

# Law Enforcement and the “Authority Of the Resource”

BY DR. GEORGE N. WALLACE

**A**ccording to Webster, “authority” means “the power to influence or command thought, opinion or behavior.” Wild nature can be said to have its own authority. Nature has her own rules, operates in certain ways, and has certain laws; there are consequences when we violate that order. Wilderness areas are among the few places on earth where we have agreed to allow nature, for the most part, to operate on her own terms. Desirable behavior is more likely to occur if people understand how their actions affect the way nature operates.

Much of the undesirable behavior which managers must deal with in the wilderness is behavior that disrupts the natural order or the ability of others to experience wild nature. All too often in dealing with visitors who are causing some sort of impact to soil, vegetation, water quality, wildlife or the experience of others, we tend to focus on the authority of the agency. By this we mean the visitor ends up thinking about

laws, regulations, badges, and the ranger’s presence rather than focusing on the natural authority inherent in the requirements of a healthy ecosystem.

The “Authority of the Resource Technique” (ART) attempts to compensate for this tendency. It *transfers the authority* (or that which asks a person to think or behave in a certain way) *from the manager ranger or agency, to those things in nature (resources) that have their own requirements.* Where Hammit and Cole (1987) and Hendee et al. (1990) have rightly emphasized the need to explain the reasons for wilderness regulations and the expected behavior, the AR technique goes one step further and asks the ranger/manager to subtly de-emphasize the regulation and transfer part of the expectation back to the visitor by interpreting nature’s requirements.

On the next page, compare the two styles of addressing visitors whose dog is running free in a wilderness area which requires dogs to be on a leash. The ranger/manager approaches the visitors and their dog on the trail.

## Authority of the Agency

**Ranger:** Hello my name is Jack Russell and I'm a ranger with the Rio Blanco District (pause or small talk). I'm going to have to ask you folks to keep your dog on a leash. We have a regulation that all dogs are to be kept on a leash unless you are in camp and the dog can be controlled.

**Visitors:** That dog has to be on a leash all the time in town. You would think that up here where he can't hurt anything that it wouldn't matter. Besides, he doesn't range very far unless he's on to a rabbit or something. (chuckle)

**Ranger:** Well, your dog may be well behaved but many aren't, and I have to enforce the regulation that says dogs must be on a leash for everyone. This is just a warning notice, but if the dog is seen running again, I will be forced to give you a citation. The fine would be \$25. Do you have any questions, or is there anything I can help you with?

**Visitor:** No, I don't believe so.

**Ranger:** Well, I won't bother you anymore. You folks have a nice day.

## Authority of the Resource

**Ranger:** Hello. How are you today? I'm Jack Russell, the backcountry ranger in this unit. (Uniform, name plate and shoulder patch can speak for themselves, or the agency can be identified.)

**Visitors:** Fine, thanks.

**Ranger:** (After some more ice breakers) I noticed earlier that there was a dog running free in the aspen stands where the trail crosses that saddle (turns and looks at the aspen in the distant saddle).

**Visitor:** Yeah, that was probably Rocco here (gestures at the dog).

**Ranger:** Well, this is the time of year when the mule deer are dropping their fawns, (points at the bench above the saddle where he has seen several

fawns) and they are very vulnerable to disturbance. We have found that dogs that are running free often put a lot of stress on the does and their fawns. This is just one of several reasons for the regulations that asks visitors to keep their dogs on a leash (if the regulation clearly exists); or, we would feel better if folks could keep their dogs on a leash unless they are in camp and the dogs stay in camp with them.

**Visitors:** Ok, thanks for the reminder.

**Ranger:** That's quite alright. He is a nice looking dog. Is he full-blooded Australian? (Return to small talk or questions the visitors might have.)

I had the privilege of working periodically over several years with David Hawkins, former Director of the Mountain View Center for Environmental Education in Boulder, Colorado. As we trained teachers, we listened, watched, and analyzed the language and actions that teachers used. Hawkins and his associate Marie Hughes taught me to look and see if teachers and pupils appeared to be "face to face" or "shoulder to shoulder" as they talked or worked. They maintained that in every face to face relationship there exists a certain amount of tension. If, on the other hand, both people turn and share an interest in something in the world around them, and their attentions are focused on this third thing (deer, aspen, saddles, or the special qualities possessed by an Australian Shepherd), the relationship is more authentic and less threatening to the person who may know less. He felt that it was possible to teach—in this case, without the coercion of authority—that the authority lay in the "stuff" which both people found interesting.

Perhaps the original inspiration for developing this concept comes from Freeman Tilden as well as philosopher Martin Buber. In his book *I and Thou*, Buber also describes how concern or care for the progress or development of another person (much as a ranger hopes that wilderness visitors will move to higher levels of respect for wilderness resources) often best occurs during mutual and reciprocal interaction with some interesting phenomenon in the world rather than by directly confronting the person. Tilden's (1957) first principle of interpretation seems based on this as well.

Before we get too far into the wild reaches of

philosophy, let's try another example of a manager/ranger who is dealing with an undesirable behavior but using only the Authority of the Resource Technique this time. In this case, our backcountry ranger notices a group of backpackers washing dishes in the inlet of a small mountain lake. After opening conversation the ranger brings up the issue with the goal of influencing future behavior rather than writing a citation:

**Ranger:** We have noticed that on several occasions lately, people have washed or bathed directly in the stream or the lake. Researchers tell us that even small amounts of nutrients, like those found in most soaps, are enough to change the growth of aquatic plants. Normally, in these high lakes, there aren't many nutrients to begin with (squats looking into the water, possibly picking up some rocks or plants from the bottom). Once the number of water plants increases above normal, lakes like this may experience changes in temperature, clarity, and the amount of oxygen available. Then, other organisms that live here now begin to change as well. We would like to keep these lakes crystal clear, cold, and as natural as possible, so we are asking campers to carry water for washing, bathing, or packstock back to camp. Also, by pouring leftover water on the vegetation near camp, it is possible to help it recover a bit.

Once again, the ranger in our hypothetical example has shifted the focus away from himself as an authority figure representing the agency and focused the visitor's attention on the resource. He has used the undesirable behavior—washing dishes in the lake inlet—to create an opportunity to talk about water quality, the nutrient cycle and the changes that can be set in motion by a series of seemingly innocent acts. Washing dishes in an inlet is something that many people would not consider harmful. If so, it may be an example of willful noncompliance. The ranger can change that by revealing the authority of the resource. The best reason for not washing dishes in the lake is not because there is a regulation on the back of the



By explaining WHY washing dishes in the stream is harmful to the resource, managers can educate as well as enforce.

map or a ranger that asks you not to. Ideally, once the visitors understand how the lake and stream function and might be affected by their actions, they respect the integrity of those systems and act accordingly. Tilden speaks to this issue of presenting the "whole picture" in his fifth principle of interpretation. Concepts that unify the workings of nature and our bonds with the natural world are those that reveal the authority of the resource.

Another aim of the ART is to remove the tension that often occurs when teacher and pupil or land manager and land user are face to face—one supposedly knowing more than the other. Like Tilden, we wish to get past "instruction" to that which he chooses to call, in his fourth principle, the "provocative." It is especially appropriate for use with wildland visitors that are causing natural resource or social impacts that they may not be fully aware of.

The ART message in each case can be viewed as systematic. It has several sequential parts that can be described and later practiced.

### **Step 1. Give An Objective Description of the Situation;**

After opening conversation, the manager or ranger simply makes an objective statement about the visitor's actions as they were observed. Any reference

to the agency, the regulations, or the visitor as violator is to be avoided at this point. Example:

**Ranger:** I noticed that there was a salt block left near the campsite at Darby's Meadow.

It is important to avoid value laden terms. Phrases like "you really shouldn't," "Don't you know that it is harmful to . . .," or "it's against Regulation 32(a), under the . . .," don't need to be used.

In fact, the above statement is made without attributing the act directly to the party in question even if it is highly likely that they did leave the salt. This is done for two reasons. First, someone else could have left it behind. Since a backcountry manager cannot and should not attempt to keep track of all the details of any group's actions, there is often some question as to exactly what happened. Secondly, it is a matter of diplomacy and tact to avoid the implication. Languages like French and Spanish, for example, hardly ever choose to assign blame to an individual choosing rather to use reflexive verbs that say "it left itself" (was left), "it broke itself on you" (was broken), etc. We are doing the same here and at no loss to the message.

### **Step 2. Explain the Implications of the Action or Situation that was Observed;**

It is here that the manager/ranger attempts to reveal the authority of the resource or interpret what will happen in nature if the action is continued. This may also be thought of as including social impacts or what will happen to the interaction that others are having with nature if the action continues.

**Ranger:** In places where salt has been left behind in the past (ranger turns toward the area in question), deer and elk return repeatedly to the site, and it begins to look like any artificial salt lick, compacted and denuded of vegetation. They continue to paw at the ground afterwards, which is their habit at naturally occurring salt licks. It also tends to sterilize the soil in the immediate area. Other visitors frequently complain about finding these sites in a wilderness area.

