



ATC Management Policy Unmanned Aircraft

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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 ATC Policy Statement is in response to increased incidents involving unmanned aircraft (known as unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs, unmanned aircraft systems, UAS, or drones) operating within sight and sound of Appalachian Trail visitors—and is consistent with new National Park Service restrictions in 36CFR 1.5(a)(1), prohibiting the “launching, landing or operating from or on lands and waters administered by the National Park Service within the boundaries of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail”

Policy

It is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that the operation of unmanned aircraft on or over the Appalachian Trail is incompatible with efforts to maintain a high quality visitor experience and protect wildlife along the whole of the Appalachian Trail and its associated corridor lands.

Except where necessary for approved administrative, scientific, or emergency uses, as authorized by the land managing agency, ATC opposes the use of unmanned aircraft launched from, or operating over, lands or waters within the boundaries of the NPS Appalachian Trail corridor or other lands that are administered for the Appalachian Trail.



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To supplement the existing permanent prohibition in federally designated Wilderness areas and current prohibition in interim APPA regulations [36CFR 1.5(a)(1)], ATC encourages its federal, state, and municipal partners to make permanent any existing prohibitions on UAV operations proximate to all segments of the Trail and to institute new prohibitions where there are none present.

Further, the Conservancy recommends that the NPS, USFS, and other agency partners carefully monitor the FAA's developing UAS policy and where appropriate, encourage the FAA to develop policies to limit such operations over the entire Appalachian Trail and its associated corridor 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.