

The undersigned Norwich trail users – representing walkers, hikers, runners, skiers, bike riders, and horse riders – request that the Norwich Trails Committee (NTC) and Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) not accept or endorse the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) [Proposed Action of 7 June 2021](#). Rather, we request a Modified Proposed Action from GMNF based on an alternative proposal, aligned with AT regulations yet better representing the Norwich trail community's desires.

### *Principles and background*

Three considerations motivate this petition. One is that southern Norwich contains trails within the AT Corridor that many of us have enjoyed for decades, along with areas adjacent to the corridor that we wish to continue accessing (via crossings); a second motivation is keeping our local trail community working cooperatively for the benefit of all users and for protection of the natural environment, rather than squabbling over scraps of trail; thirdly, it cannot be overstated that we as trail users wish to support and assist AT trail managers in protecting our short segment of the national treasure that is the AT. As Sir David Attenborough reminds us, no one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced.

Policies and management guidelines governing the Appalachian Trail (AT) are clearly specified in countless documents. One example from the GMNF 2006 Plan states that “on all NPS-acquired transfer lands [i.e., corridor], the use of horses, pack animals, dog teams, and bicycles shall be prohibited except at designated crossings”. As US citizens and active trail users, we recognize and accept AT management standards and guidelines.

Within the past ten years a couple of short, unauthorized trails were built specifically for bikes within the Norwich AT Corridor. We understand the threat that such unregulated activity could potentially pose to managers, and to the trail itself. During this time there was also discussion of a need for AT multi-use crossings, because creation of the corridor during the 1980s and 1990s bisected an area of long-standing recreational activity; currently we have no multi-use trails or multi-use trail crossings.

In 2016 AT managers initiated a process to learn which unauthorized side trails and crossings were most-frequently used and/or most important to our community of trail users. At least three public meetings were held at which manager's concerns were expressed and community opinions solicited. The signatories below acknowledge that we as a trails community fell short of consensus among active trail users within Norwich, and did not undertake actions required to establish defined trail networks on either side of the corridor, with durable landowner agreements. In short, we failed to follow a February 2019 document provided by managers titled “Guidance and Considerations for the Norwich Trails Committee”.

Nonetheless, NTC and UVMBA submitted a joint request in May 2019 proposing authorization of two existing multi-use trail crossings and two foot-travel-only spur trails. This document supported closure of nine posted trail segments. In response, a GMNF Proposed Action was released in June 2021, accepting one multi-use crossing and two spur foot trails. A public comment period on this action ends on 10 July. As integral partners in the AT's protection and stewardship, we request a Modified Proposed Action from GMNF to better represent the Norwich trail community's desires and responsibilities.

*Preliminary, suggested modifications to the current Proposed Action*

In the five years since management publically raised concerns about unauthorized activity within the Norwich corridor, we are aware of no trail-building activity. Many of us have observed a decrease in bike riding on the AT itself and little change in use within the corridor, and we know of no sites exhibiting natural resource damage due to non-motorized use. This element of management concern appears to have been respected and mitigated. However, we aspire to better community consensus and integration of abutting trail networks through additional GMNF authorizations. The following is a preliminary list of requests we are considering – likely to be modified by community discussion – referencing the map below:

1. Multi-use crossing at Five Corners (yellow pentagon on map). Two old roads enter the corridor here from the north. One is Norwich TH 51, connecting to Burton Woods Road, passing Parkhurst Cemetery and then cellar-holes of a bygone hamlet, and coinciding with a VAST trail AT crossing; this old road, requested for multi-use, extends to the south on protected property from Five Corners (not shown).
2. The old AT within and outside the corridor between Griggs Ridge Trail junction (orange G) and the AT junction at the old Happy Hill shelter (segment F on map). We request this segment as a foot-travel only trail, a safer and more-enjoyable alternative for cross country skiing than along the current AT. Two lightly-used spur trails extend south outside the corridor from this trail to protected properties available to the public (thin white lines with arrows). Another existing trail (segment H) would be closed.
3. Griggs Ridge Trail is a favorite for bike riders, and a difficult connection which occasionally results in riders using the AT to travel west from the Tucker Trail (D on map). We request authorization for a slight westward shift of the trail's southern end within the corridor, permitting a multi-use, right-angle crossing to a new trail which would be cut on protected, private land just south of the corridor – connections from Griggs to the VAST trail and other trails of the Jericho network would become possible, as well as loops through Five Corners.
4. The already-proposed-for-authorization section of the old AT between Joshua Road and the Tucker Trail / new AT junction (Dothan Brook Trail; purple E on map), for foot travel only, with the eastern end authorized as multi-use to permit a connection between trail networks south of the AT (protected properties C, W, and K) with the already-proposed-for-authorization Joshua Trail up to the Tucker Trail (green B on map) and Cossingham Road. This multi-use segment is parallel to yet never less than about 1000 feet from the AT itself.
5. Continued use of the Barred Owl (Fern) Trail for foot travel between the AT and Tucker Trail (segment A on map), reflecting a long history of use. This will complement the Joshua Trail north of the AT (green B on map) which is a sinuous bike trail. The Barred Owl Trail and the Joshua Trail (A and B on map) converge just north of the AT, so retention of this trail does not create an additional crossing.
6. We propose a five-year probationary period for the multi-use authorizations above. Satisfactory community stewardship and protection would be demonstrated by no new side trail cutting, reduced bike traffic on the AT, no resource damage, and absence of complaints by AT users. If negative outcomes are observed during this period, we will accept reduced multi-use access.

Thanks for your consideration.



# Norwich Appalachian Trail Side Trail Crossing

Annotated 2 July 2021 (DRH)  
after USFS map  
115538\_FSPLT3\_5638511.PDF

- Joshua Trail
- Dothan Brook Trail
- Griggs Mountain Trail
- Gate
- Trails to Decommission
- Appalachian Trail
- Trails
- Recreation Site
- USFS Green Mountain National Forest

Supplement to above key:  
Upper-case yellow letters  
refer to abutting properties  
Thin white lines with arrows  
depict side trails extending  
outside the corridor

Area of Minor  
Trail Relocation

HAPPY HILL  
SHELTER

Gate to Relocate

Proposed New Gate

0 500 1,000 2,000  
Feet

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