



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy

Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance

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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 Trail-wide management.

Overview

Primary mission: In 1979, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy formally affirmed the primary mission of the Appalachian Trail Management Partnership:

The Appalachian Trail in its entirety shall be kept forever open, obvious, and narrowly passable for hiking. The treadway shall pass lightly over the land to provide for the least disturbance to the natural setting. The Trail shall be marked and cleared to offer passage that may be both enjoyable for the reasonably prepared and in harmony with the natural environment... so that a hiker unfamiliar with the area can discern the direction of the route and the location of water sources and facilities.

Policy

Clearing, Marking, and Treadway Maintenance: In 1979, ATC adopted more detailed standards for clearing, marking, and treadway maintenance, which are incorporated into ATC’s *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance* and summarized in *The Appalachian Trail Fieldbook*. Those standards and guidelines generally are recognized by all clubs and agencies as the policy guide for



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Trail design, construction, and maintenance. They encourage the use of native materials and minimum tools and techniques, in order to retain the simple, primitive character of the Trail. They are stated in general terms, permitting local discretion, resourcefulness, and artistry in Trail stewardship.

Local Adaptations of Standards: In 1983, ATC passed a resolution regarding the review and approval of local adaptations of standards:

Clubs must consult with ATC before initiating changes. If the adaptation is endorsed and the agency partner concurs, the club's standards should be stated clearly in its Local Management Plan and steps should be taken to inform the public through guidebooks, signs or other means. Failure to follow this simple procedure could lead to confusion on the part of Trail users.

Double-Blazing Standards: The standard (two-inch by six-inch) white paint blaze has marked the A.T. footpath since the 1930s. ATC has advocated the use of the double blaze to indicate turns or other places where hikers should be alert. In July 1995, ATC adopted the following amendment in response to the increasing variations in blazing standards:

Individual clubs may elect to choose one of two alternatives for double paint blazes, the in-line double paint blaze or the standard offset double paint blaze, but no other variations. Painted arrows or blazes that are slanted or at an angle are nonstandard and should be removed and replaced by standard blazes. Only one of the two variations for double paint blazing at turns may be chosen, and it must be chosen for application to the club's entire Trail section. In areas where clubs choose the offset blaze, an in-line blaze may be desirable at locations other than turns, where a double-blaze warning is necessary.

If a club intends to change its blazing style, it should consult with its agency partner(s) before implementation, and it should incorporate these changes into its local management plan prior to implementing the change. Individual maintainers should not effect a change to the offset blaze on the basis of their personal preferences. It is hoped that—by giving maintaining clubs discretion to choose only one of two variations—nonstandard blazing should be reduced, if not eliminated.

Both the in-line and the offset double blaze should be used sparingly, since they become meaningless with frequent use. Double blazes are used to indicate abrupt changes in the direction of the A.T. or at other points where hikers should be especially alert. Use two standard (two-inch by six-inch) white blazes, one above the other and two inches apart;



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if using the offset, the upper blaze should be clearly off- set approximately two inches in the direction of the turn.

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.