

Shelter and Formal Campsite Location

Preferable locations for shelters and formal campsites are:

- ✓ *Near permanent sources of clean water*—A permanent source of clean water is a nearly essential requirement. The highest mid-slope location within a drainage that retains flowing water during drought periods is best. Springs are preferred over small streams, but they must have a dependable flow history over several years. Land within the drainage above the site should be in public ownership and have no human habitations or grazing. Locate shelters and campsites more than 200 feet from water sources unless no suitable option exists.
- ✓ *Remote from motorized access*—Locate at least two miles from roads, including ORV-use areas, to deter vandalism and use by nonhikers.
- ✓ *Out-of-sight from the A.T.*—To preserve a more primitive trail experience, locate facilities just beyond sight of the A.T. whenever possible. Trailside locations reduce solitude for both hikers and campers.
- ✓ *In mid-slope positions*—Avoid ravines and depressions that can be seasonally wet and subject to cooler temperatures and lack of sun exposure. Similarly, ridge tops can be windy and prone to lightning strikes. Flat valley bottom or ridge top locations have poor drainage and allow the rapid proliferation and expansion of campsites and trampled areas. Placement on small flat areas within mid-slope positions enlists the sloping topography to concentrate foot traffic on the intended use areas or create gently out-sloped benches for shelter and camping sites using side-hill construction practices described in *Camping Impact Management* [Marion (2003) App. 2, pp 99–102].
- ✓ *Trampling resistant and expansion proof*—Minimize the loss of vegetation from trampling by choosing locations that: 1) have limited expansion potential due to topography, rockiness, or dense vegetation cover; and, 2) have very sparse vegetation cover or grassy cover instead of broad-leafed herbs (e.g., sunnier locations). See *Camping Impact Management* [Marion (2003) App. 2, pp 94–97] for additional guidance.
- ✓ *Protective of visitor safety and sensitive natural or cultural resources*—Avoid locations close to waterfalls and mountain, ridge, and cliff tops to promote visitor safety. Provide at least a 200-foot riparian buffer between the facility footprint and shorelines and stream banks, and build trails to provide access to the water. Avoid locations near sensitive natural and cultural resources, especially known cultural resource or natural heritage sites, to promote resource protection.

Site Design

Design the site to:

- ✓ *Prevent erosion*—Anticipate traffic patterns and design the site and trail layout to avoid the proliferation of visitor-created trails and erosion. A linear layout of the shelter and campsites along the contour promotes use of provided trails. Shelters and campsites should be clearly marked with side-trail signs. Refer to additional site design guidance in *Camping Impact Management* [Marion (2003) App. 2, pp 99–101].
- ✓ *Protect water sources*—Design and maintain water-access trails to prevent erosion. Route water-access trails to a durable access point that avoids traffic above the collection point and erosion at any location. Where necessary, protect springs by constructing a covered stone water box with an outlet that allows easy filling of water containers.

- ✓ *Promote solitude*—Where two shelters are built on a site, or where campsites are co-located with shelters, locate them outside the view-shed of the front side of shelters. Where possible, provide a minimum of 30 yards of separation between shelters, between campsites and other campsites or shelters, and between the A.T. and facilities.
- ✓ *Promote visitor safety*—Face the shelter opening away from prevailing winter-season winds, preferably to the south and east. Inspect the proposed site for hazard trees and have them removed.

Shelter/Campsite Design

Design the shelter/campsite to:

