



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Guidance on Relocations

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.

Overview

Where the Appalachian Trail is located on roads, or its location is undesirable because of resource damage or irreconcilable conflicts with incompatible uses, relocations may be made to provide a more desirable environment for the hiker or to protect the resource. Since the Trail was first completed as a continuous footpath in 1937, many relocations have been necessary to keep the Trail from being severed by subdivisions and road development. Those development threats were the main reason for the federal land-protection program. As federal and state agencies have acquired corridor land, Trail clubs have been involved in major relocations to place the Trail in the newly acquired A.T. corridor. Care must be exercised so that Trail relocations do not diminish the primitive quality or simplicity of the footpath. Relocations also open up new areas to public use. All relocations should provide a Trail environment that is equal to or better than that of the existing location, while procedurally complying with the legal responsibilities of the landowning agency, particularly those established in the National Trails System Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). (NEPA).

Guidance

Although ATC does not have a formal policy on relocations, ATC ensures that all partners—the Trail clubs, land-managing agencies, and landowners—are involved and consulted, with proposals and plans shared and reviewed *before* relocations are constructed in the field. ATC also serves as guarantor that the primitive quality of the Appalachian Trail is maintained or enhanced in the relocation process. ATC cooperates with federal agencies in completing the environmental assessments required by NEPA.

Consultation with land manager is required for all relocations, however seemingly insignificant. Compliance with NEPA is required for all relocations affecting any federal lands crossed by the Trail.

Consult your regional ATC office for appropriate management approval forms and procedures.



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During the land-acquisition program particularly in the southern national forests, ATC and the Forest Service developed an “Optimal Location Review” process to ensure that the optimal A.T. route was selected before acquisition. (This process is still used on USFS lands in the Southern region of the Trail. Trail clubs should check with their ATC regional office for guidance).

Inform ATC regional office and land management partners through the Trail Asset Inventory update process so that guidebooks and trail facility assets are accurately reflected.

For questions related to this guidance 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.