Once again, the most important implications of leaving salt behind are not that it is against the regulations or that the outfitter's special use permit may be put in jeopardy (authority of the agency). The implications are that it is an unnatural occurrence which can cause impacts. The "authority" lies in the behavior of elk and the nature of soil organisms, or what happens to soil macropores, roots, water infiltration, or the recovery period when a site is compacted. This part of the message should be interesting. The ranger/manager should demonstrate interest in the topic rather than impatience with the offender. It is an opportunity to employ the art of interpretation and help people see the subtle workings of all things wild or, as Holmes Rolston puts it, "to let them in on nature's show." Instead of threatening the individual "face to face" with your power to constrain or alter their activities, you help them, "shoulder to shoulder," acquire new knowledge. Lawrence Kholberg (1974) suggests that this approach allows the offender to self-test their existing values or attitudes and to move them to a higher level of principled thinking.

Wilderness users typically have high levels of education and assign a high value to wilderness (Hendee et al. 1990, pp. 1568). In keeping with these facts, the ART always uses the positive expectation which assumes that once the person understands what is happening in nature, or in the wilderness experience of others, that they will want to stop what is recognized as undesirable behavior. This brings us to the last step.

### **Step 3. Tell Them How You Feel About It and What Can (Should) Be Done to Improve the Situation;**

When the person using the Authority of the Resource Technique is both interested in and concerned about what is happening, it is acceptable to state how you feel about the implications or probable results of the undesirable behavior. Since you are wearing the agency's uniform, the visitor can assume that what you say is also a statement of how the agency feels and what actions are desirable in the agency's eyes.

**Ranger:** I'd (we'd) feel a lot better if the deer, elk, and animals did not become accustomed to man's salt in the wilderness. We are (or 'the agency is') asking all packstock users to place their salt on a board, log, or other

surface that keeps it off the ground when it is offered to packstock, and to be sure and carry all salt out with them when they break camp.

Bolton (1979) describes communication techniques, like "I messages" which are similar to the AR Technique. Authors of such techniques tell us that once a nonthreatening ("shoulder to shoulder") atmosphere has been established, it is natural and effective to include a more personalized expression of concern like that which is seen in the first sentence of the statement above. Each person, however, who deals with undesirable behavior in the field must use their own judgment in deciding how to express the right mixture of their own feelings, the agency's position, and the position of others who may be concerned (fish and game or other wildlife officers may also be concerned about abandoned salt blocks).

The manager or ranger must make a decision in this third part of the message whether or not it is necessary to cite the regulation per se. This can be debated and depends on several things. The National Park Service is fairly consistent in its use of certain regulations. In other agencies, there are still a great many inconsistencies in where, how, and if regulations are used. This may always be the case since there is great diversity in size, location, and management needs between units in the National Wilderness Preservation system. Many times a ranger will see undesirable behavior that is not specifically covered by a regulation (type of fuelwood being burned, hunters who leave flagging behind, locations that are more appropriate for picketing horses, etc.). Managers may still wish personnel to make contacts and use techniques similar to the ART even if specific regulations do not exist. In fact, wilderness management guidelines ask us to minimize regulations in the wilderness.

Finally, it is important to qualify all of the preceding. Although by their very nature, wilderness and backcountry areas are the most logical places to try a technique like this, *the ART may not always work or be appropriate*. There are times when the manager must move to other, more traditional levels of law enforcement. It may be necessary to use more of the "authority of the agency." Although an ART approach will probably work for most wilderness users who, studies show, are well educated and supportive of the wilderness concept, there will be a small percentage of violators who exhibit undesirable behavior that is clearly illegal (poachers, marijuana growers, motorized entry, etc.) Cases that clearly involve more than

unavoidable, uninformed, unskilled, or even careless behavior may require that those techniques which emphasize enforcement over education or interpretation be taught to most commissioned law enforcement officers. Also, if management problems are not sufficiently reduced, after a period of using an ART-type approach with the majority of visitors, it may be necessary to create or emphasize existing regulations and enforce them to a greater degree.

It is good, however, to expect the best of people when we can. Combining interpretation with law enforcement to reveal the authority of the resource, seems to be a good place to start. We hope for long-term changes in peoples' respect for nature in general and an intrinsically motivated stewardship of the wilderness in particular. Such changes are likely to last longer when we help people to test their own beliefs and values and arrive at a more principled wilderness ethic of their own accord.

---

*Dr. Wallace is an Assistant Professor of Recreation Resources and Landscape Architecture, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523.*

---

#### REFERENCES

- Bolton, Robert. (1979). *People Skills*, Prentice Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey .
- Buber, Martin. (1970). *I and Thou*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
- Hammit, William E. and Cole, David N. (1987). *Wildland Recreation and Management*, John Wiley and Sons, New York.
- Hawkins, David. (1969). "I, Thou, It." In Bulletin of the Association of Teachers of Mathematics, No. 46 (Spring), University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.
- Kholberg, Lawrence. (1974). *Collected Papers*. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Manning, Robert E. (1986). *Studies in Outdoor Recreation*, Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, Oregon.
- Tilden, Freeman. (1957). *Interpreting Our Heritage* The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.



How to Respond to Less Than Leave No Trace Moments:



60 views

# AUTHORITY OF THE RESOURCE IN 3 EASY STEPS

When enjoying your world, whether while thru-hiking the AT or on a short day trip, have you ever noticed another visitor exhibiting what we could call, "Less than Leave No Trace" behavior? Did you struggle with how to approach that person? What to say? If you even should say anything? Maybe it's littering, feeding wildlife, carving their name into a tree, or taking a shed antler out of the environment. Whatever the issue, there's a method called Authority of the Resource (ART), developed by Dr. George N. Wallace, that focuses on how to best approach and educate a person that may be doing something damaging to the resource or others' experiences.

According to Webster's Dictionary, "authority" means "the power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior". Nature can be said to have its own authority. There are real and often immediate consequences to our actions and approaching people on the trail using education (as opposed to rules and citations) connecting their actions to the effects they have on the world around them is a proven method in persuading them to minimize their impact.

Authority of the Resource can be broken down into three steps.

**1 MAKE AN OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:** “I’ve noticed a lot of people taking that short-cut back there.”

- Give them the benefit of the doubt. It could have been someone else that caused the impact.
- Avoiding accusatory language will help in diffusing any tension that may have arisen.
- People are more responsive if shown consideration and tact.

**2 EDUCATE** them by explaining how the resource is negatively effected: “Unfortunately, cutting those switchbacks tramples the vegetative ground cover and causes erosion.”

- Simply stating, “don’t cut switchbacks”, provides no education and is more regulatory in nature.
- Understanding the “why” behind a recommendation is a fundamental component to a visitor considering changing their behavior.
- Take a moment before approaching an individual to think through how you’ll engage and what the real implications are to their actions.

**3 TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL** about the situation and provide an **ALTERNATIVE:** “I volunteer for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and you would be surprise how much time, money, and effort goes into maintaining these trails so I’d, personally, feel a lot better if folks didn’t cut those

switchbacks. It really doesn’t take much longer to stay on the trail, is less steep, and helps keep the trail, surrounding vegetation, and soil in much better condition. If you do want to hike off-trail, please try to stay on durable surfaces like rock and leaf litter in areas that aren’t as steep.”

- Interjecting a personal perspective can help humanize these situations and break down barriers.
- Providing an alternative communicates that off-trail travel isn’t necessarily “bad”, just that there’s a time and place for it and along a heavily used trail like the Appalachian Trail isn’t one.

#### **ADDITIONAL TIPS:**

- Break the ice and get to know the person. They may be new to traveling and camping in the outdoors and do not have experience minimizing their impact.
- Stand side-by-side. Body language says much more than our words and standing face-to-face with someone is very confrontational. Standing side-by-side diffuses that tension.
- Remember that Authority of the Resource cannot always be used and is not always immediately effective. In situations that may be dangerous, law enforcement officials should step in.

This information was obtained from the article Law Enforcement and the “Authority of the Resource” featured in Legacy, Volume 1 (2).

Thanks for reading and remember to be like Bigfoot and Leave No Trace.

## **TRAIL AMBASSADOR**

### **Appalachian Trail Conservancy Volunteer Program Job Description**

**Purpose:** To encourage and promote desired wildland ethics among Appalachian Trail visitors by offering interpretation on the natural or cultural significance of specific high-use areas and tips on best-practices for enjoying the Trail.

**Term:** Annually renewable volunteer commitment  
Training occurs twice annually, in February and April.

During the peak-use seasons in the Southern Appalachians (March – October), volunteers commit to at least 1 or 2 days per month at one of the club's high-use location. These days may be independent one-day activities or scheduled consecutively for opportunities to serve as a caretaker at specific overnight sites.

**Location:** High-use sites along the Appalachian Trail in a given club's maintenance section. In particular, sites offer scenic or historic value for interpretation that leads to an enhanced connection with the land.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Hike requisite distance to location
- Meet and greet the public and educate them about the A.T., ATC, local Trail clubs, local land owning agencies and Leave No Trace hiking/camping methods.
- Advise visitors and hikers of rules on the A.T. and of NPS, USFS, state, and local regulations.
- Pick up litter on the Trail, at camp/shelter sites, and at Trailhead parking areas. Naturalize user-created campsites.
- Collect information on groups using the A.T.
- Report unsafe conditions, misuse, and abuse of the A.T. and its shelters (including vandalism, vagrancy, forest fires, beer and liquor parties, suspicious persons, vehicles, unauthorized hunting, tree cutting, *etc.*)
- Maintain a daily log, submit monthly written or e-mailed reports to coordinator at the end of each work period. Participate on short bi-monthly calls with other trainers to share successes and challenges.
- Maintain regular contact with field supervisors, club volunteers, agency partners, and local officials.

