



Small Projects Day, Section 1: Project Proposal

1. **Responsible Official:** Christopher Mattrick, Rochester/Middlebury District Ranger
2. **Project Name:** Appalachian Trail Side & Corridor Crossing Trail Designations
3. **Project Location:** Town of Norwich, Windsor County, VT
4. **Project Contact:** Seth A. Coffey, 802-767-4261 x5532, seth.coffey@usda.gov
5. **Purpose and Need** (*Why here? Why now? Why is the outcome desired?*):

For many years, the Town of Norwich, Vermont has been a gateway community for the Appalachian Trail (AT), providing recreation opportunities for the residents of Norwich and surrounding communities in both New Hampshire and Vermont. More recently, Norwich has been designated an AT Community and a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Appalachian Trail Community program for actively protecting and promoting the AT in their community. The densely populated areas of the White and Connecticut River Valleys support additional recreation opportunities provided by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA), the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA), and the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT). Several of these recreation opportunities are adjacent to the AT and additionally, several Norwich Town trails and roads run parallel to or cross the AT corridor.

There are several authorized crossings of the AT in this area including the Tucker Trail, legal town roads and trails, and Vermont Association of Snowmobile Trails (VAST) snowmobile trail crossings. Due to the high level of recreational interest in this area, numerous user-made trails have been established to provide connections between existing trail systems to the north and south of the AT corridor. Some of these connections provide loop opportunities for hikers, skiers, horseback riders, and more recently mountain bikers. None of these user-created trails crossing the AT in Norwich are authorized or contained on the National Forest System (NFS) trail network. To curb further development of user-made trails in the Norwich AT corridor, the Norwich Trails Committee (NTC) and the UVMBA worked with the USDA Forest Service (USFS), Green Mountain Club (GMC), and ATC over several years to discuss trail needs in the area. The NTC and UVMBA included the greater Norwich community in a process that focused on which of the existing unauthorized trails would be most valuable to the community.

The result of this effort was a proposal submitted by NTC and UVMBA to the USFS requesting that the following trail segments crossing the AT corridor be added to the NFS trail network: Dothan Brook Trail, Joshua Trail, Meadow Junction Trail, Griggs Junction Trail, and Griggs Mountain Trail. These trails would be managed as Forest Service Class I trails (minimal/undeveloped) within the AT corridor in Norwich. After careful consideration of the proposal, District Ranger Christopher Mattrick, accepted the proposal to add three of the five requested trails: Dothan Brook, Joshua, and Griggs Mountain Trails. The proposal for the Meadow Junction and Griggs Junction Trails was declined due to the presence of authorized and existing adequate loop opportunities a short distance to the east crossing the AT corridor.



6. **Proposed Action** (*What will we be doing? How will we do it? Where is the project located?*):
Is tree cutting included in this proposal? Yes **No**

The following actions relate to existing trail segments are proposed to be added to the NFS system within the AT Management Area in Norwich, VT.

- Designate the **Joshua Trail**, which is the middle of the three existing mountain bike trails between the Tucker Trail and Joshua Road, as an official non-motorized hike/bicycle crossing of the AT. The total trail length to be added to the NFS system is 0.98 miles.
- Designate the **Dothan Brook Trail**, including a small relocation to move the trail fully into the AT corridor, as an official foot-travel only side trail of the AT. The total trail length to be added to the NFS system is 0.93 miles.
- Designate the **Griggs Mountain Trail** as an official foot-travel only side trail of the AT. The total trail length to be added to the NFS system is 0.12 miles.

Joshua Trail: The Joshua Trail would be added to the NFS trail network as a Class I mountain bike trail in its current condition and location on a narrow ridge connecting the Tucker Trail and Joshua Road. Small adjustments to the trail alignment may be necessary to protect natural features along the trail and to rectify any public safety issues. All work would be completed using hand tools. Appropriate directional and guide signs would be installed. No additional trail work to establish the trail is necessary. The existing gate located on the Tucker Trail would be relocated just west of the Joshua Trail intersection with the Tucker Trail to help direct bicyclists to the Joshua Trail. No tree cutting would be required for the Joshua Trail.

