



APPALACHIAN TRAIL
CONSERVANCY

Local Management Planning Guide



REVISED APRIL 2009

Appalachian Trail Conservancy LOCAL MANAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDE

—TABLE OF CONTENTS—

Preface: An Introduction to the Local Management Planning Guide	3
 PART 1: A.T. Planning and the Cooperative Management System	
1 (A) Cooperative Management System	7
1 (B) Appalachian Trail Planning—Advice to Volunteers	14
1 (C) The Local Management Plan—What to Include in the Written Plan	20
1 (D) ATC Policy Development and Adoption	24
1 (E) Review and Approval of Management Plans and Project Proposals.....	26
 PART 2: The Physical Trail	
2 (A) Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance	30
2 (B) Accessibility	33
2 (C) Relocations	36
2 (D) Stream Crossings and Bridges	38
2 (E) Trailheads and Parking	41
2 (F) Side and Connecting Trails	44
2 (G) Overnight-Use Areas	48
2 (H) Drinking Water Supplies and Water Quality	55
2 (I) Sanitation	59
2 (J) Managing the Trail for a Primitive Experience	61
2 (K) Trail-Crew Safety and Skills Training	63
2 (L) Chain-saw and Crosscut Saw Training and Certification	68
2 (M) Reassignment of Club Maintenance Responsibilities	71
 PART 3: Public Use, Public Information, and Emergency Response	
3 (A) Emergency Planning and Coordination	75
3 (B) Special Events and Large-Group Use	79
3 (C) Public Information, Education, and Outreach Programs	82
3 (D) Ridgerunner and Caretaker Programs	84
3 (E) Trail Signs	86
3 (F) Minimum-Impact Backcountry Use	88
3 (G) Advertising in the A.T. Corridor	90
 PART 4: Conflicting Use, Competing Use, and Corridor Monitoring	
4 (A) Corridor Monitoring	93
4 (B) Motorized Uses	96
4 (C) Litter and Graffiti	99
4 (D) Hunting	101
4 (E) Horse and Pack Animals	104
4 (F) Roads and Utilities	106
4 (G) Wind Energy Facilities	112
4 (H) Road Closures and Access Control	116
4 (I) Special Uses	118
4 (J) Structures and Dams	121
4 (K) Military Maneuvers	125

4 (L) Bicycles 128
 4 (M) Hang Gliding 131
 4 (N) Nonhiking Recreational Uses of Trail Lands 134
 4 (O) Impacts of Land Development in the Vicinity of the A.T. 136
 4 (P) Geocaching 141

PART 5: Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources

5 (A) Resource Management 145
 5 (B) Climate Change 148
 5 (C) Open Areas and Vistas 150
 5 (D) Timber Management 152
 5 (E) Pest Management 155
 5 (F) Threatened and Endangered Species 157
 5 (G) Wildlife Management 160
 5 (H) Vegetation Management and Reclamation 161
 5 (I) Cultural Resources 164
 5 (J) Wilderness 167
 5 (K) Special and Unique Areas 171
 5 (L) Agricultural Use 173
 5 (M) National Environmental Policy Act Compliance 176
 5 (N) Exotic Species 178

Appendices

A General Management Approval Form for Trail Stewardship Issues
 B Checklist and Approval Form for Overnight Facilities
 C NPS-ATPO Compendium of Orders
 D List of ATC Trail Management Policies
 E Cooperative Agreement between NPS and ATC
 F ATC/Trail Club Memorandum of Understanding
 G Table of State Memoranda of Understanding
 H Trail Assessment and Planning Documents
 I Accessible Facilities Guidelines and Drawings
 J Guidance for Locating and Designing Overnight Sites
 K Volunteers in Parks/Volunteers in Forests Protection
 L Sample Project Logistics Form
 M Incident Reporting Guidelines
 N ATC Trail Management Sign Catalogue
 O Designated Wilderness Areas
 P Hyperlinks in LMPG Text

An Introduction to the Local Management Planning Guide

Local Management Planning

In 1980, the Appalachian Trail Conference (now the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, or ATC) began promoting the concept of local management planning among the Trail-maintaining clubs and agency partners. In fact, the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) and the Memorandum of Agreement ([Appendix E](#)) between the National Park Service and ATC, which delegated certain management responsibilities to ATC and the Trail clubs, both assume that local management plans will be the cornerstones for cooperative management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.).

In 1987, ATC began developing a “local planning guide” to provide the Trail-maintaining clubs with a comprehensive reference document to aid them in the local planning process. The first version (1989) and a 1997 revision were mailed to Appalachian Trail maintaining clubs and agency partners in binders intended to be handed on to succeeding club officers and agency personnel. That format proved cumbersome and has been difficult to keep current as new ATC policies have been adopted and as the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service have updated their management policies, forest-planning rules and forest land- and resource-management plans.

With this update, the *Local Management Planning Guide (Planning Guide)* becomes a Web-based document that Trail managers can access easily and that can be more readily kept current as new policies are adopted by ATC.

This edition of the *Planning Guide* is intended to serve two primary functions: (1) to consolidate ATC and National Park Service (NPS) policies affecting Trail management into a single reference document for Trail clubs and cooperating agencies; and (2) to answer questions on how to prepare a local management plan and what to include in a plan.

Please note that for the most part, U.S. Forest Service policies and state agency policies are not included in this document. Forest [planning rules](#) have been under revision. Forest Service [directives](#) are available on the Internet. Maintaining clubs with Trail sections on U.S. Forest Service lands should work closely with their district ranger and ATC regional office staff in developing their local management plans. State agency partners should be involved in development and review of club plans as necessary.

From Conference to Conservancy

In 2005, several years of structured reflections and strategic planning came to fruition. The Appalachian Trail Conference became the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, a change that reflects the gradual broadening and deepening of the organization’s vision. ATC’s leadership realized that preserving the Trail experience for future generations would require action beyond the boundaries of the Trail corridor and beyond the scope of traditional volunteer Trail building and maintenance.

Clean air, the presence of native flora and fauna, natural and clean streams and ponds, views unmarred by developments are all examples of features that are intrinsically part of the Trail experience, yet they cannot be protected without reaching beyond corridor lands. For this reason, ATC has chosen to broaden its scope of action, while reaffirming its commitment to its first and prime responsibility—that of caring for the Appalachian Trail and its corridor lands.

As a result of the 2005 reorganization, ATC’s former Board of Managers has been replaced by a smaller

Board of Directors (Board) focused on long-term growth and planning issues and financial oversight for the Conservancy. A Stewardship Council, appointed by the Board chair, oversees policy development and programs related to stewardship of the Trail and surrounding public lands, including land protection and land-use planning. The three former regional management committees (Southern, Mid-Atlantic, and New England) that began overseeing A.T. management in 1980 have been replaced by four regional partnership committees (RPCs) corresponding to ATC's four regional offices (known as New England, Mid-Atlantic, Central and Southwest Virginia, and Deep South). The RPCs work closely with and advise ATC's four regional directors and the Stewardship Council. Each RPC provides a forum for coordination and decision-making among Trail-maintaining clubs, ATC staff, agencies, and other partners. Each Trail club has at least one representative on its RPC, and the Stewardship Council includes at least one member from each RPC.

ATC's staff structure has changed since the 2005 reorganization, with Trail-management and land protection functions consolidated into a new department of conservation, and the four regional offices now being headed by regional directors. The organization is still led by the executive director, while a chief operating officer oversees the directors of conservation, finance and administration, marketing and communications, and membership and development.

Changes also have been made in the approval process for certain Trail-management actions. In November 2008, following review, discussion, and concurrence of the four RPCs, the ATC Board of Directors adopted the unanimous recommendation of the Stewardship Council regarding the review and approval of management plans and project proposals, which delegates to ATC's four regional directors approvals for local management plans, changes in Trail-club maintenance assignments, relocations, overnight facilities, side trails, and timber harvest operations (see Chapter 1 (E), the specific chapters on those topics, and the appendices referenced in those chapter).