#### **Qualifications:**

- Excellent communication and education skills
- Ability to interact with the public under stressful conditions
- Extensive hiking and/or backpacking experience
- Interest in Trail and resource-protection efforts
- Proven ability to work alone with minimal supervision

#### **Training:**

Trainer Volunteers are required to attend seasonal program training for ATC Ridgerunners and A.T. Trainer Volunteers at the outset of their first season. Training includes:

- A.T. History and Management
- Leave No Trace Trainer course (2-day)
- Public encounters scenarios



- In depth analysis of site-specific features and threats to the resource
- Trail Ambassador volunteers are encouraged to have current first-aid and CPR certifications. Wilderness First-Aid certification is preferable.
- It is also helpful, though not required, for Trail Ambassadors to have or seek out A.T. maintenance experience.

**Uniform:** During the performance of their trainer duties, volunteers are encouraged to wear either a shirt issued or display an Appalachian Trail Leave No Trace patch that unifies their purpose with ATC's ridgerunner and caretaker program and uniform.

**Benefits:**

After one year as an A.T. Trail Trainer, volunteers are eligible to receive a scholarship toward an ATC-hosted Leave No Trace Master Educator course.

# AT RIDGERUNNERS

## **Purpose & Priorities**

Ridgerunners operating in Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee are employees of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and report to the Trail Resources Manager. While employees of ATC, ridgerunners receive support from a number of different partners. These partners also rely on the activities of the ridgerunners. The priorities of ridgerunners are provided here, but if a ridgerunner ever has a question about prioritization of activities or requests, s/he should contact his/her direct supervisor.

1. Visitor Encounters: Ridgerunners protect the visitor experience by reducing social and resource impacts from visitor use. They educate hikers about resource stewardship through example and conversation, using the "authority of the resource" technique. They are friendly, approach with a smile, listen first, and seek the best possible outcome with patience.

Ridgerunners represent the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, local club and land manager with pride. They serve a public-relations function and should keep this in mind as they dispense kind and helpful information.

Ridgerunners are an official presence along the trail. While official, they do not have any law enforcement authority. They are often provided with a radio that connects them with either the local land management agency or county emergency response personnel. They may be asked to assist in the event of an emergency.

In the Smokies, ridgerunners facilitate compliance with backcountry regulations. In the forests, ridgerunners will serve as a source of information on current regulations or restrictions in place so that hikers can make informed decisions.

2. Clean and Maintain: Ridgerunners monitor trail, shelter and privy conditions. They assist with cleaning and maintenance according to the guidance provided by the club partner and land-management agency. These tasks include but are not limited to:
  - Picking up litter
  - Cleaning shelters
  - Cleaning out fire pits or fireplaces
  - Dispersing fire rings at visitor-created camp sites and re-naturalizing the area.
  - Privy maintenance in the form of knocking down fecal cone, sanitizing the head, moving the bins, distributing decomposed material.

They report trail-related safety issues that need attention to the local club, land manager and ATC through weekly reporting as well as more direct channels when urgent problems require immediate attention.

As time allows, ridgerunners are asked to also perform trail maintenance such as sawing out blowdowns, cleaning waterbar drains, lopping annual growth, or repairing deteriorated dangerous sidehill trail segments.

3. Reporting: Weekly, on the final day of their 5-day patrol, ridgerunners file a report of their work that includes encounters, data on number of visitors, information about group use, privy, shelter, treadway, campsite reporting, as well as information about pertinent wildlife issues that need attention. Pictures are part of reporting. Reporting is used by A.T.'s cooperative management partners to inform their decision-making about trail management and stewardship. The distribution of these reports are to a designated e-mail list provided during ridgerunner training.

In the Smokies, ridgerunners will also need to complete tool box inventories and bear cable inspections on a monthly basis.

Ridgerunners must also complete timesheets on a weekly basis, no later than Sunday afternoon.

4. Assist the partnership: The management of the A.T. is complex and variable. Ridgerunners may be asked to attend A.T.-related events. Ridgerunners may be asked to attend and assist with National Trails Day events or work alongside Konnarock, Rocky Top, or S.W.E.A.T. Trail Crews. In the Smokies, specifically, ridgerunners may be asked to carry in/out tools from the backcountry, install park-only approved tarps at shelters, or facilitate the receipt of supplies for A.T. crews when the crew leaders are unable.
5. Attend club meetings or outings: When ridgerunners have available time that overlaps with scheduled club meetings, ridgerunners are encouraged to attend and participate.

### **Scheduling**

Ridgerunner schedules are determined by ATC's Southern Regional Trail Resources Manager (TRM). The precise location for work may be provided by TRM; if it is not provided, or not provided in detail, ridgerunners may determine their schedule including intended overnight sites and communicate the itinerary for their upcoming patrol in the previous week's patrol report.

In the months from March through May, A.T. management partners prefer and request ridgerunners work and travel southbound along the A.T. to encounter the greatest number of visitors intending a northbound thru-hike.

### **Shuttles**

Ridgerunners may receive support from the local maintaining club and/or the land-management agency. Scheduling needed shuttles early with shuttle providers is recommended, and providing an advanced calendar of needs is always welcome.

### **Safety**

Safety and ridgerunner wellbeing is a top priority, always!

#### Safety while hiking:

Be aware of hazards while hiking. Be observant to minimize or avoid slips, trips or falls. Ridgerunners are empowered to leave their post/patrol if the weather becomes particularly inclement or is forecast as such. Changes to intended itinerary should be communicated to TRM and partners as soon as possible. Timesheets should reflect changes to work schedule or itinerary. Ridgerunners should exercise sound judgment in thunderstorms to avoid being struck by lightning.

#### Safety on patrol:

Use your intuition and observation skills when approaching a group or individual who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Do not engage if you do not feel comfortable.

If a routine visitor encounter turns heated for some reason, you can and should always walk away.

Remember to write down details of any significant incident you encounter for reporting purposes. You can't always trust your memory later. Write things down when they happen.

More tips on hiking safety are found on ATC's website: <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/hiking/hiking-basics/health-safety>

### **Professionalism**

The start of the thru-hiker season is exciting. There are so many wonderful people and so many lofty

aspirations. Encourage, support and share in the delight of the A.T. Just keep in mind that you're there as a professional and not part of the thru-hiker pack.

**Uniform:** Ridgerunners are asked to wear their uniform when working. This consists of the button-down shirt with the ridgerunner patch applied on the left sleeve. An Appalachian Trail Leave No Trace patch should be applied to the right sleeve, if one is provided to you. If you are a 2,000-miler and have your A.T. patch and 2,000-miler rocker, you may apply these to the left chest pocket area of the shirt. Uniform may also include the A.T. ridgerunner cap. If for some reason your uniform shirt is not visible, it's advisable to wear the cap.

**Connectivity:** Use discretion with your mobile device. Please keep in mind some folks on the A.T. are there to get away from their sometimes hectic world and are not interested in hearing beeps, rings, etc that may cloud the sounds of nature. Out of respect for others, please keep technology on "silence" and only use devices out of eye and earshot of others.

It is not acceptable to hike with earbuds while on duty as a ridgerunner so as to be available to immediate visitor encounters.

### **Found Items**

There's no shortage of gear and garbage collected by our ridgerunners. Undoubtedly, you'll collect almost as much as your weight. Most of it is garbage and can be disposed of appropriately. If you find gear that may be useful to others, particularly volunteers on our trail crews, do save these items and turn them in on your last day or exit interview. These things may be pants or shirts made of wicking material (this is what we loaned the most of last year) in fairly good shape, tarps (even the heavy kind we backpackers would never use), sleeping pads, etc.

### **Gear Check-Out**

Ridgerunners generally arrive with everything they need for their field season, save the uniform they are issued at training. However, sometimes they need an item or two. Whatever is checked out must be documented, appraised a current value, and signed-out by you and your supervisor. If it is not checked-in at the conclusion of your field season, the current value of the item will be invoiced to you.

