



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Trail Signs

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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

This policy is intended to provide general guidance to trail clubs in the creation and placement of informational and interpretive signs within the AT Management Area. Local Management Plans (LMP) typically contain a section regarding the placement and style of backcountry signs for each trail maintaining club.

Land managing agencies may have their own standards and practices regarding signage. Coordinate with land managers prior to creating and installing new signage.

Policy

Guidelines endorsed by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

1. Identify the trail club’s needs for signs as part of the Asset Inventory or local management-planning process. It is important to consider alternative methods for conveying information, such as brochures, web pages and social media.
2. Be certain that signs containing the National Park Service (NPS) official arrowhead symbol are placed only on National Park Service lands. The Park Service also has guidance on

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placement and use of the National Scenic Trail sign (“pregnant triangle”). Similar protocols should be followed for other land managers.

3. Comply with state and local legal requirements for posting property. Localities may also have restrictions on the type, color and size of signs—particularly in public locations such as streets, roads and parking areas.

4. Locate signs conspicuously, but not too conspicuously. Signs directed at Trail users will be less prone to vandalism if placed on the Trail, but just out of sight of roads. Signs that convey messages to others will be most effective if posted along roads and at other potential points of entry.

5. Avoid “sign pollution” by using only the minimum needed to do the job. If you need to convey more than one or two messages, consider using a Trailhead signboard or small “birdhouse” to post signs on.

6. Temporary signs, intended for less than one season’s use, may not conform to standards detailed in the LMP. Be sure to remove such signs when no longer needed.

7. Consider strategies to reduce the chances of signs being taken or damaged. These can include using non-reversable bolts or screws, placing signs high enough to be out of easy reach, etc.

8. Monitor signs regularly for damage, disappearance, and effectiveness. Clubs should maintain a list of signs and their locations that is updated regularly.

9. If you need to develop additional signs, consider the following:

- a. Your greeting should be friendly but authoritative.
- b. Identify the Trail club and land-managing agency where appropriate.
- c. State prohibitions or restrictions in a positive way.
- d. Include names and phone numbers of emergency contacts where appropriate.
- e. Use international symbols where appropriate.
- f. The wording of regulatory signs or the use of the symbol of any land-managing agency needs to be approved by the land-managing agency.
- g. Posting of specific prohibitions, such as NO HUNTING or NO HORSES, requires a reference to the pertinent regulation to be properly enforced.



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For questions related to this policy please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at www.appalachiantrail.org, or P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV, 25425-0807.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.