

# Ethics, Standards & Guiding Principles

ASCENT - Apply Skills and Conserve our Environment with New Tools

Promoting Sustainable Access to Uplands & Natural Environments

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin  
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST  
Caring for Mourne

Where are ASCENT's sites located?

ASCENT brings together Local and Environmental Authorities to collectively address the environmental challenges facing 7 Northern European upland areas in the 5 partner regions of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Iceland, Finland and Norway.  
ASCENT is funded by the *Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020* [click](#)

1 Slieve Donard, Northern Ireland

2 Errigal Mountain, Ireland

3 Trolltunga, Norway

4 Slieve Gullion, Northern Ireland

5 Lillstjärnsfjäll Mountain, Iceland

6 Hessa Region, Finland

7 Geopite Eldraun, Iceland

## T1.2

# Guiding Principles and Policy Development for Upland Path Management

by Newry Mourne and Down District Council and Mourne Heritage Trust and researcher, Marc Vinas, Ecologist

# Ethics, Standards and Guiding Principles, for Managing Increased Erosion in Environmentally Sensitive Landscapes December 2017

---

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Glossary of Abbreviations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Glossary of Working Groups</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. Upland Path Work Review Table</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Upland Path Ethics, Standards and Guiding Principles</b>	<b>7</b>
5.1 UK	7
5.2 USA	13
5.3 Ireland and Northern Ireland	20
5.4 Canada	22
5.5 Australia	23
5.6 Argentina	24
5.7 Spain	24
<b>6. ASCENT Workshop; Managing Upland Paths – Are Good Principles Enough?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7. Summary and Recommendations</b>	<b>27</b>

---

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

This report delivers against ASCENT activity target T1.2.1 Production of Guiding principles and review of best practice toolkits.

T1.2.1 will build local, national and international capacity in path management including the review of research literature, collation of existing reports and toolkits, and a synthesis linked to practical use of such findings. The activity will therefore develop guiding principles for the development of Upland Path Management Policy and utilise research to construct and define a more robust and sustainable path management and development technique in pilot sites across the NPA region using new tools and acquired skills.

It provides an assessment of existing Ethics, Standards and Guiding Principles for managing increased erosion in environmentally-sensitive landscapes, with the aim of identifying best practice to inform an agreed ASCENT overarching approach that all partners aspire to. This helps establish a consistent approach across NPA countries and helps reinforce wider management continuity.

It describes the development of best practice standards in the UK and Ireland and presents examples from an international perspective, including the USA, South America, Australia and mainland Europe.

In particular, it profiles the 'Helping the Hills' principles (see 5.3 (6) page 27) and suggests that they could be adopted as the agreed ASCENT guiding principles, albeit with some minor amendments:

[http://www.helpingthehills.ie/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=33&Itemid=38](http://www.helpingthehills.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=33&Itemid=38)

The report also summarises an ASCENT workshop entitled Managing Upland Paths – Are Good Principles Enough? held on 22 and 23 November 2017 in Newcastle, Co. Down, Northern Ireland, where approximately 80 representatives from stakeholders across the UK, Ireland and Iceland met to Review Upland Path Principles And Their Applicability For Land Managers, Practitioners And Local Communities, Who Are Responding To Increased Erosion In Environmentally Sensitive Landscapes. Key themes included: common challenges, shared experience, innovation and policy development.

This workshop identified a set of key issues to address if sustainable access management were to be possible and made recommendations for adopting the Helping the Hills principles and initial actions that could be taken forward by ASCENT partners, participants and their represented organisation to this end.

## Chapter 2

# Glossary of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Organisation
<b>ANPA</b>	Argentina National Parks Authority
<b>ATC</b>	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
<b>BMC</b>	British Mountaineering Council
<b>BUFP</b>	British Upland Footpath Trust
<b>CCW</b>	Countryside Council of Wales
<b>HCESC</b>	House of Commons Environment Select Committee
<b>IMBA</b>	International Mountain Bike Association
<b>ISC</b>	Irish Sports Council
<b>JMT</b>	John Muir Trust
<b>KNP</b>	Kingborough National Park
<b>LDNPA</b>	Lake District National Park Authority
<b>LDUMG</b>	Lake District Upland Management Group
<b>MDNR</b>	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
<b>MI</b>	Mountaineering Ireland
<b>NE</b>	Nature England
<b>NPS</b>	National Park Service (USA)
<b>NT</b>	National Trust
<b>NTfs</b>	National Trust for Scotland
<b>NTO</b>	National Trails Office (Ireland)
<b>PNAP</b>	Parc Natural de l'Alt Pirineu
<b>RSA</b>	Recreation South Australia-Trails Sub Committee
<b>SNH</b>	Scottish Natural Heritage
<b>SNPA</b>	Snowdonia National Park Authority
<b>SUPP</b>	Snowdonia Upland Paths Partnership
<b>TFOC</b>	Trails for all Ontarians Collaborative
<b>UPAG</b>	Upland Path Advisory Group
<b>HPNP</b>	High Pyrenees Natural Park
<b>USDA-FS</b>	United States Department of Agriculture-Forest Service

## Chapter 3

# Glossary of Working Groups

Group	Organizations	Year
Lake District Access Management Group	LDNPA-NT-NE	1992
Upland Path Advisory Group	SNH-NTfS	1998

## Chapter 4

# Upland Path Work Review Table

Country	Document - Project	Source	Year	Site-Location	No. of Principles
UK	Percy Unna's Guiding Principles	NTfS	1937	Scotland	7
	Upland Path Erosion Guiding Principles: The National Standards	LDUMG-BUFT	1995	Lake District	8
	Mending our ways: The quality approach	BUFP	1998	Lake District	12
	Wild Land Policy	NTfS	2002	Scotland	4+7
	Footpath Management	JMT	2011	Scotland	10
	Pathwork Principles for Scotland	UPAG	2015	Scotland	13
USA	National Trails Act	U.S. Laws	1976	-	Trail classes identification
	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)	USDA-FS	1979	-	Recreation experience levels
	Appalachian Trail: Design, construction and maintenance	ATC	1982	-	6
	Limits of Acceptable Challenge (LAC)	FS	1985	-	Visitor carrying capacity
	Sustainable Trails	NPS	1991	Rocky Mountains	6
	Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Trails	USDA-FS	1996	-	3
	Wilderness Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS)	USDA-FS	1996	-	Standard Trail Definition
	The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP)	NPS	1997	-	Management goals + LAC
	National Quality Standards for Quality Recreational Management	USDA-FS	2002	-	4
	Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook	USDA-FS	2007	-	6
	Trail Planning, Design & Development Guidelines	MDNR	2007	Minnesota	9
	The Forest Service Trails Accessibility Guidelines	FS	2013	-	2
	Trail Fundamentals and Trail Management Objectives	USDA-FS	2016	Federal	Trail class - Design parameters

<b>Ireland</b>	Irish Trail Strategy	ISC	2007	-	Strategy principles & guidelines
	Management Standards for Recreational Trails	NTO-ISC	2008	-	4
	Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails	NTO-ISC	2008	-	Trail classes description
	A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland	NTO-ISC	2012	-	Trail planners practical advice
	Principles to guide the management of path erosion in Ireland's upland areas (Helping the Hills)	MI	2013	-	16
<b>Others</b>	Design, Construction and Maintenance of Sustainable Trails	TFOC	2006	Canada	14
	Guidelines principles for recreational trails in South Australia	RSA	2016	Australia	6
	Kingborough Tracks and Trails	KNP	2017	Tasmania	7
	Design, construction and maintenance of trails in natural areas	ANPA	2004	Argentina	8
	Trail Solutions: Guide for the mountain bike trails	IMBA	2004	Spain	4
	Technical criteria for the restoration of traditional trails	UPNP	2006	Spain	8

# Upland Path Ethics, Standards and Guiding Principles

## 5.1

## UK

---

### 5.1.1

#### Unna's Principle

to guide management of mountainous areas. Scottish Mountaineering Club, 1937

Percy Unna, a highly-competent and well-travelled mountaineer, who was the president of the Scottish Mountaineering Club at the time, was the driving force and main personal contributor to a successful appeal to mountaineering clubs to raise the finance needed to acquire the major part of Glencoe in 1937. This was then gifted to the National Trust for Scotland.

