



*Following adoption of a geocaching policy by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Board of Directors on November 1, 2008, ATC staff developed this guidance for Trail-maintaining clubs on implementing the policy.*

*The policy attempts to strike a balance between the value of geocaching as an outdoor recreational activity and the potentially significant negative impacts to natural and cultural resources that unmanaged geocaching can cause. To that end, A.T. land-managing agencies are encouraged either to manage and monitor geocaching activity, or to prohibit it.*

### **Geocaching Guidance to Appalachian Trail Maintaining Clubs**

- Clubs should disseminate the geocaching policy and this guidance to their members, especially trail maintainers and corridor monitors, and ensure that information is available to members who have questions about the policy. Clubs should refer questions and comments back to ATC.
- Trail clubs are not responsible for monitoring geocaches. However, volunteer help in finding and mitigating caches impacting natural or cultural resources is greatly appreciated. Club members who locate geocaches on Trail lands in the course of other Trail duties (such as corridor monitoring or Trail maintenance) are requested to document and report their findings. Ideally, club members should document the placement of the geocaches (as well as any visible impacts) as precisely as possible with field notes and photographs and report their findings through their club to the appropriate land-managing agency and ATC regional office.
- Trail clubs are not responsible for managing geocaching requests. Geocachers are responsible for determining land ownership and obtaining permission before placing caches on public or private land.
- If a club receives a request regarding placement of a geocache on A.T. lands, it should direct the person making the request to the appropriate land-managing agency. If the club does not know which agency to contact, it should direct the person to the appropriate ATC regional office.
- If the request pertains to lands managed by the NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office or other lands where the club knows that geocache placement is not permitted, the club should inform the person making the request that geocaching is prohibited on those lands and encourage him or her to contact the appropriate managing agency for more information.
- Club volunteers are not responsible for removing geocaches. If club volunteers find a geocache where they believe that such activity is prohibited, or in an area of sensitive or historic resources, or where it seems to be creating impacts (for example, social trails), the volunteers should notify the appropriate land-managing agency. If the location and the

prohibition can be verified, the agency staff may ask the volunteers if they are willing to help by removing the cache.

- Volunteers are asked to notify their ATC regional office if they become aware that a cache is being considered for removal. ATC will attempt to contact the appropriate cache owner as well as GroundSpeak (founder of [Geocaching.com](http://Geocaching.com), a Web site with listings of geocaches and other information on the activity) to apprise them of the situation in order to better educate the geocaching community about existing agency rules and regulations and foster a better working relationship.
- Clubs should examine their sections for areas that they believe are particularly inappropriate for geocaching, using criteria such as existing natural and cultural resources and intensity of use, and highlight these areas of particular concern in their local management plans for the Appalachian Trail. Clubs are encouraged to work with their partner agencies in highlighting such trail-management concerns for their consideration. Conversely, clubs may feel that certain unrestricted areas are appropriate for geocaching and may work with partner agencies that permit and monitor the activity to highlight opportunities and consider options.

### **Contact information**

NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office

Chief Ranger Todd Remaley 304-535-6171

Appalachian Trail Conservancy Regional Offices

New England 603-795-4935

Mid-Atlantic 717-258-5771

Virginia 540-953-3571

Southern 828-254-3708