

ESSENTIAL MAINTENANCE MODULE

TRAIL CONDITION & ASSESSMENT



LEARNING OUTCOMES

Awareness for desired conditions for Trail

Awareness for federally designated Wilderness, if applicable

Performing a condition assessment

A.T. Fieldbook references for condition assessments

WHAT IS THE DESIRED CONDITION?

The desired condition is what is desired by Trail managers for a section of Trail. The area's desired condition includes the core values of the Trail for a simple footpath, along with other criteria that includes: visitor use, how much development users encounter on or near the Trail, and any legal protections – such as Wilderness designation.

Why is knowing the desired condition important?

When the trail is cared for in ways that are compatible to its desired and intended experience, it helps to ensure visitor satisfaction and resource protection.

Learn about the local desired condition:

Refer to the local management plan for your area of the Appalachian Trail to understand the desired condition, and whether or not your section includes federally designated Wilderness.

Know Your Role

If you are assigned responsibilities to monitor or maintain a section of the Appalachian Trail, understand the duties for your assignment.

You may be asked to simply monitor the condition and to send reports to others who address challenges, or, with training, you may be authorized to assess and then address identified trail issues.

Assess the Area of Work:

With the desired condition in mind, walk the length of a project area before beginning any physical work to gain big-picture perspective on all trail conditions, which situations pose user-safety risks or resource damage, and how to prioritize work, needed tools, knowledge/skills.

Developing your “Trail Eyes” helps you see issues, examine the root cause, and think about possible remedies.

Walk the trail section in various seasons and weather conditions with an eye towards understanding the root causes, and making notes of work necessary in the near and long term.

Document findings to:

- Plan your work, or
- Report to your organization for a future work party to address.

FROM THE A.T. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Trail will lie lightly on the land, remaining a simple footpath. Care must be exercised, as the Trail is relocated or reconstructed, that its primitive quality is not lost. What are seen as Trail improvements may sometimes be steps in a progressive loss in simplicity for the footpath.