In entrusting the NTfS with the care of this premier mountaineering property, Unna drew up principles for its future management, which have guided the management of all the Trust's mountainous properties. From his letter to the Chairman and council to the National Trust for Scotland in November 1937, have been extracted the prescriptions, which are the early upland path principles:

- The public may have unrestricted access at all times.
- The land will be maintained in its primitive condition.
- 'Unrestricted' does not exclude regulations.
- The hills should not be made easier or safer to climb.
- Paths should not be extended or improved.
- New paths should not be made.
- No directional or other signs should be allowed.

The letter finishes as follows: "...the present instance may create a precedent for similar areas in other mountainous districts, not only in Scotland, but also in England and Wales".

The Unna Principles are still the key reference point when the National Trust for Scotland is considering management of mountainous properties. However, while still valuable, they are, in many ways, a 'period piece'. The Principles represent what was then the consensus view of the mountaineering community, of which Unna was a leading light and driving force. At the time, the Principles were part of ongoing free debate and not necessarily considered sacrosanct. While somewhat overlooked by the Trust from about 1970 to 1990, the relevance of the Principles re-emerged in the 1990s and played a key part in shaping thinking about management of properties such as West Affric and Mar Lodge Estate. Hence, the NTfS Wild Land Policy, initially draft in the 1990s, complements rather than replaces the Unna Principles.

### 5.1.2

#### Upland Path Erosion Guiding Principles. Lake District Upland Access Management Group, 1995

Although distinctive, local problems were recognised in some of the earliest path work in the UK, and undoubtedly played some part in inhibiting further work on paths - especially in remote parts of the mountains - the shortcomings of technique became more evident and explicit from the late 1980s. During that period, with a substantial increase in an aggregate effort devoted to upland path work, path repairs began to extend higher and further into the hills and to tackle more difficult sites. These concerns became explicit years later at the British Upland Footpath Trust Conference held at Glenmore Lodge in 1998, where path professionals from all over the UK considered current approaches to path repairs.

In 1993, three key organisations came together to work jointly on the maintenance and repair of upland footpaths in the Lake District. The National Trust, English Nature and the Lake District National Park Authority formed the Upland Access Management Group.

The following principles were formulated by this group, and were adapted from the British Mountaineering Council policy statement on the repair and management of upland paths. They were adopted by the House of Commons Environment Select Committee (in 1995) as the best practice guidelines to establish a nationwide approach for the repair and maintenance of upland footpaths.

The repair and maintenance of paths in open country are subject to the following considerations:

- Repairs are necessary to prevent or ameliorate visual intrusion and environmental damage.
- Works should be of a high standard of design and implementation using indigenous materials, and should be sympathetic in colour and texture to the immediate surrounding area. Uniformity of construction should be avoided, e.g., steps.
- Techniques used should protect existing vegetation and only locally occurring plant species should be used in restoration. Non-local species will be accepted only where necessary as a nurse crop and where natural succession will rapidly result in their disappearance.
- The more remote the path, the more stringently the criteria for path repairs should be applied. This will be a matter of judgment but, in general, the more remote or wild the location, the less acceptable an obviously engineered path will be.
- Repaired paths should be suitable to the route's use and constructed on a scale appropriate for the intended use as a footpath, bridleway or byway.
- Before any repair work is agreed, the question should be asked 'is there a better solution?'
- The use of waymarks, cairns or other intrusive features, other than those traditionally established on summits and path junctions. will be discouraged.
- A sustained commitment of resources to path management will be sought, so that small- scale continuous maintenance can replace infrequent major repairs as the normal method of path management.

### 5.1.3

#### **Mending Our Ways. British Upland Footpath Trust, 1998.**

Mending our Ways aimed to develop a quality approach through sharing knowledge, commitment and establishing consensus, and clarified the above principles (considered to be the de facto National Standards) and the important issues for managing upland paths. It aimed to promote the highest standards of footpath work in the mountains, fells and moorlands of Britain.

- Path work should comprise the minimum required.
- Regular monitoring to prevent erosion with routine management.
- Pre-emptive work may prevent major repairs (drainage control and vegetation management).
- Use appropriate, local, natural materials if major repairs are unavoidable.
- If man-made materials are unavoidable, these should be permanently hidden.
- Avoid uniformity (variation of angle and width of the path), avoiding formal steps or regular "stepping".
- Restore and enhance surrounding environment (recolonisation of native species, landscaping with and around natural features).
- Make the path appropriate and better to use than surrounding ground through landscaping.
- Minimise future maintenance with durable materials.
- Do the minimum to remedy and prevent future erosion.
- Where major repairs are necessary, sensitive management should be stringently employed.
- Programmed maintenance to prevent further major work.

#### 5.1.4

##### **Wild Land Policy – National Trust for Scotland, 2002.**

Management of areas with wild land quality may involve several aspects including: management to influence physical features, visitor management (including education and interpretation) and managing impacts on the landscape. The manner in which any management activity is carried out is vital to conserving wild land quality:

- Management should be unobtrusive and sensitive.
- The standard of work must be appropriate.
- Human footprint should be very light.

It is recognised that wild land quality can be enhanced, in some cases fairly easily, if there is the will to do so. Previous examples of such approaches on Trust property include the promotion of 'the long walk in' to mountainous areas and the removal of intrusive, high altitude tracks.

- Where possible, positive management designed to enhance wild land quality will be pursued.

As mentioned above, the National Trust for Scotland Wild Land Policy complements rather than replaces the Unna Principles.

#### 5.1.5

##### **Footpath Management – John Muir Trust, 2011**

The Trust's vision is that connection with nature and wild places will improve the health and well-being of our nation, and people will be supported and encouraged to make these connections – thereby reversing the current devaluing of wildness. The Trust takes a pre-emptive approach to keep trails wild and costs low.

- The John Muir Trust does not advocate the construction of new paths in or into wild land.
- The Trust will maintain an 'access neutral' approach to path management on its land (i.e., maintain what is there rather than extend access).
- Achievement through sensitive low-key works on existing paths in order to prevent excessive wear and erosion of surrounding habitats, while keeping visual intrusion to a minimum.

- Presumption of minimum signage on paths.
- The management of each section of the path will always take into account: 'wild land nature' setting and the immediate surrounding landscape; variations in the nature of the path at different sections; maintenance of maximum variation in path width between different sections.
- A programme of monitoring of the condition of each path will be established and incorporated into the management plan for each property. The principal paths on each property will be surveyed using the 'Amber Survey' approach in order to prioritise resources, plan work and maintain continuity of approach across different properties.
- Some erosion may be more acceptable than engineered path repairs – especially at higher altitudes.
- In general, best practice in line with the Upland Path Action Groups Construction Standards will be followed but with a strong emphasis on a 'low impact and low engineering' approach following guidance from the Upland Footpath Trust.
- Sensitive techniques (such as subtle path realignment) are preferred over more engineered approaches.
- On-site materials are used wherever possible.

