

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

**Issue:** Annual review of ATC and Club Roles & Responsibilities

**Background:** Recall that Mid-Atlantic Regional Director Karen Lutz gave a helpful power-point overview last March 2007 regarding the delegation of management responsibility from the federal and state governments to ATC and the Clubs.

Bob Proudman would like to lead a review at our upcoming meeting. The Mid-Atlantic office has kindly offered to attach each A.T. Maintaining-Club's 1997 Memorandum of Understanding to this issue paper. These MOUs remain in full force and effect.

**Summary of Roles: Appalachian Trail Conservancy**—The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's role is defined by its bylaws, policies adopted by its Board of Directors, and cooperative agreements with the National Park Service, the Forest Service, Trail clubs, and states.

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

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

- Opportunities for observation, contemplation, enjoyment, and exploration of the natural world;
- A sense of remoteness and detachment from civilization;
- Opportunities to experience solitude; freedom; personal accomplishment; self-reliance; and self-discovery;
- A sense of being on the height of the land;
- Opportunities to experience the historic and pastoral elements of the surrounding countryside;

- A feeling of being part of the natural environment; and
- Opportunities for travel on foot, including opportunities for long-distance hiking.

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

The affairs of ATC are overseen by a 15-member Board of Directors, stewards of the Conservancy's long-term goals and vision and guarantors of its compliance to legal requirements. The all-volunteer Board meets at least twice a year and reviews any documents, decisions or processes set forth for its approval. The Board is supported in its duties by the Stewardship Council, whose 15 members represent the interests of the Conservancy membership. The Council also meets twice a year to discuss and adopt policies on the standards and guidelines for management of the Trail, which are summarized in the *Local Management Planning Guide* (LMPG).

Stewardship Council members from the Mid-Atlantic Region are Walt Daniels from New York and Barbara Wiemann from Pennsylvania. The Board and council meet next on May 2-3, 2008, in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

### **Summary of Roles: Appalachian Trail Maintaining Clubs**

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

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

ATC and the Trail clubs have signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that define those responsibilities and formalize the relationship between ATC and the clubs.

The MOUs apply only to those activities of the clubs that are related to the management of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor, and outline basic Trail club responsibilities as follows:

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

Through the MOUs, the clubs also agree to assist to the extent possible ATC's land trust in trail protection, management and monitoring efforts, as well as ATC's responses to "external threats" such as highways or development expansions that threaten the Trail ("Advocacy": We hope to have a separate discussion of threats and advocacy).

*Preparation of the Local Management Plan* —The *Appalachian Trail Comprehensive Plan*, developed and signed by the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service in 1981, envisioned a series of "local management plans" (LMPs) prepared by Trail clubs in concert with their agency partners. The publication of the first edition of the *Local Management Planning Guide* in 1987 provided a framework for preparation of those local management plans.

In developing its local management plan, a Trail club needs to consult with its agency partners, ATC, local officials, and other organizations concerned with Trail issues. The club also should provide opportunities for public input into the plan. That can be done formally, through a public meeting cosponsored with an agency partner, or informally, through public notice of a club meeting focusing on planning issues. The club also must assume responsibility for writing the plan and amending it, as necessary, to reflect new club policies and goals. ATC, particularly through its regional staff, is available to assist in this process.

Attachment: Cooperative Partners in the Mid-Atlantic Region

***Mid-Atlantic Region***  
**PARTNERS IN THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL**  
**COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

	<b><u>Trail Organization</u></b>	<b><u>Agency Partners</u></b>
<b>National</b>	Appalachian Trail Conservancy	National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture
<b>State</b>		
<i>New York</i>	N.Y.-N.J. Trail Conference	N.Y. State Office of Parks, Rec., & Historic Preservation N.Y. Dept. of Environmental Conservation
<i>New Jersey</i>	N.Y.-N.J. Trail Conference	N.J. Dept. of Environmental Protection Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	Wilmington Trail Club Batona Hiking Club AMC-Delaware Valley Chapter Philadelphia Trail Club Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club Allentown Hiking Club Brandywine Valley Outing Club Susquehanna A.T. Club York Hiking Club Mountain Club of Maryland Cumberland Valley A.T. Club Potomac A.T. Club	Pennsylvania Game Commission Pa. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources Pennsylvania Fish Commission
<i>Maryland</i>	Potomac A.T. Club	Maryland Department of Natural Resources C & O Canal National Historical Park
<i>Virginia/ West Virginia</i>	Potomac A.T. Club	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park Shenandoah National Park Virginia Dept. of Conservation & Recreation Virginia Department of Forestry Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries West Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources