

## Input on the posting of trail closure signs within the Norwich AT corridor

---

*Responder #1 (saw posted signs): Sep 25, 2018, 2:55 PM*

I am very concerned about the signs that have been posted all along the AT corridor. I have lived on Joshua Rd for 35 years now and hike, cross country ski or horseback ride the trails also everyday. I have always thought that living near the AT trail was a wonderful thing.

My first question to the people making the final decisions is "WHY"...it seems to me that here in Vermont the trails are not overused, they are well cared for and the people using them are respectful of the environment. We do not have big issues with motorized vehicles tearing up the trails all the time which might be the case in another state. I would like to think each area along the AT is treated somewhat differently depending on population and use. The impact around here is small.

I think ALL the trails should be left open for use unless a problem should arise. Why create this bureaucratically designed complication that it totally unnecessary?

I am wondering why bikes are allowed on some trails within the corridor and horses are not? I am always careful never to ride my horse on the trails in early spring or after any big storm. The impact of horses hoofs are not any worse than the tread of a bike wheel on the trail...in fact the bike wheel probably would cause more erosion because of the flow than a horse's hoof mark. There are several boarding horse farms on Dothan rd and Jericho st and I know several people like to ride down Newton Lane into the wood trails and perhaps over to Bragg Hill. There are so few people who ride, I cannot imagine what the problem would be. These trails all started as trails for horses...it is part of the history of this state. Also, I realize that the snowmobile trail crosses the AT trail...are they going to stop the snowmobiles from going through? This is on the VAST trail... The snowmobile organization seems to be well run and they take very good care of the trail.

My overall opinion is that all trails stay open unless abused, that bikes and horses be allowed on side trails that are not the main AT trail and that all bikes, horses and snowmobiles are allowed to cross the AT trail in order to get to the trail on the other side.

I hope this feedback is helpful...I think a community gathering with the people making the final decisions about the trails should happen...there are so many people who love to use these trails and everyone I have met are respectful of these woods.

██████████

---

*Responder #2 (saw posted signs; 90 acre abutter): Tue, Sep 25, 5:09 PM*

I attended the meeting at the Norwich library last spring. I live ██████████ and the family has been here in this house and property since the American Civil War. We have the same 100 acres that we have cared for for nearly 160 years. The AT has been here now for approaching half that time and we have been pleased to have it pass by.

Until the 1980's, the trail crossed our property and we took care of with an annual clean up. I'm now ██████ and recall going out with the older generations to tend to it. We were glad Dartmouth Outing Club did

most of the heavy lifting. I still fondly remember Happy Hill Cabin with its beds , tables and chairs and Hudson Bay blankets, stove and firewood and kitchenware and food staples -flour, sugar and the like. In the 1980's the government acquisition effort took over - this under the threat of eminent domain. At first the government wanted half our property, not just the right of way that was another option at the other end of the spectrum of acquisition. It ended up that they moved the trail and the acquisition corridor off our property entirely. The "old" AT still exists on our property as it proceeds into the acquired corridor.

A couple of years back, we donated development restrictions with a conservation easement to the Upper Valley Land Trust. This further protected open space in the vicinity to the AT corridor. Open space uses are encouraged and protected. I am glad the AT did not take our property as that would, as it now seems, result in our being cut off from walking the footpaths our family and community has long enjoyed.

ENTER THE NEW APPALACHIAN TRAIL policy. Last week I came upon newly posted signs, finding first the one where the old AT on our property becomes the old AT in the corridor. Then I went off to discover other new postings where existing (many long existing) trails enter the corridor.

I both feel and find:

1. That this is unfriendly and disrespectful to the extreme, an unnecessary and unconscionable action to solve a "one shoe fits all" solution to a problem that does not exist. There are local impacts that can certainly be different along a 2000 plus mile corridor.
2. The trail where I saw the first sign is but one location of several where a barrier is being created for those who hike and run and walk and snowshoe and Nordic ski and, by the way, still go a horseback as we did when these hills were first settled.
3. What does it mean that something is an unauthorized trail and why may I ask do you want to do that? If I use the trail, is it a misdemeanor or a felony? What if I pick up a stick, cover up some toilet paper left by an A.T. hiker, nip a branch, remove a fallen tree, or even, Heaven forbid, pick up a stick on the A.T. itself? Are you going to build a Trumpian Wall? Who pays? Are you going to spy with hidden cameras? Are forest service heavies going to take us in?
4. If you had the power of eminent domain to acquire this land for a trail, why could that now be used to take rights away from local people who have long cared for local trails and used them respectfully? Is this action also removing the VAST trail? Class 4 roads?
5. I'd like to see the problem defined and be judged upon by people locally and not some gentrified policy wonk in some office somewhere. I hope these folks consider wisely, accept local input but I am sure that they are just throwing it out for comment and then doing what fits their blind misconceptions. Then the problems will begin
6. Please keep me posted. Sounds like a round of meetings. Can you take a picture of one of the signs and offer an article in the Norwich Times and beyond?



---

*Responder #2 (message #2): Tue, Oct 2, 6:50 AM*

Curious if there has been any more feedback. Also, been going over old Norwich maps back to the beginning late 1700's and have been looking at old roads where they dovetail though the A.T. corridor. The old discontinued A.T. used some of these trails that now have been used by hikers and by horse for

200 years. Now they are to be unauthorized!? Their solution looking for a problem will surely find some if they proceed.

---

*Responder #2 (message #3): Tue, Oct 2, 11:03 AM*

I called [REDACTED] and count them in as aggrieved neighbors and 4-season trail users. [REDACTED] said they were just out a few days ago clearing debris on either side of the opening east of Parkhurst Cemetery. Gee, I'd hate to go and tidy up the cemetery via a unauthorized trail access.

---

*Responder #3 (saw posted signs; 146 acre abutter): Sat, Oct 20, 4:05 PM*

Our home is the southwest border of Norwich, near West Hartford, and borders the AT land. While hiking, we came across a clearly fresh sign that said that a review of all trails in the Trail Corridor is underway, and that trails not designated as "valued" will be closed.