### 5.1.6

#### Upland Path Advisory Group for Pathwork in Scotland, 2015

At the same time as the National Standards were developed, a path skills group worked to raise the general standard of Scottish upland path management through a formal training programme and the publication of a technical standards manual for basic path repair techniques. There was also further rapid expansion of the framework to initiate and manage upland path works. All of these were evidence of a growing critical mass in path repair work, but also generated growing practical concerns over the style, standard, and durability of the repairs being applied to the upland areas.

- Path work will be carried out within a coherent management framework, including a commitment to long-term maintenance. It will integrate with other management objectives.
- An understanding of the underpinning philosophy and practice of path improvement is required of managing and funding agencies.
- Path work will be generated by area survey and prioritisation.
- Priority will be given to curtailing and restoring environmental damage, while also enhancing visitor experience.
- Environmental sensitivities will be given stringent regard, particularly in sites of outstanding landscape and/or natural heritage quality.
- Management of the path will be informed by suitable consultation with interested parties.
- The purpose of the path and its expected use will be defined and the path built to fit this purpose.
- Path work will be of the highest standard of design and implementation, preferably using locally-sourced materials in harmony with the site.
- Good environmental practice will be paramount. No material won in works will be wasted.

- Techniques used will protect existing vegetation and cultural remains and the site will be left in as natural a state as is practicable.
- Those involved in the design, implementation and supervision of path work should be demonstrably professionally, and technically competent.
- All work will be carried out in accordance with legal obligations and the requirements of current health and safety legislation.
- Accessibility needs to be balanced with the need to build upland paths as sensitively and unobtrusively as possible.

UK upland path work handbooks including standard principles and guidance:



1996



2016



2015

## 5.1.7

### Related Projects and Appeals across UK

#### 5.1.7.1



National Parks: Lake District, North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales, Peak District, Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons, Exmoor, Dartmoor. Mend Our Mountains consists of eight projects across England and Wales benefitting from funding and commenced two years ago. Now, this appeal is asking supporters to step up to the challenges, with the aim of raising £1 million for a range of vital projects within the UK's entire family of 15 National Parks, encompassing England, Wales and Scotland. This appeal is a 'sequel' to the first Mend Our Mountains campaign, which raised £103,832 through crowdfunding in the spring of 2016 and was named 'Campaign of the Year'.

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/mend-our-mountains-returns-with-1-million-target-for-britains-bestloved-landscapes>



#### 5.1.7.2

The Footpath Foundation. National Trust for Scotland Donation Campaign. The Mountains For the People fixed-term project funded large-scale works, which have been carried out across several National Trust for Scotland properties. Over the past four years, the project has seen the successful restoration of paths in Torridon, Glencoe and Arran. It supported an aftercare programme, which will enable the Mountain Path Team to tackle the lower-priority sections of mountain paths. The Mountains for People project would not have been possible without the support of donations from the Footpath Fund Appeal. The focus on aftercare was an essential part of the initiative. There are currently four full-time members of staff (the Mountain Path Team), who cover Arran, Torridon, Glencoe, Ben Lomond and Ben Lawers all year, simply carrying out maintenance and small-scale restoration work on the mountain paths.

<https://www.nts.org.uk/Campaign/The-Footpath-Fund>





### 5.1.7.3

The Mountains and The People is a 10-year landscape scale project. It is the flagship project of the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland, and is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund in partnership with Scotland's two National Park Authorities (the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs), Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

To achieve its vision, the project will deliver a wide range of physical improvements on the ground as well as opportunities for people to get involved in conservation and in learning about the mountains within Scotland's National Parks.

All activities will deliver the following objectives:

- Respect: public engagement, awareness raising and next-step guiding walks.
- Reskill: training opportunities, apprenticeships and educational resources.
- Repair: capital investment in 125km of path repair, 1,200 days of conservation volunteering and path public adoption initiative.

<http://themountainsandthepeople.org.uk/>



### 5.1.7.4

The John Muir Trust (Scotland) pathwork is funded entirely from donations. It recommends monthly direct debits as a funding mechanism as it allows the Trust to better plan this vital work year on year. Donations help to care for - and maintain - paths through wild places for the adventurer in all; help to protect fragile plants, animals and soils from erosion and disturbance; deliver local employment and over 600 hours training a year to volunteers, students and conservation groups; assist local communities in places like Knoydart and Assynt with their path repairs and provide a fast response to repair paths after unexpected damage such as rockfalls. <https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/support-us/campaigns/855-wild-ways-path-appeal>



### 5.1.7.5

A partnership project involving the Lake District National Park, the National Trust and Natural England has been addressing the problem of recreational damage to paths over recent years. It encourages greater understanding of and support for access to the fells by both existing users and identified target audiences. It provides training and development for staff, volunteers and contractors involved in the project. It continues repairing seriously-eroded landscapes and associated paths. It concentrates on transferring the practical work away from the larger projects, towards smaller, pre-emptive type works. <http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/projects/fixthefells>

---

## 5.2

# USA

---

### 5.2.1

## Appalachian Trail Conservancy: Management of a 2,190 Mile Long Footpath, 1922-2017

In October 1921, a forester named Benton MacKaye from Shirley, Massachusetts, published an article in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects entitled An Appalachian Trail - A Project in Regional Planning. His bold vision was a regional plan for the ridges and valleys comprising the Appalachian Province, which extends from Maine to Georgia. He envisioned a 'long trail... from the highest peak in the north to the highest peak in the south - from Mt. Washington to Mt. Mitchell'. He proposed to divide the trail in sections, each to be in the immediate charge of a local group of people. MacKaye anticipated that difficulties could arise over the use of private property, but added that such matters could be addressed 'if there were sufficient local public interest in the project as a whole'.

In 1921, parts of the trail already existed, largely as a result of the efforts of independent volunteer organisations such as the Appalachian Mountain Club founded in 1876. In 1922, MacKaye led the first effort to develop the Appalachian Trail by organising a small group in Washington, DC. In 1925, the first Appalachian Trail Conference was held in Washington, DC, resulting in the establishment of a permanent trail body with an executive committee.

In 1938, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service signed an agreement to extend the trailway one mile on either side of the trail, where no new parallel roads or incompatible development would be permitted. In 1939, a trailway agreement was executed for state-owned lands, establishing a protected zone of one-quarter mile on either side of the trail.

Today, the Appalachian Trail is 2,178.3 miles long and extends from Maine to Georgia within a protected 250,000 acre greenway. In Pennsylvania, except for a few short sections along highways, the trail's 229-mile route is within a protected corridor of varying dimensions, consisting of lands owned largely by the National Park Service and state agencies.

The entire Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia is maintained by 30 volunteer trail clubs.

After years of path work, the first handbook was edited in the 1980s. The following principles have been extracted from the book Appalachian Trail: Design, construction and maintenance, 1982:

- 'Before you rush out on the trail, tools in hand, we suggest you always ask yourself a few simple questions that will guide you in preserving the experience:
- Will my work protect the natural resources of the trail and its adjacent lands?
- Will my work protect the Appalachian Trail's diversity of character?
- How can I do my work in the least obtrusive manner?
- Does my work diminish the sense of solitude or unnecessarily remove challenges to hikers' skill or stamina?
- Will my work inappropriately affect the primitive quality of the trail?
- Will my work ensure that future generations of hikers enjoy a primitive recreational experience?'

In the 1960s the USDA-Forest Service developed responses to rapidly-growing recreational use and the increasing impact on resources.