- ✓ *Emphasize primitive, rustic qualities*—Use rustic architectural designs and primitive materials for shelters, e.g., sides consisting of logs, rough-cut wood, or natural stone and non-glare roofing. Use of planed, dimensional lumber should be minimized. Limit the visibility of shelters by using roofing or paints with natural colors. Where possible, hide concrete footers by facing them with natural stone.
- ✓ *Emphasize resource protection in shelter designs and facilities*—Use the minimal design necessary to concentrate sleeping and cooking activities in a small shelter “footprint.” Features such as large covered decks, windows, hanging chairs, showers, and wood stoves are generally considered inconsistent with the intended A.T. Experience and should be avoided. In Wilderness, shelter designs and associated facilities should be reduced to the absolute minimum required for resource protection. See *Camping Impact Management* [Marion (2003) App. 2, pp 102–105] for further discussion.
- ✓ *Maximize lifespan and minimize maintenance*—Provide separation between the ground and wood, and use pressure-treated lumber. In the south, use metal flashing at key places as a termite barrier. Provide adequate overhangs to keep wood sides dry and overlap roofing to prevent rot in supporting wood. Slope the land uphill from the shelter to divert water flow around the shelter area and install broad and deep drainage channels armored with rock to capture and divert roof water.
- ✓ *Minimize fire danger*—Where fires are allowed, fire rings should be small. Provide no more than one fire ring at a shelter. Consider using firmly anchored metal fire rings/grates of a small diameter to discourage dangerous and fuel-consuming bonfires. Avoid or minimize use of substantial masonry work. At campsites, consider ice-berging large rectangular rocks to permanently define and anchor fire site locations. Consult with the local Fire Marshall for approval where necessary, and note that fires are prohibited in some states and parks. Emphasize Leave No Trace practices with respect to fires.
- ✓ *Minimize campsite proliferation/expansion*—Employ side-hill campsite design practices where possible, or use site closure/ruination practices to deter these problems in flatter terrain (see *Camping Impact Management* [Marion (2003) App. 2, pp 99-102]).
- ✓ *Minimize use of tent platforms*—Tent platforms are less natural, expensive, and require sustained maintenance. Where possible, employ side-hill campsite designs to create gently-sloped tent pads; in rocky areas obtain soil from wind-thrown tree root balls or borrow pits.
- ✓ *Ensure food protection from wildlife*—Install appropriate facilities where necessary to prevent wildlife from obtaining human food. Examples include bear poles, cable systems, or steel food-storage boxes.

Sanitation

Toilet facilities should:

- ✓ *Be located in well-drained soils*—A toilet site should be more than 200 feet from all water sources and the shelter or campsites, and preferably downhill. Perform a percolation test by digging a hole and filling it with water. The hole should drain readily within a short time. Look for areas with deep soils and water tables (>4 ft), where the digging is easiest.
- ✓ *Follow applicable state and ATC guidance*—Consult and follow all state regulations for pit toilet use. Consult the ATC publication *Backcountry Sanitation Manual* (ATC and Green Mountain Club 2002) for further guidance and options.
- ✓ *Protect human and wildlife safety*—Pits and bins receiving human waste should be inaccessible to wildlife and flying insects, with openings only through a covered and screened vent stack and waste entry hole with a self-closing lid. Retired privy sites should be filled with soil and mounded at least 12 inches above grade to allow for settling.

Maintenance

Perform routine maintenance to:

- ✓ *Minimize soil erosion*—Maintain trails within the site and to the water source to minimize soil erosion. Water-source trails are often too steep and have fall-line alignments. If alternate alignments are impractical (i.e., visitors won't use them), then install sufficient tread hardening to limit erosion. Inspect shelter/campsite areas carefully for signs of erosion and install grade dips or water bars to avoid further erosion.
- ✓ *Limit fire danger*—Clear wind-thrown trees and other flammable materials away from the shelter. Keep fire rings away from the shelter overhang.
- ✓ *Maximize facility lifespan*—Check all wooden structures annually for signs of mold and rot and repair roofing or paint to prevent further deterioration. Inspect and repair other damage as needed.
- ✓ *Remove hazard trees*—Check for and remove hazard trees from shelter and designated camping areas. Hazard trees are dangerous to remove. This is an excellent job for your agency partner.
- ✓ *Preserve the natural appearance of facilities*—Use clear or semi-transparent flat (non-reflecting) paints with natural colors to preserve wood in shelters.
- ✓ *Maintain clean site appearances*—Dig out all fire grates, remove trash and scatter coals/ash in off-site areas. Pick up all litter and discarded food; clean the shelter.

Visitor Use Management

Manage visitor use to:

- ✓ *Avoid or minimize resource and social impacts*—Communicate *Leave No Trace* practices (see attached suggested guidance).
- ✓ *Minimize use of regulations*—Preserve visitor freedom by employing educational options first and regulations if problems are not resolved. Potential regulations to consider include limiting camping in shelter areas to shelters and formal campsites, prohibitions of campfires, and hanging food bags in bear country.

