

# **APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY AFFINITY GROUPS**

# ATC Affinity Groups are open to all, no exceptions. While the intent is to appeal to trail users with shared identities and interests, anyone is allowed to join. Affinity groups will also rely on the expertise and feedback of existing trail users and volunteers. Many of our group leaders are ATC members, trail maintaining club members, and have extensive experience volunteering for the Trail.

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# **Interested in learning more? Contact us…**

# **Affinity Groups: inclusive or divisive?**

# *“Let’s imagine new faces and a broader aperture for stories of the outdoors.*

# *Let’s question: Are we relevant, and who have we been relevant for?” – Laura Swapp, REI Marketing Director*

# Trail maintaining clubs and affinity groups can work together in a variety of ways including but not limited to:

# Cross-promoting events, volunteer training, and trail maintenance opportunities.

# Assisting in recruiting members, volunteers, and potential leaders

# Plan joint events to create local interest

# Develop mentorships between veteran trail users/stewards and newbies

# **How can trail maintaining clubs work with Affinity Groups?**

# We will begin with several pilot groups. Currently, we have convened Veterans, LatinX, Women’s and LGBTQ+ groups. We plan to roll out more groups once we have identified volunteers to lead these efforts.

# **Which Affinity Groups currently exist?**

# Affinity groups provide fellowship, support and services:

# **Fellowship***:* From hosting online communities to supporting local events, Affinity Groups connect trail users and stewards from under-represented to each other and to the ATC and to the Trail.

# **Support**:Affinity Groups provide trail information, training, and advice. They keep members informed of trail maintenance, stewardship, and other volunteer opportunities, and provide pathways to leadership within the ATC and trail maintaining clubs.

# **Services**: Affinity groups provide online services (event listings and social media), volunteer-led local activities, and create links to existing services provided by the ATC and trail maintaining clubs.

# **What do Affinity Groups do?**

# Affinity Groups are a means through which people with *shared interests* and *shared identities* can connect and contribute to the ATC’s mission of preserving and managing the Appalachian Trail. Open to all, Affinity Groups complement the work of the ATC, trail maintaining clubs, and like-minded third party organizations. Ultimately, Affinity Groups contribute to the larger goal of Broader Relevancy by encouraging trail users from under-represented groups to become members, volunteers, donors, and/or future leaders in the trail community.

# **What are Affinity Groups?**