Dothan Brook Trail: The Dothan Brook Trail would be added to the NFS trail network as a Class I hiker/pedestrian trail in its current condition and location between Joshua Road and the AT, south of the Tucker Trail/AT intersection. A small trail relocation would be required to move a section of the Dothan Brook Trail into the AT corridor. It currently crosses a small stretch of private land. This relocation would be less than 300 feet and would be performed with hand tools. No trees over 3 inches in diameter would be cut. Other small adjustments to the trail alignment would be necessary to protect natural features along the trail and to rectify any public safety issues. Appropriate directional and guide signs would be installed. A gate, or other traffic control mechanism, where the Dothan Brook Trail intersects Joshua Road would be installed to prohibit motorized vehicle traffic from using the trail.

Griggs Mountain Trail: The Griggs Mountain Trail would be added to the NFS trail network as a Class I hiker/pedestrian trail in its current condition and location, leaving the AT east of Meadow Junction and travelling north to the AT corridor boundary along the shoulder of Griggs Mountain. Small adjustments to the trail alignment may be necessary to protect natural features along the trail and to rectify any public safety issues. Appropriate directional and guide signs would be installed. No tree cutting would be required for the Griggs Mountain Trail.

In conjunction with the above trail designations, mitigation measures would be undertaken to reduce several of the user-made trails that currently exist on AT corridor lands in Norwich. Two unauthorized mountain bike trails that traverse the same ridge as the proposed Joshua Trail would be closed. Five user-made trails in the area adjacent to the proposed Griggs Mountain Trail would be closed: two south of the approved Griggs Mountain Trail's intersection with the AT, two north of Meadow Junction, and one located south of the AT between the Griggs Mountain Trail and the side trail to Happy Hill Shelter.



Mitigation measures to be used include the placement of signs informing and educating the public why trails are being closed. Brush and other forest debris would be placed in the trail tread as well as incorporating the use of other revegetation methods, such as transplanting saplings and ferns. These remedial actions would be accomplished by the NTC and UVMBA.

7. Forest Plan Management Area: Appalachian National Scenic Trail

8. Forest Plan Compliance (*How does this project comply with the Land & Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) direction?*):

The direction and desired future condition for recreation management in the Appalachian National Scenic Trail management area is to provide non-motorized trail opportunities for those on foot and pedestrian means, such as skis and snowshoes. Recreation use will be evident although the type and intensity of use may vary by season. Roads and designated motorized trail crossings will be the only evidence of motorized use. Recreation impacts will be managed to protect cultural and natural resources and to minimize visual disturbance. Recreation management of the AT will be towards the desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) of Semi-primitive Non-motorized.

Designation of the Dothan Brook and Griggs Mountain Trails would address the resource issue of multiple user-made trails in the AT corridor in Norwich by providing the public with specific sanctioned recreation opportunities on hiking trails clearly marked on the ground. (Recreation; Forest Plan Guideline G-3). Management activities would not result in a change along the ROS class of Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized because both trails would be minimally developed and maintained as Class I hiking trails (Recreation; Forest Plan Guideline G-4). The NTC would work in conjunction with the ATC, GMC, and USFS to inform and educate trail users about the designated side trails and the closure of other user-made trails in the Norwich AT corridor (Non-Motorized Trails; Forest Plan Guideline G-3).

The Joshua Trail would provide a single designated crossing of the AT corridor in Norwich for bicycles providing a connection to multiple loop opportunities for trail users on the north and south side of the AT corridor (Non-Motorized; Forest Plan Standard S-1; and Guideline G-2). Management activities would not result in a change to the ROS class of Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized. The Joshua Trail would be minimally developed and maintained as Class I bicycle trail (Recreation; Forest Plan Guideline, G-4). The UVMBA would work in conjunction with the ATC, GMC, and USFS to inform and educate bicyclists about the designated crossing trail and the closure of other user-made bicycle trails in the Norwich AT corridor (Non-Motorized Trails; Forest Plan Guideline G-3).

Additionally, the designation of the Dothan Brook, Griggs Mountain, and Joshua Trails meet Hiking Trails (Forest Plan Standard S-1, and Guideline G-1) under the Appalachian National Scenic Trail management area direction.



9. Exclusion Category:

36 CFR 220.6 (e)(1) *Construction and reconstruction of trails; and*

36 CFR 220.6 (e)(20) *Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, including unauthorized roads and trails and National Forest System roads and National Forest System trails, to a more natural condition that may include removing, replacing, or modifying drainage structures and ditches, reestablishing vegetation, reshaping natural contours and slopes, reestablishing drainage-ways, or other activities that would restore site productivity and reduce environmental impacts.*

10. Expected Implementation Date: Summer/fall of 2021.

