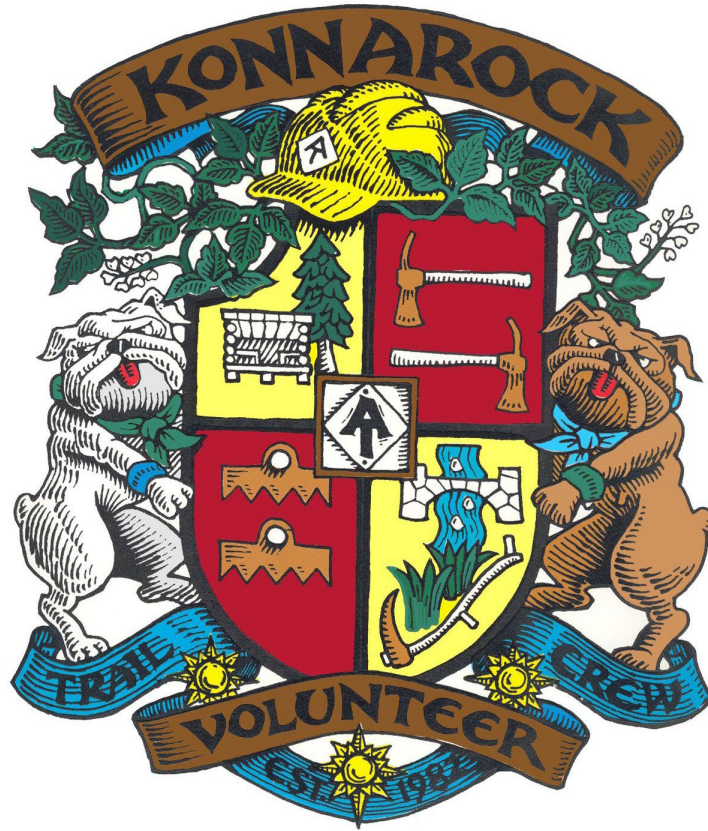


# KONNAROCK TRAIL CREW



APPALACHIAN TRAIL  
CONSERVANCY®

## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

(Updated January, 2024)

## Thanks for your Interest in the Konnarock Trail Crew!

You are in for the experience of a lifetime with the Konnarock Trail Crew! Volunteers are the heart and soul of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Our volunteer trail crews are the most immersive, physically & mentally demanding, and rewarding volunteer stewardship opportunity that we host. This document is designed to be a helpful resource as you plan your time with us. The included information and your understanding of it is extremely important to the success of your experience. We ask that you are familiar with the contents of the handbook **before** you arrive.

### Trail Crew Application Process:

These are the registration steps that volunteers will follow to participate on trail crew:

- ⬆ Volunteer finds crew opportunity and completes the initial sign-up form, expressing interest in no more than two crew weeks.
- ⬆ Volunteer receives automatic email with link to the second (and final) online form. Also included in the email is this volunteer handbook, the crew volunteer job description, and the packing and gear list.
- ⬆ Within 10 business days of the volunteer completing the second online form, ATC staff will review the information provided and schedule a phone call to talk in person about crew logistics, expectations, answer questions, etc.
- ⬆ Once the phone call with ATC staff occurs, participation status is determined and confirmed via email. The confirmation email will confirm dates of crew, meeting location, and once again share this volunteer handbook, driving directions to camp, and the packing and gear list.
- ⬆ Two weeks before the crew week begins, volunteers will receive an email reminder about their upcoming trail crew participation. If the volunteer is no longer able to attend, they should contact ATC to cancel and/or see if there's another crew week that may work. ATC appreciates prompt notice of cancellation so program staff can fill vacant crew spots.