The policies in this *Planning Guide* have been modified to reflect the changes in ATC's organizational structure. Where only the name of ATC has changed, the policies were edited without being readopted by the Board. Where decision-making processes involving ATC's new governing bodies and staff were involved, the policies were readopted by the Board.

How this Guide is Organized

Part 1 of the *Planning Guide* provides an overview of the roles of the partners who collectively manage the Appalachian Trail. The basics of planning are also summarized in this section: how to plan, what to include in a plan, who should participate in preparing a local management plan, review and approval of plans and other project proposals and a final new section on ATC policy development and adoption.

Parts 2, 3, 4, and 5 are a catalogue of existing guidance for each significant issue that has been raised with respect to managing the A.T. Policies that have been developed for construction and maintenance of the footpath, shelters, and other Trail facilities are assembled in **Part 2**. **Part 3** focuses on the public's use of the A.T. and programs for handling emergencies and disseminating information. **Part 4** summarizes existing monitoring and management policies regarding incompatible uses of the A.T. lands, such as off-road vehicle use, and competing uses, such as utility lines that intersect the A.T. The policies outlined in **Part 5** include guidance for managing the natural and cultural resources that make up the environment of the Trail.

Relevant ATC and NPS policies are summarized in this *Planning Guide*. ATC policies are in a different font and set off from the text so they are easily identifiable. National Park Service policy, for the most part, has been summarized from the 2006 National Park Service [Management Policies](#) compendium. [Appendix C](#) of this document is the compendium of orders containing NPS policy for specific locations

on the Appalachian Trail.

Following the summary of policies for each issue in **Parts 2, 3, 4, and 5** is a subheading entitled “Considerations for Planning,” which is designed to lead the Trail club through the process of drafting its own policy direction and action plan for each issue.

The *Planning Guide* also contains links to Trail management documents and includes several basic reference documents in the appendices. The *Appalachian Trail Data Book* and A.T. maps and guidebooks can be purchased online from the [Ultimate A.T. Store](#) or by calling toll-free 888-287-8673.

PART 1

A.T. Planning and the Cooperative Management System

CHAPTER 1 (A)

Cooperative Management System

The Appalachian Trail has been a cooperative enterprise since 1925, when the Appalachian Trail Conference was formed, with private individuals and federal agency representatives among its Board of Managers. In 1938, at ATC's behest, the first Appalachian Trail agreement was signed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), sealing a commitment by the volunteer Trail community and the two principal federal partners that continues today.

Since that first agreement, many agreements have been executed among the 30 maintaining Trail clubs, municipalities, landowners, states, federal agencies, and ATC. In fact, the National Trails System Act, passed in 1968 strongly encourages this activity:

The Secretary... may enter written cooperative agreements with the States or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of such a... trail, within or outside a federally administered area.

—Section 7(h) of the [National Trails System Act](#), as amended 2009

The adoption of the National Trails System Act and the extensive land-acquisition program that it authorized also fundamentally altered, and greatly expanded, the roles and responsibilities of the Trail clubs, ATC, and agency partners. Because the land-acquisition program provided an opportunity to relocate many segments of the footpath away from road shoulders and other inferior locations, many club volunteers became engaged in constructing new segments of the footpath, as well as associated facilities, such as shelters and bridges. And, club volunteers and ATC staff members assisted and continue to assist public agencies in scouting potential routes, defining land-acquisition boundaries, and interacting with affected landowners and communities.

Perhaps an even greater challenge for the clubs and ATC stemmed from understandings that were developed around the time of the 1978 amendments to the National Trails System Act. ATC and the Trail clubs strongly supported those amendments, which provided the authority necessary to protect the entire Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Representatives of the Conference and clubs recognized the significant investment of public funds being sought and told the United States Congress and the federal agencies, in effect: "If you buy it, we will manage it." Although, at the time, such an assertion must have required a considerable leap of faith for Congress and agency managers, Trail-community leaders could point to more than 50 years of successful volunteer-based stewardship for the footpath and its facilities. Congress agreed to the deal. As a result, rather than being managed as a traditional unit of the national park system, the Trail continues to be managed primarily by citizen volunteers.

The fundamental management principles of this cooperative management system were outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan for the Protection, Management, Development, and Use of the Appalachian Trail* (usually referred to in this document as the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#)). Published in 1981 and republished in 1987, that document was prepared by the National Park Service Appalachian Trail Park Office and approved by the director of the National Park Service and chief of the U.S. Forest Service. The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) commits the federal agencies to support the volunteer Trail community and the cooperative management of the Trail.

In 1984, these understandings were formalized in a landmark cooperative agreement, often referred to as the "delegation agreement," in which the National Park Service delegated management responsibility for lands acquired by NPS along the Appalachian Trail to ATC. ATC, for itself and in behalf of the Trail-maintaining clubs, accepted responsibility for operations, development, maintenance, and monitoring of

those Trail-corridor lands. In 1994 and again in 2004, the agreement was renewed for ten-year terms (see [Appendix E](#)).

A similar agreement was signed by the U.S. Forest Service and ATC in 1984 and renewed in 1994 that affects certain lands in Vermont, New Hampshire, West Virginia and Virginia that have been administratively transferred by the National Park Service to the U.S. Forest Service.

Those agreements provided ATC with the authority to redelegate responsibilities to Trail-maintaining clubs. That re delegation was effected in October 1984, by a letter to each of the Trail clubs from the chair of ATC. Since that time, the clubs have assumed day-to-day responsibility for operations, development, maintenance, and monitoring for their respective Trail-section assignments, with ATC serving as guarantor to the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service that those lands and resources would be adequately managed in the public interest. This arrangement was formalized in 1997 when each of the maintaining clubs and ATC signed individual agreements (see [Appendix F](#)).

Many other cooperative agreements have been developed at the local or state levels. Beginning in 1987, ATC, Trail clubs, and agency partners began work on a series of statewide cooperative agreements patterned on the basic tenets of the federal agreements. State cooperative agreements are referenced in [Appendix G](#) and are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Cooperative Management System Partners

The primary partners on any given section of the Appalachian Trail are usually the Trail club, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, state land-managing partners (if any), and one or both federal partners (NPS and USFS). Many secondary partners, such as state law-enforcement agencies, provide support and should be recognized in the local management plans.

The major roles and contributions of each partner are summarized in the rest of this chapter.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's role is defined by its bylaws, policies adopted by its Board of Directors, and cooperative agreements with the National Park Service, the Forest Service, Trail clubs, and states. ATC policies pertaining to management of the Trail may be found in [Appendix D](#).

ATC's Basic Role—Historically, ATC has been responsible for ensuring adequate maintenance and management of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor lands through oversight and support of its member organizations, the A.T.-maintaining clubs. If and when needed, ATC has served in a back-up capacity to the clubs, to guarantee adequate maintenance and management. ATC strives to support and respect each Trail club's volunteer traditions. ATC has numerous programs to enhance volunteer management, including grants, workshops, and organized volunteer Trail crews. ATC also works closely with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and each of the 14 states through which the Trail passes.

In addition to that role, ATC has resolved to take on wider stewardship responsibilities, recognizing that concentrating efforts solely on the Trail and its corridor lands will not adequately protect the Trail experience. In 1997, ATC developed the following values statement that more broadly construes its mission with respect to the Appalachian Trail experience, which includes but is not limited to the following features:

- Opportunities for observation, contemplation, enjoyment, and exploration of the natural world;
- A sense of remoteness and detachment from civilization;

- Opportunities to experience solitude, freedom, personal accomplishment, self-reliance, and self-discovery;
- A sense of being on the height of the land;
- Opportunities to experience the historic and pastoral elements of the surrounding countryside;
- A feeling of being part of the natural environment; and
- Opportunities for travel on foot, including opportunities for long-distance hiking.

—*The A.T. Experience and Nonhiking Recreational Uses of A.T. Lands, adopted April 1997*

The affairs of ATC are overseen by a 15-member Board of Directors--stewards of the Conservancy's long-term goals and vision, guarantors of its compliance to legal requirements, and representatives of ATC's membership. The all-volunteer Board meets at least twice a year and reviews any documents, decisions or processes set forth for its approval. The Board is supported in its duties by the Stewardship Council, with 15 members who provide expertise and field experience in the many disciplines required for the Conservancy's conservation programs. The Council also meets twice a year to discuss and recommend policies for management of the Trail and other programs, which are summarized in this *Planning Guide*. In addition, the Stewardship Council may help craft guidance and standards for program activities consistent with the Conservancy's mission to protect and manage the A.T.

Federal Agreements with ATC—Following adoption of the [National Trails System Act](#), the National Park Service signed a cooperative agreement (in 1970) with the Appalachian Trail Conference, officially authorizing the organization's traditional stewardship of the A.T. That agreement was the basis for subsequent cooperative efforts, including the 1983 Volunteers in the Parks Agreement, which provides liability and medical protection to ATC and the Trail club volunteers on all NPS, state, and private lands, and the delegation agreement (see [Appendix E](#)).

In September 1980, the Forest Service and ATC signed a memorandum of understanding that authorized ATC efforts in support of local Trail clubs to operate and maintain the Appalachian Trail across the national forests. The USFS now has individual memoranda of understanding with most of the 16 Trail-maintaining clubs having maintenance responsibilities on the eight national forests crossed by the Trail. In addition, the USFS and ATC signed a cooperative agreement in 1984 to provide for ATC and Trail-club management of lands that have been administratively transferred from the NPS to the USFS.

[Appalachian Trail Maintaining Clubs](#)--descriptions of the clubs' Trail sections and links to club Web sites are found on ATC's Web site.

The Trail Club's Role—The Trail clubs are responsible for keeping the A.T. “forever open, obvious, and narrowly passable for hiking” and for on-the-ground maintenance and management of associated facilities and lands. Effective, active local Trail clubs—30 of which now maintain Trail sections from Maine to Georgia—are the key grassroots leaders in the managing partnership.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when ATC and Trail club representatives sought greater federal efforts to protect the A.T., Congress was assured that the maintenance and management of the Trail would essentially remain ATC and Trail club responsibilities, saving the government millions of dollars. Further, the possibility of direct involvement in the day-to-day management of the A.T. by NPS, USFS, and states concerned the ATC Board and Trail clubs. ATC worked diligently to guarantee the continuing role of volunteers in the management of the Trail. Those efforts were successful, and the Trail-maintaining clubs continue to fulfill and expand their responsibilities for local management and maintenance of the A.T. as it has grown from a privately maintained footpath into a National Scenic Trail—in effect, a linear national park. While the traditional Trail-maintenance responsibilities remain the clubs' most important A.T. duty, club roles have grown to include new responsibilities for land management and planning.

ATC and each Trail club have a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) that defines those responsibilities and formalizes the relationship between ATC and the club. (Trail Club-ATC MOUs are included by region in [Appendix F](#)). The MOUs apply only to those activities of the clubs that are related to the management of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor, and outline basic Trail club responsibilities as follows:

1. *Trail construction and maintenance* (relocation and side-trail design and construction; footpath protection and hardening with water diversion structures, puncheon, and rockwork; pathway obstruction removal; route marking with blazes, signs, and cairns).
2. *Facilities construction and maintenance* (shelter, privy, and bridge construction; trash and illegal fire-ring removal).
3. *Trail- and corridor-lands management* (regular revision of the local management plan, Trail assessment, corridor monitoring, regular cooperation and communication with ATC and agency partners).
4. *Information and education* (publication, or assistance in publication, of Trail guides, provision of information about the Trail to ATC, agencies, and the public, and hiker education).

Through the MOUs, the Trail clubs also agree to assist to the extent possible ATC's land trust in land protection, management and monitoring efforts, as well as ATC's responses to "external threats" such as highways or development expansions that threaten the Trail.

Preparation of the Local Management Plan—The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) developed and signed by the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service in 1981, envisioned a series of "local management plans" (LMPs) prepared by Trail clubs in concert with their agency partners. The *Local Management Planning Guide* provides a framework for preparation of those local management plans.

In developing its local management plan, a Trail club needs to consult with its agency partners, ATC, local officials, and other organizations concerned with Trail issues. The club also should provide opportunities for public input into the plan. That can be done formally, through a public meeting cosponsored with an agency partner, or informally, through public notice of a club meeting focusing on planning issues. The club also must assume responsibility for writing the plan and amending it, as necessary, to reflect new club policies and goals. ATC, particularly through its regional staff, is available to assist in this process. Planning is discussed in Chapter 1 (B). Creating a Trail-club's local management plan is detailed in Chapter 1 (C). Local management plans must be approved by ATC, and the approval process is laid out in Chapter 1 (E).

Federal Agencies

The National Park Service (NPS)—The National Park Service (NPS) retains the primary authority and responsibility for the acquisition, development, and administration of the Appalachian Trail. Under the [National Trails System Act](#), the secretary of the interior is responsible for administration of the entire Appalachian Trail, in consultation with the secretary of agriculture. The National Park Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Interior, oversees the Appalachian Trail and works in consultation with the Forest Service, an agency of the Department of Agriculture.

The NPS official with overall responsibility for the A.T. is the park manager of the Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO), located in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, a position equivalent to a superintendent in a traditional national park. The park manager carries out the duties and authorities of the secretary in administration of the A.T., including land acquisition outside of established federal units and management direction on NPS-ATPO acquired lands. Even though management responsibility for NPS-acquired land

has been delegated to ATC and the local A.T.-maintaining clubs, the park manager is the responsible official retaining authority for law enforcement, land acquisition, boundary surveys, and compliance with the regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The park manager and his/her staff are bound by the same regulations that are in effect for all national park system lands, as enumerated in the [Code of Federal Regulations](#), Title 36, “Parks, Forests and Public Property.” The park manager also reviews Trail club LMPs to ensure that the policies and practices identified in the LMPs comply with NPS regulations. Furthermore, pursuant to review and acceptance of the LMP by the park manager, LMP designations have force-of-law on NPS lands and can be enforced by the appropriate authorities.

National Park Units—The Appalachian Trail crosses six established units of the national park system, each of which is overseen by a park superintendent: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah National Park, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, C&O Canal National Historical Park, and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The parks retain oversight of the A.T. within their boundaries as part of their over-all management of the park and participate in the day-to-day affairs of the Trail, including active involvement in local management planning with the Trail clubs. They are primary partners as signatories on cooperative agreements. Clubs should work in close consultation with the individual park units so that the policies, practices, and actions identified in their local management plans are coordinated with those developed for the park’s general-management and resource-management plans.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS)—Approximately 1,015 miles of the Appalachian Trail cross eight national forests, two in the eastern region (USFS Region 9) and six in the southern region (Region 8). The Trail crosses some lands in Virginia, West Virginia, Vermont, and New Hampshire that were acquired by the National Park Service for the Trail but have been administratively transferred from the NPS to the USFS. The national forests crossed by the A.T. are listed in Table 1 below. Each national forest is made up of several ranger districts, the local level of interaction with A.T. Clubs.

The U.S. Forest Service is a multiple-use agency—that is, it manages lands for many different uses, including timber management, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, range, and recreation opportunities. Beginning in the mid-1980s, primary direction for the management of the A.T. has been included in the *Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FLMP)* for each national forest. In each plan, the A.T. and the lands surrounding it are identified as either a “management area” (MA) or a “management prescription” (MRx).

