

### A.T. Saw Program: ATC Recommendations

Among the most dangerous aspects of work that is performed on the A.T. is operating a chainsaw or crosscut saw to address fallen trees bound under tension, fell material for work projects, or dislodge and move heavy segments of bucked trees. This is an essential task for keeping the A.T. open for visitors, and we recognize how quickly blowdowns can impact the Trail when one microburst last summer brought down more than 200 snarled trees in just a few short miles.

The longstanding [MOU](#) between NPS, USFS and ATC related to reciprocity and standards has greatly benefited the A.T., its cooperators and volunteers. Last summer, USFS released a new, national, saw policy that unifies that agency's approach, and details of changes are outlined on the back of this page. ATC recommends that partners recognize the changes and reassert their commitment to retain the MOU—recognizing reciprocity of cards issued by NPS, USFS, or ATC, provided that course instructors/evaluators offering the training deliver it to meet course standards outlined in the MOU. The NPS solicitor is reviewing this recommendation now. What follows is ATC's recommended approach. Implementation of this recommendation is based on agreement from NPS/ATC/USFS. We hope to have final direction by the end of 2017. Within this recommended approach, A.T. volunteer sawyers would see little significant change in their instruction or field operations under the new guidelines, with the exception that courses from USFS and ATC contractors will now issue cards based on seven sawyer levels rather than the previous three levels.

Clubs that traditionally benefit from local USFS district or National Park support for trainings will continue to receive those, and ATC will continue to rely on contractors when gaps in federal agency support exist. Under this model, evaluation undertaken by contract instructors hired by ATC may sign A.T. Sawyer Cards; these cards will be redesigned to current USFS sawyer levels to facilitate ease of reciprocity.

A.T. Sawyer Cards signed by contractors will not be entered into the USFS National Saw Database. However, these cards are recognized while working on the A.T. by multiple land management agencies consistent with the updated MOU. An exception to this would be when evaluation forms of volunteers who work on USFS districts, has his/her evaluation form (and card) signed by the USFS district ranger (or designee), at which time a USFS card would be issued in lieu of an A.T. Sawyer Card.

ATC will continue to maintain A.T. Sawyer Rosters, and club sawyer rosters will continue to be sent by clubs regularly to ATC, as we have been doing.

Both USFS policy and a draft NPS policy allow for volunteers to have responsibilities of federal employees when it comes to training and certification, *if they have the demonstrated exceptional skill and experience*. With this in mind, ATC also recommends a gradual approach to building a cadre of volunteer saw instructors and evaluators, namely through our existing partnership with the USFS.

If volunteers working on USFS districts are evaluated at a R8/9 Saw Instructor Workshop where they demonstrate and earn instructor or evaluator status-- they may, under the new USFS policy, perform that function provided they have an individual service (instructor) agreement with their district to do so. In this case, sawyers evaluated and recommended for certification levels by these volunteer instructors would have their cards signed by the district ranger or his/her designee. A process is under development that would enable A.T. volunteer sawyers (working on USFS lands) to progress through demonstrated saw handling and mentorship with instructors to receive a nomination from ATC to participate in R8/9 Saw Instructor Workshop. Note this recommendation does not include provisions for NPS volunteer instructors, or for volunteer instructors enabled through USFS protocols to instruct/evaluate NPS volunteers since there is not an identified certifying official outside of a USFS to authorize cards.

**USFS Saw Policy – effective July 19, 2016**

The Department of Agriculture issued a final directive on updates to the [USFS National Saw Policy](#) on July 19, 2016 that unifies all training, administration and certification among all its units, partners, and cooperators. USFS implementation of the policy was effective immediately, and clubs working directly with USFS on new training and certifications are already working under the new policy. Cooperators, like ATC and our contract instructors, are working to incorporate the changes within our administration practices.

Current USFS sawyer certifications held by A.T. volunteers will be valid until their expiration dates, at which point their recertification will incorporate the new changes.

- There are seven sawyer levels. [Responsibilities, limitations, training, knowledge and skills for each are detailed in the policy.](#)
- Chainsaw sawyers must be at least 18 years of age. Crosscut sawyers must be at least 16 years of age.
- First aid and CPR training continues to be required for chainsaw and crosscut operators. It is not required for Crosscut Sawyer Trainees operating under the supervision of a B or C sawyer.
- Certification does not limit B Sawyer Felling and Bucking to work on a specific maximum diameter. Rather, it is defined by the range of “Complexity” (non-complex, moderately complex for B-level). C-Sawyers - Felling and Bucking may independently fell, buck and limb any size material in highly complex situations.
- USFS will have a single National Saw Program Coordinator to oversee the program.

|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| Crosscut Sawyer Trainee        |
| A Sawyer                       |
| B Sawyer - Bucking Only        |
| B Sawyer - Felling and Bucking |
| C Sawyer - Bucking Only        |
| C Sawyer - Felling and Bucking |
| C Sawyer - Evaluator           |

- Sawyer Instructors can be USFS staff, partner staff or contractors, or volunteers “who are qualified sawyers...with the requisite skill to conduct or assist with training at the sawyer’s skill level and who has received written approval to conduct that training from the (forest/district) Saw Program Coordinator.” Note that instruction and evaluation are separate roles within the new policy, though some individuals may be approved by the Regional Saw Program Manager to do both. B Sawyers with Felling and Bucking certification "may also conduct classroom and field training for A and B Sawyers with prior written approval from the (forest/district) Saw Program Coordinator." Sawyer Evaluators for A and B can be C Sawyers or C Sawyer Evaluators, who also evaluate C-Sawyers. Evaluators determine whether a sawyer is proficient in the safe use of a saw in the field and documents that determination as required by the Forest Service. ATC’s Saw Program Working group will develop a process for sawyers to be nominated to participate in the R8/9 Saw Instructor Workshop.
- All certification cards must be issued from the National Sawyer Certification Database. This nation-wide database is in the process of being developed by the Forest Service. Until that is functional, certification cards will be issued and credentials managed through the current process.
- Game of logging is supplemental curriculum for teaching technique; it does not replace curriculum and training from MTDC which is still the standard for the USFS and the A.T. Saw Program MOU.