All potential crew volunteers are required to review the **Konnarock Trail Crew Volunteer Job Description, this Volunteer Handbook, and the Packing and Gear List.**

### A few things about the screening process:

- ⬆ Remember – new volunteers, or alumni who haven't volunteered within the past five years, will only be **confirmed for up to two crew weeks**. Volunteering additional crew weeks may be an option and can be discussed between the volunteer and crew staff during their initial first two weeks. Decisions on potential additional crew weeks will be made by ATC staff before the end of the second crew week.
- ⬆ Several times during the trail crew season the base camp facility is closed to volunteers during a break for crew staff. Even if volunteers are signed up for multiple weeks, they may not remain at the base camp facility during extended crew breaks. Potential volunteers can discuss options with ATC staff during the screening process.
  - ⬆ Information submitted during the application process will be reviewed with you. If you think you forgot to supply any details, this is the time to update the information we have on file. **Important information** that will be reviewed and confirmed with you:
    - ⬆ **Dietary Restrictions:** vegetarian, pescetarian, vegan, dairy-free, gluten-free, other.
    - ⬆ **Allergies:** drug, food, insect, latex, environmental; if so, do you carry an Epi-Pen?
    - ⬆ **List of Medications**

- ⬆ **Existing Conditions Affecting:** musculoskeletal, lung, cardiac, diabetes, or seizures?
- ⬆ **Has a physician limited your activities?** Have you been cleared for trail crew activities?
- ⬆ **Emergency Contact Info:** Name, phone number

- ⬆ While most trail crew applicants are granted a spot on crew, it's not guaranteed. The screening process is the time where expectations, abilities, and experience are shared. Occasionally this screening conversation leads to potential volunteers being steered to different volunteer opportunities to build skills, experience, and to ensure that an immersive experience like trail crew can be undertaken in the future.

Any changes to the trail crew week project or logistics will be shared with the registered volunteer in a timely manner.

**If you have questions about completing your registration, gear list, or any aspect of your work with the crew, please ask. Contact: [crews@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:crews@appalachiantrail.org) or 828-348-1911**

### **Trail Crew Basics**

Our trail crews bring together individuals from all over the country with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Crew weeks are successful when all participants:

- ⬆ **Respect One Another**
- ⬆ **Are Motivated**
- ⬆ **Enjoy Hard, Physical Work**
- ⬆ **Have Experience or Interest in the Outdoors**
- ⬆ **Are Flexible and a Team Player**

Trail crews are supported and led by ATC staff. These individuals are responsible for managing the crew week to ensure that high quality work is completed safely in a rewarding and fun way. All crew members can help make this happen by:

- ⬆ Listen and follow crew leader instruction and direction.
- ⬆ Help throughout the day – before, during, and after the workday.
- ⬆ Offer assistance if you see a fellow crew member or staffer needing help.

***Trailwork is hard!*** Conditions while on crew can be extremely demanding due to:

- ⬆ Length or elevation change of the hike in/out of the project site.
- ⬆ Weather: cold, heat, humidity, rain, thunderstorms, and sometimes snow is possible.
- ⬆ Trailwork is physically and mentally demanding – swinging handtools all day, moving large rocks, and hikes at the beginning and end of the workday.

**Don't worry though, Konnarock isn't a race nor a competition. If you can hike, aren't afraid of hard work, sweat, heat, humidity, dirt, or grime, you'll do great!**

### **Crew Volunteer Arrival at Basecamp:**

**Konnarock Basecamp Address: (609 Flat Ridge Rd, Sugar Grove, VA 24375)  
Basecamp Pavilion Phone: 276-677-4055**

## **Basecamp Pavilion Office: 276-677-3393**

It's the afternoon and the beginning of your trail crew experience and you've found your way to Sugar Grove, VA. Now what? Camp may be almost empty, or it may be teeming with other volunteers, don't be intimidated.

Expect to be greeted by one of our crew staff, or another volunteer. First, we'll give you a tour, then give you a place to sleep in a pod (that's what the Forest Service calls the cabins onsite). Our pods are very rustic - they have power and lights but lack insulation, heat, or air conditioning. If crews are full, plan to have a roommate.

