

## **ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy**

### **Trail Crew Safety and Skills Training**

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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.

#### **Policy**

Personal Responsibility: ATC recognizes the strong tradition of volunteer involvement in maintenance and construction activities along the Appalachian Trail. Although ATC or other club or agency sponsors of A.T. seasonal Trail-crew programs assume responsibility for providing certain safety training and equipment to crew participants as further described in this policy, each volunteer engaged in crew-sponsored maintenance and construction activities must assume personal responsibility for assessing his or her own physical condition and preparedness for engaging in the proposed Trail-work activities and for equipping themselves with clothing appropriate to the location, duration, weather conditions, and degree of difficulty associated with the proposed work project.

Leadership: Each work party associated with an ATC-sponsored or -supported Trail-crew program must have a designated leader. Normally, the leader will be a Trail-crew or ATC employee or his or her designee. The leader, in cooperation with appropriate ATC staff, will have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that a “job hazard analysis” and a “project needs assessment” have been prepared in advance of the proposed work project and are documented on a “project logistics” form.
- To explain to members of the work party the nature of, and related potential hazards associated with, the proposed work.

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- To ensure that all work-party participants do not exceed their physical capabilities and are equipped properly for the expected work conditions.
- To ensure that appropriate tools, equipment, and safety gear are available to each member of the work party, consistent with the proposed activities and hazards of the work project.
- To provide basic safety instruction to the work party in advance of engaging in the work project and to periodically monitor during the project the safety practices of, and use of appropriate safety equipment by, each member of the work party.
- To explain the requirements of any applicable federal programs, such as VIP or VIF.
- To ensure that required medical history, personal, and emergency-contact information is obtained from each member of the work party.
- To provide basic first-aid and other emergency-management assistance and to follow the prescribed “accident-response procedure” in the event of any injury of a work-party member.

**Training, Education, and Supervision:** Safety training and education must be a fundamental component of work-skills training in every aspect of Trail-crew operations. ATC-sponsored or -supported Trail-crew members must be properly trained in any task they are likely to be asked to perform in the context of a Trail-crew work project.

Each Trail-crew supervisor is responsible for training crew members under his or her supervision. The Trail-crew supervisor may request assistance from other ATC staff, from the sponsoring maintaining-club supervisor or coordinator, and/or from the cooperating federal or state agency, if the supervisor does not feel qualified to properly train the crew members in some aspect of the proposed work. However, the Trail-crew supervisor has field-level responsibility for ensuring that crew members are properly trained, equipped, and supervised for the work they will be asked to perform.

ATC and/or other program sponsors will provide opportunities for seasonal Trail-crew supervisors to obtain additional knowledge and safety training in all phases of Trail work, including certification, where appropriate, for certain specialized equipment and/or power tools. In addition, ATC and other program sponsors will require all Trail-crew supervisors to successfully complete a government-approved defensive-driving course and an American Red Cross, or equivalent, basic first-aid and CPR course. Trail-crew supervisors will receive full salary, housing, and travel-expense reimbursement during such training.

All crew members must receive basic training in Trail maintenance and construction practices, including proper use of tools and equipment; appropriate safety practices and gear; any potential hazards or risks associated with the specific work project or site; and precautions associated with the transportation of passengers, equipment, and fuels to or from the work site. Normally, such

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training will be provided at the outset of the work project, by the Trail-crew supervisor, during a worker-orientation session either at the crew base camp or at the work site.

In addition, at the beginning of each day of the work project, or whenever a new project is initiated, the Trail-crew supervisor should conduct a “tail-gate safety session” to provide crew workers with a review of safety practices and an assessment of any new hazards or risks that may arise as a result of changing conditions at the work site. The Trail-crew supervisor also should monitor the work and safety practices of each crew member periodically during the course of the work project.