Table 1

Forest Name	Current Plan and Date	MA/MRx
Chattahoochee National Forest, GA	FLMP, January 2004	MRx 4A
Nantahala National Forest, NC	FLMP, Amend. 5, March 1994	MA 14
Pisgah National Forest, NC	FLMP, Amend. 5, March 1994	MA 14
Cherokee National Forest, TN	FLMP, January 2004	MRx 4A
Jefferson National Forest, VA	FLMP, January 2004	MRx 4A
George Washington National Forest, VA	FLMP, January 1993	MA 6
Green Mountain National Forest, VT	FLMP February 2006	MA 8.1
White Mountain National Forest, NH	FLMP September 2005	MA 8.3

The A.T. management area or management prescription is a defined area around the Trail, within which the primary management objectives are the protection and enhancement of the A.T. The USFS has developed many innovative techniques for involving the public—including ATC and the local A.T. clubs—in management decisions and for balancing multiple resource objectives in planning forest activities. Examples of those techniques include scoping and request for comments as a part of National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis on proposals, and the Scenery Management System (SMS), which is used to define the boundaries of the A.T. management area or management prescription on most national forests, and to evaluate potential visual resource impacts as viewed from the A.T. on all national forests.

Additional direction for the management of the A.T. on national forest lands can be found online (see the National Forest Management Act [planning page index](#)), in agency [directives](#) (*Forest Service Manual*, *Forest Service Handbook*, and their supplements), and in the several cooperative agreements among the USFS, the NPS, and ATC that are referenced in this *Planning Guide*.

With the implementation of a new agency planning rule in 2008, future forest plan revisions will be less specific and contain fewer standards for management. It is anticipated that some direction currently found in forest plans will be moved to agency directive supplements.

Ranger district personnel should be primary partners in the preparation and review of LMPs.

State Agencies

Primary State Agencies—On-the-ground management of state lands is usually carried out by the relevant state park, forest, or local fish and wildlife office. (State-level agencies are listed in the table at the end of this chapter.) State agencies administer state lands under different authorities, and the degree of emphasis given to Trail matters varies from agency to agency. Because of this wide variation in agency charters, a need has been identified for “A.T. management zones” or “corridors” on state-owned lands in order to establish consistent policies and regulations for lands within the A.T. corridor. ATC has initiated a series of cooperative agreements with affected state agencies to establish those zones and articulate the roles of the state primary and secondary agencies, the Trail clubs, ATC and the federal agency partners. A table of the current status of those agreements is included in [Appendix G](#).

Secondary State Agencies—Secondary partners include state and local agencies with responsibilities or activities that may affect the A.T. in some way, *e.g.*, departments of transportation, law-enforcement agencies, search-and-rescue agencies, fire-control agencies, fish-and-wildlife agencies, and historic-preservation agencies. Each affected agency should be consulted during the local management planning process and offered an opportunity for review and comment. Local law-enforcement officials and emergency-response personnel should participate in the development of strategies for handling emergencies and other incidents on the Trail.

The State’s Role in Preparation of the Local Management Plan—All state agencies that manage land traversed by the A.T. should take an active role in development of the local management plan. The Trail club should contact them early in the planning process and get a clear understanding of state policies and regulations affecting lands crossed by the Trail. Regardless of whether a cooperative agreement is in place, state agencies should be offered the opportunity for review and comment on the plan in its draft form, and relevant comments should be incorporated into the final version of the plan.

**PRIMARY PARTNERS IN THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
(listed by Trail state)**

<u>STATE</u>	<u>TRAIL ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>PRIMARY FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES</u>
<i>Maine</i>	Maine Appalachian Trail Club Appalachian Mountain Club	Baxter State Park Maine Dept. of Conservation Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
<i>New Hampshire</i>	Appalachian Mountain Club Dartmouth Outing Club	N.H. Dept. of Resources and Economic Development White Mountain National Forest
<i>Vermont</i>	Dartmouth Outing Club Green Mountain Club	Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Green Mountain National Forest
<i>Massachusetts</i>	AMC-Berkshire Chapter	Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation Mass. Turnpike Authority
<i>Connecticut</i>	AMC-Connecticut Chapter	Conn. Dept. of Environmental Protection
<i>New York</i>	NY-NJ Trail Conference	N.Y. State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation N.Y. Dept. of Environmental Conservation Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge
<i>New Jersey</i>	NY-NJ Trail Conference	N.J. Dept. of Environmental Protection Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	Keystone Trails Association Wilmington Trail Club Batona Hiking Club Appalachian Mountain Club-Delaware Valley Chapter Philadelphia Trail Club Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club Allentown Hiking Club Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club York Hiking Club Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club Mountain Club of Maryland Potomac Appalachian Trail Club	Penn. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources Penn. Bureau of State Parks (within DCNR) Penn. Bureau of Forestry (within DCNR) Penn. Game Commission Penn. Dept. of Public Welfare--So. Mountain Restoration Center Penn. State Police Penn. Emergency Management Agency Penn. Dept. of Transportation Penn. Turnpike Commission
<i>Maryland</i>	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club	Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources C&O Canal National Historical Park
<i>Virginia/ West Virginia</i>	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club Natural Bridge A.T. Club Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Old Dominion A.T. Club Outdoor Club at Virginia Tech. Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Smithsonian Institution Shenandoah National Park George Washington National Forest Jefferson National Forest Blue Ridge Parkway Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries West Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources
<i>Tennessee/North Carolina</i>	Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club Carolina Mountain Club Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Nantahala Hiking Club	Cherokee National Forest Tennessee Valley Authority Pisgah National Forest Nantahala National Forest Great Smoky Mountains National Park Tennessee Dept. of Environmental Health and Natural Resources
<i>Georgia</i>	Georgia Appalachian Trail Club	Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

CHAPTER 1 (B)

Appalachian Trail Planning—Advice to Volunteers

Planning is as important to effective management as ownership of the land itself. Many Trail clubs have found that formal communications with agency partners and written local management plans are essential to effective stewardship of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor lands. The local management-planning process ensures that Appalachian Trail clubs will have a lead role in managing and maintaining the Trail and that government partners are informed and supportive of the club's priorities. Also, it helps a Trail club organize its work, set priorities, and direct volunteer energy towards the most critical maintenance and management needs. ATC is able to provide grants, workshops, or direct assistance when Trail clubs take the initiative in planning what needs to be done. Most importantly, planning guarantees that the condition of the assigned Trail section will improve with time and steady team effort.

Each Trail club, with the participation of its agency partners and ATC, prepares a local management plan that clearly identifies the partners involved in managing a particular section of Trail, provides useful background on the club's history, identifies the Trail route and significant features for that section, and sets forth club policies and actions that the club intends to take to ensure that its section of Trail is well managed. Each local management plan should include:

- A brief summary or inventory of the important features of the club's assigned section;
- A summary of issues that the club needs to address;
- A statement of the club's policy for each issue or management program;
- An annual plan of work to be undertaken to maintain or improve the status of the club's assigned section.

Organizing for Management Planning: The Committee Approach

Clubs have organized for planning in a variety of ways. Ideally, the planning process involves a cross-section of the club membership—people involved in all aspects of A.T. management. The two most common approaches are either to form a club committee or to establish a management committee composed of representatives from the club, ATC, agency partners, and appropriate local groups.

A planning committee within the club works well for Trail sections on national forest lands, in established national parks, or on older, established state public lands, where the management situation is relatively simple, with few partners or jurisdictions and easily identified management problems.

A committee with wider representation may be imperative for National Park Service corridor lands and some state lands where jurisdictions overlap, land ownerships are complex, or complicated management problems exist or are likely to crop up. In such cases, A.T. volunteers sustain the committees, but state agencies, local officials, Trail neighbors, farmers, police officers, and members of the general public are invited to participate.

