

Environmental Impact Statement

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River
Appalachian National Scenic Trail

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Enabling Legislation and Purpose: Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Public Law 90-543 (16 U.S.C. 1241 et. Seq.)

The National Trails System Act established the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and directed the Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with the Secretary of Agriculture, state and local governments, and private citizens, to protect and administer the Trail. The Act provided the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture with the authority to relocate the Trail; administer use of and access to the Trail; regulate incompatible uses, including motorized uses, bicycles, and horses; and enter into agreements with state agencies and non-government organizations to protect, manage, maintain, and develop the Trail. It also encouraged state agencies to pass similar legislation and take active steps to protect the Trail; and authorized federal land acquisition as necessary to establish a permanent route and protective corridor surrounding the footpath.

On March 21, 1978, President Carter signed a significant amendment to the National Trails Systems Act. This law re-authorized the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Advisory Council, required a comprehensive management plan for the Trail, and increased the amount of funding for land acquisition. Acquisition of lands by eminent domain was increased to an average of 125 acres per mile, and the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture were directed to substantially protect the Trail within three years.

On March 28, 1983, President Reagan signed an Act of Congress to amend the National Trails System Act, thus strengthening support for volunteers and volunteer-based organizations, refining the process for designating side and connecting trails, providing authority for administrative transfers of land, authorizing whole tract acquisition with the consent of the landowner, defining trail uses, and clarifying that donated easements qualify as conservation tax exemptions.

Purpose

The APPA is administered primarily as a footpath in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the 14 states encompassing the trail, providing for maximum outdoor recreation potential as an extended trail and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural and cultural resources of the areas through which the trail passes (NPS 2005a).



Appalachian Trail sign painted on a rock

Significance

The APPA is a way, continuous from Maine to Georgia, for travel on foot through the wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. It is a means of sojourning among these lands, such that visitors may experience them by their own unaided efforts. The body of the trail is provided by the lands it traverses, and its soul is in the living stewardship of the volunteers and partners of the Appalachian Trail Cooperative Management System (NPS 2005a).