Once you are settled in, it's easy to find your way around camp. People tend to congregate in the pavilion, where the bulletin board that contains crew assignments and other timely information is located. If you need to store personal gear or items of value at Sugar Grove while in the field for the week they can be securely locked in the office (located inside the pavilion), just grab a staff member and they'll get your items stored. Your locked vehicle, if you drive, will be secure here while you are away in the field.

Dinner is served buffet style in the kitchen around 6 p.m., listen for the bell. After dinner and when the dishes are done, you'll meet with the camp coordinator for an informal orientation to discuss the upcoming week. The hum of activity continues into the night when you meet with your crew leaders to learn about your upcoming week and get your PPE (personal protective equipment - hard hat, gloves, safety glasses, and shin guards).

The next morning, give yourself additional time to fill water containers and pack a lunch for the day. Bagged lunch fixings will be in the pavilion, as well as coffee before breakfast. Breakfast is served by 7 a.m. Once breakfast is eaten and dishes are washed, crews finish loading up vehicles for the week. By 8am, vans and trucks are loaded, seat belts are in place, and crews are headed to the project. For the next few days you'll be in the capable hands of your crew leaders – be curious, ask questions, speak up, and have fun!

### **Sugar Grove: Camp Basics:**

*Bathhouses:* There are two shower/laundry/bathroom facilities located on the grounds, both are unisex. Be courteous to other users and respect their privacy. If you make a mess, please clean up after yourself. If you notice TP or paper towels low, or some other facility need, please report to an ATC crew staffer.

*Pavilion:* This building serves many functions: dining, recreation, tool storage/repair, bunk room, and office. The large common area is meant for fun, meeting your new crewmates, and a place to relax. There are movies, a big TV, couches, pool/ping-pong tables, and tables and chairs for meals.

*Internet:* **\*Cell Phones without Wi-Fi-calling do not work at Base Camp\* - there is no cell service in Sugar Grove.** The closest dependable cell service is about a 15-minute drive north towards Marion, VA. Wi-fi is available in the pavilion to check email, check-in with loved ones, etc. Be aware, however, that the Wi-Fi isn't always consistent and if crew staff require internet to finish up their weekly crew coordination, volunteers may be asked to put their phones in airplane mode. We also ask that internet users not view inappropriate material while using the pavilion internet.

*Phone:* If a phone is needed, there is one in the pavilion that you may use, but you'll need a calling card. Please limit calls to 10 minutes as a courtesy to others. If you need to provide a number for family members to contact you while at base camp, the communal area phone number is 276.677.4055.

*Quiet Hours:* 10 p.m. - 6 a.m. quiet hours are enforced camp-wide. To respect the sleep habits of others, please keep noise to a minimum once 10 p.m. arrives. Individuals may have had long travel days, or need to get up early the next day. If you end up talking with your new crewmates or watching a movie past 10 p.m.,

please close the pavilion windows and turn the volume down.

Sugar Grove basecamp is a comfortable place to live. We think of it as our home. While you're a crew member, it's your home too. We all need to pitch in and help out. While the crew is at the camp, we need volunteers to help cook, wash dishes, clean the kitchen and communal areas, and a variety of other jobs. When everyone pitches in, such work goes quickly and easily.

### **Crew Volunteers - Field Life:**

*Transportation:* Crew staff and volunteers travel to/from camp and projects using a 15-passenger van and truck. Travel to projects can vary anywhere from less than an hour to a full day's drive. Our crew leaders are responsible for driving safely. If you feel the crew leader has operated a vehicle inappropriately, please report this to the ATC staff upon your return to camp, or before if needed. All passengers riding in ATC vehicles are required to fasten their seat belts.

*Camping during the crew session:* After the workday is done, most often, your home will be a tent located within an established remote front or back-country camping area.