# SOLITUDE CHALLENGE

SELF RELIANCE

# SECURITY COMFORT

SOCIALIZING

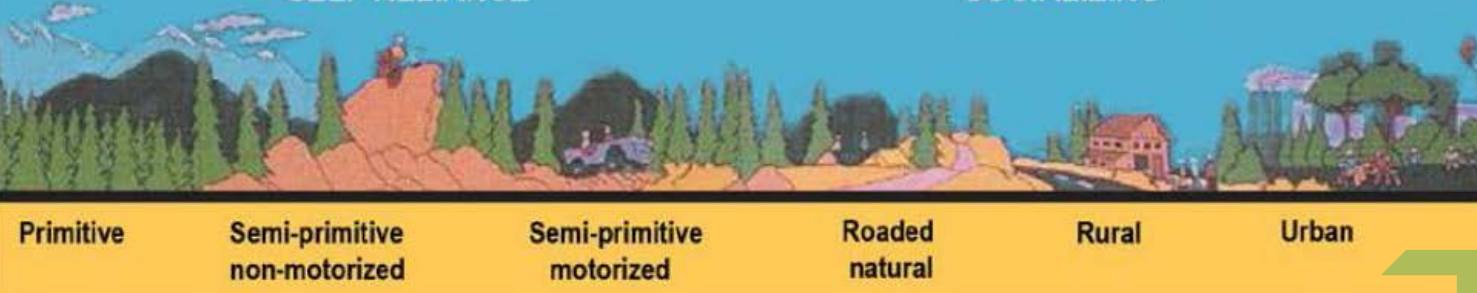


Figure 1. ROS settings illustration (source: Visitor Use Management Framework. A Guide to Providing Sustainable Outdoor Recreation – U.S. Visitor Use Management Council, 2016).

## 5.2.2

### National Trails Act

#### (U.S. Laws, Statutes, etc.1976b)

Recognises three classes of trails varying in purpose, permitted uses, and adjacent development. The National Trails Act was enacted 50 years ago, when outdoor enthusiasts and congressional champions demanded free-flowing rivers and trails to connect people to the outdoors

## 5.2.3

### The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

A Framework for Planning, Management and Research, 1979. USDA-Forest Service recognises five recreation experience levels, ranging from those offering challenge, solitude, and demanding high skills, to those involving extensive facilities and few skills. The illustration below (Figure 1) represents the range of settings included in the ROS.

The ROS provides a framework for integrating recreational opportunities and non-recreational activities. Modern opportunities are generally characterised as more highly-organised and regulated than are primitive types. But the 'principle of minimum regimentation' should apply across the spectrum. We should regiment only as much as necessary to protect the qualities of the opportunity in question (Stankey and Baden 1977). Ideally, the most primitive opportunities should have few regimenting influences. With the reality of increasing pressures from use of primitive settings, regimentation may be necessary to protect the integrity of the opportunity and to ensure its use into the future.

This is particularly true where management objectives call for the preservation of naturalness. After the establishment of the opportunity classes, factors of resource and social conditions were selected to describe the classes more precisely. Then, for each factor, one or more indicators were chosen (see Figure 3 page 14).

Thus, management actions that might otherwise be appropriate for protecting an area (facilities, onsite management etc.) would not be satisfactory if they themselves would alter natural integrity. Control of visitation would be necessary, and such measures have been instituted in several Wilderness Areas and in National Park back country (Stankey 1979, Fazio and Gilbert 1974). Each factor is displayed graphically in Figure 2. The range of conditions that a management factor can have (for example, from very easy to very difficult access), represents relative rather than absolute limits of what is acceptable and appropriate along the ROS.

## 5.2.4

### Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) System for Wilderness Planning. Forest Service, 1985.

The LAC is a framework for establishing acceptable and appropriate resources and social conditions in recreation settings. The LAC has been developed in response to the need of managers for a means of coping with increasing demands on recreational areas in a visible, logical fashion. The LAC also represents a reformulation of the recreational carrying capacity concept, with the primary emphasis now on the conditions desired in the area rather than on how much use an area can tolerate.

## 5.2.5

### Sustainable Trails. National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 1991

- It supports current and future use with minimal impact to the area's natural systems.
- It produces negligible soil loss or movement, while allowing vegetation to inhabit the area.
- It recognises that pruning or removal of certain plants may be necessary for proper maintenance.
- It does not adversely affect the area's animal life.
- It accommodates existing use, while allowing only appropriate future use.
- It requires little rerouting and minimal long-term maintenance.

## 5.2.6

### Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Trails. USDA-Forest Service, 1996

- Section 915 – Existing Trail Restoration.
- Work consists of restoring the original trail template.
- Conserve and use suitable material.

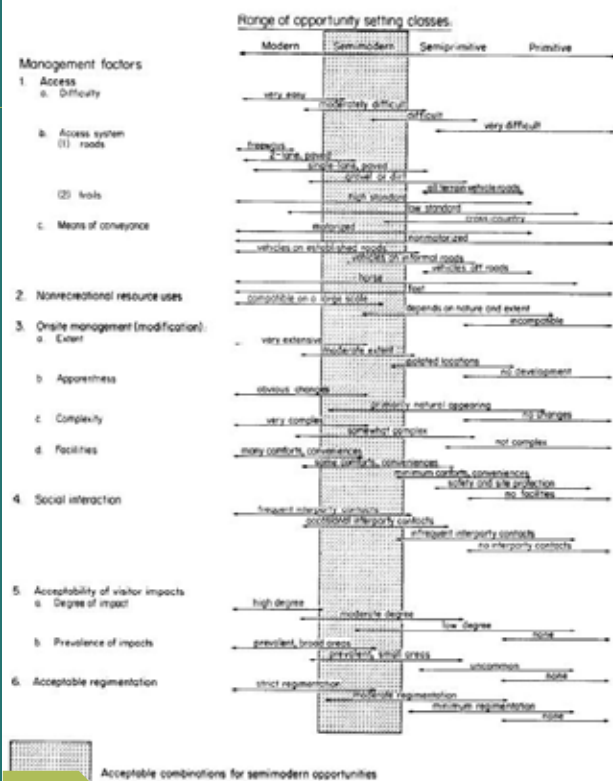


Figure 2. Factors defining outdoor recreation opportunity settings (source: The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, A framework for planning, Management and Research – USDA Forest Service, 1979).

Factors and Indicators Considered for the Imagination Peaks Wilderness		
Factor		Indicator
<b>SOCIAL</b>		
A. Solitude while traveling	1.	Number of other parties met per day while traveling
B. Campsite solitude	2.	Number of other parties camped within sight or sound per day
<b>RESOURCE</b>		
<b>C. Trail conditions</b>		
	3.	Percent of trail system miles (km) with multiple trails
	4.	Percent of trail system miles (km) with severe erosion (entrenchment of over 4 ft <sup>2</sup> [1.3 m <sup>2</sup> ] cross-section) and/or very muddy, boggy areas 10 ft (3 m) or longer
<b>D. Campsite conditions</b>		
	5.	Number of campsites per 500-acre (200-ha) area (a circle 1 mile [1.6 km] in diameter)
	6.	Square feet (m <sup>2</sup> ) of revegetated area within any 5-acre (2-ha) circle
	7.	Condition class rating (a composite rating based on the severity of a number of impacts on the campsite, with class 1 very minimally impacted and class 5 severely impacted (Cole 1983; Friswell 1978))
	8.	Degree of forage utilization
E. Range conditions	9.	Population trend for threatened and endangered species (associated with probable human causes)
F. Threatened and endangered species		

Figure 3. Factors and indicators considered for the 'imagination peaks wilderness' (source: The Limits of Acceptable Change System for Wilderness Planning – USDA Forest Service, 1985).

### 5.2.7

#### **Wilderness Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS). USDA-Forest Service, 1996**

Further development of ROS

Standard Definitions for primitive class trails:

- System trails are present in this class generally at low density.
- Some desire lines may exist, but are not encouraged for use and rarely upgraded to system trails.
- If user-developed trails become well established, management action should be taken to rehabilitate damage and discontinue use.
- Reroutes of existing trails may be done to protect resources or to meet wilderness objectives.
- New trail construction in trail-less sites or to new destinations must be considered in the Forest Planning process.
- Facilities that are essential for resource protection and visitor safety are appropriate in this class.
- Only native or natural appearing construction materials will be used. There will be no facilities provided for user comfort or convenience.

### 5.2.8

#### **The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP)**

Framework A: Handbook for Planners and Managers. Department of Interior – National Park Service, 1997

In 1992 the National Park Service began developing this framework to address visitor use management and carrying capacity issues in the units of the national park system.

- Goals in conflict identification: for example protection of environmental conditions and visitor experiences (goal 1) and unrestricted access to resources for recreational use (goal 2).

- Establish that both goals must be compromised: if one or the other goal cannot be compromised, then the LAC process is not needed. One goal must simply be compromised as necessary to meet the one that cannot be compromised.
- Decide which goal will ultimately constrain the other: in the case of national parks, the goal of protecting environmental conditions and visitors' experiences will almost always constrain the goal of unrestricted access.
- LAC Standards for ultimately constraining goals: these standards express minimally acceptable conditions for the environment and visitor.
- Compromise the constraining goal until the standards are reached: allow the environmental conditions and visitor experiences to degrade only to the minimally acceptable standard. Recreational access should not be substantially restricted until the standards are reached.
- Compromise the other goal as much as necessary: once standards for environmental conditions and visitor experiences are reached no more degradation is allowed, and recreational access is restricted as needed to maintain standards.

### 5.2.9

#### **Meaningful Measures for Quality Recreational Management: Recreation Sites**

National Quality Standards. USDA - Forest Service, 2002.

- Effects of recreational use do not conflict with environmental.
- Landscape character at the developed recreation site is consistent with the scenic integrity objectives.
- Visitors do not exceed site capacity.
- Constructed features are serviceable and in good repair throughout the designed service life.

### 5.2.10

#### **Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook. USDA - Forest Service, 2007**

- Sustainability of the trails: trails that do not harm the natural environment and are going to be maintained so that they are there for a long time.
- Decide what can be accomplished as basic maintenance.
- A good trail may appear to have 'just happened'.
- Design and construct your trail to fit the land.
- Your trail must be more obvious, easier to travel, and more convenient than the alternatives or you are wasting your time and money.
- Well-designed trails take advantage of natural drainage features, reducing maintenance that might be needed, while meeting the needs of the users.

### 5.2.11

#### **Trail Planning, Design & Development Guidelines. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2007**

- Avoid sensitive ecological areas.
- Develop trails in areas already influenced by human activity.
- Provide buffers to protect sensitive ecological and hydrologic systems.
- Develop appropriately when trails intersect with sensitive areas. The above discussion notwithstanding, trail development and maintenance across, along, and within sensitive areas is often desirable and justifiable. Streams need to be crossed, slopes traversed, and features interpreted.

- Allowing controlled access to sensitive ecological areas may be an integral part of educating the public about the value of protecting them. Most often, this takes the form of routing a corridor trail on the periphery of a sensitive area (with adequate buffers) and allowing more direct access to specific settings only in very select locations, and with appropriate trail forms (such as boardwalks and bridges) for closer observation. This approach provides reasonable access while limiting the potential for environmental impact and can also be developed in conjunction with an environmental education programme. In addition, any trail development should also be consistent with Resource Management Plans.
- Use natural infiltration and best practices for storm water management.
- Limit tread of erosion through design and construction.
- Provide ongoing stewardship of the trails.
- Ensure trails remain sustainable.
- Formally decommission and restore unsustainable trail corridors.

### 5.2.12

#### **The Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG), 2013.**

- Provides guidance for maximising accessibility of trails while protecting the unique characteristics of their natural setting.
- Class Trail Definition: for those in the category 'minimally developed'. Single lane with no allowances constructed for passing and predominantly native materials. Obstacles common, naturally occurring, and intended to provide increased challenges. Structures minimal to non-existent. Natural and unmodified, typically primitive.

### 5.2.13

## Trail Fundamentals and Trail Management Objectives. USDA - Forest Service, 2016.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, updated the Trail Fundamentals and Trail Management Objectives in September 2016 to improve readability and layout, and to reflect agency printing guidelines.

The Trail Fundamentals are five concepts that are cornerstones of trail management:

- Trail type
- Trail class
- Managed use
- Designed use
- Design parameters

The Trail Class Matrix at Figure 4 shows the combination of Trail Class and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) or Wilderness Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS) settings that commonly occur.


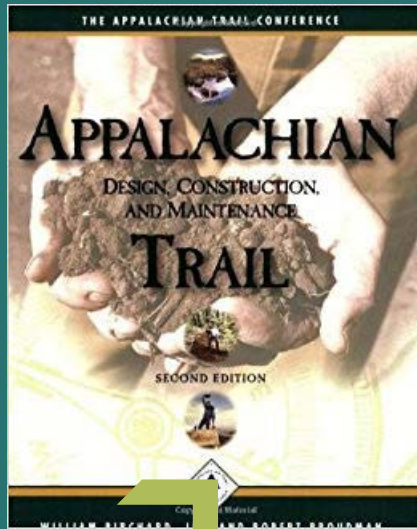
The Federal Trail Data Standards (FTDS) are applicable to all trails managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS), and U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), including National Scenic Trails (NSTs) and National Historic Trails (NHTs). State or local governments and other entities can also apply the FTDS to trails they manage.

Trail Attributes	Trail Class 1 Minimally Developed	Trail Class 2 Moderately Developed	Trail Class 3 Developed	Trail Class 4 Highly Developed	Trail Class 5 Fully Developed
<b>Constructed Features &amp; Trail Elements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures minimal to non-existent</li> <li>Drainage typically accomplished without structures</li> <li>Natural fords</li> <li>Typically no bridges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures of limited size, scale, and quantity; typically constructed of native materials</li> <li>Structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure and resources</li> <li>Natural fords</li> <li>Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures may be common and substantial; constructed of imported or native materials</li> <li>Natural or constructed fords</li> <li>Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures frequent and substantial; typically constructed of imported materials</li> <li>Constructed or natural fords</li> <li>Bridges as needed for resource protection and user convenience</li> <li>Trailside amenities may be present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures frequent or continuous; typically constructed of imported materials</li> <li>May include bridges, boardwalks, curbs, handrails, trailside amenities, and similar features</li> </ul>
<b>Signs<sup>2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing limited to junctions</li> <li>Route markers present when trail location is not evident</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent</li> <li>Destination signing, unless required, generally not present</li> <li>Information and interpretive signing generally not present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing limited to junctions</li> <li>Route markers present when trail location is not evident</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent</li> <li>Destination signing typically infrequent outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness</li> <li>Information and interpretive signing not common</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Route markers as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing may be common</li> <li>Destination signing likely outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness</li> <li>Information and interpretive signs may be present outside of wilderness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Route markers as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing common</li> <li>Destination signing common outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness</li> <li>Information and interpretive signs may be common outside of wilderness</li> <li>Accessibility information likely displayed at trailhead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing at junctions and for user reassurance</li> <li>Route markers as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing common</li> <li>Destination signing common</li> <li>Information and interpretive signs common</li> <li>Accessibility information likely displayed at trailhead</li> </ul>
<b>Typical Recreation Environments &amp; Experience<sup>3</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural, unmodified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Primitive to Roaded Natural</li> <li>WROS: Typically Primitive to Semi-Primitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural, essentially unmodified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Primitive to Roaded Natural</li> <li>WROS: Typically Primitive to Semi-Primitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural, primarily unmodified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Primitive to Roaded Natural</li> <li>WROS: Typically Semi-Primitive to Transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be modified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Semi-Primitive to Rural</li> <li>WROS: Typically Portal or Transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be highly modified</li> <li>Commonly associated with visitor centers or high-use recreation sites</li> <li>ROS: Typically Roaded Natural to Urban</li> <li>Generally not present in wilderness</li> </ul>


