

Trails within the Norwich AT corridor: seeking input from users

Do you use any trails in Norwich which cross the Appalachian Trail, or are within the adjacent corridor of public land? If so, the Norwich Trails Committee would like to hear from you - because many of these trails may close next summer. Read on, for background information and links pertaining to this situation.

The Appalachian Trail (AT) includes ~7 trail miles between the White and Connecticut Rivers (West Hartford to Elm Street; all but ~0.3 trail miles are in Norwich). To protect the AT footpath, a corridor of land extending ~500 feet or more to both sides was acquired by the National Park Service following passage of the National Trails System Act in 1968. Since 1984 this land has been managed by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), which works cooperatively with the US Forest Service. Locally, the Norwich segment is monitored and maintained by the Green Mountain Club (GMC), which took over responsibility from Dartmouth Outing Club.

On the AT footpath itself, horses, bicycles, and motorized vehicles are prohibited. However, within the AT corridor there are old roads - some pre-dating the Trail itself (1921) - and a variety of other trails. Guidelines for the management of side trails and AT crossings are outlined in the *2006 Green Mountain National Forest Plan*, Chapter 3, Section 8.1 (page 70), which is available [here](#). The *A.T. Corridor Stewardship Field Book* (2nd ed., 2017; available [here](#)) includes "unauthorized ATV, horse, or mountain bike trail(s)" among a list of encroachments that corridor stewards are expected to document and report.

Norwich side trails within the AT corridor have recently been mapped by the ATC, and almost all have been classified as unauthorized. According to ATC and GMC personnel, Norwich has the highest density of unapproved side trails within the entire AT corridor, and this is their rationale for planning to close them in 2019. At some locations where these side trails enter the corridor, signs have been posted to notify users of the impending closure; the text can be seen [here](https://twitter.com/norwichtrails) (<https://twitter.com/norwichtrails>).

The Norwich Trails Committee is now soliciting input from users of side trails and crossings within the AT corridor. The attached map shows the location of side trails on which signs have been posted. According to ATC personnel, 20 signs have been posted and additional locations will soon also be. The following symbols are used on the map (also available at <http://norwich.vt.us/trails-committee/>):

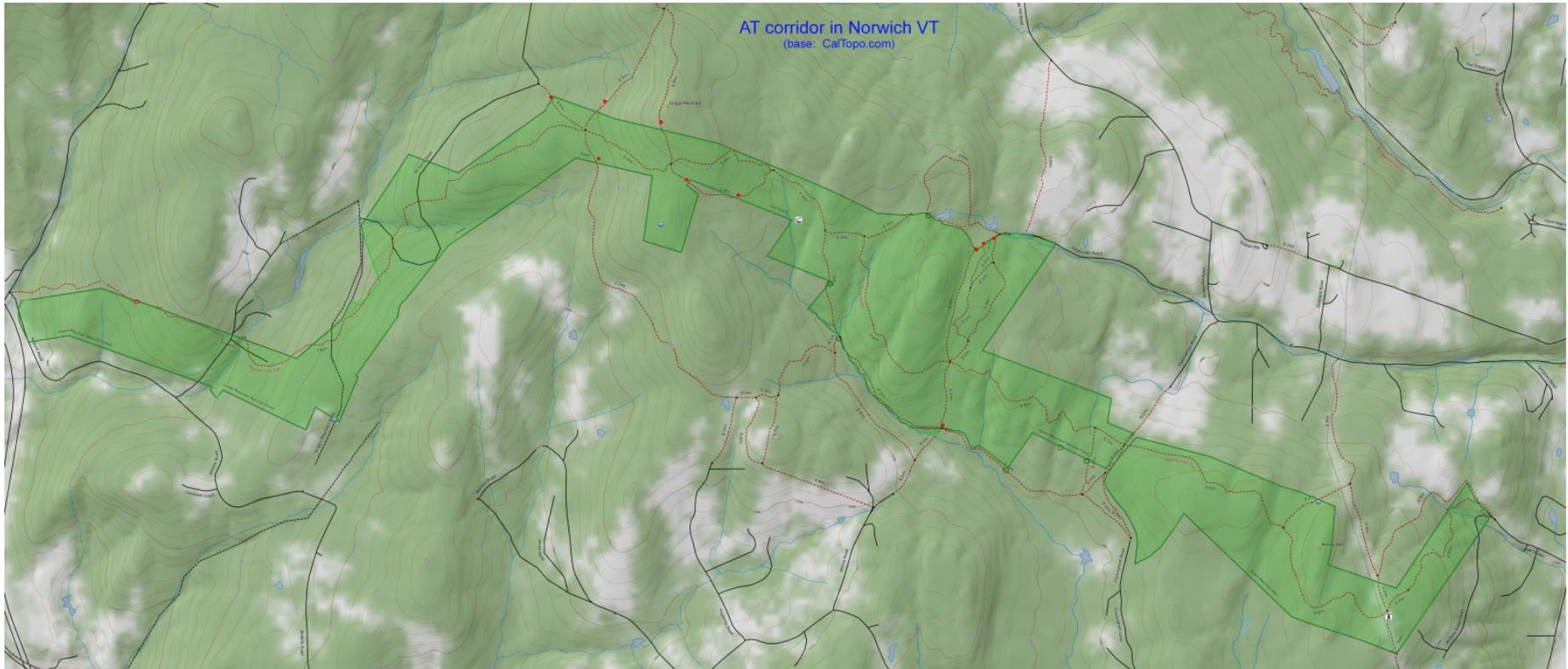
- bright green shading = AT corridor (exterior boundary not accurate, esp. western end)
- red circles (filled) = posted signs (10 locations found)
- red circle (open) = sign reported [very approximate location]
- small blue circles with ? = possible sign locations, not checked (3 shown on map)
- green circles = locations where signs not found in October
- shelter symbol = Happy Hill
- lighthouse symbol = VELCO intersection (powerline corridor)

Over the next few months, the Trails Committee will be preparing one or more proposals to the Forest Service requesting authorization for one or more of the existing AT side trails. As many local residents have favorite trails within the corridor, we would like to hear from as many other trail users as possible, to help guide our proposal development.

Please help the Trails Committee by responding to some or all of the following (no names will be published):

1. Do you know of any posted signs whose locations are not on the map?
2. Do you know of any trails within the corridor which are not on the map?
3. Are there side trails within the corridor that you would like to continue using as foot trails (hiking & running)? If so, please rank them by priority - if possible.
4. Are there side trails you would like to use for biking or horse riding which cross the AT, or are otherwise within the corridor? Please identify which trails these are.

We look forward to hearing from you at: norwichtrails@gmail.com - Thanks!



Key:

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A JPEG version of this map is available at <<http://norwich.vt.us/trails-committee/>>

Base map source: CalTopo.com