*Equipment:* Other than your basic camping equipment, clothing is the most important item you'll need to bring. Please refer to the attached Packing and Gear List for mandatory and essential items. ATC will provide all group camp and kitchen necessities including stove and mess kits, tables, chairs, etc. ATC can also provide loaner camping gear such as sleeping bags, sleeping pads, tents, backpacks, water bottles, headlamps, etc. You'll have a chance to check out any items you need during your first night at basecamp.

*Crew Food:* ATC will provide all breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack food items you'll need for the session. We try to accommodate everyone's dietary needs, but keep in mind food storage is limited and we're never able to bring enough fresh foods as we'd like. We try our best to provide a broad range of items that will appeal to all, so if you have special dietary needs feel free to bring some supplementary items from home with you. This will be reviewed during your registration screening phone call with ATC staff, so be sure to share your needs and preferences.

*Sanitation:* It's critical to the health and safety of all members of the crew that individuals adhere to using best practices when it comes to keeping camp, field kitchen, and bodies as clean and sanitary as possible. Your crew leaders will provide guidance on how best to do this, but the basics are:

- ⬆ Wash hands before food preparation or consumption.
- ⬆ Wash hands after using the bathroom or latrine.
- ⬆ Clean all cooking and kitchen equipment after each meal, using the soap-rinse-bleach 3-bin method.
- ⬆ Fill water bottles at camp before heading out to the project, avoid drinking untreated water.

### **Crew Staff:**

While in the field, Trail Crew Leaders and Assistants are key individuals responsible for organizing, managing, transporting, and leading the trail crews. They load the equipment; make sure the crews get to the trailhead, have their food, equipment, and camping supplies, set-up/take-down camp; and lead trail-construction and maintenance activities. Please take their direction. **They have the final word on any matter concerning crew life, safety, and trailwork.**

At base camp, the Camp Coordinator is in charge. They are the logistics person in charge of basecamp, housing assignments, food, equipment, and supplies. They plan the trail crew menus, prepare meals for incoming volunteers and returning crews, take care of equipment and vehicle maintenance, assist with airport/bus stop pick-ups, and assist volunteers with time-off activities.

If you encounter insurmountable problems, talk them over with your crew leader. Do not let an unpleasant situation fester.

### **Communication:**

*Cell Service:* While rural cell service has improved over the years, there is no guarantee that you'll have service at any of the following locations: project campsite, project camping area, or project worksite. For most volunteers, working trail crew is an opportunity to get away from work, normal life, and the associated technology. Respect others with your cell phone use during the crew session by:

- ⬆ Silence your cell phone.
- ⬆ If you need to take a call, move away from crew members.
- ⬆ During the work day cell phones should not be used, unless it's an emergency or breaktime.

*Emergency Communication:* In case of an emergency while in the field, crew leaders carry a Garmin In-Reach - a satellite two-way communication device that alerts and sends the closest emergency response team once triggered. If someone needs to contact a volunteer at base camp or in the field due to an emergency at home, please direct them to the following numbers (listed in order of calling (please only use in real emergencies):

**Southern Regional ATC Office Phone: 828-348-1911**

**Virginia Regional ATC Office Phone: 540.904.4393**

**Konnarock Program Manager: 304-667-0354**

**Konnarock Base Camp Common Area Phone: 276.677.4055**

**Konnarock Base Camp Office Phone: 276.677.3393**

### **The Trailwork:**

Trail building, rehab, and maintenance are about making sustainable trails. You will be physically working on one of two types of projects during your volunteer week: relocations and rehab. Relocation projects involve digging through thick root mats and moving several square yards of soil with hand tools to create a bench to walk on.

Rehab projects involve improving existing trail through replacing or installing trail structures like log or rock steps, retaining walls, or drainage features. Tasks may include breaking big rocks into little rocks with large and small sledgehammers, splitting rocks with rotary hammer & generator, setting rocks as steps, quarrying for rock with rock bar & pick mattock, constructing dry-stacked crib-retaining walls, moving several hundred- pound rocks with canvas slings, or working with native timber to set as steps or cribbing.

