



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy on Military Maneuvers

Published: November 1989	Reviewed: Jan 2020
Category: Other 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 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

This policy is intended to mitigate the impact of military training maneuvers on the Appalachian Trail whether they be physical, noise, visual. ATC recognizes and endorses the valuable assistance provided by units of the armed forces during search-and-rescue missions along the Appalachian Trail, the use of military aircraft to airlift materials for shelter construction projects in remote areas, and other actions undertaken by military personnel at the request of a club or agency partner for the benefit or management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. This policy is not intended to discourage these mutually beneficial cooperative activities, which have significantly enhanced the management capabilities of the Appalachian Trail management partners.

Policy Body

The physical and experience impacts of military training exercises, including ground and air noise disturbances, can significantly detract from the experience of hiking the Appalachian Trail and may also create safety hazards for hikers. It is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that military maneuvers should not be permitted on the Appalachian Trail corridor lands, except in unusual circumstances.

ATC and impacted Trail-maintaining clubs should be consulted during any formal or informal consideration of a proposal for military-training exercises on A.T. lands. ATC will assist agencies to the extent possible in identifying alternative locations for conducting military training exercises. If an authorization is under consideration for military training use of the Appalachian Trail or



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy on Military Maneuvers

Appalachian Trail lands, ATC would urge its land-managing partners to issue authorizations only when a determination has been made by the appropriate agency officials that the training exercises are essential for national defense and that it is not feasible to conduct the exercises at any other location. If a special-use permit is issued by a land-managing agency for any military training exercise on the Appalachian Trail or Appalachian Trail lands, the permit at a minimum should state that:

1. No ground disturbance (including construction of bunkers, foxholes, tent platforms, etc.) and mechanized or motorized use should not be permitted (and is prohibited in “wilderness” and “wilderness study” areas);
2. Activities authorized under the permit must not interfere with hikers on the Trail;
3. All reasonable efforts will be made to notify hikers and other users of Trail corridor lands that such activities are occurring;
4. No weapons should be used or be visible to observers;
5. No activities may be conducted which put any hikers or other civilians at risk.
6. No activities may be conducted which would exceed the limits for group use set forth in the ATC group-use policy (“Groups spending one or more nights on the Trail should not exceed 10 in the same organization and day-use groups should not exceed 25 in the same organization unless clubs otherwise designate in their local-management plans”);
7. No explosive materials will be permitted;
8. No activities should be permitted near shelters or other Trail facilities;
9. The Trail club and ATC should be notified by the land-managing agency at least 48 hours in advance of any pending activity.

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.