Several Trail clubs have been tempted to opt for the more "efficient" approach of unilateral planning and plan-writing by one or a few individuals. While this might be appropriate for a first draft, both the short- and long-range benefits of involving more club members, agency officials, and Trail neighbors far outweigh the possible disadvantages. A plan written without including the community of club members, government partners, ATC representatives, and Trail neighbors may become a lifeless document that ignores the educational benefits of an open dialogue. The best results arise from involved people working together, sharing ideas, and reaching consensus on how to manage the Trail.

Opportunities for Public Input in A.T. Planning

Public input is an essential component of A.T. planning. In fact, more opportunities for public input probably exist in the A.T.'s process than in any other national park or forest-planning effort.

After the amendments to the National Trail Systems Act in 1978, the National Park Service solicited public input on the management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The 1981 [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) included an extensive public review process. Hundreds of comments were received from local, state, and federal government entities, local and national trail organizations, and individuals and organizations interested or involved in the management of the Appalachian Trail. The *Comprehensive Plan* established overall philosophical goals for Trail management and committed A.T. management partners, which include the land-managing agencies, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the local Trail clubs, to develop plans at the local level that incorporate those broad philosophical goals.

A second level of planning and public input takes place at the regional/local level. The [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) does not usurp or replace the ongoing planning processes of national parks, national forests, state land-managing agencies, and other local governmental administrative units with lands crossed by the Trail. The Forest Service's land- and resource-management plans and the National Park Service's general-management and backcountry-management plans incorporate the key management principles of the *Comprehensive Plan* and provide a critical forum for public input into management of that particular section of the Trail. ATC and the Trail clubs participate in those planning efforts as well.

A third level of planning takes place when the Trail club prepares its local management plan. As part of its planning process, the Trail club solicits comments from its agency partners, local government organizations, and other individuals and organizations that have expressed interest in management of the Trail.

A fourth level takes place at a specific site. Each site-specific action on federal lands with the potential to affect the environment (such as the construction of a Trail shelter or parking lot) is evaluated in an environmental analysis or environmental-impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Most state agencies have similar procedures. Both of those processes provide opportunities for public involvement [see Chapter 5 (M)].

Getting Informed: Basic Documents and Tools

The philosophies, traditions, policies, regulations, techniques, and other information gleaned from years of management experience by ATC and Trail clubs are contained in a variety of documents. A management committee should assemble those materials in preparation for planning and writing plans. The following documents should provide most of the information a Trail club will need (some may not be applicable to a particular Trail club's section):

- ATC's *Local Management Planning Guide* (this document)
- The NPS *Comprehensive Plan for the Protection, Management, Development, and Use of the Appalachian Trail* (the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#))
- Trail club files and maps
- NPS-ATPO Capital Plan, sometimes called the "Five-Year Plan" (see [Appendix H](#))
- Trail inventory and project maps and tables
- A.T. guidebooks and maps for the section of Trail
- The *Appalachian Trail Data Book*

- ATC's stewardship publication, *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*
- State cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding ([Appendix G](#))
- State trails acts and state agency plans
- ATC/U.S. Forest Service/National Park Service agreements
- Forest Service manual supplement (Region 8) and regional standards (Region 9) for the A.T.
- The NPS-ATPO park manager's *Compendium of Orders* ([Appendix C](#))
- Forest Service land and resource management plans or national park management plans
- NPS segment maps and land-tract files

Some of these reference documents are included in the appendices or as links in this *Planning Guide*. Others are available from ATC, ATPO, or the U.S. Forest Service. Contact ATC headquarters or your ATC [regional office](#) for more information.

How to Plan

Although the concept of a local management plan has developed over time, its purpose is still the same: to document the policies or principles of a Trail-maintaining club for all issues that have a bearing on the Appalachian Trail.

Planning is a directed, logical process of organizing common efforts to achieve maximum results. A simple planning model that can be used to help a Trail club put together a local management plan consists of four steps:

- 1) Inventory
- 2) Issue identification
- 3) Policy statement
- 4) Action plan

Step 1 provides an accurate status of the club's Trail section. In Step 2, a small committee of key club representatives identifies the key local management issues, using the information developed in the inventory and the issues contained in Parts 2–5 of this *Planning Guide*. In Step 3, the committee generates the club's approach to each issue. In Step 4, the committee sets forth the actions that the Trail club plans to carry out its policies for maintaining and managing the Trail. Each of these four steps is detailed below, and suggestions and illustrations are provided for accomplishing each step under "Trail Club Policy" and "Considerations for Planning" in each chapter in Parts 2–5.

Step 1: Inventory

Conducting an inventory is simply a matter of taking stock of the existing situation. From a practical standpoint, some components of a local management plan can be easily inventoried (*e.g.*, shelters) while other components cannot (*e.g.*, hunting use). A Trail club should aim to develop an inventory for the following components of a local management plan:

- Trail maintenance needs
- Relocations
- Signs
- Bridges
- Streams
- Trailhead facilities and parking

- Overnight sites
- Drinking water supplies
- Exterior corridor-boundary survey (ECBS)—condition, problem spots
- Trained and certified chain-saw and crosscut-saw users
- Roads
- Road closures
- Dumps
- Sites with litter and graffiti
- Utility lines
- Communications sites
- Wind towers
- Geocache sites
- Structures
- Open areas and vistas
- Threatened or endangered species
- Exotic species
- Historic or cultural sites
- Special and unique areas

Most Trail clubs already have much of this information on hand in the collective written and unwritten knowledge of club members, agency partners, and Trail hikers and through the collaborative ATC/NPS/Club project-management cycle. That cycle, driven by NPS accountability requirements for funding, requires inventories and project planning to follow a standardized process and format described below. This process replaces the previous “Trail Assessment” process and is applicable to all A.T. lands.

Trail Condition Assessment, Inventory and Project Planning—The aim of the assessment and project planning process is to determine as objectively as possible what the funding needs are, and to be accountable for expenditures. NPS will only fund specific projects, so it in turn can be accountable for its spending. For further information on this, consult the FAQ and supporting documents in [Appendix H](#).

The new information gathering and management system (known as the “Capital Plan” or “Five-Year Plan”) was begun in 2004 when the baseline Trail assessment was begun. As it was impossible to physically assess the condition of the whole Trail within a year, ATPO developed an extrapolation based on random sampling of five-mile Trail sections. From that point on, 20 percent of the Trail was assessed every year, equally distributed over the regions, so that the whole Trail assessment was completed by the end of 2008. The Trail will continue to be fully assessed every five years. Assessments will be conducted jointly by ATC regional staff, Trail club representatives and NPS representatives. Clubs should contact their regional offices to schedule their Trail assessments.

Assessments now use global positioning system (GPS) units to capture both the location and attributes of relevant features—only NPS GPS units may be used as they have a data dictionary function that enables standardization of descriptions. ATC regional office staff has been trained in the use of those units and will handle data entry. The data gathered in the assessments will be processed by ATC and ATPO staff, and maps and tables showing the identified deficiencies will be sent back to the Trail clubs.

These are valuable tools for the Trail clubs to complete and update their five-year project plans, however, the plan must be updated annually for the coming years, and funding requests have to be made for the next open year. For example, a plan submitted in 2009 is for projects from 2012 through 2015. In 2010, any necessary changes must be made to projects planned for 2012 to 2015, and new projects must be submitted for 2016. Because the cooperatively managed assessments only occur once out of every five years for each Trail club, they will periodically be using three- to four-year-old assessment data to aid

their decisions. The clubs therefore still have the responsibility of surveying their sections and planning their maintenance projects each year—the main difference is that clubs are now asked to identify projects several years in advance and coordinate their planning with ATC regional offices to receive funding.

After prioritization at the regional and at the trail-wide level, funding requests are submitted to the NPS and also to other sources. When responses are received, ATC and ATPO consolidate their budgets and send the list of funded projects to the Trail clubs.

