

Appalachian Trail Conservancy Strategic Plan Adopted August 2014

GOAL: EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP

Lead a public/private partnership for managing the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) treadway and corridor lands.

I. Outcome: A.T. treadway, Trail facility and corridor land deficiencies are identified by ATC and the Clubs, annual work plans are developed based on priority projects and capacity and 100% of the annual work plan is completed.

Strategies:

- A.** Annually assess the A.T. treadway, open areas, boundary line conditions, and improve related data management systems.
- B.** Working with the Clubs, the National Park Service's Appalachian Trail Park Office (APPA), the U.S. Forest Service and state agency partners, collaboratively develop annual plans for Trail maintenance and land management priorities to effectively direct volunteer engagement and resource allocation.

II. Outcome: Potentially hazardous road and water crossings are identified and plans are developed to address high priority problem areas.

Strategies:

- A.** Review and update the Federal Highway Administration's A.T. Highway Crossing Safety Assessment (2003).
- B.** Create a safety assessment of bridge and water crossings.
- C.** Based on these assessments, develop an implementation plan and seek sufficient funding.

III. Outcome: The impacts to the Trail from organized group use, commercial use and increased hiker use are effectively managed to facilitate a quality visitor experience.

Strategies:

- A.** Finalize and implement the Group Use Policy, aligning it with the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and state agency policies.
- B.** Support an assessment to identify priorities for new group camping sites and sanitation facilities.

- C. ATC becomes a Master Educator Leave No Trace Course Provider, providing courses to organizations and individuals that are leading others in organized outings on the A.T.
- D. ATC promotes a quality visitor experience and Trail resource protection through effective information services and communications.

IV. Outcome: ATC meets land management standards set by the Land Trust Alliance.

Strategies:

- A. Align ATC policies and procedures with Land Trust Alliance management standards.
- B. All ATC-owned parcels are visited and assessed annually and all easement violations are addressed.
- C. Transfer or sell parcels to conservation partners, only retaining ownership of parcels that can be leveraged for greater conservation and education purposes and develop plans for these parcels.
- D. Enlist and train volunteers to assist with annual monitoring of each ATC-owned parcel and train volunteers to support and maintain landowner relationships.

GOAL: PROACTIVE PROTECTION

ATC advocates for broader protection of the natural and cultural resources within the A.T. corridor and adjacent landscapes.

I. Outcome: Priority adjacent landscapes are identified and plans to protect them are developed and implemented.

Strategies:

- A.** Collaborate with APPA to persuade the National Park Service to designate the A.T. as a “priority national park landscape” as part of the National Park Service’s 2016 “Call To Action” agenda.
- B.** Identify and prioritize by region adjacent landscapes along the Trail where ATC will focus on landscape conservation and create media and public education campaigns to support landscape-level protection strategies.
- C.** Seek additional funding for landscape conservation strategies from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other sources.
- D.** Forge new partnerships with land conservation organizations and government agencies that share our vision for protected A.T. landscapes.

II. Outcome: High priority threats to the natural and cultural resources along the A.T. and within the A.T. corridor and adjacent landscapes are effectively mitigated or prevented.

Strategies:

- A.** ATC, APPA, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation coordinate efforts with state historic preservation offices to consider and evaluate National Register designation for the Trail to enhance protection of cultural resources and cultural landscapes.
- B.** ATC uses its environmental research and monitoring programs as the basis for protecting biodiversity and improving the effectiveness of natural resource management for the Trail.
- C.** ATC and its key partners identify specific priority Trail protection campaigns in each of its four regions to address major resource threats from proposed energy projects, new or expanded transmission line corridors, communication infrastructure, commercial or residential development, highway construction and hiker use of the Trail.
- D.** ATC collaborates with key partners to leverage available corridor science data to achieve a better understanding of climate change impacts along the Trail corridor and to support the development of more effective national policies that address climate change.
- E.** ATC works closely with the Partnership for the National Trails System to address major threats to the A.T. and to advocate for Land and Water Conservation Fund money to expand protection of the existing Trail corridor.

GOAL: BROADER RELEVANCY

Engage with and connect the A.T. and the ATC to a younger and more diverse audience and broaden the understanding of the physical and mental benefits the Trail provides to a variety of users.

