

White Mountain National Forest

Chapter 3 Management Area Direction



MA 8.3 – Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Introduction

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) includes all trails designated by the National Trails System Act, as amended (P.L. 90-543), that occur on federal lands managed by the White Mountain National Forest. The AT includes spur trails to shelters, overnight-use sites, viewpoints, and water sources. Within the Proclamation Boundary, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail management area is the land designated as 0.5 miles either side of the trail. Outside the Proclamation Boundary, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail management area includes all the lands acquired by the National Park Service for the AT in the state of New Hampshire and administratively transferred to the USDA Forest Service under a Memorandum of Agreement. They are managed as part of the White Mountain National Forest “... for the protection and enhancement of the Appalachian Trail and also in accordance with this agreement.” They are “... subject to the National Trails System Act and laws, rules and regulations pertaining to the National Forest System.” These NPS-acquired lands are commonly referred to as either “corridor lands” or “[transfer lands](#).”

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is administered by the Secretary of Interior in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, and managed as a partnership between the National Park Service AT Park Office, USDA Forest Service, local Appalachian Trail Clubs, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC, formerly named the Appalachian Trail Conference).

Purpose

1. Manage the segment of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail on Federal lands that traverses the state of New Hampshire and the White Mountain National Forest.
2. Provide for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the land through which the trail passes.
3. Provide opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation experiences, including a sense of remoteness and solitude.
4. Recognize and strengthen the level of partnership, cooperation and volunteer efforts integral to AT management.

Desired Condition of the Land

The AT will be accessible only by foot and other non-motorized, pedestrian means, such as skis or snowshoes. Roads and motorized trails are not present except at designated crossings. Limited recreation facilities such as huts, cabins, shelters, and tent platforms may be present but will complement the desired recreation opportunities. Development levels and levels of use will vary by location, but the management area will emphasize a remote backcountry recreation experience in a predominantly natural or natural-appearing landscape.

White Mountain National Forest – Land and Resource Management Plan

Although new roads are prohibited, there are locations where roads currently exist in this management area.

Recreation impacts will be managed to protect cultural and natural resources and to minimize visual disturbance. The minimum managerial controls necessary will be used to maintain acceptable social and ecological standards.

There are extensive stands of northern hardwoods and conifers in the AT management area. These stands will contain a mix of tree sizes and ages, visually dominated by mature trees. This management area also includes part of the alpine/subalpine area, offering a rare landscape with high open areas for outstanding views.



Lakes of the Clouds Hut, with Mt. Washington in the background, is a popular stop for AT hikers and other alpine visitors (WMNF photo by Forrest Seavey)



Standards and Guidelines

See Chapter 2, Forest-wide standards and guidelines, for additional required direction in each program area.

General

- S-1 Management of the AT must follow the National Trails System Act, as amended (P.L. 90-543). This Act is implemented according to:
- a) The Comprehensive Plan for the Protection, Management, Development, and Use of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.
 - b) Various Memoranda of Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding, and policy statements between the USDA Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Appalachian Trail Conference (now Appalachian Trail Conservancy).
 - c) Forest Service Direction (FSM, FSH, and supplements).
- S-2 Consistent with existing agreements, the White Mountain National Forest will consult with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and Dartmouth Outing Club (local Appalachian Trail clubs) on management actions that affect AT values.
- S-3 Management direction for both the Appalachian Trail (MA 8.3) and Wilderness (MA 5.1) must apply where the AT crosses through Wilderness. Where direction differs, the more restrictive standards and guidelines must apply.
- S-4 Management direction for both the Appalachian Trail (MA 8.3) and Alpine Zone (MA 8.1) must apply where the AT crosses through the Alpine Zone. Where direction differs, the more restrictive standards and guidelines must apply.
- S-5 Corridor lands with easements or outstanding rights will be managed consistent with deed transfer language.
- S-6 Motorized use is allowed only for administrative purposes.
- G-1 The Forest should consult with the State of New Hampshire on actions in the AT management area adjacent to the AT on New Hampshire state lands.
- G-2 Management is guided by the following documents. When these documents are amended, they will provide updated guidance and as such will not require Forest Plan amendments.
- Appalachian Trail Conference. *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance* (ATC Stewardship Manual, second edition, 2000).
 - Appalachian Trail Conference. *Overnight-Use Management Principles*.
 - Appalachian Trail Conference. *Local Management Planning Guide*.
 - Appalachian Trail Conference. *Checklist for the Location, Construction and Maintenance of Campsites and Shelters on the Appalachian Trail*.
 - Local Management Plans for the Appalachian Trail.