Remember, your trail crew leaders will provide all instruction, demonstrations, and support along the way to make sure the work completed is done safely and meets AT standards.

*Partners:* AT Maintaining Club members may work side-by-side with the crew. Please understand that we work for and with our local maintaining clubs. They support our program, and they've invited us to come help them. They are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of sections of the Appalachian Trail. Please represent us well! Maybe you'll get lucky and work a week when one of the clubs sponsors a cookout for the crew. Joining one of the local clubs is one of the best ways to maintain your involvement with the Appalachian Trail after your crew experience.

**Always wear personal protective gear (PPE) when working or handling tools in any way. PPE consists of: boots, long pants, hard hat, eye protection, gloves, and usually shin guards.**

## **Trail Crew Policies:**

### **Safety:**

While building trail, we employ all sorts of blunt and sharp instruments, and we apply them with force. They can be dangerous and with improper use there is the chance of serious injury. The best way to minimize chances of injury is to use your head -- listen to your crew leaders and be aware of your fellow crew members. Don't try to compete with yourself or anyone else. Don't horse around with tools. Be particularly careful at the end of the day when most injuries occur.

### **Injuries & Insurance:**

As volunteers for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the National Park Service (NPS), you are covered by federal Worker's Compensation insurance. This means if you sustain a work-related injury requiring medical attention, volunteers can submit a claim to cover treatment costs. To ensure a claim is submitted, report any injury or condition that is experienced during the crew session ASAP to your crew staff, don't wait until you get home, days after your session ends.

#### ⬆ What's Covered:

- Activities throughout the workday, commute from basecamp to project site, commute from campsite to project site, routine basecamp or field camp activities like cooking, cleaning tools, etc.,
- Job-related injuries such as cuts, abrasions, broken bones, internal injuries, muscle or ligament damage,
- Reactions to poison ivy and bug bites are covered, but you must report them as soon as your reaction occurs.

#### ⬆ Injuries Not Covered:

- Occurring when not complying with crew leader instruction or tailgate safety session guidance,
- When not wearing personal protective equipment,
- Outside of the trail crew session,
- During leisure or recreational activities like swimming, cliff jumping, horseplay, etc.

ATC trail crew program staff will work with injured volunteers to ensure Workers Compensation paperwork is submitted to federal land managers.

If a claim is submitted, volunteers may receive payment notices from hospitals while claims are being processed. If you receive a bill, **please send a copy to ATC staff**. ATC can confirm the status of the claim with the USFS/NPS and share that information back to the volunteer.

If a volunteer is injured while on crew, staff will determine steps in care. Upon treatment and if the injured volunteer receives a light duty restriction by the attending physician the volunteer may join the crew at the worksite and perform light duty tasks at the discretion of the crew leader. If the injury prohibits the volunteer from performing any trail crew activities, the volunteer will be transported back to the base camp facility.

For those volunteers who've signed up for multiple weeks and get injured with more crew weeks to come, the volunteer may only return to crew with a return-to-work clearance from a physician. To minimize the risk of further injury or reinjury, especially with musculoskeletal injuries, crew staff may determine the volunteer is unable to safely continue trail crew activities and will need to return home. This conversation will occur between the volunteer, crew staff, and crew program managers.

Remember: You will not be covered if your injury is the result of lack of compliance with safety procedures, if the proper safety equipment was not used, or if you fail to report an injury immediately.

### General Rules:

1. No pets. We can't transport pets to the field with you or watch them while you're away.
2. No illegal drugs.
3. Only ATC staff may drive crew vehicles (other than in an emergency).
4. No smoking inside of any building, structure, or vehicle. If you do smoke, please be considerate of the crew, and take your smoke break away from the group.
5. Please leave your firearms and other weapons at home or in your vehicle at Base Camp.

### Alcohol Policy:

The consumption of alcohol by responsible, legal adults is neither prohibited nor promoted by ATC. However, it is the responsibility of the Conservancy to ensure the safety of the volunteers and the smooth operations of programs under its supervision. ATC seeks to prevent injury or discomfort arising from disruptive behavior, and to remind members of crew to be considerate and responsible.