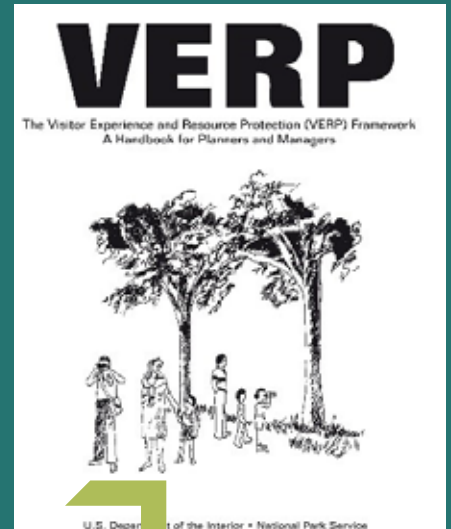
Figure 4. Trail Class Matrix (source: Trail Fundamentals and Trails Management Objectives – USDA Forest Service and National Parks Service, 2016).



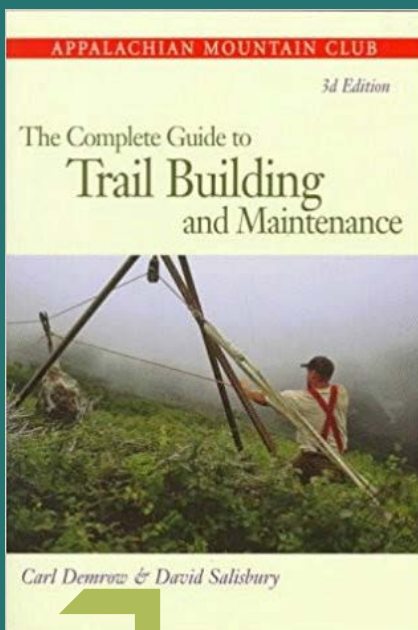
1979




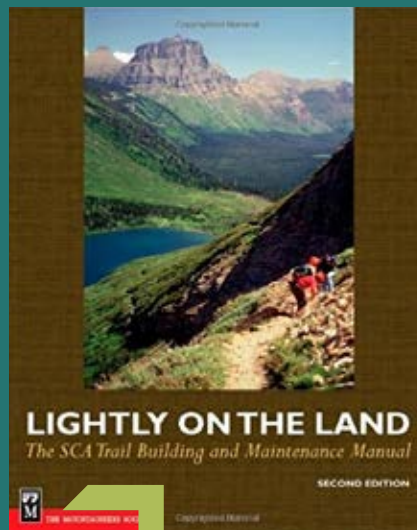
1982-2000



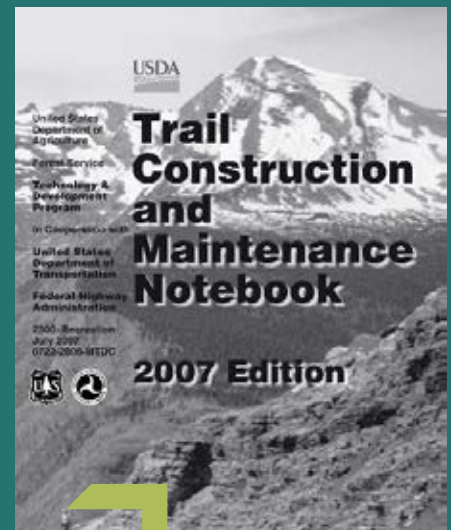
1997



1998



2006



## 5.3

### Ireland and Northern Ireland

---

#### 5.3.1

##### **Irish Trails Strategy. Irish Sports Council, 2007**

Strategy principles:

- Sustainable and sensitive trail development.
- Sustained user, landowner, community and agency involvement and support.
- Strategic investment.
- Integrated trail planning, implementation and monitoring/ongoing evaluation.
- Coordinated marketing and promotion.

Initial implementation projects:

- Develop an Irish trail standards system.
- Establish a classification system for all trails.
- Establish a national trails signage policy.
- Prepare Irish trail construction guidelines.
- Establish a trail quality assurance programme.
- Prepare and agree a five-year trail plan.
- Establish a trail research programme.
- Develop and commence education and training.
- Programme for trail management, construction and maintenance.
- Establish and commence implementation of a recreational trails marketing and promotion plan.

#### 5.3.2

##### **Management Standards for Recreational Trails. National Trails Office – Irish Sports Council, 2008.**

Broad vision is ‘to create, nurture and maintain a world class recreational trail network that is sustainable, integrated, well utilised and highly regarded’

- Action to minimise any negative impact as deemed necessary must be on record if a route passes through, or is adjacent to, a designated site of environmental, archaeological or architectural interest.
- Where there are junctions on a trail route or where there is a risk of the user diverting from the trail, waymarking must be provided.
- Specifically the trail surface must comply with the guidelines set down in the document titled ‘Classification and Grading for Recreation Trails’.
- The surface of a trail should be free from severe erosion and drainage problems. Under normal conditions it should not be waterlogged, have extended sections which are boggy, or have deep mud along the route.

#### 5.3.3

##### **Classification and Grading for Recreation Trails. National Trails Office – Irish Sports Council, 2008**

Identifies walking trail classes suited to different land types as a tool for use in trail planning, development and management.

For example, Class 5: Upland or remote area.

- Challenging trails, surfaced or unsurfaced over variable ground, may be in exposed areas.
- Can include rough steps, stiles, water-bars, side drains, simple bridges or river crossings.
- Extremely variable and uneven surfaces with large rocks, roots and other obstacles offering a challenging hike.
- No gradient constraints. Desirable: Maximum 40% requiring steps.

### 5.3.4

#### Community Trails Development Seminar

National Trails Office – Irish Sports Council, 2011. Presentation of Trail Management Standards and Classification.

National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC): was established to facilitate cooperative working and joint initiatives among all agencies involved in funding, development and management of trails nationally. To this end, the key organisations that have a stake in the development of trails in Ireland are represented on the National Trails Advisory Committee.

### 5.3.5

#### A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland. National Trails Office – Irish Sports Council, 2012

Practical advice to trail planners:

- Trail features to be treated with care, particularly in remote and special nature areas.
- Consider landscape topography.
- Consider the trail carrying capacity.
- Identification of the line of the route.

### 5.3.6

#### Principles to Guide the Management of Path Erosion in Ireland's Upland Areas (Helping the Hills), Mountaineering Ireland, 2013

Following the Helping the Hills Conference (Glendalough, 2012), and drawing on similar work in Great Britain, Mountaineering Ireland developed principles to guide the management of path erosion in Ireland's upland areas, seeking to have these principles adopted by organisations involved in the funding, management and repair of upland paths [http://www.helpingthehills.ie/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=33&Itemid=38](http://www.helpingthehills.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=33&Itemid=38)

Communications:

- Management of upland paths should be informed by consultation with all stakeholders, including landowners, recreational users, relevant statutory bodies and the local community.
- Signage and other communications about upland path work should emphasise that the work is being carried out to protect the natural environment.
- Information on the responsible and sustainable use of upland paths should be available to all users.