- G-3 The Forest Service should report law enforcement incidents on the AT to the National Park Service AT Park Office, the ATC, and local AT clubs.
- G-4 The Forest should develop and distribute information about the Appalachian Trail and appropriate use of the trail in cooperation with the ATC and local AT clubs.
- G-5 Consistent with ROS objectives, education and information delivery:
 - 1 Should be concentrated primarily at visitor centers, classrooms, and other off-Forest locations, or at trailheads and developed facilities when delivery can be effectively accomplished at those locations.
 - 2. To a lesser degree, may be conducted at backcountry locations when effective delivery cannot be accomplished at developed or frontcountry locations.
- G-6 Printed public safety messages and signs (other than directional trail signs, or signs at overnight facilities) should be located primarily at trailheads or visitor centers. They may be used at backcountry locations in unusual or unique circumstances.

Accessibility

Forest-wide standards and guidelines apply.

Air Quality

Forest-wide standards and guidelines apply.

Geologic and Mineral

Leasable (Commercial) Minerals

S-1 These lands are administratively unavailable for mineral extraction activities.

Mineral Materials (Common Variety)

S-1 Common variety mineral extraction is prohibited.

Recreational Rock and Mineral Collecting

S-1 Recreational rock and mineral collecting is prohibited.

Heritage

Forest-wide standards and guidelines apply.

Lands

Special Uses

S-1 Designated communication sites are prohibited.

S-2 Wind towers are prohibited.

S-3 New utility lines or rights-of-way are prohibited unless they represent the only feasible and prudent alternative to meet an overriding public need.

- S-4 Impacts to the AT from new utility corridors must be sufficiently mitigated to protect trail values.
- G-1 Agricultural special use permits are permitted only when used to maintain existing fields and vistas, and only if consistent with wildlife habitat requirements, cultural needs, and scenery management objectives.
- G-2 New communication use permits may be authorized on a case-by-case basis if they are attached to existing facilities and are consistent with visual quality standards, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum objectives, and other management area requirements.
- G-3 Authorizations for research activities may be allowed if operated consistent with AT objectives.
- G-4 New approved utility lines or rights-of-way should be co-located within existing rights-of-way (roads, utility lines, etc.) where practical, and should be limited to a single crossing of the AT.

Native American
Relations

Forest-wide standards and guidelines apply.

Non-native
Invasive Species

Forest-wide standards and guidelines apply.

Rare and Unique
Features

- G-1 Vegetation manipulation may be implemented to protect or improve habitat for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

Recreation

General

- S-1 Dispersed camping is allowed unless restricted to address social or resource concerns. Implementation of closures will be through Forest Supervisors Orders. Closures will be coordinated with the ATC and local AT clubs.
- S-2 Management of the AT experience must be compatible with the prescribed recreation experience opportunity class. Lands within this management area should be managed under the semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class. There are situations where the AT crosses or follows [public roads](#) and snowmobile trails, and where developed facilities are present. Current inconsistencies in this ROS Class, such as Appalachian Mountain Club huts, are acceptable but are managed to minimize impacts on the SPNM experience.
- S-3 There are cases where sections of the AT retain a greater sense of the wild (primitive ROS class). These areas will be managed with special concern for these values.

- G-1 Route 16, where it passes through this MA in the Pinkham Notch area, is recognized as an acceptable inconsistency to the ROS Class objective.
- G-2 Length of stay limits may be implemented as needed.
- G-3 On sections of the AT where use is high, follow the strategy of concentrating use at specific sites rather than dispersing use along the trail. Management activities should not disperse recreation use from high- to low-use sections.
- G-4 Overnight camping and recreation use should be managed to recognize different levels of use and desired recreation opportunities consistent with overall AT goals.
- G-5 Areas may be closed, new campsites may be designated or built, or the use regulated to address social or resource issues.
- G-6 Open surface water sources may be identified in Forest, ATC, and AT trail club information, including guidebooks, trailhead signs, or on blue blazed side trails.
- G-7 Open surface water sources may be improved only to the minimum necessary to allow for collection of water.
- G-8 AT hikers should be responsible for the potability of their own drinking water.

Facilities

- G-1 Backcountry facilities include huts, shelters, tent platforms, and associated amenities such as toilets, spring boxes, registers, and other facilities agreed to by the Forest, ATC, and local AT clubs. Dispersed campsites without overnight amenities are allowed and should be managed to maintain appropriate recreation opportunities or to minimize impacts on natural resources.
- G-2 Design and management of the backcountry facility system should consider the needs of both long distance hikers (places to eat and sleep after a day of walking) and for hikers of all distances.
- G-3 New shelters, tent platforms, and dispersed campsites may be considered where there is a demonstrated need. If constructed, they should be located 100 feet or more from the main trail and should not be located within two miles of an existing road open to motor vehicles.

Horse, Pack Stock, and Mountain Bike Use

- S-1 On all National Park Service (NPS) acquired corridor lands, horse, pack stock, and mountain bike use are prohibited except at designated crossings.
- S-2 Horse, pack stock, and mountain bike use is prohibited on the AT footpath and within 500 feet of the trail except where it crosses or is located on Forest system, state or county (town) roads, or designated snowmobile trails.
- G-1 New mountain bike crossings should be discouraged, except as mutually agreed on by the Forest, ATC, and local AT clubs.