The other crucial step in the planning process is the reporting by the clubs to ATC regional offices upon completion of every work season. Clubs are asked to report which projects have been completed and which have not. In the case of projects that were not completed, clubs must decide whether to abandon them or move them to another year. If a project is moved to the newly opened year in the five-year cycle, it will have no ripple effect. However, if it is rescheduled earlier than that, it will displace one or more other projects. This decision-making process is part of the update of the five-year plan that must occur annually.

Details, diagrams and FAQs are included in [Appendix H](#). ATC regional staff is available to assist with planning and to answer any questions the Trail clubs may have.

Finally, Trail clubs are encouraged to use the local management plans to seek funding or means from other sources: just because the NPS budget year will not fund certain projects in a particular fiscal year, does not mean they cannot be tackled if other resources, volunteer and financial, are secured.

Other Sources of Inventory Data—Many other sources of basic information about the Trail are available. Agency partners often have map-based inventories of natural resources for lands under their jurisdictions. Trail users often leave comments in registers or in letters to the Trail club or to ATC. A.T. guidebooks and the *Appalachian Trail Data Book* also contain important information.

The Completed Inventory —The finished product should be a list of basic inventory data for the club’s Trail section, accompanied by a set of maps showing the major features, Trail facilities, and land ownerships. The inventory and maps can be attached to the local management plan as appendices.

Step 2: Issue Identification

The next step in the planning process is identifying management concerns or issues from sources such as Trail club members, agency partners, Trail users, adjacent landowners, local government officials, and the general public. At a minimum, the plan should address the issues or topics outlined in Parts 2–5 of the *Planning Guide*, as shown in the sample “Table of Contents” in the next chapter.)

Those issues generally have been recognized as issues of regional or Trail-wide concern. There also may be issues specific to a club’s section of the Trail, such as Trail use and maintenance within a municipal watershed, winter Trail use, research activities, and alpine-ski development.

The Trail club’s LMP should have an issue statement for each topic included in its plan. An issue statement is a short, direct statement of a problem. For example:

Drinking water supplies are essential to hiker safety and comfort and can be threatened by activities of hikers, pets, livestock, and other Trail users. There are few water sources along certain sections of the Trail, and no water source can be assumed to be safe unless the water is treated.

An issue statement can be written to in a manner that is more specific to a club's Trail section, however unless unusual conditions exist, it does not need to be any more complex than the example above.

Step 3: Policy Statement

A policy statement is a response to an issue that defines a course or method of action to guide and determine present and future decisions. For each issue, the Trail-maintaining club must define its policy. The existing policies of ATC and the National Park Service for each issue are provided under “Existing Policy” in each chapter in Parts 2–5. (A list of policies adopted by ATC is provided in [Appendix D](#).) Individual state-agency policies can be obtained from the agency responsible for managing lands. A Trail club has to comply with agency laws and regulations, as does ATC. However, club policies may differ from ATC policies—ATC policies are parameters, or guidelines, only. While consistency is an ideal, in reality each club faces a unique set of issues and must develop its own policies to guide its actions. A Trail club may adopt ATC policy or a policy developed by another Trail club or develop its own policy for any given issue.

In a typical planning model, policy statements are “issue-driven.” Issues are presented as questions or problem statements, and policies are presented as answers or management prescriptions. In response to the sample issue statement, “Drinking water supplies are essential to hiker safety and comfort...” the following policies could be developed:

- Water sources should be protected from contamination by livestock use and unsanitary human use. Privies will be located as far as feasible from water sources and at an elevation lower than water sources.
- Where necessary to prevent livestock use, springs and other water sources will be fenced.
- The guidebook will describe water sources along the Trail, indicate precautions for minimizing the potential for contamination, and describe methods of water treatment.
- Signs will be posted at major trailheads advising hikers to treat water taken from backcountry sources before use.

Step 4: Action Plan

An action plan is a means for identifying and setting priorities for work that needs to be done. The current Trail condition assessment and inventory program mentioned previously results in up-to-date lists of the work that needs to be done, as well as annual work plans based on priorities and available funding for several of the management issues that Trail clubs deal with. However, some issues are not covered by that process and require separate action plans. Further guidance on tackling these issues can be found in the “Action Plan” paragraph of the chapters listed below.

Part 3: Public use, Public Information and Emergency Response

3 (A) Emergency Planning and Coordination

3 (B) Special Events and Large-Group Use

3 (C) Public Information, Education and Outreach Programs

3 (D) Caretaker and Ridgerunner Programs

3 (F) Minimum Impact Backcountry Use

3 (G) Advertising in the A.T. Corridor

Part 4: Conflicting Use, Competing Use and Corridor Monitoring—all chapters

Part 5: Natural, Cultural and Scenic Resources—all chapters

CHAPTER 1 (C)

The Local Management Plan—What to Include in the Written Plan

The end result of the local management planning process for the Appalachian Trail is a document called the “local management plan.” Most Trail clubs have patterned their plans after the format of the example contained in this chapter. However, any format for the written plan is acceptable, provided the plan includes the contents discussed in this chapter. Trail club local management plans should be updated at least once every ten years.

What to Include in a Local Management Plan

At a minimum, a local management plan should include:

1. A brief introduction describing the purpose of the plan, the Trail club’s role, the roles of its management partners, and the section of Trail covered by the plan;
2. A summary of Trail-maintenance and -management issues present on the section of Trail and a statement of club policy for each issue or management program affecting the club’s Trail section;
3. An inventory of the important physical features located on the club’s assigned Trail section, a map or set of maps of the club’s assigned section, and copies of any cooperative agreements or other documents that define roles of management partners;
4. The updated five-year plan of work to be undertaken to maintain or improve the status of the club’s assigned section.

A Sample Format for a Local Management Plan

Introduction—State the purpose of the local management plan: to guide the club in fulfilling its responsibility for the maintenance and management of a specific section of the Appalachian Trail in cooperation with its agency partner(s). Reference the documents that provide the authority for the local management plans—the [National Trails System Act](#) (Public Law 90-543, as amended), the 1981 [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#), and the agreements that delegate responsibility for maintenance and management of the Appalachian Trail to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and its member Trail clubs. Include a short paragraph on the planning process—who was involved in preparing the plan, how the public was given an opportunity to participate, and how often the plan will be updated and reviewed.

Background—This section contain two basic components: a description of the Trail route and a short history of the club's involvement in maintenance and management of the Trail. The description of the Trail route should identify important physiographic features and jurisdictions of land-managing agencies. A map or set of maps showing the Trail route and corridor should be included, either in this section or as an appendix.

The Partners—The roles of the primary partners, which include the local Trail club, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the state agency, and the federal land-managing agency, should be briefly outlined and any cooperative agreements or other documents defining management responsibilities should be referenced and included as appendices. Most of the information concerning these roles is outlined in Chapter 1 (A) and may be used for preparing this section of the local management plan. If appropriate, regional committees, such as the Orange/Rockland County A.T. Management Committee or the Maryland A.T. Committee, should be mentioned.

Issues and Policies—These are the heart of the local management plan. For each issue that the Trail club identifies (including all issues identified in Parts 2–5 of the *Planning Guide*), it should prepare a short issue statement and corresponding policy statement or statements.

A detailed explanation of how to develop an issue statement and a policy statement is provided in Chapter 1 (B), “Appalachian Trail Planning—Advice to Volunteers,” under subheadings titled “Issue Identification,” and “Developing a Policy Statement.” The issues and policies may be prepared according to the general statements that respond to the issue, may be grouped by common themes (the format used in the *Planning Guide*), or they may simply be listed by issue.

Action Plan—The Trail club's five-year work plan, as well as any other planning required by specific policies (for example: emergency planning). The club's most recent Trail-assessment information is available upon request from ATC staff and should be included. A long-range plan, if one has been written, should be incorporated.

Appendices—Appendices should include:

1. A map or set of maps showing the Trail route, basic Trail features, topography, and land ownership;
2. Cooperative agreements, delegation agreements, memoranda of understanding, *etc.*;
3. Inventory data.