What does "closed" mean? The trail we were on was only clear to those who knew of it; if you'd hiked across it on the AT, there'd be no sign (such as a worn path in the forest floor) to indicate its presence.

I don't ask that any trail other than the AT be maintained, but would like to understand the meaning is of side "trails" that are hardly trails being closed.

Thanks! I can be reached at this email, or during the work-day at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Best regards, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #4 (direct contact): Mon, Nov 5, 9:48 PM*

Am I to assume that the Tucker Trail into which the A/T tees and turns left (going south) and what I know as Newton Lane, which tees into the Tucker/AT trail, prior to the HH Cabin are "authorized". Newton Lane is the old path of the A/T at that point.

N.B. what shows as "Newton Lane" on the A/T map is actually Cossingham Road crossing over to the real Newton Lane.

The labeling that I suggest is important, irrespective of where signs have been posted.

For me the challenge is encroachment of MTB trails, even though I would personally support them. I feel that our system of hiking trails should be no more problematical than the DOC trails on Moose Mountain or especially the multitude of trails that cross the A/T in the White Mountains.

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #5 (response to Trails e-mail): Tue, Nov 6, 9:14 PM*

Thank you for the work you do in our woods. We truly appreciate it and it is with great respect that I send this letter.

I would like to comment on the AT side trails issue and share my thoughts.

My question is what negative impact do these side trails have on the AT? Do they lead hikers astray? I know they don't have motorized vehicles on them, so the natural aspect of the AT is certainly not being impacted. What is the issue with small foot trails and a few mt bike trails crossing the AT? As the AT happens to run through these woods, it means that for walkers and bikers to get around, trails naturally cross the main trail. I just wonder if this is a problem that is not really a problem. Or to whom is it a problem? My experience is that Norwich and Upper Valley folks love these woods, respect the trails, and help take care of them. We do not abuse them and in no way do the woods resemble a highway system. I run or walk almost every single day in the woods along the AT corridor and rarely see anyone out there. Clearly these small trails do not bring unwanted traffic to the woods and the AT trail seems none the worse for them. I do not see anything problematic with small trails intersecting the AT if there is no negative impact. With so much happening in the world, I wonder if our energy could be better spent?

If you require a "ranking" of side trails, I would be happy to do that. Would you let me know how to indicate which side trail is which as we try to "rank" them? I would like to send feedback but your map does not name or give the trails numbers as far as I can tell, so it will be hard to reference them. I could describe the trails I mean, but that might be cumbersome. Or perhaps I am missing something?

Thanks for your help. We care deeply for these woods, use them on a daily basis and care about their future.

Again, we do appreciate the work you do for our town and our trails.

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #6 (response to Trails e-mail): Wed, Nov 7, 9:16 AM*

Thank you for your email about the potential trail closures. As a daily trail user, I really hope the ATC doesn't go through with any closures. However, I do agree that the ATC should prevent further trail building. There seems to be an aggressive "build now, ask later" push in Norwich lately that concerns me, as well as a disregard for the AT corridor. I'm concerned that people don't understand that the AT corridor is an amazing feat of landowner-agreement and national park building, and that it is public land that is not ours to choose to build trails on.

That being said, below are my top three unauthorized trails. I see a lot of people on these trails, and they create numerous loops and links for hikers and runners. I would hate to see them closed!

1. The old AT/DOC trail that roughly parallels the AT between Cossingham and the Happy Hill shelter. It seems to be more of a class IV road in parts?
2. The trail that runs left off of the Tucker trail, if you're headed from Happy Hill TO the Happy Hill shelter - the 3rd left once you start walking from the top of Happy Hill. It's the most prominent side trail of the 3 that turn left off of Tucker. It heads left at a pond/wet area, goes up and comes down to the AT midway between Cossingham and the Happy Hill Shelter. I've heard it referred to as the Valley of the Barred Owl trail.

*Note: there are 2 other side trails in that area that just appeared in the last 5 years. These seem redundant if we can keep the Barred Owl trail.*

3. The continuation of the trail I just mentioned - it goes straight across the AT, intersects with the old AT/DOC trail I ranked as #1.

Thank you for all your work on our Norwich trails. We are so fortunate to have such a plethora of beautiful, well-maintained trails in our town!

Thank you, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #7 (response to Trails e-mail): Wed, Nov 7, 10:48 AM*

These are my views based on 30 years of casual hiking, snowshoeing, XC skiing and mt biking:

Heyl Trail

Interesting access to AT from Bragg Hill. Minimal impact on AT since crossing is in middle of VELCO ROW [Right of Way]. Please keep open.

Jericho Trail

Parallels AT from Newton Lane (Cossingham ROW?) to AT intersection. Newton Lane to Joshua Rd. gets MB use and should stay open. Joshua Rd. to AT forms part of popular walking loop, but rather steep near AT intersection. Closing that section would help keep MBs off AT.

Cossingham Rd.

Popular AT access, popular MB route, town ROW. Presumably not on table for closure

Tucker Trail

Popular AT access. Arguably redundant to Cossingham Rd. access. Problematic as MB conduit onto AT rather than across AT. I use it a lot on foot but can live without it.

Meadow Junction

Approx 1 mile west of Happy Hill shelter. Burton Woods, and Sugartop trails terminate at AT. Griggs Mt. trail terminates at Burton Woods trail. Sugartop to Burton Woods to Sue Spaulding should be worth preserving as multi-use route.

Milt Trail

Begins on Sugartop east of Meadow junction. Gentle climb up to the old AT segment west of the old Happy Hill shelter. Crosses AT and follows Griggs Mt; ridgeline. Descends Griggs Mt, crosses Burton Woods and ends at Tucker Hill Rd. I enjoyed it as XC ski route 10-15 years ago, but it is unsafe in places and I would not use it today. OK to close.