- G-2 Trail users should be informed and educated about closures and guidelines for using the trail, especially regarding horses, pack stock, and bicycles.

Motorized Use

- S-1 Motorized use is limited to portions where the AT crosses or is located on Forest System, state, county, or town roads, or during the snow season on designated snowmobile trails.
- S-2 Motorized use on other segments of the AT footpath is prohibited.
- S-3 New motorized trails are prohibited except at crossings.
- G-1 New snowmobile or motorized crossings should be discouraged, except as mutually agreed on by the Forest, ATC, and local AT clubs.
- G-2 Trail users should be informed and educated about closures and guidelines for using the trail, especially regarding motorized use.

Operation and Maintenance

- S-1 Management actions such as trail locations, improvements, or increasing developments must not result in a change along the ROS scale from less to more developed. For example, management actions must not change an ROS class from primitive to semi-primitive. Changes from more developed to less developed are allowed.
- S-2 The Optimal Location Review process must be used to initiate the decision-making process for trail relocations.
- G-1 Consistent with Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) standards, sufficient signing should be provided to inform hikers of significant features and distances to major road crossings.
- G-2 Where the trail is located on decommissioned roads, the tread should be allowed to revegetate to normal Appalachian Trail tread widths.
- G-3 Use of trail structures such as steps, cribbing, and bridges should be minimized. Where necessary, the simplest rustic design, with the least disturbance, should be used. Trail structures should be consistent with ROS class.

Special Uses – Recreation Specific

- S-1 The Forest Service must manage [recreation special use permits](#) on the AT in cooperation with the ATC and the AT clubs.
- S-2 Recreation special uses must not be dispersed from high use to low use areas of the AT, as identified in the current *Trail Use Inventory*.
- S-3 Competitive events permits are prohibited.
- S-4 The recreation special use permit program along the AT must be managed to protect the characteristics of low use areas.
- G-1 Outfitter/guide permits are allowed but may be restricted to address social and environmental concerns.

- G-2 Recreation Special Use permits on the AT should be denied when social or resource conditions warrant (for example, if crowding or overuse negatively affects natural resources or a specific experience objective).
- G-3 If monitoring and analysis of social and resource conditions determines that recreation special use capacity along the AT has been reached, a process should be developed to assign user days.
- G-4 Group size may be limited when necessary to provide for safety and resource protection or to minimize the impact large groups have on others.

Riparian/Aquatic

- G-1 Artificial habitat structures should not be used. If used, they must be created from materials that blend with the site and do not detract from the natural landscape.

Scenery
Management

- S-1 The AT is a Concern Level 1 Travelway, and [middleground](#) and [background](#) areas on National Forest lands seen from the AT must be managed for scenery in accordance with Scenic Integrity Objectives identified through the [Scenery Management System](#).
- S-2 All management activities will meet a Scenic Integrity Objective of High or Very High.

Transportation
System

- G-1 To maintain a discrete trail experience, trailhead parking facilities should be located where the Appalachian Trail can be accessed by a short spur trail rather than locations where the trail footpath crosses a road.
- G-2 New roads should not be allowed within this management area. New roads may be allowed if they are the only feasible and prudent alternative, and after impacts have been mitigated to the extent practical.
- G-3 Where the AT follows Forest Service system roads, road maintenance may be done as needed on drainage structures, closure devices, and the roadbed. Grass may be allowed to grow in [local roads](#) (maintenance levels I or II).
- G-4 Roads crossings should be at right angles wherever possible.

Vegetation
Management

- S-1 On all National Park Service (NPS) acquired corridor lands, commercial timber management and salvage operations are prohibited.
- S-2 Commercial timber management is prohibited where the AT management area is adjacent to any MA other than MA 2.1.

- S-3 Salvage operations are prohibited where the AT management area is adjacent to any MA other than MAs 2.1 and 6.1.
- G-1 Where the AT management area adjoins MA 2.1, commercial timber management and salvage operations are allowed in that portion of the Appalachian Trail MA between the trail footpath and the 2.1 Management Area, but only outside the foreground area as defined in the Scenery Management System (SMS). The foreground zone is determined by site-specific analysis of the area as seen from the AT. Everywhere else in the AT management area, commercial timber management and [salvage sales](#) are prohibited.
- G-2 Maintaining existing fields and vistas should be allowed.

Water Resources

Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines apply.

Wildland Fire

- S-1 Wildland fire use (WFU) is allowed only where permitted in the adjacent management area.
- S-2 Prescribed fire is prohibited.

Wildlife

- S-1 Creation of regeneration forest habitat must occur only through [natural disturbance](#) events, except for areas adjacent to Management Area 2.1, in that portion of the Appalachian Trail MA between the trail footpath and the 2.1 Management Area outside the foreground zone.