Sample Table of Contents for a Local Management Plan

The following table of contents is an example of the general structure of the local management plan. If a Trail club does not have any need to deal with a specific issue listed in the *Planning Guide* (such as overnight-use areas or wilderness, because there are no overnight-use areas or designated wilderness areas on the club's Trail section), simply include a one-sentence statement to that effect. Policies on additional issues that the club must deal with, such as winter Trail use or ski-area development, can be added where appropriate.

1. Introduction
 - A. Statement of Purpose
2. Background
 - A. Route of the Appalachian Trail
 - B. Land ownership
 - C. Inventories (by reference to appendices)
3. The Partnership and the Planning Process
 - A. Club Roles and Responsibilities
 - B. ATC Roles and Responsibilities
 - C. Agency Partner(s) Roles and Responsibilities
 - D. Roles and Responsibilities of Other Parties
4. Issues and Policies—Managing the Physical Trail
 - A. Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance
 - B. Accessibility
 - C. Relocations
 - D. Stream Crossings and Bridges
 - E. Trailheads and Parking
 - F. Side and Connecting Trails

- G. Overnight Use—Shelters, Campsites, and Privies
 - H. Drinking Water Supplies and Water Quality
 - I. Sanitation
 - J. Managing the Trail for a Primitive Experience
 - K. Safety Training and Certification
5. Issues and Policies—Public Use, Public Information, and Emergency Response
- A. Emergency Planning and Coordination
 - B. Special Events and Large-Group Use
 - C. Public Information, Education, and Outreach Programs
 - D. Ridgerunner and Caretaker Programs
 - E. Trail Signs
 - F. Minimum-Impact Backcountry Use
 - G. Advertising in the A.T. Corridor
6. Issues and Policies—Corridor Monitoring and Management
- A. Corridor Monitoring
 - B. Motorized Uses
 - C. Litter and Graffiti
 - D. Hunting
 - E. Horses and Pack Animals
 - F. Roads and Utilities
 - G. Wind Energy Facilities
 - H. Road Closures and Access Control
 - I. Special Uses
 - J. Structures and Dams
 - K. Military Maneuvers
 - L. Bicycles
 - M. Hang Gliding
 - N. Nonhiking Recreational Uses of Trail Lands
 - O. Impacts of Land Development in the Vicinity of the A.T.
 - P. Geocaching
7. Issues and Policies—Managing Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources
- A. Resource Management
 - B. Climate Change
 - C. Open Areas and Vistas
 - D. Timber Management
 - E. Pest Management
 - F. Threatened and Endangered Species
 - G. Wildlife Management
 - H. Vegetation Management
 - I. Cultural Resources
 - J. Wilderness
 - K. Special and Unique Areas
 - L. Agricultural Use
 - M. National Environmental Policy Act Compliance
 - N. Exotic Species
8. The Club Action Plan
- A. Annual Work Plan
 - B. Long-Range Plan

9. Appendices
 - A. Cooperative Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding
 - B. Inventories
 - C. Maps
 - D. References

CHAPTER 1 (D)

ATC Policy Development and Adoption

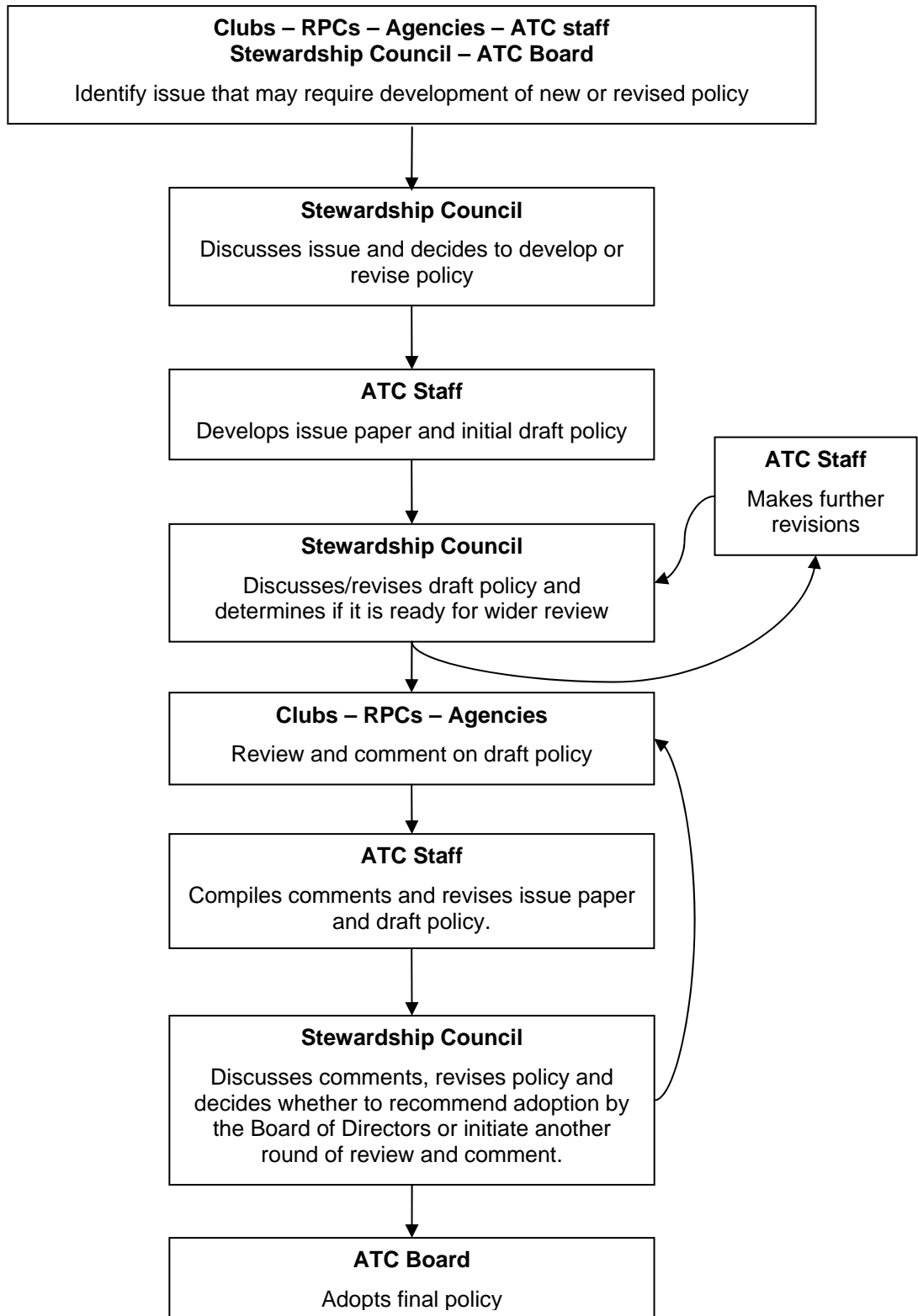
Beginning in the mid-1970s, ATC's management activities in behalf of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail greatly accelerated, both as a result of the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543, as amended) and in anticipation of the Appalachian Trail bill, which was signed by President Jimmy Carter on March 21, 1978. The new legislation emphasized the need for protecting the Trail, including acquiring a corridor, and authorized \$90 million for that purpose. Today, the acquisition program is nearly complete: 99 percent of the Trail is located across public lands, with the narrow, protected corridor authorized in 1978 connecting multiple older federal, state, and local public lands.