### **Questions & Answers: What's the deal with...?**

The few hot-topics included below just brush the surface of the policies, protection, and guidance for the Appalachian Trail. Some of these resources are included in the appendix of this guide. If you don't find what you need there, or if you're just craving more information about the management of the A.T. visit the A.T. Volunteer Toolkit on [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

**Advertising:** Both the National Park Service and Forest Service prohibit advertising on federal lands. ATC and the clubs should take steps to ensure that those longstanding prohibitions in federal regulations are clearly disseminated, implemented, and understood by hikers, Trail neighbors, and affected area businesses or individuals. In order to maintain the natural character of the A.T. corridor, it is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that advertising is incompatible with the Trail and should not take place within the A.T. corridor... Advertising is defined as posting materials, such as signs, notes, or business cards, or distributing flyers, brochures, or similar materials designed to call specific services, both commercial and noncommercial, to the attention of hikers. **(ATC Policy on Advertising in the Appalachian Trail Corridor, 2001)**

**Fundraising:** Commercial endeavors designed to profit from visitor use are not an acceptable component in the Trail corridor **(A.T. Comprehensive Plan, 1981)**

**Trail Magic:** Trail magic, defined as an unexpected act of kindness, is a quintessential part of the Appalachian Trail experience for many long-distance hikers. ATC has developed some recommendations for providing trail magic so thoughtfully and with the least amount of impact to the resource and its visitors seeking solitude with the wilderness. **(Suggestions for providing trail magic, 2007)**

Filming: *Taking video for personal project? Great! Is the video filming for commercial use?* Permits are required for commercial filming on almost all of the A.T. The Trail passes through many jurisdictions, each requiring a separate permit, and commercial filming is generally not allowed in the 26 federally designated wilderness areas along the A.T. Those contemplating filming in multiple areas along the A.T. should first complete a filming permit for the Appalachian Trail Park Office. Permits require a processing fee; a daily location fee may also be required, as well as numerous additional permits from other jurisdictions. If you have questions about the permit process, contact the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Park Service Office at 304-535-6278.

**Trail Ambassador  
Location Resource Guide  
Georgia Appalachian Trail Club Section**

Trail Ambassadors encourage and promote desired wildland ethics among Appalachian Trail visitors by offering interpretation on the natural or cultural significance of specific high-use areas and tips on best-practices for enjoying the Trail. High-use sites identified here within each club's maintenance section, has specific opportunities that leads to an enhanced connection with the land. Here are some suggestions for Trail Ambassador day or overnight location work.

Location	Resource Protection & Education	Notes
<p><b>Springer Mountain:</b> Many people, for many different reasons, make the pilgrimage to Springer Mountain annually. Many of them have heard of the A.T. and are just coming to check it out. The easily accessibility of Springer by road means we often find impressionable people longing for more information about the Trail and hiking (a great opportunity to stress the importance of adequate planning/prep and other LNT etiquette).</p>	<p>Pack-it-in, Pack-it-out Human waste Fires Encouraging use of designated overnight sites only</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping a head-count of hikers.</li> <li>• Make sure they know how to find the register.</li> <li>• Great opportunity for a “what bugs you most?” poll at trailhead parking area to engage on values and best-practices.</li> <li>• Fantastic way to mitigate bad habits before they start and make folks aware of important things they should know about (Norovirus, Bear Canister restriction, voluntary hiker registry, etc)</li> </ul>
<p>Blood Mountain:</p>	<p>Wildlife protection Human waste Fires Know-before-you-go (regulations) Cultural History (CCC shelter, natives people, etc) Natural History</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convey seasonal bear canister requirement for camping</li> <li>• Great opportunity to convey values of designated Wilderness</li> <li>• Identify groups (leaders) commonly utilizing this area so we can engage them in helping plan future hikes to mitigate future impact.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other high-use sites (overnights best):</b> Hawk Mountain Shelter Gooch Gap Addis Gap (during spring “feeding” season)</p>	<p>Minimize campsite and fire impacts Pack-it-in, Pack-it-out</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These sites are close to roads and heavily visited.</li> <li>• Know and share the Trail Magic suggestions</li> <li>• Great opportunities exist to engage with groups and share local knowledge</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other high-use sites (day):</b> Neel Gap Big Cedar Mountain / “preaching” rock Long Creek Falls</p>		

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE  
CHATTAHOOCHEE-OCONEE NATIONAL FORESTS  
ORDER NUMBER: CO-13--36  
FOREST WIDE**

**GENERAL FOREST ORDERS**

Pursuant to Title 36 C.F.R., Section 261.50(a) and (b), the following acts are prohibited on all lands and waters, which comprise the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. This closure is effective from July 25, 2013 to July 25, 2023.

1. Driving, possessing, parking, or leaving any kind of vehicle on a road, which is closed, by sign, gate or barricade, including earthen barricades extending the width of the road. 36 CFR 261.54(a)
2. Using a Forest Development Road for commercial hauling without a permit or written authorization. 36 CFR 261.54(c)
3. Driving, riding, parking, or leaving any kind of vehicle on developed trails, which have been closed by sign, gate, earthen mound or physical barrier. 36 CFR 261.55(b)
4. Entering on or upon any road, trail, or area which has been posted as closed to public access. 36 CFE 261.53(f)
5. Parking or leaving a vehicle in violation of posted signs and/or instructions. 36 CFR 261.58(g)
6. Operating a motor vehicle in violation of State law. 36 CFR 261.54(d)
7. Operating a bicycle on a Forest development trail unless designated and posted for this use. 36 CFR 261.55(b)
8. Shortcutting a switchback on Forest Development Trails. 36 CFR 261.55(e)
9. Camping in a prohibited area and is so posted. 36 CFR 261.58(e)
10. Establishing, maintaining, or using a dispersed campsite shall be limited to a period not to exceed 14 consecutive days. Upon vacating a site, all personal property will be removed. A new campsite may not be re-established within 1 mile of the vacated campsite for a period of 7 days. 36 CFR 261.58(a)
11. Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by any person under 21 years of age, in violation of State Law. 36 CFR 261.58(bb)

12. Providing any person under 21 years of age with alcoholic beverages, in violation of State Law. 36 CFR 261.58(bb)
13. Being publicly nude. 36 CFR 261.58(j)
14. Possessing, discharging, or using any kind of fireworks or other pyrotechnic or explosive device. 36 CFR 261.52(f)
15. Riding, hitching, tethering or hobbling a horse or other saddle or pack animal in violation of posted instruction. 36 CFR 261.58 (aa)
16. Hitching, tethering or hobbling a horse or other saddle or pack animal closer than fifty (50) feet from a stream or body of water. 36 CFR 261.58(aa)
17. Hitching, tethering or hobbling a horse or other saddle or pack animal in a manner that causes damage to live trees, vegetation or soil. 36 CFR 261.58(aa)
18. Failure to properly store food or refuse to prevent access by wildlife. 36 CFR 261.58 (cc)
19. Placing, leaving, depositing any food, bait or refuse in a manner likely to attract or concentrate any wildlife, whether for purposes of hunting or viewing animals. 36 CFR 261.58 (cc).
20. Hunting from or constructing a permanent tree stand. 36 CFR 261.58(v)
21. Failing to remove a tree stand after hunting. 36 CFR 261.58(v)
22. For public health and safety, the transportation of a loaded long gun or cocked crossbow in a motor vehicle is prohibited. 36CFR 261.53 e.

**NOTE:** A firearm is considered “loaded” if a round of ammunition is in the chamber or magazine, a percussion cap is on the nipple, or powder is present in the frizzen pan. A “Long gun” is a firearm with an extended barrel, usually designed to be fired braced against the shoulder. It shall include all rifles, shotguns, carbines, muzzleloaders, and/or other such weapons.

23. For public health and safety, the possession of an alcoholic beverage as defined by state law, while hunting is prohibited. 36CFR 261.58 bb.

**NOTE:** “Hunting”, as defined at OCGA 27-1-2 (39), means pursuing, shooting, killing, taking or capturing wildlife or feral hogs.



**Pursuant to Title 36 C.F.R., Section 261.50 (e), the following persons are exempt from the above prohibitions:**

**Any Federal, State or local law enforcement officer of firefighter or organized rescue or military personnel engaged in the official performance of their duties.**

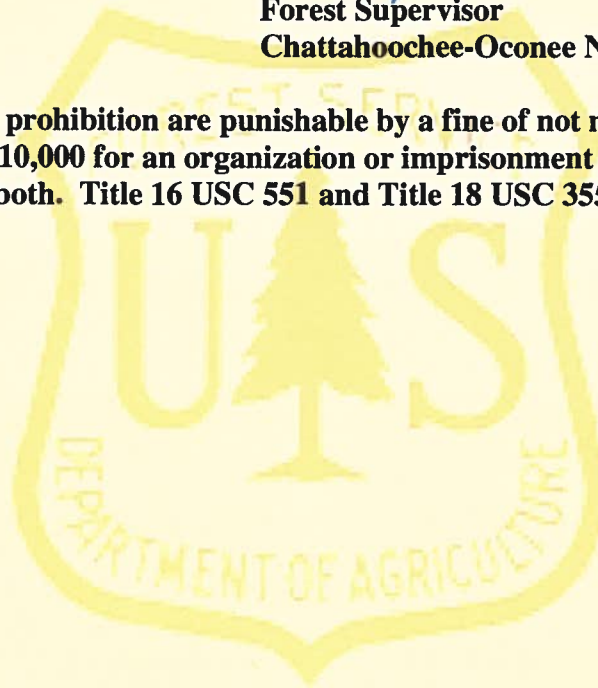
**Persons with a permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.**

**Prepared at Gainesville, Georgia this 12<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2013.**



**Betty A. Mathews  
Forest Supervisor  
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests**

**Violations of the above prohibition are punishable by a fine of not more than \$5000 for an individual and \$10,000 for an organization or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months or both. Title 16 USC 551 and Title 18 USC 3559 and 3571.**



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**U. S. FOREST SERVICE**

**CHATTAHOOCHEE-OCONEE NATIONAL FOREST**

**BLUE RIDGE RANGER DISTRICT**

ORDER NUMBER CO—13-04

**OCCUPANCY AND USE**

Pursuant to Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R) Section 261.50 (a) and (b), the following act or omission is prohibited within 300 feet of the Appalachian Trail from where the Appalachian Trail crosses State Route 129 at Neels Gap to where the Appalachian Trail crosses Slaughter Creek south of Slaughter Gap in the Blood Mountain Wilderness. This land is on the Blue Ridge Ranger District within the Chattahoochee– Oconee National Forest. The provisions shall remain in effect from July 25, 2013 through July 25, 2023.

1. Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire or campfire or gathering woody material for a fire or campfire. 36 CFR 261.52 (a).

Pursuant to the provisions of Title 36 C.F.R, Section 261.50 (e), the following persons are exempt from the above prohibition:

1. Persons with a permit specially authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
2. Any Federal, State, or local officer or member of any organized rescue or firefighting force in the official performance of their duties.

Prepared at Gainesville, Georgia this 12<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2013.



**Betty A. Mathews**  
Forest Supervisor  
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE  
CHATTAHOOCHEE – OCONEE NATIONAL FOREST

BLUE RIDGE RANGER DISTRICT

ORDER NUMBER CO-16-02

**Appalachian Trail Seasonal Camping Regulation**

Pursuant to Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R) Section 261.50 (a) and (b), and for the protection of the public and natural resources, the following act or omission is prohibited in all areas along and within one quarter mile of each side of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail located between Jarrard Gap and Neels Gap to include the Woods Hole Shelter and Blood Mountain Shelter in the Chattahoochee National Forest of Georgia between March 1<sup>st</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The provisions of this Order shall remain in effect until terminated.

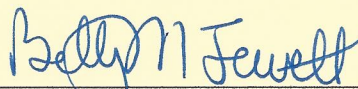
1. All persons camping overnight must possess and use a bear resistant canister for the storage of all food, food containers, garbage, and toiletries. (36 CFR 261.53 (e))

Bear Resistant Canister: All bear resistant canisters must be commercially made; constructed of solid, non-pliable material manufactured for the specific purpose of resisting entry by bears

Pursuant to the provisions of Title 36 C.F.R, Section 261.50 (e), the following persons are exempt from the above prohibition:

- 1) Persons with a permit specially authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
- 2) Any Federal, State, or Local officer or member of any organized rescue or firefighting force in the official performance of their duties.

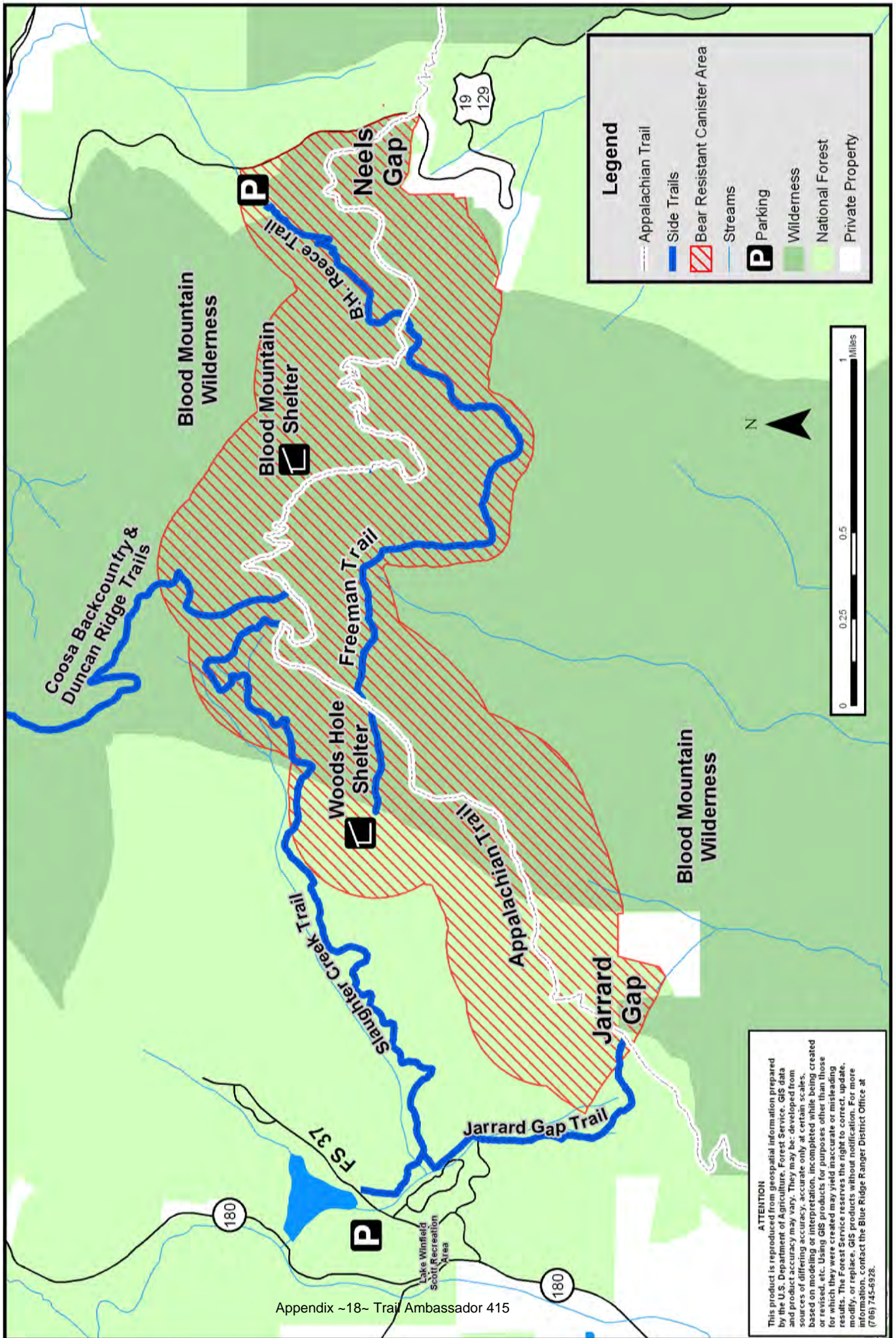
Prepared at Gainesville, Georgia this 15 day of June, 2016.



Betty M. Jewett, Forest Supervisor  
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest

# Appalachian Trail Seasonal Camping Regulations

## Jarrard Gap to Neels Gap



**ATTENTION**

This product is reproduced from geospatial information prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those intended may create errors or omissions or be misleading results. The Forest Service may have the right to correct, delete, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. For more information, contact the Blue Ridge Ranger District Office at (706) 745-6928.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE  
SOUTHERN REGION CLOSURE ORDER**

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 36 C.F.R. § 261.50 (a) and (b) the following acts are prohibited in the areas described in this Order within the following National Forests: Chattahoochee, Nantahala, Pisgah, Cherokee, George Washington, and Jefferson.

**PROHIBITIONS:**

1. Staying more than 3 days within a 30-day period at any single Appalachian National Scenic Trail shelters within the Southern Region, Wayah Bald Shelter Camp, Davis Path Overnight Site, or Davis Farm Overnight Site. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58 (a).
2. The above prohibition applies to all Appalachian National Scenic Trail shelters within the Southern Region, Wayah Bald Shelter Camp, the Davis Path Overnight Site, the Davis Farm Overnight Site, and the areas immediately surrounding them as defined by a circle with a radius of 100 yards (300 feet).

NOTE: The Appalachian National Scenic Trail shelters, Wayah Bald Shelter Camp, Davis Path Overnight Site, and Davis Farm Overnight Site are depicted on the five (5) maps attached as Attachments A through E, and are further described by latitude and longitude on the Latitude/Longitude Location Table provided as attachment F.

**EXEMPTIONS:**

1. Any Federal, State, or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of an official duty.

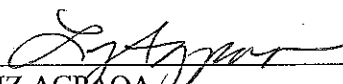
**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Order is to protect and maintain the integrity and intended use of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail shelters, Wayah Bald Shelter Camp, Davis Path Overnight Site, and Davis Farm Overnight Site, and conversely to prevent them from being used for unintended and inappropriate purposes.

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

1. This order will be in effect on the date signed and shall remain in effect until rescinded.
2. Any violation of this prohibition is punishable as a Class B misdemeanor by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for individuals and \$10,000 for organizations or by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, or both. [Title 16 USC 551, Title 18 USC 3559, 3571, and 358.
3. This order supersedes, rescinds, and replaces any previous orders prohibiting the same acts covered by this Order and are in addition to the general prohibitions in 36 CFR § 261, Subpart A.

Done at Atlanta, GA this 16 day of July, 2014.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LIZ AGPAOA  
Regional Forester  
U.S. Forest Service Southern Region

## Prevent Norovirus (Stomach Bug) Infection

Several outbreaks of norovirus (stomach bug) have occurred on the Appalachian Trail in recent years.

**Help prevent one in 2017!**

Proper hygiene—especially hand washing with soap and water—is key to preventing the spread of the disease. (Hand sanitizers may not be effective against norovirus.) Also, be aware that *most water filters do not filter viruses*.