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #2 (message #4): Wed, Nov 7, 12:12 PM*

Thanks for acknowledgement, await your future response. Copying a [REDACTED] who attended last spring's meeting at the Norwich Library with me and who uses and knows these backwoods trails as well as do I, perhaps even more so.

As for your map. I have frequently been by the western 6 filled red circle locations and I use those side trails often as do many others. Have wonderful encounters with section hikers as well as NOBO and SOBO hikers. Perhaps see more LOBO hikers of which I am but one ("LO" standing for local). In the depth of winter, I've yet to see the first three above passer byes.

South of the 6 clustered filled red circles, I did look for the sign at the potential location of the blue ? dot. It is not there. I do know at in that section of land there is a used trail that is not much more visible than a deer trail. I am aware that two hikers with their dogs were stopped on that trail once by perhaps a forest service "trail nazi" (a good trail name perhaps) and were told that they were not supposed to be there. I am not aware if these hikers then stepped off the trail or not or if that would not even be then more legal. Do we know what will be the penalty for such crimes against society.

I have not been to the Cossingham Road area of late but I would expect signs there as well as along the old A.T., again all used by locals as they have been since first white settlement. Actually the first mapped travel way from West Hartford to Norwich village used much of the travel corridor - this the map from 1796.

Am not aware of Podunk Road area sign placement as have not been there of late. Have dropped in however on Newton Cemetery which is listed and is in the A.T. corridor. That is located east of the shown trail north of the the blue circle with ? on the map. And while we are on the subject of cemeteries, Parkhurst Cemetery just outside the corridor is best approached in an unauthorized manner or, at least, that is how before his death, Ed Janeway used to tend to it as an assigned civic duty. Perhaps if he was around and willing to bushwhack, there'd be "no harm, no foul".

"No harm, no foul" is germane to this who discussion/issue. It's a solution looking for a problem.

---

*Responder #8 (response to Norwich listserve): Fri, Nov 9, 6:39 AM*

Wondering what the impetus is behind closing the trails? Are the land owners complaining? I run on several of the trails that cross the AT including but not limited to the old AT, the office, trails to podunk, wet and wild etc.

Thank you for your work, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #9 (response to Norwich listserve): Sat, Nov 10, 6:36 AM*

I have used the Cossingham trail over to Newton Lane and the Happy Hill trail and the Heyl trail many times and would like to see them stay available. Also, there are one or two side trails that are sort of short-cuts that I would like to see continued. However, I do not hike as much as I used to. It's been nice to have those trails nearby. Beautiful old land rich in history.

Thanks, [REDACTED] Norwich.

---

*Responder #10 (response to Norwich listserve): Sat, Nov 10, 10:56 AM*

Thanks for your post on the listserv earlier today. I just spent the morning reading through the two referenced USDA and ATC documents on trail regulations, which raised one question that I think it'd be helpful to get the Green Mountain Club folks to expand on before the spring deadline:

The basic AT regulations state that "[...] Side trails to the Appalachian and Long Trails (identified in the Long Trail System Management Plan and Dartmouth Outing Club Local Management Plan for the Appalachian Trail) should be managed primarily as non-motorized trails designated for foot travel. " (Standards and Guidelines for Appalachian National Scenic Trail 8.1, section G-1). Likewise, the monitoring guidelines mention, "[...] Unauthorized ATV, horse, or mountain bike trail into the corridor" as a moderate encroachment issue to be reported by trail stewards. (page 42).

But, there seems to be no guidelines for side trails used only for foot travel. It's not clear whether they're acceptable or not, whether they need to be "authorized" or not, whether they fall under the auspices of the ATC clubs to maintain, or not. But the guidelines would seem to imply that the current flurry of activity is specifically aimed only at perceived violations of the ATV/horse/MTB regulations. How, then, do AT monitors determine what a given side trail is primarily being used for?

Their 21 postings all claim that the side trails in question are "unauthorized" -- but if they're used for foot travel, would they need to be authorized at all? And since several of them were clearly authorized at some point, insofar as they're listed on official AT signage (e.g. the Podunk Road connector from the 4-way in the meadow SW of Griggs Mountain), when did they become unauthorized again?

Moreover, if I'm not violating any AT guidelines by running or hiking in the corridor somewhere not on the designated AT, then, presumably, I would still not be violating those guidelines if I continue to run on a "closed" side trail in the future? And if a given side trail is only intended for/maintained for use by foot traffic, then can we assume the GMC wouldn't have a problem with it being left "open" in the future?

Which leads to a second question: what, exactly, would "closing" an existing side trail entail? Simply blocking the "entrance" where it crosses into the AT corridor? Actively spending time and resources to "erase" the length of the trail? Some of the side trails currently under scrutiny are old Class IV roads (e.g. the continuation of Newton Lane WNW from the intersection with Cossingham Lane) -- they can't simply be made to disappear, no matter how much the GMC would like that to happen. And wiping out the trails doesn't seem reasonable in the case of trails that are only being used for foot travel -- but, of course, the challenge then becomes: how do you ensure that a side trail is really only used for foot travel?

Looking at your map w/ all the current "unauthorized trail" postings, I actively use every single segment at least once a month or more, all year, either for hiking or for trail running. From E to W:

1. I use the three connections (the old fern trail and the two newer trails to the E of that) between the Happy Hill Road extension to the AT proper both from N to S and in reverse as a convenient way to create a loop, either from Cossingham Road or Happy Hill Road.
2. I use the loop on Chris Lang's property off the Happy Hill section to connect across the peak of Happy Hill and connect to trails on private land on the Bragg Hill;
3. I use the connector from the NW end of Newton Lane N to the AT to create an extended climb all the way up to the Happy Hill section, or as a way to connect to the AT from Joshua Road

4. I use the extension of Newton Lane further W to the creek crossing to connect to the old AT and to connect to trails on private land SW of the creek
5. I use the section of the old AT from the creek to the current AT to create a long southern loop segment from the E end of Newton Lane to the AT
6. I use the southern fork of the AT at the stream crossing S of Griggs Mountain to create a loop around Griggs Mountain, and to connect to foot and snowmobile trails on private land SE of Podunk Road
7. I use the connector that runs from the AT N around the W edge of Griggs Mountain to connect to the Burton Woods trails and private trails off Bragg Hill Road
8. I use the connector from the 4-way crossing in the meadow W to Podunk Road to loop N towards the trails on Sue Spaulding and Tucker Hill
9. I use the connector from the 4-way in the meadow N to the Burton Woods trails

It might be worth noting that the connector shown as running between the AT corridor and the powerline N of Mosley Hill has recently (spring of 2018) been rerouted completely onto neighboring private lands, and this multi-use trail runs the length of the AT corridor from the powerline (and the now largely defunct N end of the Heyl Trail) to Cossingham Road.