With about 30 private Trail clubs and more than 65 public agencies joining forces in the cooperative management of the A.T., as described in Chapter 1 (A), the Conservancy adopted an open process of policy development and adoption that today is reflected throughout the pages of this *Local Management Planning Guide*. In the interest of brevity, this document does not include most of the background information on the history of each policy, only the date of adoption.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy policies are intended to guide the ATC Board, its Stewardship Council, committees, and staff in their decision-making for the management of the Trail. ATC policies also are meant to inform the Trail clubs and agency partners and to help coordinate decision-making by all of the partners toward more consistent management for the entire Trail. ATC also provides this coordination by working with federal and state partners to understand rules and regulations and find acceptable compromises and adaptations between legal requirements and the unique volunteer-based work force dedicated to the Trail. Finally, ATC policies also serve to inform the general public of ATC's position on matters concerning the Appalachian Trail. ATC welcomes input from Trail clubs and other interested parties during the formative stages of policy development. To that end, concerns and comments on proposed policies are solicited through ATC's regional partnership committee (RPC) meetings, letters to Trail-club presidents, and publication of draft versions of proposed policies in [The Register](#).

The schematic on the following page illustrates the process of developing and adopting ATC policies.

The ATC Policy Development Process



CHAPTER 1 (E)

Review and Approval of Management Plans and Project Proposals

In 2008, the Stewardship Council took the opportunity to review all of the policies that involved review and approval processes and updated them to be consistent with ATC's new governance structure while maintaining the traditions of the cooperative management system:

- Partnerships exist between local Trail clubs and agencies;
- There is a strong volunteer role;
- Management decisions are made by mutual agreement of the cooperating partners whenever possible;
- Management is decentralized to the extent possible;
- ATC is responsible for assuring that the A.T. is satisfactorily managed and serves in a back-up capacity to the Trail clubs.

Since the reorganization, members of the Board of Directors and Stewardship Council are not involved in day-to-day management of the Trail to the extent the members of the former Board of Managers were. ATC's strategic plan envisioned that local A.T. management decisions, within existing policy, would fall to the regional level. Regional staff is charged with seeking advice from local A.T. managers, both volunteers and agency partners, to make fair, effective, and appropriate decisions. In most cases, the knowledge and experience on regional issues and local Trail projects lie within the volunteer base and staff at the regional level. Consequently, the regional director is in the best position to engage local volunteers, encourage dialogue, and make timely decisions in behalf of ATC.

To maintain consistency among the regions the regional directors will be encouraged to consult with their colleagues in the other regions, as well as ATC headquarters and NPS-ATPO, staff, other agency partners, and volunteers (including members of the Stewardship Council).

ATC Policy—Following review by and the concurrence of all four of ATC's regional partnership committees and based on the recommendation of the Stewardship Council, the ATC Board of Directors adopted the following policy for the review and approval of management plans and project proposals on November 1, 2008:

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and provide guidance to Trail-maintaining clubs, regional partnership committees and ATC volunteers and staff on the process for review and approval of management plans and management project proposals.

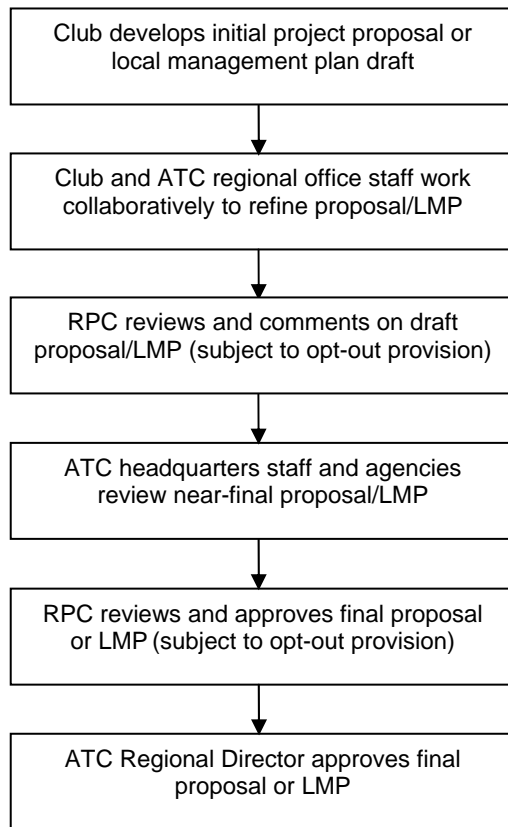
In general, the review and approval process is designed to achieve several objectives:

- Involve all of the relevant partners (Trail clubs, agencies and ATC) in the decision-making process;
- Review project and plan proposals efficiently while providing local volunteers, through the regional partnership committees (RPC), the opportunity to be involved early in the process;
- Have as many management decisions as possible made at the regional level;
- Meet ATC's obligations under its management agreements with land-managing agencies.

Scope: This guidance applies to approval of the following:

- Local management plans
- Trail relocations (minor and major)
- New side or connecting trails
- Construction of new or replacement overnight facilities
- Voluntary Trail club maintenance reassignments

Process: The review and approval process is diagrammed and described below:



The focal point during the processing of projects and plans is the ATC regional office. ATC regional staff will assist clubs and other partners in refining initial proposals, assembling the necessary supporting information and engaging other management partners in the process. Regional staff, especially the regional director, will work closely with the RPC during both the initial and final reviews.

The Regional Partnership Committee chair has the option to “opt-out” of RPC review and approval of minor local management plan amendments, trail relocations, new side or connecting trails or construction of overnight facilities. This decision will be made by the RPC chair in consultation with the club or agency

making the proposal and the ATC regional director.

Responsibility for approval of proposals covered by this guidance is delegated to the regional directors unless specified otherwise in specific policies.

In order to maintain consistency among the regions, regional directors are encouraged to consult with their colleagues in the other regions, as well as ATC headquarters staff, agency partners, and volunteers (including members of the Stewardship Council).

If a regional director feels that a specific decision should be made at a higher level in ATC, the director should forward a request to do so to the director of conservation. The request should include an explanation of the reasons for elevating the decision. The director of conservation will work with staff and volunteer leaders to determine the appropriate decision-making level. Possible levels are director of conservation, chief operating officer, executive director, Stewardship Council and Board of Directors.

The process is designed to involve all partners in the decision-making process and reach consensus. However, if a Trail club or other partner is dissatisfied with a regional director's decision, a review of the decision may be requested. The request will be forwarded to the director of conservation. Further review, up to the Board of Directors, may be requested. Decisions of the Board are final.

Endorsement of a Local Management Plan

Local management plans undergo a review process to ensure consistency with the aims and objectives of ATC, the policies in this *Planning Guide*, and those of the land-management agencies. This process is similar for any important Trail stewardship decision as described above.

The final step in preparing a local management plan is to obtain a formal endorsement of the plan from ATC. A sample approval form is included as [Appendix A](#). At a minimum, the following individuals and organizations should have reviewed the plan before it is submitted for endorsement:

- The Trail club's officers
- The appropriate representative(s) of the land-managing agency partner(s)
- The National Park Service Appalachian Trail Park Office
- The ATC regional director
- The ATC director of conservation operations
- The regional partnership committee

Perhaps the most effective method for obtaining review and comment prior to endorsement of a local management plan is informal consultation: contact individuals in the Trail club, ATC, the Appalachian Trail Park Office, the land-managing agencies, and members of the public who would have an interest in the plan, and offer to let them review a draft and provide comments before the plan is finalized. An informal review can take the place of a formal request for review and comment. If review is formally requested, reviewers should be given at least 30 days to comment.

Development and endorsement of local management plans will follow the process outlined in ATC's policy for review and approval of management plans and project proposals in Chapter 1 (D). *Please note that ATC requests that all club LMPs be submitted in Microsoft Word and PDF formats.*

Following endorsement of Trail club plans involving NPS-acquired lands, the NPS-Appalachian Trail park manager may designate overnight-use areas (if overnight use is restricted to those areas) or close a Trail section to open fires (if fires are an issue), or make similar designations or closures that are promulgated under the NPS [Code of Federal Regulations](#) as proposed or described in the local management plan. These are periodically published by the NPS A.T. Park Office in its *Compendium of Orders* ([Appendix C](#)), a listing of all geographically enforceable closures, making club-recommended controls legally enforceable.