Ethos:

- All those who go into the uplands, whether individually or as part of a group, have a responsibility to minimise the impact of their activities on the natural environment.
- Upland path work should be carried out within a coherent and agreed management framework, which establishes the rationale for works, their relative importance and includes a commitment to long-term maintenance.
- Path repair or construction in the uplands should only be carried out when this is necessary to protect the environment.
- Any work carried out should strive for minimum impact on the essentially wild character of the landscape.
- The more remote the path, the more stringently the criteria for path repairs should be applied. This will be a matter of judgment, but in general, the more remote or wild the location, the less acceptable an overly-engineered path will be.
- Those involved in the design, implementation and supervision of upland path work should preferably be technically competent and suitably experienced.
- Private landowners must be involved in decision making regarding erosion management on their land. However, they should not be expected to bear the cost of repairing paths that have been eroded through recreational use.

- A sustained commitment of resources to upland path management will be sought so that small-scale, continuous maintenance can become the norm, with the aim of preventing the need for major repairs.

#### Practicalities:

- Path work should be of the highest standard of design and implementation, normally using locally-sourced materials in harmony with the site. The best or most sensitive solution and quality of work should always be sought, not necessarily the cheapest.
- Good environmental practice is paramount. Techniques used should protect existing vegetation and cultural remains and the site should be left in as natural a state as is practicable.
- The addition of intrusive features such as fences, waymarkers and cairns should be avoided.
- Machines can provide valuable assistance in upland path work. However, they must be used sensitively and appropriately by a skilled operator. The use of machines should be in accordance with all other principles.
- It should be an objective in any upland path work to train and upskill local people with a view to establishing a long-term skills and employment base, although it may be necessary to bring in workers with relevant expertise from outside the area.

#### 5.3.7

### Northern Ireland: Principles and Standards for Trail Development in Northern Ireland. Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland

To aid trail owners, providers and promoters in designing and developing new sustainable trails that are to be managed primarily for recreation. It does not provide guidance on footpath erosion management or remediation works, but it does provide a useful reference for assessing existing trail sustainability.

It states: The purpose of a sustainable trail is to provide users with a way to access natural areas on a defined path that is resistant to erosion and causes minimal damage to the environment, and; properly sustainable trails co-exist with land use in a symbiotic partnership.

## 5.4

### Canada

#### 5.4.1

### Design, Construction and Maintenance of Sustainable Trails. Ontario, 2006

Trail sustainability is a process of trail design, construction and maintenance that seeks to maximise the probability that the trail can be maintained over a long term:

- Environmental sustainability: trail is one that will be compatible with the natural environment over a long term.
- Economic sustainability: the trail supports its own cost.
- Social sustainability: community response to the trail.

Guidelines for understanding of the trail:

- Design from an in-depth understanding of the natural environment.
- Balance the demands of conservation, recreation and transportation.
- Protect the natural environment around the trail: done well, a trail disturbs the natural setting very little.
- Preserve and promote important elements.
- Design from knowledge and experience.
- Follow the process of sustainable trail design.
- Maintain natural drainage patterns.
- Avoid 'the way we've always done it'.
- Determine the location of the trail on the landscape through careful examination of the trail environment.
- Utilise the natural topography and geology of the land.
- Focus activity within the desired trail corridor.
- Avoid putting the trail tread through a wet environment.
- Design and locate bridges for all water crossings.
- Design for minimal maintenance.

## Australia

### 5.5.1

#### **Guidelines principles for recreational trails in South Australia. Recreation SA Trails Sub Committee, 2016**

- Trail sustainability and quality must be ensured.
- Attract support from the user group.
- Minimise the likelihood of environmental damage.
- Maximise opportunities for land owner support and funding.
- Appropriate trail design, location selection and ongoing management.
- Take into account the sensitivities and desires of local communities.

### 5.5.2

#### **Kingborough Tracks and Trails: Strategic Management Plan, 2017-2022**

Kingborough Council's Vision: a vibrant, diverse and connected community, with well-managed, natural and physical assets and a wide range of economic and lifestyle opportunities.

Trails Tasmania Vision (2007): Tasmania will be recognised for its diverse and sustainable recreational trails that are amongst the best in the world.

Council's Tracks and Trails Vision: Kingborough tracks will meet the needs of residents, visitors and tourists by providing increased physical activity, enjoyment, and an increased environmental and cultural awareness.

The ensuing guiding principles are aimed as a guide for decision-making to assist the realisation of these visions:

- Planning: develop a strategic, comprehensive and coordinated approach to the planning of a municipality wide, connected and diverse network of tracks and trails.
- Design and construction: ensure design and construction for tracks is sustainable – environmentally, socially and economically.
- Communication: adhere to a consistent method of communicating a track rating difficulty system that is consistent with regional, state and national classification systems for multiple user groups.
- Maintenance: commit to a maintenance programme for track upgrade planning to relevant standards, that new tracks are sustainable to maintain and implement an on-going cross municipal maintenance programme.
- Information: effectively promote the Kingborough tracks and trails network to local residents, visitors, tourists, media and business interests through appropriate signage, accessible information and promotion.
- Resourcing: to integrate resources across relevant council departments for track planning, management and maintenance. Seek external funding, where appropriate, and commit to including funding in annual capital works programmes towards new track development, upgrades to existing tracks, and on-going maintenance.
- Community engagement, involvement and partnerships: work in partnership with other land management agencies, recreational clubs, community groups and volunteers and facilitate their involvement in the development, management and maintenance of a sustainable network of tracks.

## 5.6

### Argentina

#### 5.6.1

#### Design, construction and maintenance of trails in natural areas. Argentina National Parks Administration, 2004.

##### Principles/Guidelines to set up a good trail:

- Environmental assessment of the trail.
- Take advantage of dry and sunny slopes.
- Keep on well-drained soil.
- Plan future maintenance.
- Use gentle slopes: drainage facilitation and aesthetic enhancement.
- Avoid wet areas.
- Keep a moderate trail network.
- Avoid engineering approaches (bridges, footpaths) or non-natural elements.

## 5.7

### Spain

#### 5.7.1

#### Trail Solutions: Guide for the construction, conservation and maintenance of mountain bike trails. International Mountain Bicycling Association Spain, 2004.

For the sustainability and durability of a trail:

- Social function, as communication path between areas.
- Protection of the environment.
- User satisfaction.
- Low maintenance needs.



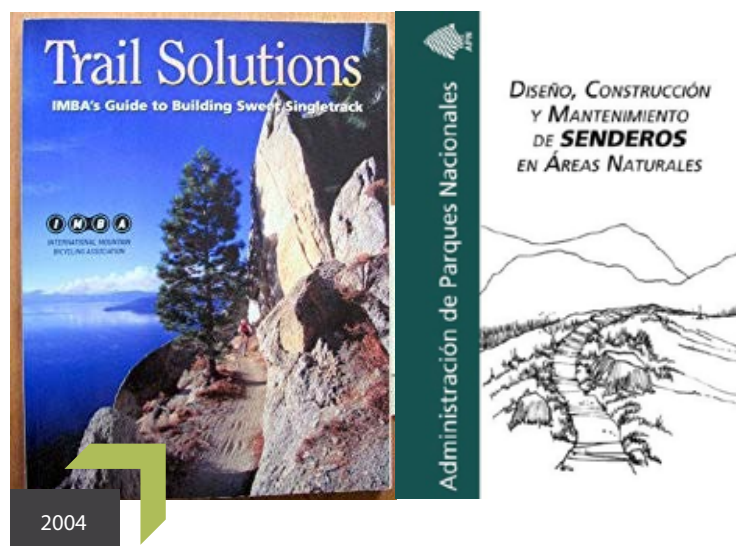
#### 5.7.2

#### Technical criteria for the restoration of traditional trails. Trail plan of High Pyrenees Natural Park, 2006.

Basic principles of generic path work:

- Preferred use of traditional construction techniques.
- Avoid the use of non-natural materials.
- Basic objective of keeping walkers on the path.
- Hand works preference and only light machinery use.
- Minimal impact approach in the works.
- Environment integration maximisation:
- Materials used in the works: colours, textures and characteristics similar to the site environment.
- Techniques and building solutions: taking into account topography and landscape.
- In areas with high recreational pressure, only when strictly necessary, potential for planning the construction of new paths as a solution.