ATC Shelter Approval Checklist

Shelter Name: _____
A.T. Maintaining Club: _____
Submitted by: _____ Date: _____
Agency Partner: _____

- New site? Replaces existing shelter?
New shelter at an existing campsite? New shelter and new campsite?
Is this proposal identified in the club' Local Management Plan? Yes No
Is this proposal identified in the club's Trail assessment? Yes No

Project Description

Describe type of shelter; construction, cost estimate, etc. (use additional sheet if needed): _____

Name of nearest shelter/overnight site (in both directions) and distance from the proposed site:
North: _____ South _____
Distance of proposed site from the A.T. (if on a side trail): ____ miles
Distance from nearest open road: ____ miles. Describe the situation: _____

Distance from nearest road open only for administrative use: ____ miles.

Provide a comprehensive site plan. Please address motorized access to the shelter and closure of any temporary roads following construction (use additional sheet if needed): _____

Describe the location of the water source relative to the shelter site: _____
Existing privy? Yes No New privy? Yes No Type: _____

Agency Approvals

USFS/NPS NEPA Compliance—Information submitted to agency? Yes No
EA completed? Yes No

State/local agency approval received? Yes No Not Needed Des
Agency engineering approval received? Yes No
Biological evaluation (T&E species review) completed? Yes No
Cultural-resource evaluation completed? Yes No

Attachments

- Map of project location (use NPS segment map, USGS quadrangle, guidebook map, etc.)
- Site plan (showing side trail, shelter, tent pads or platforms, privy, water source, etc.)
- Shelter design (sketch or, if available, detailed plans)
- Materials list
- Other:

Approved by: _____

Club Representative	Date
----- Agency Representative	----- Date
----- ATC Regional Director	----- Date
----- Regional Partnership Committee Chair	----- Date
----- ATC Stewardship Council Chair	----- Date

A.T. Shelter and Campsite Use—*Leave No Trace* Practices

PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- If you are traveling in a group of more than 5, please consider camping away from the immediate vicinity of the shelter, leaving the shelter for use by lone hikers and small groups.

TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

- While hiking, stay on the trail, never shortcut switchbacks. Take breaks off-trail on durable surfaces.
- To minimize impact and preserve the natural environment, restrict activities to areas where vegetation is already absent, or to pristine sites that are unlikely to be discovered and reused.

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

- Never burn, bury, or leave litter or food anywhere. **PACK IT OUT.**
- Use the privy for human waste ONLY (feces). DO NOT fill with trash. If facilities are unavailable, dispose of human waste (feces) by burying in a cat-hole, 6–9" deep, 4–6" wide and at least 200 feet from water sources, trails and shelters.
- Where campfires are permitted, leave the fire ring clean by removing all trash and scattering unused wood, cold coals, and ashes away from camp.
- Wash dishes, bodies, and clothing away from water sources—minimize use of soap.

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

- Never build structures or alter shelters in any way.
- Never damage live trees or plants.
- Leave plants, cultural artifacts and other natural objects where you found them for others to enjoy.

MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

- Use stoves for cooking—if you need a fire, build one only where it's legal and in existing fire rings using small dead and downed wood. Burn all wood to ash.

RESPECT WILDLIFE

- Our goal is **ZERO RODENTS** at shelters. You can help: Store all food out of reach of animals. Don't discard or drop any food, even a few noodles or pieces of granola are a large meal for mice. Clean up spills completely and pack out all food scraps.
- Bear sightings are *increasing* at shelters and campsites—even small food rewards teach them to associate humans and camping areas with food. When that happens, they are often killed to protect human safety.

BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

- Be courteous to other hikers. A.T. shelter space is available on a first-come, first-served basis *regardless* of the type of hiker or length of their hike.
- Respect others by keeping loud voices and noise to a minimum
- Let nature's sounds prevail: **NEVER** use cell phones or audio equipment in the presence of other hikers.
- Limit-of-stay is **TWO NIGHTS**.
- Travel in groups of 10 or fewer hikers overnight; or 25 or fewer if day hikers.

1-800-332-4100 (<http://www.LNT.org>) for further information