

ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy on Vegetation 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.

Policy

- The most common vegetation-management practice on Appalachian Trail lands will be to take no action, other than routine actions necessary to keep the footpath open.
- Landscapes and plants will be modified only when necessary to meet approved objectives as identified in the local management plan for the area. Active vegetation-management practices may be necessary to maintain, protect, or restore significant cultural landscapes, scenic resources, or plant and animal habitat. Examples include agricultural lands, open areas, vistas, and sensitive-species habitat.
- Vegetation-management practices should minimize long-term negative impacts to the aesthetic qualities of the Trail. At the same time, the selection of the most appropriate practice must minimize the negative effects to natural resources, such as soil and water.
- Selection of vegetative management practices must recognize the limitations of volunteer personnel and funding levels.
- When active vegetation-management methods (beyond routine maintenance actions) are to be employed, a site-specific plan that takes into account local physical, biological, and social conditions will be developed.

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- In areas that have been adversely affected by prior human activity, active measures may be employed to restore an area to a natural condition. These sites may include dumps, structures, gravel pits, roadbeds. Native plants will be used in the restoration process, except in extraordinary circumstances where management objectives dictate the use of nonnative species.
- In general, measures will not be undertaken to repair damage caused by landslides, floods, hurricanes, or fires, unless required for hiker safety, for reconstruction of the footpath or a related facility, or for protection of soil and water resources.
- Active measures may be used to control the invasion of nonnative (exotic) species, particularly when they are a threat to a significant natural resource, scenic resource, or cultural landscape.
- Native vegetation may be planted or cultured to screen the Trail from negative visual influences and noise caused by nearby residences, roads, commercial centers, and utility structures.
- Herbicides should not be used for routine maintenance. Herbicides may be used in exceptional circumstances, for site-specific purposes only, where other methods are deemed ineffective for achieving a desired condition. Herbicide use shall require consultation and approval by the local Trail club, ATC, and the agency partner. Herbicides shall be used only in a manner and under circumstances specifically approved by the land-managing agency.
- Hikers should be notified of any major vegetation-management activities (balds and open-areas clearing projects, prescribed burns, etc.) by use of temporary signs, ridgerunners, and other public notification procedures as appropriate.
- Activities will be coordinated among the local Trail club, ATC and the local agency partner.

Also see Invasive Exotic Species Policy.

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.