

ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Timber Management

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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

Policy

In 1982, the ATC adopted the following guidelines for National Park Service Trail-corridor lands. Guideline 5 was amended by the Board in 2008:

1. Forest-resource management to enhance the Trail (i.e., noncommercial vegetation manipulation for vistas, balds, etc.) is an integral part of corridor land management. Local clubs shall have the discretion to practice such activities as they feel are necessary to manage the forests to protect the Trail and its environs.
2. Management of forest resources to protect and enhance the A.T. corridor shall be considered as part of local management planning to ensure that such activities are compatible with the goals of the ATC and take into consideration other noncommercial forest resource-management activities.
3. Local clubs should consult periodically with the ATC and the NPS on forest resource-management activities, practices, and plans to ensure that they continue to be consistent with over-all A.T. corridor planning and management.
4. Forest resource management for timber (i.e., commercial harvest of firewood, saw timber, or pulpwood) will be allowed only under exceptional circumstances and only when



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local clubs can show that such activity is consistent with the goals of the ATC.

5. Plans by local clubs to undertake timber management activities must be incorporated into an approved local management plan for the affected area.

6. Before any club can undertake forest-resource management for timber (i.e., commercial timber harvesting), the ATC and the NPS must resolve the question of who may collect and use the proceeds from any such commercial activity.

7. This policy shall apply specifically to corridor lands owned in fee by the National Park Service.

These guidelines are subject to NPS rules and regulations regarding such management.

In June 1989, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy adopted the following policy statement regarding timber management on national forest lands:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy endorses the use of the U.S. Forest Service Visual Resource Management [now Scenery Management] System and the consultation procedures described in the Forest Service Manual Supplement for the A.T. (FSM 2353) and used by the U.S. Forest Service, ATC, and the Trail-maintaining clubs for assessing the impacts of timber management activities upon the Appalachian Trail. ATC will participate and encourage participation by Trail-maintaining clubs in review of forest plans and proposals for management actions on national forest lands. The

Appalachian Trail Conservancy recognizes that timber harvesting is a legitimate use of national forest lands. However, it is the position of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that timber harvesting has the potential to cause adverse impacts to the scenic, aesthetic, recreational and natural resource values of the Trail, and that timber harvesting should only take place in a manner that does not detract from Trail values.

Vegetative management activities that are designed for the purpose of enhancing or maintaining the scenic, aesthetic, or recreational values of the Trail, including vista maintenance, balds clearing, and wildlife habitat improvements, should only take place after consultation between the appropriate management partners. Timber harvests, in contrast to vegetative manipulations designed to enhance Trail values, should be prohibited within the foreground area (as defined in National Forest Landscape Management, Volumes 1 and 2, U.S. Department of Agriculture Numbers 434 and 462) of the Appalachian Trail.

Protection of the scenic environment of the Trail may require modification of proposed



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timber management actions in the middle-ground and background zones (also as defined in National Forest Landscape Management, Volumes 1 and 2).

ATC will support recommendations that protect and enhance the visual quality of the Trail. ATC will work toward a consistent, Trail-wide interpretation of the USFS [Scenery Management] System that ensures maximum protection of the scenic and aesthetic values of the Trail and endorses a cooperative program to map the visual zones from the “optimal route” of the Appalachian Trail, as determined by the Optimal Location Review process, for the entire length of the Trail where the viewshed encompasses national forest lands.

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.