



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy

Public Information, Education, and Outreach Programs

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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

Although it was built and maintained privately at first, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail was always intended for use by the broad spectrum of the public and is now located almost entirely on public lands.

As stewards of the Trail, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Trail-maintaining clubs, and agency partners seek to make others aware of the Trail and its possible attractions for them, promote access to the A.T. for all, and motivate users to treat the Trail, its resources, and other users properly for the greater enjoyment of all. At the same time, greater awareness and use of the Trail increases the number of potential Trail club members (including a new generation of maintainers and managers) and ATC. Good community relations are an asset in corridor monitoring and land protection, as well as a means of strengthening the local organization with new talents for managing the diversity of activities now associated with the Trail project. Public information, or public relations, always supports some other purpose of the organization.

Trail users obviously want and need information about the Trail. The news media (and commercial publishers of travel and recreation books and other materials) are also interested—many will publish hike and work-trip notices; most are always interested in the type of “good-news,” local volunteer work that is the mainstay of A.T. club activities. Regular contact is also perhaps an organization’s best insurance against irresponsible reporting in times of crisis, minor or major.



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Policy

ATC has an obligation as a nonprofit organization and as a cooperative management partner to provide full, factual, and unbiased information about the Trail as a national public resource. In fulfilling this obligation, a series of 11 official guides to the A.T. are published by ATC and three of the Trail clubs, supplemented by an annual summary of mileages between important points (the Appalachian Trail Data Book); a magazine for members; technical manuals for maintainers; promotional and educational brochures for the Trail user; and other books, posters, maps, and related merchandise. These materials, obviously, are intended for direct communication with users, potential users, and supporters.

ATC also engages in and encourages indirect communication through the news and educational media, the commercial publishing industry, and the entertainment business. In its day-to-day promotional activities, ATC seeks to leave a positive impression of both itself and the maintaining clubs and encourages media contacts with them. In emergencies affecting the Trail and its reputation, ATC also serves as the media liaison for the A.T. community.

ATC is reaching out beyond its traditional audiences to engage new volunteers in environmental monitoring through the A.T. MEGA-Transect and other programs, and to encourage future Trail users, volunteers, and supporters through a place-based educational program known as a Trail to Every Classroom as well as through community partnerships being nurtured along the Trail. ATC's [volunteer clearinghouse](#) provides an online opportunity for Trail clubs to reach out to potential volunteers by posting work trips and other projects.

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.