and staff regarding the potential harm caused by non-native invasive species, their rate of expansion, and methods that can be employed to control them effectively. Coupled with education, efforts may be taken to install boot cleaning stations at high traffic trail heads to prevent the spread of non-native invasive from known vectors into the forest interior.
- **Monitoring** – The occurrence and spread of invasive exotic species will be monitored as resources permit. Existing national, state and local data can and should be consulted to provide insight into existing and imminent invasive threats. Monitoring priority will be given to those areas where threatened and endangered species are at risk and in natural exemplary natural communities. As ATC continues to understand and identify climate resilient lands, areas of climate change refugia and ecologically valuable areas, they too may become priorities for monitoring.

ATC will adopt the APPA Invasive Species Detection Standard Operating Procedure. ATC recognizes that some of our partners may use different monitoring systems, and we will work with them to maximize the value of the monitoring data we collect. ATC will adopt the standardized reporting system, EDDMapS (Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System), to track the occurrences of non-native invasive species, Trailwide.

- **Control** – Eradicating all invasive species along the A.T. is not a realistic objective. We do not know where all infestations are located, and infestations become established faster than we are able to identify them. Thus, invasive species control and management will be guided by priorities determined by A.T. resource managers, guidance from regional invasive species organizations, and feedback from volunteers and A.T. staff. Trail non-native invasive species monitoring efforts should be used to inform and develop management plans and best management practices (BMP).

To the extent feasible, non-native invasive species will be controlled with priority given to those areas:

- 1) Where non-native invasive species have the potential to do the greatest harm; and,
- 2) Where actions to control non-native invasive species will do the greatest good and have the highest likelihood of success.

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Pests, as defined by the USDA National Roadmap for Integrated Pest Management, are any organism (microbes, plants or animals) that poses economic, health, aesthetic or environmental risk. Pests are context-specific, so an organism that is a pest in one environment may be benign or beneficial in others.

Decisions concerning whether or not to manage a pest or pest population will be influenced by whether the pest is a native or non-native species. Native pests (i.e., occurring within their natural range) will be allowed to function unimpeded, except as noted below.

Based on National Park Service Management Policies 2006, ATC The NPS may control native pests to:

- Conserve threatened, rare, or endangered species, or unique specimens or communities;
- Preserve, maintain, or restore the historical integrity of cultural resources;
- Conserve and protect plants, animals, and facilities in developed areas;
- Prevent outbreaks of a pest from invading un-infested areas outside the Appalachian Trail Corridor;
- Manage a human health hazard when advised to do so by the U. S. Public Health Service (which includes the Centers for Disease Control and the NPS public health program);
- Or, to otherwise protect against a significant threat to human safety.

ATC has adopted the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to managing non-native invasive species and pests. IPM is a science-based, decision-making process that combines biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools to identify, manage and reduce risk from pests and pest management tools. IPM actions will be implemented once approvals have been obtained from appropriate land management and regulatory agencies. Pest-control measures should comply with integrated pest-management recommendations for the use of pesticides and herbicides as set forth by the land-managing agency (or its designee). ATC staff and partners will follow all applicable licensing and notification procedures when managing invasive species on A.T. lands. In accordance with IPM practices, ATC will consider and work to minimize potential negative impacts to non-target species, weighing the long-term benefit to the natural community or its component species.

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.