

ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy

Guidance on Special Use Permits

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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

General guidelines for issuing special use permits on NPS-acquired lands were developed jointly between the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO) and ATC in 1983. These guidelines also may be applicable to other Trail lands. Typically, Trail clubs and ATC play a greater role in administering and monitoring permits on NPS-acquired lands than on lands administered by other agencies.

Policy

In general, these guidelines provide direction on the following aspects of review and approval of special-use permits:

Decision-making process—Coordination of initial issuance and renewals rests with the local managers, according to principles outlined in the A.T. Comprehensive Plan and local management plans. These local managers usually include the local Trail club (which has the lead role), local management committee, agency partner, local municipality, and the ATC regional office staff. When a permit is contemplated, consultation occurs among partners, and permit language is drafted by ATPO. If all parties are in agreement with the permit, the final permit is signed by the park manager and issued from the ATPO. If there are major policy implications or controversy regarding the issuance or renewal of a permit, the local managers should

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establish a committee, to the extent that one does not already exist, to address the problem on a local level. In addition, if unique situations arise that are not covered by the guidelines, this committee approach should be used to seek a local solution.

Standard Provisions—All special-use permits must be considered temporary in nature and revocable at the discretion of the NPS A.T. park manager. Permits are not transferable. They may be issued for any period of time up to five years. All permits must have a specific description of the property involved, intended use, expiration date, and statement of liability.

Appropriate Uses—Permits should be issued only to accomplish management purposes or to continue existing uses until specifically addressed in the local management-planning process. Selection of Permittee—If apparent qualifications among interested parties are comparable, land-use permits should be issued first to the former landowner, then to the adjacent landowner, then to local residents. Permits for occupancy of structures may more appropriately be based on interviewing of potential tenants. Renewals of permits may be offered first to the previous permittee, all conditions having been met.

Fees—Generally, fees should be charged for any use of public lands and documentation of fee determination kept on file. Managers should establish local rates for comparable rentals and apply standard deductions as appropriate. This function is handled by ATPO.

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.