I would consider the closure of any of these side trails a considerable reduction in recreational opportunities in and around Norwich. And while I can appreciate the GMC's concern with unauthorized trails and their fervent desire to adhere to the USDA/ATC guidelines, it seems like they're trying to stir up a storm in a teacup, picking a battle where none needs to be fought. Even if the occasional mountain biker (or horse, or dog team) were to stray across one of the supposedly offending side trails, it's not clear to me that the perceived (real or otherwise) damage justifies a wholesale closure of a well-established network of low impact recreational trails, many of them primarily intended for foot travel. It might be helpful if the GMC could explain what, exactly, they're so worried about, and what's lead them to take this rather drastic course of action at this time.

Thanks to all of you on the Trail Committee for your work on this.

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #11 (response to Norwich listserve): Sat, Nov 10, 3:39 PM*

I think this is a very interesting topic of debate for the Norwich community. My family has lived in this area for quite some time and may have been a part of the development of some of these "side trails" over the last 50 years or so. I believe they are heavily used for walking, running, and dog walking and it would be a shame to close them down. I think that the efforts of ATC and GMC should be focused on maintaining official trails rather than closing the numerous side trails. The people of this community use the side trails to connect with their neighbors and enjoy the many benefits of nature.

To answer some of your questions:

1. Do you know of any posted signs whose locations are not on the map? No.
2. Do you know of any trails within the corridor which are not on the map? Yes. There is a network of unofficial mountain biking trails that are not on the AT hiking map provided. Local mountain bikers have access to the map via a database application. A few local mountain bikers who own



land abutting the AT Corridor use and develop trails on their own accord. Also, there are more hiking/walking trails that lead to Bragg Hill Rd than are shown 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. I use too many of the trails to prioritize.
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. There are a series of mountain biking trails that begin near Heyl trail (at the end of Elm St) and end in various locations, criss-crossing the map. I do not maintain or develop new trails, but given the rising popularity of mountain biking in this area, I would expect many people to be disappointed by their disappearance.

Thank you for all that you do to maintain local trails.

Best, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #12 (response to Norwich listserve): Sun, Nov 11, 8:55 AM*

Looked at the map, but too small for me to read, so couldn't figure out where things were. Our most frequent usage is off Happy Hill and Cossingham. It's an extension of Newton Lane that winds its way along the stream and then bends back to the AT spine that leads back to Happy Hill. We also use trails off Burton Woods, but much less often.

Thanks. I hope they'll keep more of them open and consider restricting them to walkers, if bikes, etc. are a concern.

[REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #13 (response to Norwich listserve): Mon, Nov 12, 12:02 AM*

Thanks for asking for our input. I've lived here for 25 years and have biked and hiked in this area throughout this time. Since I developed knee problems about 5 years ago, I'm less able to hike, and instead get most of my exercise mountain biking these days. So I really appreciate the trails in the AT corridor and surrounding area that enable me to get exercise with my dog without having to be on foot for long distances or go onto roads with traffic. I suspect the reason there are so many cross trails has a lot to do with the popularity of biking in this area and efforts to avoid the AT while on bike. It would be great if options for biking can be maintained without being disruptive to the AT. The sudden interest in these trails is curious, since most have existed over 25 years, and are a tremendous asset to the local community. They are a sign that people are out enjoying the outdoors and getting exercise and provide an option to bike rather than hike. At the same time, the number of people using them seems modest since I rarely have encountered anyone else when I've been on them (other than on Cossingham, which mostly outside the AT corridor).

I like to bike the loop that starts on Cossingham from [map intersection] L and travels outside the AT corridor to Joshua Rd., then from Joshua to H inside the AT corridor. I then have to scoot on the 0.1 mile section from H to I to exit on Happy Hill Road back to Cossingham. I would be disappointed if they closed the trail that goes along the stream from Joshua to H.

Although I haven't been further southwest in a while, closing the cross trails at E, F and G would disrupt biking loops. That said, I realize that the only way to actually do a loop there is travel the 0.3 mi section from G to H, and I can understand the concern about that. It would be highly desirable for an alternative trail to be constructed for bikes there- perhaps connecting F to H (or even better, I) mostly outside the AT corridor, and providing a way around the AT segments G to I. This would enable exit down Happy Hill Road.

Although it's been a long time since I've been on the section from Joshua Road to J and the segments from J to Happy Hill Rd, it would be desirable to see at least one of these cross routes remain open. I can't say which since it's been so long.

I haven't been on the segment that is outside the AT corridor parallel to it from L to M, but I heard about it and hope to get it on it next season as it would enable to me to get from the Heyl trail to the other trails without having to go on Bragg Hill Road. It appears to dip slightly into the AT corridor. Since I would expect that mostly bikers would use this, closing off the access to M might be OK. Hikers from Bragg Hill who want to access the AT from there might not like the extra mileage to go to N and back track though.

I hope you are getting input from other bikers (UVMBA?) as this area is a valued resource for biking, which, though popular among the young, is also important for us older folks with bad knees. The overall picture looks like the intent is to block bikers from crossing the AT. It's not so much that we want to bike in the AT corridor, but rather than the AT corridor runs right through excellent moderate biking loops (with the exception of Joshua to H, but in all the years I've been biking it I've never once encountered a person on foot on that segment.)

