

ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy on Resource Management

Published: November 1988	Reviewed:
Category: Resource Management	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 Trailwide management.

Policy

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy seeks to manage the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of the Appalachian Trail in a manner that preserves and protects these resources, while meeting its responsibilities for promoting the use and enjoyment of the footpath, its related facilities, and its surrounding corridor lands.

This policy is based on the following principles:

1. The Appalachian Trail footpath is itself a resource of greater significance than component parts of the corridor. Preserving the continuity and integrity of the footpath and its environs is an essential consideration in management of individual natural, cultural, and scenic resources. This consideration should not cause other resource values to be overshadowed, however. The use and enjoyment of the footpath and surrounding corridor lands and the protection of individual resource values should serve as goals that complement and enhance each other. In the vast majority of cases, traditional Trail-management practices have served and will continue to serve to maintain and enhance the natural, cultural, and scenic qualities of the Trail environment.
2. Management decisions should reflect a conscious awareness that activities and use levels on and adjacent to corridor lands affect Trail resources. In those rare instances where unique or key natural or cultural features are jeopardized by the footpath’s presence,

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adjustments in location or use will be made to protect resource values.

3. Trail lands shall be managed to promote their primitive, natural character. Exceptions may be made to manage the land for other special or distinctive resource values (e.g., open areas, vistas, farmland, historic sites, sensitive species sites, etc.). In areas that have been adversely affected by human-caused disturbance (e.g., a gravel pit, dump, etc.), management activities to restore an area to its original condition are encouraged.

4. The diverse character of Appalachian Trail lands is fundamental to the Trail experience. Preserving and promoting the broad range of traditional landscapes that the footpath passes through is essential. Resource management planning choices will consider the long-term diversity of the landscape (e.g., open areas vs. forest) as well as the diversity (or richness) of plant and animal species.

5. Some activities are inappropriate on Appalachian Trail lands because of their adverse effect on resources and hikers. In order to preserve the quality of the Trail experience, measures will be taken to protect the footpath and surrounding corridor lands from improper uses. Minimum responsible land stewardship entails protecting the corridor from encroachments and uses that degrade Trail values (e.g., dumping, timber theft, unauthorized roads, vehicle usage, etc.). Use of corridor lands for interpretation and other non-consumptive uses, including scientific use, will be encouraged when it is in keeping with primitive Trail values and consistent with club local management plans.

6. The cooperative management system provides the framework for volunteers, ATC staff and public land-management agency professionals, acting as partners, to manage natural, cultural, and scenic resources as integral components of the Appalachian Trail. Local clubs develop statements of resource management policy in their local management plans and, where appropriate, identify actions for the protection and enhancement of natural, cultural, and scenic resources within their Trail sections. The capacity of volunteers and partners to undertake management may vary. This requires balancing the physical possibilities with the limitations of people and budgets. ATC will continue to serve as a guarantor to public-agency landowners to ensure that minimum stewardship standards are met.

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.