*In the field:* Crew staff and volunteers are not allowed to bring alcohol in their personal or crew belongings to the project site nor field camp. No alcohol should be transported in the crew vehicles.

- ⤴ Oftentimes the local maintaining club will provide the crew with a thank-you dinner. Volunteers can partake of alcohol during "club-sponsored events" if crew members aren't operating motor vehicles, there is no disruptive behavior, and they are responsible and considerate of ATC staff, fellow crew volunteers, members of the local maintaining club, and the general public.
- ⤴ The ATC will not purchase, transport, or provide alcoholic beverages to any volunteer members of ATC crews while out in the field.

*At Base Camp:* ATC will comply with all state and local laws and ordinances regarding the purchase, transport, storage, and consumption of alcoholic beverages.

- ⤴ Underage volunteers will refrain from drinking alcohol.
- ⤴ Alcohol will not be consumed to excess. **Disruptive behavior is grounds for dismissal from the program.**
- ⤴ ATC staff will not consume any alcohol before operating ATC vehicles.

Volunteers who make the choice to not comply with the policies and program guidance within this handbook are subject to immediate suspension or dismissal from ATC sponsored events.

### Volunteer Dismissal:

While rare, volunteer trail crews aren't always the best fit for every individual. Just as a volunteer is free to leave at any time, for any reason, ATC reserves the same right to end our volunteer relationship with a volunteer, with or without notice, for any reason not prohibited by law.

Dismissal of a volunteer will occur only as a last resort and will generally take place following progressive disciplinary actions where possible. Whenever possible, concerns will be shared with the volunteer via a verbal warning, which will then be communicated in a written warning.

*Grounds for Dismissal:* may include, but not limited to:

- ⬆ Being verbally or physically aggressive or disrespectful to other volunteers, staff, agency partners, club volunteers, or the public
- ⬆ Behavior or communication that disrupts normal trail crew operation.
- ⬆ Willfully not following crew staff direction.
- ⬆ Failure to perform volunteer trail crew job duties as agreed (as outlined in the Konnarock Volunteer Trail Crew Job Description).
- ⬆ Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances during the workday.
- ⬆ Theft of other volunteer, ATC, or USFS property.

Dismissals will be made jointly by ATC program staff, although the Crew Leader and Camp Coordinator have the authority to immediately remove anyone threatening the safety or well-being of the crew. **All decisions are final.** ATC will investigate and document all performance concerns and incidents which may serve as grounds for dismissal. Volunteers may be offered the opportunity to meet with Trail Crew Program Managers to provide the volunteer's account of the incident.

Remember, while you are on the crew, you are representing the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service. We expect both your work and your behavior to be a credit to all organizations.

### **A Brief History of ATC and Konnarock:**

[Check out our website for history and background on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conference.](#)

**Konnarock Trail Crew:** With an increasing backlog of major trail construction projects created by federal land acquisitions thanks to the National Trails System Act, the ATC and partners searched for a way to both aid clubs with projects and develop within the volunteer Trail community the expertise to tackle complex and difficult trail management challenges.

With the financial backing of the ATC Board, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the support and encouragement of many volunteers and professionals, we created the basic program that you are going to participate in back in 1982. Volunteers and their spirit built the A.T, a community that you're a part of now. We remember our past while looking to a future of more triumphant, transcendent, trail building!

We don't want this to be an isolated experience in your life. We want to build good trail, sure, but we also want you to use what you learn! Make our day -- join an A.T. maintaining club after you return home or become part of an organization near where you live with a similar focus.

- ⬆ Does your company offer volunteer time, or financial donation matching? Be sure to check with your employer; some volunteers, depending on their employer can apply for a monetary match from their company after they volunteer with us – State Farm Insurance, and Exxon are current companies that are donating on behalf of their employees/our volunteers.