Training in specialized skills, such as operation of crosscut saws, chain saws or other power equipment, winches and associated rigging equipment, and rock drills, will be provided by ATC, the sponsoring club, and/or the cooperating public agency to each Trail-crew supervisor at the beginning of each crew season. Opportunities for refresher training will be provided periodically throughout the season. Those sessions will be open to volunteer members of the Trail crew(s). Any operator of power equipment or winches must be trained properly in the use of that equipment or work under the direct supervision of a properly trained leader with the required skills. Chain-saw and crosscut-saw operators must be certified by an approved chain-saw and crosscut-saw certification program. Explosives may be handled and detonated only by state or federally licensed operators.

In addition to on-the-job and orientation training for Trail-crew supervisors and volunteers, ATC and/or the sponsoring club or agency will provide Trail-crew workers with information materials describing trail-maintenance and -construction practices and standards, safety precautions and equipment, and applicable requirements for VIP or VIF coverage by agency cooperators.

**Project Analyses and Other Documentation:** Each proposed Trail-crew work project should be analyzed in advance of commencement of work. This evaluation should include both a “project-needs assessment” and a “job hazard analysis” and will be documented on a “project logistics” form. The purpose of the “project-needs assessment” is to determine the objectives and scope of the work; the number of workers and estimated work hours required for the project; the tools, equipment, and materials necessary to complete the project; and the amount and type of safety equipment appropriate to the project.

The purpose of the “job-hazards analysis” is to assess potential risks associated with the proposed work project, given the type of work and tools and equipment involved in the project, physical and environmental conditions at the work site, and the degree of difficulty and technical knowledge associated with the work. Normally, these analyses will be developed by the Trail-crew supervisor in consultation with the appropriate ATC field representative, the sponsoring-club coordinator, or a designated cooperating-agency representative. ATC will develop appropriate forms and

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instructional materials to assist those responsible for preparing these analyses. Trail-crew supervisors are responsible for sharing information from the “project-needs assessment” and the “job-hazards analysis” during orientation and other training sessions with all volunteer Trail-crew workers and for maintaining and updating this information as the work project evolves or the work environment changes.

Trail-crew supervisors also will be responsible for ensuring that all crew workers have completed required personal and medical-history forms and any appropriate VIP or VIF forms in advance of the commencement of work. This information must be easily accessible to the Trail-crew supervisor in the event of a medical or other emergency. Federal-agency partners will be responsible for providing ATC and/or the sponsoring club with appropriate VIP and VIF forms and a summary of requirements for coverage. Packets of medical claims forms and instructions for the NPS VIP program are available upon request from the appropriate ATC regional office or the Appalachian Trail Park Office in Harpers Ferry.

In addition, Trail-crew supervisors will be required to follow an “accident-response procedure” in the event of any accident or medical difficulty arising in connection with a work project or during a worker’s stay at a base-camp facility. The intent of the “accident-response procedure” is to ensure prompt response to any medical incident or emergency; to ensure proper notification to responsible officials in ATC, the sponsoring club, and the cooperating agency; and to assist in analyzing the causes of such incidents and developing recommendations for corrective or preventive actions in the future. ATC will provide crew supervisors with the appropriate forms and description of the procedure process. ATC also will be responsible for maintaining a database of accident-report information to assist in evaluating crew operations and safety practices.

**Vehicle Safety:** Any operator of an ATC-owned or -leased crew-transportation vehicle must:

- Have a valid driver’s license and driving record that meets ATC requirements;
- Understand and adhere to all applicable state and local traffic rules and regulations; and,
- Understand and adhere to these ATC “rules of the road” guidelines.

Any operator of a government-owned vehicle must have a valid government driver’s license or written authorization from the appropriate government agency and must comply with any additional agency operating requirements.

A state-issued driver’s license and proof of insurance (in the case of vehicles owned or leased by ATC) or a government driver’s license (in the case of a government-owned vehicle) must be easily accessible at all times during which the vehicle is being operated.

Explosive or highly flammable materials may be transported only in accordance with U.S. DOT



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regulations, must be properly labeled, and must be carried in approved containers, separated from passengers during vehicle transportation.

For questions related to this policy please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://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.