**Please be informed! Read the following information carefully.**

**Noroviruses (Stomach Bug)** can cause people to have gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach and the intestines. Illness often begins suddenly and lasts about 1 to 2 days.

**Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people and on infected surfaces that have been touched by ill people. Outbreaks are more likely in areas with multiple people in small spaces, such as shelters and hostels.**

**Common symptoms:** vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping.

**Less common symptoms:** low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, nausea, and tiredness.

### How noroviruses (stomach bugs) are spread:

- By eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus (untreated water sources can be contaminated).
- By touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. *Norovirus can stay on surfaces and objects and still infect people after days or weeks.*
- By not washing hands after using the bathroom and before eating or preparing food.

### Prevent getting and spreading norovirus (stomach bug) through good hygiene practices:

- Wash hands with soap and water often, especially after using the bathroom and before handling food or eating. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not as effective against norovirus, but may be used if soap and water are not available. Use biodegradable soap at least 200 feet (80 steps) from a water source.
- Boil water (rolling boil for at least 1 minute) or use chemical disinfectant (iodine, chlorine, or chlorine dioxide). Most filters do not remove viruses, but can be used effectively in combination with chemical disinfection against a broad range of pathogens.
- Bury human waste 8 inches deep in soil and at least 200 feet away from natural water if privy is not available.
- Avoid sharing water bottles, eating utensils, and other personal items.

### What to do if you get norovirus (stomach bug):

- Drink plenty of fluids and wash hands often.
- Seek medical treatment, especially if you become dehydrated or illness lasts more than a few days (norovirus usually last 1-2 days).
- Avoid contamination of common areas (e.g., shelters); consider camping or staying off the A.T. if possible.
- Limit contact with others and avoid preparing food and drinks for others for 2-3 days after recovery.

Please report date and location of any cases or outbreaks of vomiting and diarrhea on the A.T. or at places used by A.T. hikers (e.g. hostels) to the local health department and ATC at [stomachbug@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:stomachbug@appalachiantrail.org). Your prompt report will help stop potential outbreaks. Thank you!

# HANGING A BEAR BAG—THE “PCT” METHOD

Illustration ©2013 by Derek Hansen, TheUltimateHang.com

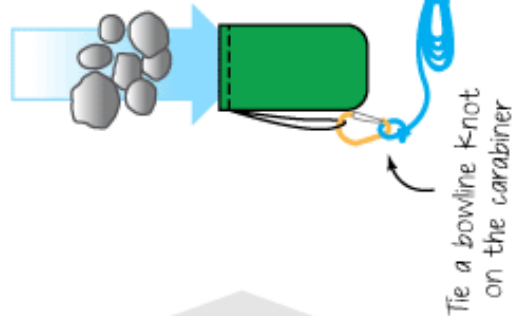
If hung “upside down” be sure to tie a slippery overhand knot to prevent the cord lock from loosening

## EQUIPMENT

- Bear Bag
- 40 ft (12 m) Rope
- Throw/Rope Bag
- Mini Carabiner
- Small twig

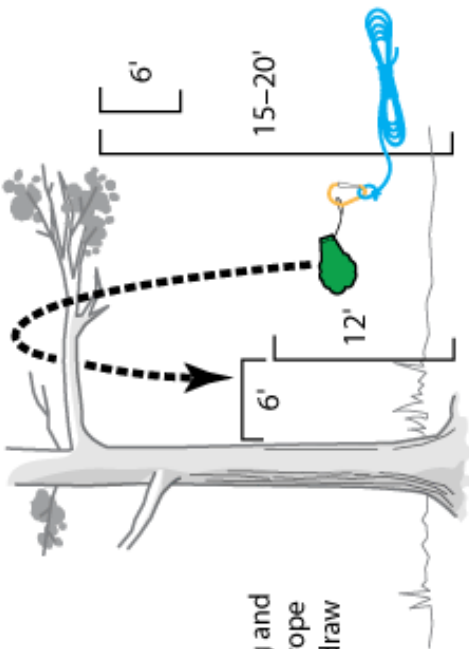
The bear bag should be big enough for all food, trash, and “smellable” items.

Bags with a webbing strap or loop are ideal



1.

Add rocks to throw bag and attach carabiner (with rope attached) to the bag's draw string to secure.

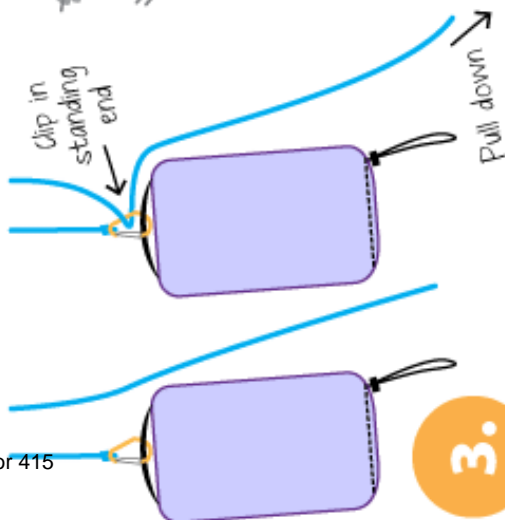


2.

Toss the throw bag over a sturdy branch that is 15–20 ft (4.5–6 m) above the ground.

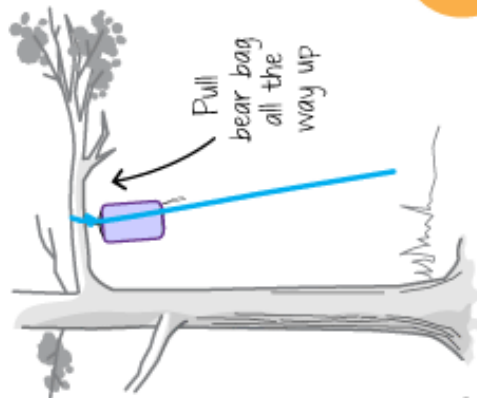
**NOTE:** When properly hung, the bear bag should hang at least 12 ft (4 m) above the ground and 6 ft (~2 m) down from the branch and away from the tree trunk.

(See <http://Int.org/blog/hanging-bear-bag>)



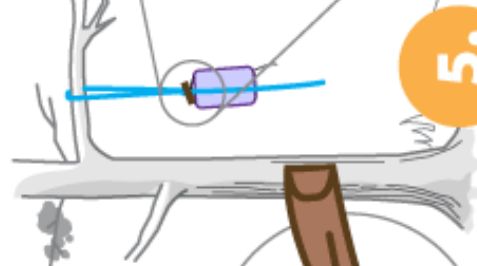
3.

Unclip throw bag from carabiner. Clip carabiner to bear bag. Feed loose end of the rope through carabiner and pull loose end to raise the bear bag to the top of the tree branch.



4.

Reach as high as you can and tie a clove hitch around the twig on the loose end of the rope, creating a toggle.



5.

Release the loose end of the rope. The bear bag will stop at the toggle.



For ATC use: Date of incident  
Location  
Reference number

**APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

**In an emergency on the Appalachian Trail, call 911 or local emergency number.**  
Report the emergency and ask the dispatcher to call the Shenandoah Communications Center at 800-732-0911 (24 hours), which will notify the NPS A.T. Park Office (NPS-ATPO). Report all incidents or suspicious activities that occur on the Appalachian Trail to local rangers or law-enforcement officers as soon as possible; then use this form to report to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC).

Report to ATC all Trail emergencies, other incidents, suspicious activities, or information on persons to be on the lookout for. This form can be completed electronically and e-mailed as an attachment, or printed, completed, and then faxed or mailed. Please use additional pages and attach maps, drawings, or additional information if needed. ATC may share this report with law-enforcement officials, land-managing agencies, and Trail clubs involved in the management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

**Submit incident reports**

E-mail: [incident@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:incident@appalachiantrail.org)

Fax: 304-535-2667

Mail: Incidents, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

<b>Date reported to ATC:</b>	<b>Reported by:</b>	<b>"Trail name" if any:</b>
Best telephone number to contact or leave a message:		
Best time of day to call:		
Mailing Address:		
E-mail:		

**Type of incident (please check as many as apply; may fit more than one category):**

<b>Follow-up to Emergency</b>	<b>Other Criminal/Suspicious Activity</b>	<b>Natural Resource Concern</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Crime—describe:	<input type="checkbox"/> Theft of personal property	<input type="checkbox"/> Dumping
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Car break-in/vandalism	<input type="checkbox"/> ATV/ORV use
<input type="checkbox"/> Search/rescue/medical emergency	<input type="checkbox"/> Disorderly/suspicious behavior	<input type="checkbox"/> Resource damage
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive animal
	<input type="checkbox"/> Squatter/shelter misuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

**Date/time of incident:**

**Location** (be as specific as possible; Provide *Data Book* or A.T. guidebook page, A.T. map number, name of nearest town, road, or shelter; GPS coordinates, or NPS segment/tract number, if known):

**Who was involved?** (provide names and Trail names if known):

**Provide name, Trail name, and contact information for anyone who may be able to provide additional information:**

**Describe what happened** (use additional sheet if needed):

**Has this incident been resolved?**  Yes  No

**Was incident reported to law enforcement, fire, or search/rescue agency?**  Yes  No

Name of lead agency:

Name of agency contact: Telephone:



**Other agencies reported to or involved in investigation (include contact names and telephone numbers):**

<b>Please complete this section if there is a request to locate or be on the lookout for someone.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency notification	<input type="checkbox"/> Person of concern	
<input type="checkbox"/> Missing or overdue person	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):	
<b>Information/Description</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Experienced hiker	<input type="checkbox"/> Inexperienced hiker	<input type="checkbox"/> No hiking experience
Name:		
Trail name:		
Home address:		
Race:		Sex:
Age:		Hair color:
Height:		Weight:
Identifying features (birthmarks, scars, physical attributes, facial hair, tattoos, jewelry, glasses):		
Backpacking gear description:		
Other equipment (camera, luggage, etc.):		
Description of clothing (type and color):		
Known or possible health problems (physical/mental/emotional):		
Personality habits:		
Vehicle (make, model, color, state registration and number, bumper stickers):		

<b>Itinerary</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Thru-hiker	<input type="checkbox"/> Long-distance hiker	<input type="checkbox"/> Day hiker
Starting point:		Intended destination:
Direction of travel:		Miles per day:
Last seen (date and place):		

<b>In company of</b>	
Names/Trail names:	
Description (please provide same information as above on separate sheet)	
Pets (breed, color, sex, size):	

\*\*\*\*\*

**(For ATC use)**  
**Report completed by (name, affiliation, e-mail, telephone):**  
**Report distributed to (list names):**  
**ATC Headquarters**  
**ATC Regional Office:**  NERO                       MARO                       VARO                       SORO  
**Appalachian Trail Club and contact:**  
**NPS ATPO:**  Chief Ranger                      **Other ATPO:**  
**Other (list names and affiliations):**



## **ATC Policy on Advertising in the Appalachian Trail Corridor**

Adopted November 17, 2001

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy places a high value on maintaining the natural character of the Appalachian Trail corridor and is well-aware that small changes that diminish that character can cumulatively alter the Trail environment to the point where the A.T. is no longer a simple footpath passing through a natural setting. Those principles are embodied in numerous ATC policies.

At the same time, ATC recognizes that many A.T. hikers value the services (e.g., lodging, restaurants, outfitters, and shuttles) that are available in many communities along the Trail. Those services may be commercial in nature or offered by Trail enthusiasts acting on their own initiatives, who provide free or for-cost assistance to hikers. Both commercial businesses and Trail enthusiasts make significant contributions to the over-all experience of hiking the A.T. and are important to many hikers, especially long-distance hikers.

Both the National Park Service and Forest Service prohibit advertising on federal lands. ATC and the clubs should take steps to ensure that those longstanding prohibitions in federal regulations are clearly disseminated, implemented, and understood by hikers, Trail neighbors, and affected area businesses or individuals.

In order to maintain the natural character of the A.T. corridor, it is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that advertising is incompatible with the Trail and should not take place within the A.T. corridor. Furthermore, ATC and the clubs should urge the adoption of regulations prohibiting on-site advertising by states and municipalities that control Trail lands where such regulations do not now exist. If necessary, the availability of hiker services outside of the Trail corridor should be publicized through other means, such as publications and Trailhead signs.

For the purposes of this policy, advertising is defined as posting materials, such as signs, notes, or business cards, or distributing flyers, brochures, or similar materials designed to call specific services, both commercial and noncommercial, to the attention of hikers. Materials that promote membership in ATC or Trail-maintaining clubs or participation in volunteer Trail-management activities and materials that recognize the donations of commercial or noncommercial entities for the A.T. are not included in this definition.

## ATC Guidance on Special Use Permits

Adopted by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in 1983

*Note: General guidelines for issuing special use permits on NPS-acquired lands were developed jointly between the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO) and ATC in 1983. These guidelines also may be applicable to other Trail lands. Typically, Trail clubs and ATC play a greater role in administering and monitoring permits on NPS-acquired lands than on lands administered by other agencies. In general, these guidelines provide direction on the following aspects of review and approval of special-use permits:*

**Decision-making process**—Coordination of initial issuance and renewals rests with the local managers, according to principles outlined in the [A.T. Comprehensive Plan](#) and local management plans. These local managers usually include the local Trail club (which has the lead role), local management committee, agency partner, local municipality, and the ATC regional office staff. When a permit is contemplated, consultation occurs among partners, and permit language is drafted by ATPO. If all parties are in agreement with the permit, the final permit is signed by the park manager and issued from the ATPO. If there are major policy implications or controversy regarding the issuance or renewal of a permit, the local managers should establish a committee, to the extent that one does not already exist, to address the problem on a local level. In addition, if unique situations arise that are not covered by the guidelines, this committee approach should be used to seek a local solution.

**Standard Provisions**—All special-use permits must be considered temporary in nature and revocable at the discretion of the NPS A.T. park manager. Permits are not transferable. They may be issued for any period of time up to five years. All permits must have a specific description of the property involved, intended use, expiration date, and statement of liability.

**Appropriate Uses**—Permits should be issued only to accomplish management purposes or to continue existing uses until specifically addressed in the local management-planning process.

**Selection of Permittee**—If apparent qualifications among interested parties are comparable, land-use permits should be issued first to the former landowner, then to the adjacent landowner, then to local residents. Permits for occupancy of structures may more appropriately be based on interviewing of potential tenants. Renewals of permits may be offered first to the previous permittee, all conditions having been met.

**Fees**—Generally, fees should be charged for any use of public lands and documentation of fee determination kept on file. Managers should establish local rates for comparable rentals and apply standard deductions as appropriate. This function is handled by ATPO.



# Strategic Plan 2015-2019

*Our Mission: To preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail – ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.*

## Effective Stewardship



**Be the leading voice with our partners in managing the A.T. and the surrounding landscapes.**

**Outcomes:**

- ↗ Pinpoint and correct land deficiencies along the Trail.
- ↗ Address potentially hazardous road and water crossings.
- ↗ Minimize the impacts to the Trail from increased visitor use.
- ↗ Meet land management standards set by the Land Trust Alliance.

**Advocate for broader protection of the Trail's natural and culture resources.**

**Outcomes:**

- ↗ Identify and protect high priority landscapes within the A.T. corridor
- ↗ Defend and prevent threats to the natural and cultural resources along the A.T.



## Proactive Protection



**Connect and engage with a younger and more diverse audience and broaden the understanding of the physical and mental benefits that the Trail provides.**

**Outcomes:**

- ↗ Encourage a diverse population and a younger audience to enjoy the Trail and give back through involvement with the ATC.
- ↗ Promote the physical and mental benefits of hiking and volunteering in order to expand the A.T. community.

## Broader Relevancy

**Engage and sustain a network of partners that reinforces our goals for the A.T. and our programs.**

**Outcomes:**

- ↗ Assist all 31 clubs with Trail and facility management.
- ↗ Continue to collaborate with the National Park Service and all primary federal, state, municipal and private partners.
- ↗ Strengthen relationships with A.T. communities so that future programs are supported.



## Engaged Partners



**Continue to build a financially strong foundation and organizational capacity to ensure long-term success.**

**Outcomes:**

- ↗ Raise operating revenue from \$6.6 million to \$8 million.
- ↗ Boost the endowment from \$3.6 million to \$8.3 million.
- ↗ Strengthen organizational capacity so that we can meet our full potential.

## Strengthened Capacity & Operational Excellence



## Suggestions for Providing Trail Magic



Trail magic, defined as an unexpected act of kindness, is a quintessential part of the Appalachian Trail experience for many long-distance hikers. The suggestions below incorporate *Leave No Trace* practices ([www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org)) to help those providing trail magic have the most positive impact on hikers, the Trail, its plants and wildlife, and the volunteers who maintain and preserve it. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association endorse these suggestions.

**Help conserve and maintain the Trail.** The most essential service you can perform is to volunteer to maintain the Trail and overnight sites and monitor boundaries and resource conditions. Visit [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org) for more information, or check with your local trail-maintaining club to find out how or where you may assist.

**Locate events in developed areas on durable surfaces.** Large gatherings in the backcountry can lead to trampling of plants, soil compaction, and disturbance of wildlife habitat. Trail towns and local parks are better locations. Keep events small. Consider whether your event may be contributing to an overabundance of trail feeds in the local area or region. Many hikers come to the Trail seeking solitude and contemplation.

**Prepare and serve food safely.** If you will be cooking or preparing food, check with the landowner to find an appropriate area and learn what food-safety or other regulations apply. Permits may be required. Charging a fee or asking for donations may not be allowed.

**Be present if you provide food or drink.** Unattended items—including their packaging—can harm wildlife that consumes them, or hikers, when unrefrigerated products grow bacteria or become contaminated. Unattended items are considered litter and their presence detracts from the wildland character of backcountry environments. Dispense food and drink in person, and carry out any trash or leftovers.

**Restore the site.** Leave the site as you found it—don't create a burden for Trail volunteers whose time is better spent in other activities.

**Advertise off-trail.** Advertising—even noncommercial—is prohibited on the A.T. Publicizing a “feed” in advance can lead to clumping of long distance hikers, causing overcrowded conditions and greater impacts at shelters and campsites.