I. Outcome: Long-term use of the A.T. by youth and long-term involvement of youth in the work of the ATC are increased.

Strategies:

- A. Collect research and engage educators and other partners to understand the barriers to involvement by youth with the A.T. and the ATC. Identify successful models and best practices.
- B. Develop a plan with ATC's key partners and collaborate with these partners in implementing the plan.
- C. Assess existing programs and priorities to determine how they best fit with youth engagement plans.

II. Outcome: Long-term use of the A.T. by diverse populations and long-term involvement of diverse populations in the work of the ATC are increased.

Strategies:

- A. Collect research and engage educators and other partners to understand the barriers to involvement by diverse populations with the A.T. and the ATC. Identify successful models and best practices.
- B. Develop a plan with ATC's key partners and collaborate with these partners in implementing the plan.
- C. Assess existing programs and priorities to determine how they best fit with ATC diversity plans.

III. Outcome: The physical and mental benefits derived from hiking and volunteering along the A.T. as well as from the enjoyment of the beauty of the Trail by people who do not hike but care about the Trail are emphasized.

Strategies:

- A. Create partnerships with other organizations that have expertise in the field of physical and mental health.
- B. Collaborate with Trail communities and schools on opportunities for enhancing physical and mental well-being through hiking and volunteering along the A.T.
- C. Develop a plan to promote the physical and mental well-being benefits of A.T. hiking and to promote the physical beauty of the Trail to non-hikers.

GOAL: ENGAGED PARTNERS

Engage and maintain a network of partners that reinforces ATC’s goals for the A.T. and its programs.

I. Outcome: ATC assists all 31 Clubs in meeting their commitments to management of the Trail and its facilities as described in each Club’s memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the ATC.

Strategies:

- A. Invest in volunteer-leadership development, strong and credible volunteer training, and volunteer recognition for Trail management.
- B. Strengthen the capacity of the Clubs to meet their Trail stewardship goals.
- C. Maintain up-to-date, realistic, and comprehensive MOUs and Local Management Plans with all Clubs.

II. Outcome: The ATC partnership with APPA continues to be a strong and vital relationship and the “cooperative management system” with all primary federal, state, municipal, and private partners whose work is essential to the management of the A.T. is strengthened and maintained.

Strategies:

- A. Work closely with APPA to use its Foundation Document and Business Plan to advance mutual goals for the A.T.
- B. Use the National Park Service’s “Call To Action” as an opportunity to advance mutual NPS/ATC priorities.
- C. Renew or implement management agreements with all primary federal, state, municipal, and private partners, according to a mutually agreed-upon schedule.
- D. Further enhance ATC relationships with state and local agencies that have a significant role in A.T. management and protection.

III. Outcome: Relationships with Appalachian Trail Communities are strengthened to support ATC’s future program priorities.

Strategies:

- A. Work closely with the established Appalachian Trail Communities to enhance the effectiveness of the program.
- B. Leverage the network of Appalachian Trail Communities for the benefit of the ATC, Trail users, Clubs and the communities.
- C. Broaden the base of the program by adding new communities.
- D. Work with ATC partner schools to engage teachers and students in Trail activities.
- E. Stimulate the involvement of the Clubs and other partners in Appalachian Trail Community activities.

GOAL: STRENGTHENED CAPACITY & OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Create a financial foundation and the organizational capacity to ensure long-term success.

I. Outcome: Operating Revenue grows from \$6.6 million in 2013 to \$8.0 million by 2019.

Strategies:

- A. Increase membership from 43,000 to 60,000+ by 2019.
- B. Concentrate fundraising efforts on qualified donors/prospects in the major donor, corporate and foundation categories.
- C. Strengthen the commitment to fundraising by the staff, Board and partners of the ATC.
- D. Enhance revenue by leveraging the A.T., ATC and National Park Service brands.
- E. Evaluate other revenue streams for growth potential.

II. Outcome: The endowment - the David N. Startzell Stewardship Fund – is increased from \$3.6 million in 2013 to \$8.3 million by 2019.

Strategies:

- A. Develop and implement a Planned Giving Program by the end of 2016.
- B. Evaluate the potential for a Capital/Endowment Campaign by the end of 2017.

III. Outcome: Investments are made in the ATC to strengthen organizational capacity.

Strategies:

- A. Develop and execute a staffing plan to ensure successful implementation of the new Strategic Plan.
- B. Develop and begin to implement an information technology strategy by the end of 2016.
- C. Develop a capital investment plan by the end of 2015.
- D. Improve internal communications to enhance organizational productivity.
- E. Invest in staff through training programs.