##### Publications:



## Chapter 6

# ASCENT Workshop; Managing Upland Paths – Are Good Principles Enough?

**22 & 23 November 2017** The aim of the workshop (Figure 1) was to Review Upland Path Principles And Their Applicability For Land Managers, Practitioners And Local Communities, Who Are Responding To Increased Erosion In Environmentally Sensitive Landscapes. Key themes included: common challenges, shared experience, innovation and policy development.

On Wednesday 22 November 2017, there was a guided site visit to the Glen River and Slieve Donard, Co Down: the busiest route in the Mourne (Plate 2). The day included: opportunities to discuss path maintenance; tools and techniques; and reviewing past, current and future work. The participants split into two groups: one walking on towards the summit to look at a wider range of issues and challenges, while another group remained just below the tree line to help repair a section of the Glen River path, working with the MHT Upland Path Volunteer Team that come out on a weekly basis, whatever the weather, to protect the mountains. This was a great opportunity to focus thinking to take into the main workshop in Tollymore National Outdoor Centre on the Thursday. It also provided an opportunity to garner advice from a number of path experts from Scotland and England, who had travelled over for the two-day session.

The main workshop was on Thursday 23 November 2017 at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, Newcastle, Co Down (Plate 3).

The welcome address was given by Vice Chair of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Councillor Willie Clarke (who had worked previously in an upland path repair team), and was followed by presentations on:

- Overview of the ASCENT project. Rosita Mahony, ASCENT Project Co-ordinator, Donegal County Council
- Cuilcagh Boardwalk: Problems and Solutions. Simon Grey, Marble Arch Caves, UNESCO Global Geopark

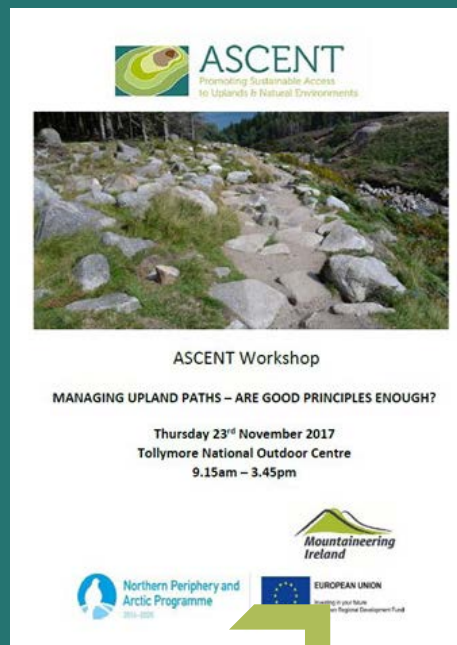


Figure 1 Workshop Flier



Plate 2 Site visit to Glen River and Slieve Donard, Co Down

- MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum: Engaging Multi-Stakeholder Groups. Patricia Deane, South Kerry Development Partnership
- The Scottish Experience; upskilling and recent trends. Keith Mackey, Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland
- International Overview of Principles & Techniques for Upland Path Work. Marc Vinas Alcon, Ecologist (N.B. the presentation was based on this report)
- Helping the Hills: Principles & Shaping the Future of Ireland's Uplands. Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland
- Capacity Building in Ireland's Upland Groups. Frank Nugent & Mary Mulvey, Irish Uplands Forum

Delegates attended two workshops to discuss relevant issues and identify key learning points to provide a focus for developing agreed priorities. The key points are summarised as follows:

#### Workshop 1

##### **What are the factors causing upland path erosion in environmentally sensitive landscapes and what trends may add to the problem in the future?**

- There is an increasing number of users and a broader range of people - particularly within social media, tourism, events and health and well-being agendas - as the main drivers of this changing pattern.
- There is a lack of a strategic approach and joined-up management, with limited resources for maintenance in particular.
- Climate change and related disturbances are making sensitive landscapes more vulnerable to the above pressures.



Plate 3 ASCENT Workshop - Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, Newcastle

#### Workshop 2

##### **Are principles like Helping the Hills useful in addressing the problems, or are there broader tools and resources that need to be developed?**

- Helping the Hills (see 5.3 page 20) was generally viewed to be a good set of principles, albeit some re-working could make it more accessible to land managers and practitioners.
- There is a need to improve effective networking across land managers and practitioners that enables easy and quick access to information, advice, skills, and training and helps develop group funding bids etc. A good model is the UK Upland Path Advisory Group. The Irish Uplands Forum could also play a key role in facilitating initial networking across the island of Ireland.
- Remote sensitive landscapes should be valued much more. This could be achieved through education programmes for users and practitioners and an advisory set of guiding principles (Helping the Hills or a derived shortened version) that land managers should be required to pay attention to when planning activity in these sites. Government leadership and the role of local authorities would be key.
- There were opportunities to introduce measures for income generation to manage the paths e.g., planning gain, tax incentives, car parking charges and targeted fundraising campaigns.

# Summary and Recommendations

The report profiles a wealth of directly relevant ethics, standards and guiding principles that are available to inform the ASCENT Partnership in its deliberations.

It has been important to document the historical development of different principles, in particular showing the underlying ethos and aspirations of the early practitioners, and how these underpinned future thinking. This is strongly evident in the Scottish and wider UK/Ireland analysis, and is also evident in the USA model and indeed all documented approaches.

The principle of raising the value of the landscape over the need to develop access is a recurring theme and from this guidelines develop, such as trying to minimise intervention in path repair, particularly as you move from urbanised areas into natural wilderness, use of natural materials and encouraging mountain skills. These are repeated throughout the research findings. However, it is clear that, over time, the challenge of increasing demand for access has meant that the principles and guidance manuals started to include pragmatic ways to retain their relevance for land managers etc., otherwise there may be a risk that the principles become seen as unworkable and are disregarded.

The Helping the Hills Principles (that cover the geographical area of the island of Ireland) were shown as being a further development of previous standards, where it introduced, in particular, specific guidance for the different stages in approaching path work including planning and consultation, as well as techniques.

USA evidence in part highlights the issue of controlling access and in many cases they manage it through a strict licensing system. Clearly in many of the ASCENT sites this would be difficult to achieve, particularly as most challenges have arisen because of the unregulated nature of current access.

The November 2017 ASCENT Workshop provided an opportunity to bring a range of experienced and interested stakeholders together to make site visits and carry out path work to help focus thinking on the above issues and then capture ideas through the presentations and two workshop sessions. This proved to be a very effective activity in developing a consensus approach, albeit the challenges of balancing the opportunity for natural landscapes to provide a hook on which to develop rural, economic and health and well-being initiatives, against the need to preserve their inherent natural and wilderness value was recognised as becoming an increasingly greater dilemma. This was highlighted by the observation that user patterns can now dramatically increase due to social media: a game changer in many ways.

Overall, there was a general feeling that the Helping the Hills Principles were a good basis for an agreed approach, albeit with some suggested amendments.

**For Further Information on the ASCENT Project, contact:**

**Rosita Mahony**

**ASCENT Project Manager**

Donegal County Council

Station Island

Lifford

Co Donegal

F93 X7PK

Ireland

**Telephone:** (074) 9172261

**Email:** [rosita.mahony@donegalcoco.ie](mailto:rosita.mahony@donegalcoco.ie)

**Web:** [www.ascent-project.eu](http://www.ascent-project.eu)

**Facebook:** ASCENTProjectNPA

**Twitter:** ASCENTProjectEU