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# KEEP THE BACKCOUNTRY BACKCOUNTRY!

Guidelines for the Responsible Development of Backcountry  
Terrain

# THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN TERRAIN TYPES



**Natural Backcountry** is skiing or riding on previously existing and **naturally created terrain**. These areas are already in continual use by outdoor enthusiasts.

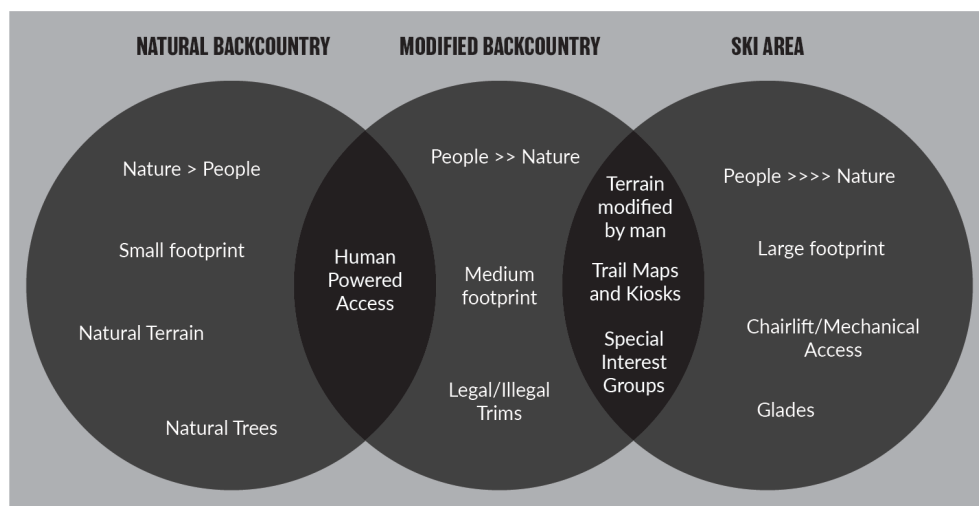


**Modified Backcountry** is skiing or riding terrain which is **created, maintained, and intentionally developed by humankind**. Generally, Modified Backcountry is similar to a man-made gladed ski trail as you would find at a ski area, but is accessed on foot, skinning, or other means.



**Conflict** occurs when **Modified Backcountry** infringes upon or expands into **Natural Backcountry** and the natural terrain is altered for ease of use and accessibility, maintained by trail crews, marked with trail signs, and often renamed, advertised, and marketed to sell merchandise and equipment.

THE BELOW “THREE TERRAIN TYPES” FIGURE SHOWS THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SKI AREA, MODIFIED BACKCOUNTRY, AND NATURAL BACKCOUNTRY TERRAIN.



# DEVELOPING MODIFIED BACKCOUNTRY IN NATURAL BACKCOUNTRY TERRAIN RESULTS IN THE FOLLOWING 5 ISSUES:

**1**

## ALTERING THE EXPERIENCE

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A key principle in backcountry skiing and riding is interpreting the terrain nature provides to create your own line. If we modify the terrain to ease or facilitate our riding, we move closer to a ski resort on the above Three Terrain Types figure, and further from Natural Backcountry. This drastically changes the experience for the user and prevents future generations of the challenge and discovery of Natural Backcountry areas.

**2**

## TERRAIN DIVERSITY

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There are many potential locations to develop Modified Backcountry that do not alter Natural Backcountry areas. These include NELSAP ski areas, logged areas, and glades that have not been established as, or are not adjacent or connected to, Natural Backcountry areas. Developing these areas while protecting Natural Backcountry encourages terrain diversity and expands the total accessible backcountry terrain. Conversely, modifying Natural Backcountry decreases terrain diversity and results in an overall homogenization of backcountry terrain.

**3**

## COMMUNITY CONFLICT

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Many Natural Backcountry areas have been enjoyed for generations by skier and rider communities. These communities are often marginalized and labeled as “haters” if they disagree with the development of Modified Backcountry. This results in conflict between the Natural and Modified Backcountry communities. Currently, only the Modified Backcountry community has a voice in what terrain is and is not developed. The Natural Backcountry community needs to be represented and have a voice in the development and protection of Natural Backcountry terrain.

**4**

## THE SCARCITY OF NATURAL BACKCOUNTRY

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**5**

## OVER-TOURISM

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There are a limited amount of Natural Backcountry areas on the east coast. These areas should not be open for modifications, but, instead, kept as a resource for all to enjoy. To accomplish this, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Services, and Land Trusts need to understand the value of Natural Backcountry and work to protect it. New users can learn the differences between Natural and Modified Backcountry and, most importantly, enjoy both experiences.

Often, Modified Backcountry is developed in the form of glades connected to a Natural Backcountry zone to encourage more use by a wider variety of skill levels. This can result in over-tourism, which occurs when there are too many visitors for a particular destination.

Downsides due to over tourism include trash, congested trails, and environmental degradation. For Natural Backcountry users “sharing the stoke” does not mean modifying terrain to artificially increase the amount of people who can or want to use it. It means skiing and riding in small groups, discovering natural features, and being respectful of naturally occurring terrain.

## CHOOSE YOUR OWN LINE!

**There really is no need for the modification of Natural Backcountry terrain.** It is scarce and rare on the East Coast, and it is already being enjoyed by backcountry users. What is the goal of “improving” it? To make it accessible to more people, to make a bigger scene, to sell more skis, to make it more “rideable”? There are many joys and challenges inherent to Natural Backcountry - using what nature provides, unadulterated, to inspire our line to get from the top to the bottom. A combination of both backcountry’s will peak the interest of locals and tourists alike, create a joint community, and benefit local shops and vendors.

**Conversely, there is plenty of terrain to develop into Modified Backcountry that will not destroy Natural Backcountry.** As shown in the Three Terrain Types, both Natural and Modified Backcountry have a place and a need on the East Coast. However, Modified Backcountry should not be developed at Natural Backcountry’s expense.

## LET’S PROTECT NATURAL BACKCOUNTRY FOR ALL TO ENJOY.

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# HOMIES ENJOYING THE STROKE!

