



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Chainsaw and Crosscut Saw Training and Certification

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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), a §501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, works closely with Appalachian Trail volunteer maintaining clubs (“Clubs”) and other public and private partners to ensure the protection and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and experiential resources of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (known as ANST, A.T., or “the Trail”). Approximately fifty federal, state, or other public agencies have authority or jurisdiction over lands and resources within the protected A.T. corridor. ATC has a central management role by virtue of its Cooperative Agreement with the USDI National Park Service and its close working partnership with the USDA Forest Service and other agencies.

ATC's Trail management and conservation policies are meant to provide guidance for (a) dissemination to the public; (b) use and implementation by the ATC and the Clubs; and (c) recommendations for land-managing and other agencies. It is the agencies who work within their defined procedures to propose, administer, and enforce public policy. ATC policies are recommendations developed to support appropriate, coordinated Trailwide management.

Overview

The ATC endorses the USDA Forest Service and the National Park Service approach to the administration of their respective employee worker-safety programs and joins with those agencies in the administration of safety programs to protect volunteers and employees working on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. ATC appreciates and supports programs that protect Trail workers under the Volunteers in the Forests Act, the Volunteers in the Parks Act, and related agency sponsorship of training and safety programs.

Historically, there has been a longstanding Memorandum of Understanding between ATC, USFS and NPS that provides a framework for cooperation between the parties concerning sawyer safety training and certification for volunteers, Trail Club staff, Conservancy staff, and agency personnel who construct, operate, and maintain the Appalachian Trail.



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Policy

In its authorization to equip and train A.T. workers, including volunteers, employees and workers from the maintaining clubs, as well as in its work with cooperating state agencies, ATC:

- Recognizes that individual Appalachian Trail workers have primary responsibility for their own personal safety and for compliance with the requirements for chainsaw and crosscut-saw operators. Furthermore, each volunteer engaged in club- or crew-sponsored maintenance and construction activities assumes personal responsibility for following crew-leader or club directions, assessing his or her own physical condition and preparedness for engaging in Trail-work activities, and coming properly equipped and clothed in a manner appropriate for the location, duration, weather conditions, and proposed work.
- Acknowledges that, through their agreements with the National Park Service and the Forest Service, A.T.-maintaining clubs have—through individual memoranda of understanding subdelegating to them maintenance responsibilities over their respective sections of the Appalachian Trail—the authority and responsibility to control all club volunteer-maintenance activities by their members and affiliates, including compliance with USFS or NPS saw training requirements and certifications.
- Follows current individual safety requirements that apply to federal employees in those agencies but recognizes that volunteers may require additional time, resources, and assistance to meet agency requirements and goals. Those requirements can be found in the [USDA Forest Service Saw Policy](#) and [NPS National Chainsaw Safety Program](#). Adheres to both agencies sawyer policies offered by the [NPS-USFS Memorandum of Agreement](#) on National Scenic and Historic Trails Chainsaw Safety Policy Reciprocity.
- Encourages Trail-maintaining crews and clubs to maintain current voluntary services agreements with their federal-agency partners. These agreements generally will list all volunteer workers and will outline any applicable medical coverage and tort-protection for incidents on the Trail arising from these groups' volunteer activities there. These agreements are authorized under agency-sponsored Volunteers in Parks (VIP) or Volunteers in Forest (VIF) programs at the local level.
- ATC recognizes that, under the VIP and VIF programs, volunteers are considered “federal employees” for the purposes of medical and tort-claims protections. However, the Conservancy maintains that its organization, its partner Trail clubs, and its individual volunteer workers and employees are independent citizens working under private ATC or



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club auspices within the law, regulations, and policies set by the federal agencies.

To the extent financially feasible, ATC will:

- Seek public funding to fully implement training and equipment programs necessary for safety management.
- Seek qualified instructors and evaluators under USFS and NPS programs. ATC's regions, state partners, and Trail-maintaining clubs should encourage willing, skilled, regularly-practicing sawyers with talents for teaching to become qualified as instructors and evaluators.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) meeting current best management practices to its instructor-certifiers, its local instructors, its certified operators, and its trail-crew leaders.
- Reimburse approved volunteer expenses for first-aid/CPR training and PPE purchases.
- Encourage both agencies to recognize current certifications still in effect through their full three-year terms.
- Prepare "Current Best Management Practices" (BMPs), which will be summarized in a volunteer-friendly format.
- Work with the agencies to publish and distribute attractive and effective training- and safety-administration handbooks, videos, and other media and to minimize reporting requirements and other paperwork.
- Support volunteer sawyer and first aid & CPR certification record-keeping, filing, and tracking through ATC's Volunteer Engagement Platform.

For questions related to this policy please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at www.appalachiantrail.org, or P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV, 25425-807.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.