I hope this is useful! Thanks again for working on this and soliciting our input.

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #2 (message #5): Mon, Nov 12, 8:57 AM*

Notes - Hartford plus A thru N

\*In Hartford, trail and corridor look a bit off

- A. No issue of confusion
- B. Is this a class 4 road or a discontinued road? Why the gap making road not connect to Wildlife Road. It does connect. Where corridor and Illsley Road parallel closely to each other I was a bit confused by yellow blazes when there recently. Newton Cemetery is to east side of this road set back perhaps 200 feet. Is this in corridor?
- C & D. three hunting cabins. access by vehicles. recent work on these access roads (cl 4) Access to cabin owned by Derrick Family comes in from Podunk, to other hunting camps well to north of corridor accessed from Tigertown Road and passing Henderson hunting camp.
- E. A major access point for local trail users coming from Jericho District (of which our family has long been one) hiking, running, snowshoe and Nordic skiing, horseback riding, care of Parkhurst Cemetery.
- F. New trail past 20 or so years. connects at old AT junction that enters our property. Between F and G are three long used trails that head south connecting to the old A.T.

- G. Stream often dry. location of old Happy Hill Cabin. At new Happy Hill Shelter, drinking water often dried up from Dothan Brook. Often through hikers head down brook, even out of corridor to get to water. That's only reasonable and "authorized".
- H. This is the old A.T.
- I. Suspect this is a vestige of the earliest trail shown on the 1796 maps that connect Norwich village to West Hartford.
- J. Valley of Death! - from whence this name?
- K and L. Another main access for A.T. users from Jericho. To use the trail in an authorized fashion, we should not need to drive to Elm Street or Podunk Road.
- M. Been by there often and have not focused on it.
- N. Assume Elm Street and power line are authorized

When a new highway is created, existing roads are accommodated for eight by over and underpasses or on/off ramps. The protected A.T. is new in the same respect. They should respect the existing trails.

---

*Responder #1 (message #2): Mon, Nov 12, 5:49 PM*

Thanks for sending all this information out. I have looked over the map and want to give you information on the points where horses would cross the corridor to connect with trails on the other side. To make this as simple as possible I am listing below the labeled intersections that would be crossed: A, B, C, D, E, J, and L. In reference to the J. Intersection...If I go down from Joshua and cross the brook, then go straight and cross the AT trail, then the trail on the right side is good to ride a horse on...it comes out directly at the gate near the top of Happy Hill Rd. There are three trails in that section but this is the only one safe for horses. In addition, if I ride down from Joshua Road and cross the brook the trail on the left that has been posted as a potential closure which follows the stream is a very important trail to keep open to the public for all uses....specifically for horseback riding, it crosses the stream further up and that crossing connects with the Myers and Kitchell trail system. Hope this is helpful feedback in term of those riding horses. That being said, I would like to share a few thoughts with you. As I said in my initial email to you, I strongly feel that ALL side trails should remain open for local use. Depending on where a person lives determines which side trail they might use. The irony of this whole thing is that the local people who use these side trails are like - minded to the conservation ethics of the AT. The locals hike the trails for solitude, because they love the woods and for many it is part of who they are. The quality of life is enhanced by these woods around us. Locals walk, ski, run, bike, and horseback ride these trails and often use the AT (understanding, of course, that bikes and horses do not use the AT trail except to cross)....we pick up garbage if it is there...after a storm it often is local hikers who help clear fallen limbs off the AT. The culture of Vermont has always been an inviting place to live and we share and give back to those who invite us onto their land. The idea that the AT would decide to randomly close trails that have been used for years and sometimes generations seems incredibly disrespectful to local people who have helped to promote the AT in its creation and continuation. I would hope that the AT decision makers would hold a meeting where they can have a face to face conversation with the local community. I also think that locals would be delighted to help out by adopting specific trails to help maintain. Once again I wonder WHY the AT has decided to do this in a community where the trails are not overused, not trashed or eroded...in fact the trails are in excellent shape and have very little traffic on them...it is a rare event for me to see another person out hiking on these side trails and I am out every day. Some of these trails are historic...used over 100 years ago by the settlers here...this is part of Vermont culture...I so hope the AT organization will reconsider this project...just skip Vermont!

---

*Responder #14 (response to Norwich listserve): Wed, Nov 14, 2:52 PM*

I'm writing about the trails on the AT corridor that are under discussion for possible closure. Friends and I ride or walk the trails between Cossingham and Happy Hill regularly. What are the appropriate steps for us to advocate to keep those trails open?

Respectfully, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #15 (direct contact): Wed, Nov 14, 4:03 PM*

Just my 2 cents [as a community response]: I'd like to see as many of the current side trails as we can get maintained for our hiking/skiing. And for [REDACTED] to ride her horses on.

Best, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #16 (response to Norwich listserve): Wed, Nov 14, 8:50 PM*

I want to express my opinion about these people closing some cherished trails.

I regularly ride the intersecting Class IV roads (Cossingham, Happy Hill, Podunk, Burton Woods) and the connections between them, most obviously pre-dating the AT, all of which I believe should be "grandfathered" in. I have regularly seen others using the same trails, so I question why the AT corridor concerns take precedent over the enjoyment of well-established Norwich trails by locals. What harm is being inflicted? I don't ride on the AT and I respect its restrictions; I would like mountain bikers' enjoyment of the woods to be respected too!

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #17 (response to Norwich listserve): Thurs, Nov 15, 7:26 AM*

I usually come up Happy Hill, and either take a left at the third red dot off the Tucker trail and head to the AT and down Cossingham Road. Or I head to the Happy Hill Shelter and return via the cut-off to the old AT, along the stream/road/trail to Cossingham. I live down the road on Bragg Hill Road.

Thanks, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #18 (response to Trails e-mail): Sun, Nov 18, 1:54 PM*

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. I am an avid mountain biker and highly value the diversity of trails in the woods around Norwich which provide an invaluable resource for residents to get out and enjoy the land that we choose to live in. There are a number of excellent trails in the area to the south of Bragg Hill Road and Happy Hill Road which either cross the AT or come within the 500' corridor. These receive regular use from bikers, hikers and horse riders and should be kept open.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to help support this effort.

