

## **ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy**

### **Review and Approval of Management Plans and Project Proposals**

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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.

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and provide guidance to Trail-maintaining clubs, regional partnership committees and ATC volunteers and staff on the process for review and approval of management plans and management project proposals.

#### **Policy**

In general, the review and approval process is designed to achieve several objectives:

- Involve all of the relevant partners (Trail clubs, agencies and ATC) in the decision-making process;
- Review project and plan proposals efficiently while providing local volunteers, through the regional partnership committees (RPC), the opportunity to be involved early in the process;
- Ensure that environmental compliance (e.g., NEPA) and permitting requirements are met;
- Have as many management decisions as possible made at the regional level;
- Meet ATC’s obligations under its management agreements with land-managing agencies.

**Scope:** This guidance applies to approval of the following:

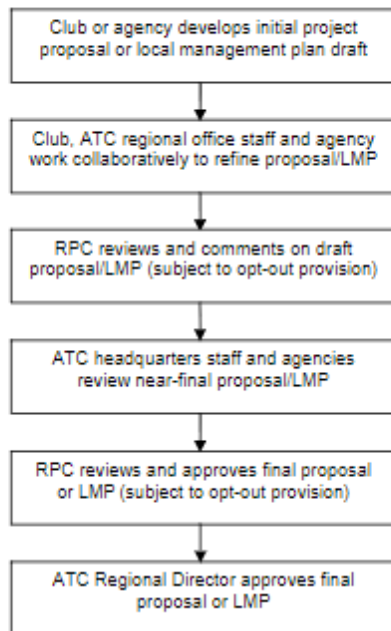
- Local management plans
- Trail relocations (minor and major)
- New side or connecting trails

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- Construction of new or replacement bridges
- Construction of new or replacement overnight facilities
- Voluntary Trail club maintenance assignments and reassignment

**Process:** The review and approval process is diagrammed and described below:



The focal point during the processing of projects and plans is the ATC regional office. ATC regional staff will assist clubs and other partners in refining initial proposals, assembling the necessary supporting information and engaging other management partners in the process. Regional staff, especially the regional director, will work closely with the RPC during both the initial and final reviews.

The Regional Partnership Committee chair has the option to "opt-out" of RPC review and approval of minor local management plan amendments, trail relocations, new side or connecting trails, or construction of bridges or overnight facilities. This decision will be made by the RPC chair in consultation with the club or agency making the proposal and the ATC regional director.

Responsibility for approval of proposals covered by this guidance is delegated to the regional directors unless specified otherwise in specific policies.

In order to maintain consistency among the regions, regional directors are encouraged to consult with their colleagues in the other regions, as well as ATC headquarters staff, agency partners, and volunteers (including members of the Stewardship Council).

If a regional director feels that a specific decision should be made at a higher level in ATC, the director should forward a request to do so to the director of conservation. The request should include an explanation of the reasons for elevating the decision. The director of conservation will work with staff and volunteer leaders to determine the appropriate decision-making level. Possible levels are director of conservation, chief operating officer, executive director, Stewardship Council and Board of Directors.

The process is designed to involve all partners in the decision-making process and reach consensus. However, if a Trail club or other partner is dissatisfied with a regional director's decision, a review of the decision may be requested. The request will be forwarded to the director of conservation. Further review, up to the Board of Directors, may be requested. Decisions of the Board are final.



**Appalachian Trail  
Conservancy**

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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.