



A CASE FOR SUPPORT

The Conservation of Large Landscapes Along the Appalachian Trail



*"If these people were on the skyline, and kept their eyes open,
they would see the things that the giant could see."*

- Benton MacKaye, 1921

Hiking the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) isn't just a walk in the woods—it's an experience that embodies an environment linking the majestic Appalachian Mountains to the human landscapes of the eastern cities. Iconic viewsheds and the precious natural resources and cultural heritage that surround the Trail all contribute to the Trail hiking experience.

The A.T. embodies among those who walk along the footpath a sense of place that is profound and often continues as a life long experience. It is the most popular and best-known long-distance hiking trail in the world.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the nearly 7,000 volunteers under its supportive umbrella derives its sense of place from its charge to care for the vast array of precious natural and cultural resources within the narrow corridor of land that surrounds the Trail itself.

Communities within the more than eighty counties that feature the A.T. corridor as part of their neighborhood share an equally strong sense of place, whether it be serving hikers through local businesses or as part of a long-term commitment to protecting the landscape.

Conservation of the landscapes connecting the A.T. and its surrounding communities goes beyond a discussion of geography, acreages, or political jurisdictions. It takes a conversation that goes deep into the locale's piece of this special American experience.

Its founding documents and its commitments to the federal and state governments across a period of eight decades make the ATC the ideal organization to lead this conversation in the fourteen eastern states crossed by the 2,190-mile Appalachian Trail.

The ATC therefore seeks to raise \$625,000 for the A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative. This initiative is designed to leverage the commitment of those who hike the Trail, the public and private partners who manage the Trail and surrounding communities to form an effective coalition to protect high-priority A.T. landscapes.



Current Initiatives



Spy Rock Vista, Nelson County, VA

- ⤴ **The goal:** Work with a coalition of public and nonprofit agencies to protect 210 acres of forest adjacent to the Priest Wilderness in central Virginia, part of iconic Spy Rock's 360-degree viewshed.
- ⤴ **The importance:** The land, broken up into three parcels, contains key watersheds important to the surrounding forests and wildlands, water quality, and landscape continuity.



Cat Rocks Vista, Dutchess County, NY

- ⤴ **The goal:** Work with local coalition partners to protect 233 acres within this scenic and ecologically significant place in southern New York near Pawling.
- ⤴ **The importance:** This landscape, located within 70 miles of New York City, provides an opportunity to relocate 1.5 miles of the A.T. to a route that better protects this popular viewshed and avoids an endangered bog turtle habitat.