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #19 (response to Norwich listserve?): Mon, Nov 19, 8:27 AM*

I run frequently on the trails in Norwich and I would love to connect with someone about the impending possible closures within the AT corridor. I think it might be easiest to discuss in person or over the phone, rather than by email. My husband and son also mountain bike around Norwich (not on the AT of course!) but closing some of these trails may significantly impact their riding.

Best, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #20 (response to Norwich listserve): Mon, Nov 19, 4:12 PM*

I often use the trails off of Happy Hill in Norwich that cross the AT for hiking and biking, it is a beautiful area. I know you are taking comments about the crossings of the AT and wanted to be able to include my voice. I would like to see all the existing crossings maintained so that local hikers and bikers like myself can continue use them. I have never had a conflict crossing the trail or even seen another hiker for the few seconds that I am in proximity of it. I am curious to know where the concern is arising from.

Thank you, [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #21 (direct contact): Tue, Nov 20, 10:24 AM*

The AT corridor is owned by the federal government, and managed as a “primitive footpath”. Wheeled vehicles (e.g. bicycles) and pack animals (e.g. horses, whether ridden or carrying) are specifically excluded, as is the development of trails or paths without a permit (ref 1). The management is intended to provide a wilderness experience for hikers, whether out for a day or a month.

Here in Norwich, this federal ownership has several effects:

- undeveloped land, which would likely be private homes otherwise, with greatly limited or prohibited public access
- a major wildlife corridor
- financial benefits for town businesses from hikers
- recreational use by town and local residents
- federal rules apply, even when locals may wish for more liberal usage

There are many alternatives in town, including miles of class IV roads and public and private trails that are open for hikers, bicyclists and horse riders. The town publishes a map, and the town trails committee maintains many of these trails. The AT corridor is not just another area for development of trails.

The management of the AT corridor supports a long term vision. Our children and grandchildren should be able to enjoy it as we can now. Undeveloped land and access to it are important. Every incursion into the corridor takes something away from this. As a town, we have the responsibility to help maintain the integrity of the AT corridor and its long term viability.

To those who say that because the land is publicly owned, they have a right to use it as they wish, I ask whether that would not be true of ATV and dirt bike riders as well? Would you advocate for them to enjoy the land as they see fit? How about the harvesting of firewood or stone? Over many years, a clear management approach has been developed and codified in law and regulation.

How the new privy at the Happy Hill Shelter was built illustrates how seriously the management is taken by those responsible. The design is accessible, following a forest service design, which entails a lot of materials. While a tractor could have delivered the materials to within 100 yards of the site, wheels were kept out of the corridor, and materials carried by hand for quite a distance. One can easily imagine justifying a single incursion into the corridor with a tractor for the construction of the privy, yet that was not done. Only footprints were left on the ground.

The trails committee has a choice. We can be grateful for the AT corridor in our town, and support the park service, Appalachian Trail Conference, and Green Mountain Club in maintaining it as they are tasked to do. Or we can seek to develop it for our own short term needs, adding crossings, and allowing bicycles and horses.

ref 1: APPA Superintendents Compendium 2018, by Wendy Janssen, Superintendent, National Park Service, Appalachian National Scenic Trail, 3/1/2018. Which includes under 36 CFR 2.16: "The use of pack animals is not consistent with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail's intended use as a primitive footpath.", and under 36 CFR 4.30: "Bicycle and all wheeled use is not consistent with the Appalachian NST's intended use as a primitive footpath."

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #22 (response to Norwich listserve): Tue, Nov 20, 3:15 PM*

Saw your posting on the Norwich list serve about the possible trail closures relating to the AT corridor. If I'm honest, I've used almost all of the "unauthorized" crossings. The most important are the crossings at E, F, and G, since I live in that area and hike, trail run, and snowshoe them weekly.

Is it not possible to "authorize" all of the trails? It seems to me the ability to link so many other local roads is one of the biggest benefits with the density of trails/roads off of the AT (many of which predate the AT). Is there anything I can do to help (contacting NPS, ATC, etc.)?

I'm not able to attend the Wednesday NTC meetings as I have standing commitments Wednesdays but I'd be happy to help in any way with this issue, trail maintenance, upkeep etc (especially out in the [REDACTED] area where I live). Also, is there an email list or other way to keep better in touch with NTC news, work dates, etc. other than the weekly minutes?

Thanks! [REDACTED]

---

*Responder #23 (response to Norwich listserve probably): Fri, Nov 23, 9:20 AM*

My sisters (4 of them) and I frequently use the Happy Hill Trail to access the AT. It is a beautiful trail and it would be a shame to have it closed. In addition, it would result in more cars attempting to park on Elm Street where parking is extremely limited.

Please don't close it.

[REDACTED]

---

*Responder #24 (response to Norwich listserve): Sun, Dec 9, 10:40 AM*

I love seeing your map, and pretty well figured out what was what.

I know I used to like to think that the trails were private and enjoyed the fact that there wasn't much traffic. However, right now I like thinking about how much more fun it is having the trail enjoyed by all. Actually I am all in favor of some signage to make it easier for people to enjoy. If the AT doesn't like having trails cut across then they will have more people riding bikes on the AT. Every summer I see people riding bikes on the AT. Perhaps if alternatives were better known it wouldn't happen as much. Although last summer those that I saw riding on the AT knew what they were doing.

██████████

---

*Responder #25 (response to Norwich listserve): hand-written submission Wed, Dec 12, 8:00 PM*

Would love to maintain connection from Tucker Trail (north of point J) and intersection with the DOC (old AT) trail to the south (Joshua Trail). Don't mind which of the 3 trails to the north, or if there is only one.

I love the trail that breaks off at point H (heading south, on old AT).

