POLICY STATEMENT

The policy of the North Country Trail Association is that bicycling is best accommodated as a use on the North Country National Scenic Trail on rail-trail segments and on other short segments of hardened surface (1) specifically designed for wheeled vehicles, where the bikes would not damage natural or trail resources; (2) that are previously established multiple use trails that become part of the North Country Trail route; (3) where bicycles could be physically restricted to the designated section; and (4) where bicycle use would not adversely affect the recreational experience of hikers. We realize these conditions generally are not found on the typical single-track forested and rural segments of the North Country Trail, and we believe bicycles use on such segments is inadvisable at best.

REASONS FOR POLICY

The vision that the Association and the National Park Service have is that of a premier hiking trail patterned after the Appalachian Trail. The Trail is meant to provide and protect an experience that more and more is lost in our busy and growing world. Whether exploring wilderness or rural landscapes, for an afternoon or weeks on end, hikers should expect to find peace, solace, insight, and a reconnection with the natural world as they journey along the North Country National Scenic Trail. Many trails offer the opportunity for exercise in a natural environment, but few seek to protect this type of experience that we feel is a crucial and growing need in human nature.

Part of the reason the Association discourages bike use is that it threatens to displace hikers seeking the type of experience for which the Trail is intended. In addition, heavy use by mountain bikes can quickly lead to erosion and degradation. The degree of such damage depends on soil conditions, and the level of responsibility and extent of bike activity. However, the North Country Trail generally has not been constructed to withstand bike traffic. Tire tracks can provide an uninterrupted course for water flow, quickly leading to trail erosion. This has led to poor walking conditions, unsightly views, and an overall degradation of the hiking experience.
LOCAL EFFECT OF THE POLICY

This policy does not represent a ban on mountain bikes on the trail, as the local managing authority has the final decision over whether or not to permit bike use. It does mean that the Association is on record as opposing mountain bike use in most situations.

NEED FOR EXPANDED MOUNTAIN BIKING OPPORTUNITIES

With its tremendous growth in recent years, mountain biking clearly is in need of the support of related organizations and agencies if opportunities for biking will ever meet demand. The North Country Trail Association remains supportive of expanded bike trails in the vicinity of, but not coinciding with, the North Country National Scenic Trail. By working together, hikes and bikers can insure that adequate sustainable opportunities exist for both types of use.