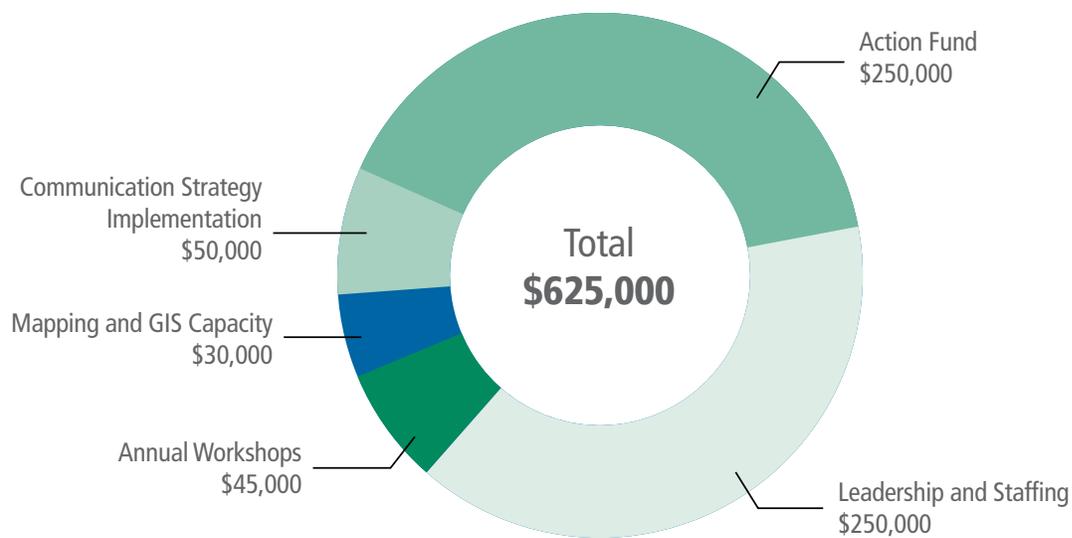


Gulf Hagas, ME

- ⤴ **The goal:** This project would permanently preserve nearly 20,000 acres of streams, lakeshore, and forestlands that were purchased jointly by the Forest Society of Maine and Pine State Timberlands.
- ⤴ **The importance:** Located in a unique multiple-use forest, this land is adjacent to eleven miles of the A.T. in the famed hundred mile Maine wilderness and the watersheds of three major tributaries that flow into the scenic Pleasant River.



A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative Annual Budget



⤴ Leadership and Staffing

⤴ Action Fund

- Mini-grants
- Acquisition costs
- Capacity building
- Initiative development

⤴ Communication Strategy

- Develop strategies that serve to build diversity and engagement among all partners
- Collect and promote the stories of conservation successes within the A.T. landscape

⤴ Mapping and GIS Capacity

- Create and distribute A.T. maps that depict areas of interest for the ATC and partners
- Develop mapping tools to inform and support the work of partner entities

⤴ Annual Workshops

- ATC and the National Park Service co-host annual workshop and regional gatherings of partners for the A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative
- Develop strategies for public and private partnerships striving for A.T. conservation
- Identify high priority target areas within the A.T. landscape



What are our goals?

- ⤴ Bring together the expertise and funding capacities of organizations, communities, and public agencies along the A.T. to protect a broad landscape
- ⤴ Preserve the scenic values, important watersheds, fragile natural habitats, and the cultural and recreational resources of the A.T.
- ⤴ Link the extensive wilderness and protected areas along the Appalachian Mountains to the developed human landscapes of eastern communities and metropolitan areas
- ⤴ Enable future generations to enjoy a high-quality recreational experience and scenic vistas generated by protected natural habitats along what was once the frontier of American civilization

Why is landscape-scale conservation important?

Although the A.T. footpath and the surrounding narrow corridor are protected by federal law, many of the pristine views and natural resources along the Trail are vulnerable to external threats which impact the hiking experience and undermine the sense of place so important to neighboring communities. These include:

- ⤴ Commercial and residential development
- ⤴ Energy development, including multiple, large-scale, natural-gas pipelines, high-voltage powerlines, wind turbines sited within important A.T. viewsheds, and communications towers rising above popular high elevation hiking destinations
- ⤴ The destruction of diverse wildlife and plant habitats
- ⤴ The loss of unfragmented forest habitat that provides resiliency to the impacts of climate change

Opportunities exist to connect existing protected areas, conserve and promote historic cultural features, and prevent land-use changes that impact protected landscapes surrounding the Trail. Identifying and targeting a diverse variety of landscapes, watersheds, and viewsheds has the potential to significantly enhance for future generations the natural, emotional, and economic value of a 2,190-mile stretch of mostly rural America. Beyond those important values lies the essential fact that these mountains are also the water source for millions of urban and suburban residents.





We have a strong coalition of public and private partners.

This allows us to build on our successes in protecting the Trail corridor and:

- ↗ Embrace a shared vision that will sustain the natural and cultural heritage of the A.T. landscape for future generations
- ↗ In collaboration with the National Park Service, host an annual A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative conference, and build a strong A.T. landscape-protection coalition
- ↗ Establish an ongoing “action fund” to provide financial support for this coalition and major land-protection projects and strategies
- ↗ Identify high-priority landscapes worthy of public and private conservation investments

We need you to join us in this conversation.

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