I love the intersection at point F. It takes you to some trails not on the map and creates opportunities for loops as well as West Norwich to Norwich trails along the ridge (i.e., Griggs Ridge or Milt Trail). Keeping the intersection at point E (TH 51) would be an acceptable alternative to F if only one can remain.

I assume the Tucker Trail is not on the chopping block.

Thanks for all of your work regarding these fabulous trails!

██████████████████

---

*Responder #26 (attended Meeting at Montshire): Fri, Dec 14, 6:51 PM*

Stressful for like-minded (outdoor loving) folks to be seemingly pitted against each other. The AT is a great thing - ██████████ are part of the trail angels (host people during the hiking season at our home, provides shuttles, Do laundry, feed, repair gear, etc.)....

I'm a mtn.biker but if biking is the perceived problem it should be called out. I rarely ride anywhere near the AT unless I'm with someone (██████████) that knows where the "OK" trails are etc. Seems like the corridor "monitors" have more of a presence in Norwich and maybe that's why there is now a focus on Norwich? I find it hard to believe that our little stretch of such a long trail is raising such interest/concern.

If there is an email distribution for Norwich trails/issues I'd like to be on it....

Can't we all just get along?

██████████████████

---

*Responder #27 (saw posted signs): Sun, Dec 16, 5:47 PM*

I noticed the posted sign this fall and while I am having difficulty understanding your map, I have been running the trails off of Newton Lane for over 25 years and would be very unhappy if they were to be closed. How can I help?

██████████

---

*Responder #27 (message #2): Tue, Dec 18, 9:30 PM*

I missed that [the Montshire meeting]...in fact, I am only just now getting around to responding after I saw the sign on the trail last Sept. I didn't see any other info in the paper, etc.

I'm mostly interested on why the trail from Newton Lane that runs towards Joshua Rd would be off limits. I use it and then run up and around...on the AT...to the Cossingham Trail

Thanks for your info., ██████████

---

*Responder #16 (message #2): Wed, Dec 26, 8:40 AM*

I use (and help maintain) the trails between Happy Hill and Joshua and the trail from Griggs Mountain to the Sugartop trail regularly, and would like them to remain open. It appears the old AT trail from Tucker Trail to Joshua is not under consideration, but that is the only other trail I use (and help maintain) in the area.

Thank you, ██████████

---

*Responder #27 (message #3): Thu, Dec 27, 5:20 PM*

Thanks....I must say however, that I run that area 4 days/week Mid-April thru Mid- Sept, and only 2 times did I see anyone mountain biking this past year. For what it's worth.

██████████

---

*Responder #28 (response to Norwich listserve?): Wed, Jan 2, AM*

Thanks for the update and keeping me on the list. One small change to the map is that there is a red dot (an unauthorized trail sign) to the northeast of "M". That trail is actually NOT on the AT corridor although the signs remain. About a year ago (or more) it was slightly on the AT corridor (by mistake) in that area, but trail has been moved slightly north in that area and is completely clear of the AT corridor.

Thanks, ██████████



---

*Responder #14 (message #2): Thu, Jan 10, 1:26 AM*

I regularly walk on the Heyl trail. And I frequently walk and mountain bike on trails that connect Joshua road/old AT with Happy Hill. I certainly want to continue.

Please let me know how I can assist in advocating to keep the trails open.

██████████

---

*Responder #29 (message to NorwichTrails): Sat, Jan 19, 5:48 PM*

To whom this may concern.

There are several trails that I use for biking, skiing and hiking that cross the AT but do not require use of the AT to connect to the rest of the trail. In particular the trail that comes off Griggs Mountain crosses the AT and proceeds down the old DOC trail for short distance before connecting to a trail off the AT corridor that then goes to the VAST trails and Sugartop Road. There is also the trail just to the left of this that comes off the VAST trail and goes over Griggs Mountain and eventually connects to Bragg Hill Road. Also the trail that extends straight off of Joshua Road, crosses the AT and then continues straight to connect with Happy Hill Road, along with the parallel trails that branch off this main trunk on the Happy Hill side of the AT. The other crossing is Cossingham Trail that connects to Cossingham Road. The map however seems to indicate that this trail does not fall within the AT corridor.

Thanks, ██████████

---

*Responder #29 (message #2): Tue, Feb 5, 5:48 PM*

I also want to add that since we live very close to the AT we use many of these trails that intersect the AT, but do not cross the trail, to access hiking on the AT, i.e, entering the trail to the north, hiking south and then exiting and hiking back home. Closing these trails would detract from our regular routine and make the AT less accessible to those of us that have long had it part of our life with it right in our backyards.

██████████

---

*Responder #30 (direct contact): Sun, Feb 12, 6:00 PM*

I would like to see all existing trails kept open.

Notes on specific trails/areas:

1. The old AT off the powerline up from Bragg Hill Road. One could go up the powerline to the AT southbound, and take it a ways and instead of going all the way to Cossingham class 4 road, you could get on the old AT (near Silverfarb residence) and go back to the powerline. Makes a great shorter loop.
2. Cossingham class 4 / AT. Good to bike, ski, run, and snowshoe. Continue on to the tee (Joshua stream crossing – Barred Owl trail – Happy Hill), then go onto old AT. Go along stream – great for all activities. Then can go left at stream to Kitchell’s Treefarm or go uphill to the old AT (or

stay on old AT – through pine forest to AT near Tucker Trail). Also great for all activities, and as a route to the Jericho area.

3. Happy Hill – to either Tucker Trail or Barred Owl Trail plus two new bike trails. New bike trails are fun to ride and run; well made. Barred Owl Trail is great to ski, bike, etc. – then across AT to trail to big intersection: left Cossingham, straight Joshua, and right to old AT. Another way to connect neighborhoods.
4. Tucker Trail up AT (basically an old road) – I do bike (and other activities). I bike this to the stream crossing and where old AT to left and new AT to right. A good way to get to Kitchell's Treefarm if go left on old AT; also to snowmobile trail near top of Sugartop. So options here – to Kitchell's, etc. or stay on old AT. Takes you to new AT or Griggs Ridge Trail to top of Griggs. Great place to ski, bike, run, etc. Keep this trail.
5. Five corners – big junction. Where AT, snowmobile trail, trail to Podunk, to Griggs, Cemetery, etc. Keep open – for ski, bike, run, etc. Connects many areas.
6. Then the Podunk class 4 crossings – good for all activities.
7. Some random crossings further down AT towards Hartford.