**Forgo alcoholic beverages.** Don't risk the legality and liability associated with serving minors, over-serving adults, or the safety issues associated with intoxicated hikers.

**Be hospitable to all.** While many long-distance hikers will likely appreciate trail magic, be sure to make all trail users and volunteers feel welcome.

*For more information, visit ATC's Web site at [www.appalachiantrail.org/trailmagic](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/trailmagic).*



## ATC Policy on Wilderness

Adopted by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in April 1991

It is the policy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to support wilderness-area designation, wherever such designation enhances the protection and management of the Appalachian Trail and its side and connecting trails. This support is based upon the belief that the Appalachian Trail and its related facilities are fundamentally compatible with designated wilderness and that the preservation of wilderness in the vicinity of the Appalachian Trail can significantly enhance the experience of Trail users.

ATC believes that the Trail and its related facilities represent a desirable existing use that is compatible with wilderness designation. ATC further believes that traditional management practices should continue, including Trail marking and maintenance, but that Trail maintainers should acknowledge and must comply with agency constraints on types of tools, equipment, materials, and methods. Maintenance of shelters and footbridges should be permitted and is desirable for the protection of wilderness values and the health and safety of persons using the Appalachian Trail within designated wilderness.

Where the A.T. passes through designated wilderness, ATC and the Trail-maintaining clubs should maintain the A.T. in accordance with the Wilderness Act, specific wilderness-area designating acts, and individual wilderness-area management plans. Decisions by agency partners regarding wilderness management that could potentially affect the Appalachian Trail should be developed in consultation and coordination with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, affected Trail-maintaining clubs, and other organizations and individuals. ATC encourages federal agencies and Trail-maintaining clubs to deal with specific shelter and Trail-marking issues on a case-by-case basis in wilderness-area management plans and club local management plans.

ATC endorses the following principles for management of the Appalachian Trail within designated wilderness and for areas encompassing the Trail that are to be designated as wilderness:

*Trail Marking.* The Appalachian Trail should be marked in designated wilderness by 2-inch by 6-inch white vertical paint blazes, as described in the ATC stewardship handbook, *[Appalachian] Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*.

Signs should be used only where necessary to provide basic information essential for navigation and public safety. Signs along the Trail within wilderness should be used to identify direction and distance to shelters and water sources, precautions for use of water, and only such other information as is necessary to protect wilderness values. In general, if a regulatory or educational sign is needed to inform users, it should be placed outside the wilderness area boundary at the Trailhead or point of entry into the wilderness area. Signs should be simple and as small as possible, be made of natural wood, and be designed to minimize their contrast with the natural environment.

*Trail Shelters, Overnight Use Facilities, and Structures.* The system of Trail shelters spaced at approximate one-day hiking intervals is an integral component of the Appalachian Trail environment. In general, Trail shelters in designated wilderness areas should be rustic Adirondack-style lean-tos constructed of lumber, logs, or rocks, with a normal use capacity of six to 10 people. Existing shelters within designated wilderness should be maintained, repaired, and restored as necessary. Materials used during repair or restoration should reflect a sensitivity towards wilderness values. Relocation of existing shelters should be considered only when adverse impacts to wilderness values can be reduced *and* where Appalachian Trail values are enhanced by such action. The historic integrity and value of the shelter, if any, should be maintained during any repair, restoration, or relocation.

Privies should be considered as an option if necessary to address sanitation concerns, but only when necessary to prevent resource damage and provide a minimum standard of public safety. Privies cannot be constructed without express authorization from the appropriate official of the land-managing agency.

*Use of Motorized Equipment.* In all circumstances, use of power tools in wilderness areas must be specifically authorized in advance by the appropriate official of the land-managing agency. Certain wilderness-area designating acts may provide specific exemptions for use of power tools during certain time periods. The authorized official of the land-managing agency may also approve use of power tools under certain conditions, such as in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the wilderness area. Emergencies may include search-and-rescue operations, wildfire suppression where human life may be at risk, clearing of severe blowdowns from the Trail treadway (where use of two-man saws may create an unacceptable safety hazard to the operators), aircraft accident investigations, and other emergencies as determined by the appropriate official of the land-managing agency.

*Tread Improvements.* Water bars, bog bridging, and other treadway structures along the Trail should be constructed and reconstructed to ensure adequate tread stabilization, erosion control, and prevention of resource damage. In isolated areas, bridges may be necessary to provide a minimum level of safety for Trail users crossing hazardous streams and rivers along the Trail and should be constructed or reconstructed when necessary to provide an adequate level of user safety and to protect the wilderness resource. The design of any reconstructed bridge or erosion-control structure along the treadway should emphasize rustic materials and workmanship with sensitivity to wilderness values.

## Regulations and Permits

---

There are hundreds of places to access the Appalachian Trail, and in most of these areas there are no fees or permits for day-hiking.

Regulations for backcountry camping and fires (but also for other activities, such as hunting) do vary considerably from place to place.

Why? First off, the A.T. is almost 2,200 miles long and passes through 14 states. Second, the A.T. also passes through dozens of separate entities including eight different national forests, six national park units and numerous state park, forest, and game lands, each managed for different purposes. Third, the A.T. passes through smaller areas as diverse as working farmlands, municipal watersheds, small towns, and even a zoo!

In between all those various entities are corridors of land (on average 1,000 feet wide) acquired by the National Park Service specifically for creating a continuously connected greenway to protect the Appalachian National Scenic Trail from Maine to Georgia.

### ARE THERE FEES TO HIKE THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL?

No fees or paid permits are required to access the Appalachian Trail for simply walking. In two of the national parks that the A.T. passes through, permits are required for backcountry camping. One requires a fee. The majority of campsites and shelter sites are free. Some campsites, especially in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, may have fees, particularly in heavily used areas or ecologically sensitive ones. At these sites, caretakers educate the public on Leave No Trace practices and special regulations required to protect sensitive areas. In these areas caretakers typically also manage composting privies.

### DO I NEED A PERMIT TO THRU-HIKE?

No, a permit is not needed to begin a thru-hike of the entire A.T., but in 2015, thru-hikers will be able to register their thru-hike start date and location with ATC. By mid-February, a link will be available here.

### ARE BICYCLES ALLOWED?

Bicycles and other wheeled vehicles are not allowed on the Appalachian Trail, except in a few places where the A.T. coincides for a short distance with a road, highway, or other multiple-use trail. The A.T. was conceived and designed as a wilderness footpath where the hiker travels by his "own unaided effort." Also, the A.T. has been built by hand by volunteers and continues to be maintained by volunteers. In most places it is very narrow and rugged. Bicycle use would not be sustainable on the primitive, relatively fragile trails of the A.T., nor would it be safe for hikers and cyclists to share the same trail.

### CAN I RIDE MY HORSE?

No, with a few exceptions.

### ARE THERE ANY PARTS I CAN DRIVE?



You can't actually drive along the A.T. (except where the A.T. passes through a few towns for a mile or two, such as Hot Springs, NC, Damascus, Virginia, and Hanover, NH). However, the A.T. closely parallels and frequently crosses the 100-mile scenic Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park, Virginia.

## **CAN I BRING MY DOG?**

Dogs are allowed everywhere on the Trail except in three areas:

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina
- Trailside Museum and Wildlife Center in Bear Mountain State Park, New York
- Baxter State Park, Maine

Dogs must be leashed on the forty percent of the Trail that uses National Park Service-administered lands. (Actually, we recommend that you keep your dog leashed at all times.)

## **ARE GROUPS ALLOWED TO HIKE?**

Groups are welcome on the Trail, but they do have some special considerations.

## **IS HUNTING PERMITTED?**

Hunting is allowed—as long as the hunter observes state laws and regulations—along more than half of the Appalachian Trail's length, including some part of all fourteen Trail states. During hunting season, make sure you can be seen and heard. Wear a blaze-orange cap and vest and/or backpack cover at all times, including in and around camp.

## **CAN I CARRY A GUN?**

ATC strongly discourages hikers from carrying firearms: Most experienced A.T. hikers consider them impractical and unnecessary, and encountering an armed stranger makes many people uncomfortable. To legally carry a firearm on the Trail, you must meet the permitting standards of the state and locality in which you are hiking. On national-park lands, discharging a firearm is illegal, even if you have a legal permit to carry it. Extra efforts may be required to secure weapons in towns to abide by local ordinances and private-property owners' rules. (Firearm rules vary by land ownership. The Trail crosses 14 states and more than 90 state, federal, or local agency lands, with each having its own rules and regulations; you are responsible for knowing and following those rules.) In areas of the Trail corridor where hunting is legal, hikers may see hunters carrying firearms. Hunters must abide by their own set of firearm rules, somewhat separate from firearm-carry rules but also varying by state and county.

## **IS COMMERCIAL FILMING ALLOWED?**

Permits are required for commercial filming on almost all of the A.T. The Trail passes through many jurisdictions, each requiring a separate permit, and commercial filming is generally not allowed in the 26 federally designated wilderness areas along the A.T. Those contemplating filming in multiple areas along the A.T. should first complete a [filming permit](#) for the Appalachian Trail Park Office. Permits require a processing fee; a daily location fee may also be required, as well as numerous additional permits from other jurisdictions. If you have questions about the permit process, contact the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Park Service Office at 304-535-6278.