Where trails cross AT, suggest putting logs & branches across, to help hikers stay on AT, a more-natural approach than signs.

I maintain █ miles of AT from █, and I do not see signs of biking except for a few bike tire marks on Tucker Trail old road, by people going to the old AT. This is not ruining anything.

All locals keep trails and crossings clean and well maintained, except for 2 newer bike trails. Everything has been the same for 30 years that I've been using them, excepting Milt's Trail which was put in awhile ago. It is a great trail and should stay open; it was never officially closed, so we've been using it for many years – another great connector.

Let's work this out!

█

---

*Valley News article by Jared Pendak: Sat, Jan 26*

Norwich — A potential crackdown on unauthorized side trails along the Appalachian Trail corridor in Norwich is forcing longtime users to contend with federally imposed regulations.

As a designated National Scenic Trail, the AT is governed by the National Park Service and, in Vermont, is managed by the Green Mountain National Forest. According to a 2016 inventory of side trails in Norwich administered by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy — an organization that partners with NPS and the U.S. Forest Service to protect and maintain the AT — the approximately 6 miles of the AT that run along the southern boundary of Norwich contain some of highest density of unauthorized side trails within the 2,190-mile trail's entire corridor from Georgia to Maine.

Last fall, about 20 signs endorsed by the U.S. Forest Service and the AT Conservancy were posted to these side trails, alerting users that a review is underway and that any side trail not designated for authorization during an upcoming "proposal process" would be closed this summer.

The signs surprised many side trail users, prompting a December meeting at Montshire Museum between conservancy personnel and other interested parties such as Norwich Trails Committee members.

About 45 people attended as AT Conservancy outreach coordinator Katie Mann, whose office is in White River Junction, and others explained management guidelines for the AT corridor, which includes 500 feet on either side of the sanctioned trail.

One designated side path already exists along the AT in Norwich — the Tucker Trail near Happy Hill — and there are numerous public rights of way on ancient town roads such as Podunk Road and Cossingham Road.

Much of the AT regulations' language is centered on precluding non-foot travel, including a section written in Green Mountain National Forest's 2006 land and resource management plan that reads, "The use of horses, pack animals, dog teams and bicycles shall be prohibited on the AT footpath and within 500 feet of the trail except where it crosses or is located on National Forest System roads, state highways, or town roads."

But a burgeoning network of mountain bike trails has been built during the explosion in the sport's popularity over the last 20 years, including several miles of them in the vicinity of the Tucker Trail.

Many of the additional trails connecting and intersecting with the AT in Norwich pre-date those mountain bike trails — some even pre-date the AT itself, users say — and are used primarily for foot travel. These trails also could be subject to closing, if not designated as side trails, based in part on a 1981 NPS plan document that states, "The (AT) will lie lightly on the land remaining a simple footpath ... retaining a sense of the wild and primeval."

Trail user and longtime Norwich Trails Committee supporter Doug Hardy has argued that many of these side foot trails are primitive and have little or no impact on the wilderness aesthetics of the AT.

"These are informal, small trails that have a long history of use and have not caused damage to the (Appalachian Trail)," Hardy said in a phone interview. "A lot of them were built by private landowners who have conservation easements on their properties, and a big reason why those easements are in place is because they're interested in protecting the land surrounding the AT."

John Wiggin, who said his family has maintained 100 acres near Sugar Top Road since the Civil War era, called the crackdown on side trails "a solution looking for a problem."

"To see these signs posted right before the holiday season was a slap in the face, a punch in the gut," Wiggin said. "It's unfriendly and needless."

Hawk Metheny, regional director for the AT Conservancy, said keeping a close eye on side trails along the AT corridor is important for a number of reasons.

"If a trail is well-established, an AT through-hiker could say, 'Where does this go?' and end up getting lost," Metheny said. "Some of the trails go into sensitive vegetation areas and riparian buffer zones and cause erosion, and once they become established, they can be inviting for (non-foot-travel) uses like mountain biking and motorized use, and then those users might access the AT."

One takeaway from the meeting at Montshire was a suggestion that AT Conservancy personnel offer the public more guidance regarding trail use. Matthew Stevens, a Lyme resident and the AT group's conservation resource manager in Vermont and New Hampshire, has begun working with the Norwich Trails Committee to identify which side trails should become protected as designated side trails.

"It wouldn't be practical to have a sweeping closure of every historic trail through the area, and we understand it's very important to have ongoing community dialogue," said Stevens. "At the same time, it's our responsibility to minimize the impact on a national scenic hiking trail that is managed to stay as wild as possible."

Metheny, the AT Conservancy regional manager, believes the proposal submitted to the Green Mountain National Forest should ultimately request for "one or two" of the unauthorized trails to become designated NPS side trails, based on their importance to the community.

Meanwhile, Hardy is advocating for the status quo for foot travel use — neither closing the trails nor building them into officially designated trails with signage and maintenance schedules.

"If you're trying to maintain as much of a sense of wilderness as possible, it's a paradox if you start marking and maintaining these small side trails," he said. "Accepting or 'sanctioning' any given trail does not mean it has to be built out to any particular standard."

Brian Riordan, president of the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association, said closing the trails built near the AT corridor could undermine his organization's vision to connect more neighborhoods through trail networks. However, he's confident the interested parties will find common ground.

"Ultimately, I think you're going to see collaboration to where it works out for everyone," said Riordan, a Norwich resident. "Everyone involved is involved because they love the wilderness experience."

*Jared Pendak can be reached at [jpendak@vnews.com](mailto:jpendak@vnews.com) or 603-727-3216.*