Every year, over three million people go out of their way to hike some part of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail — lovingly known by many simply as “the A.T.” They climb steep, sweat-inducing inclines. They trudge through waist-deep snow, swampy summer heat, and days of rain showers. They go for days, sometimes weeks or months, without the conveniences afforded to them back home. They take time away from their family, friends, careers, and more to live a simpler life in the woods.

Why do so many leave behind the conveniences of the modern world to hike on the A.T.?

If we were to choose one word to explain why, it would be “connection.”

A connection to a historic, one-of-a-kind footpath through the Appalachian Mountains, traversing regions rich with history and culture.

A connection to the natural environments and sweeping landscapes, providing momentary relief from modern “conveniences” and replacing them with a simpler, soul-satisfying connection to the surrounding world.
A connection to the thousands of volunteers, whose generous contributions of expert skills and hard work keep the A.T. experience alive.

A connection to the communities, agencies, foundations, and individuals whose dedication and support have reinforced the Trail and its protection.

And a connection, of course, to the visitors of the Trail, a community of dreamers and doers seeking to experience one of the most unique — and important — parks in the entire world.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is proud of its role in establishing and fostering these connections. In fact, the ATC’s ability to fulfill its mission of managing, protecting, and advocating for the A.T. is due, in large part, to the connections it has created, all of them critical to the building and protection of the A.T. over the past century — and they are just as critical for the century to come.

The ATC is uniquely experienced, uniquely capable, and uniquely positioned to create and strengthen these essential connections.

As you will see, at no time was this more true than in 2019, a year that has helped the ATC grow, adapt, and prepare for another century of conservation and connections.

There is one last connection that has been crucial to building, maintaining, and protecting of the Trail: connections to our supporters. None of the work we do is possible without your generous contributions. We hope you will continue to support the ATC as we advance our work of managing this iconic and irreplaceable resource and experience.
CONNECTIONS TO THE TRAIL

Making an Impact: The ATC’s core impact is through the fulfillment of our mission — managing, protecting, and advocating for the A.T. We conserve not only the A.T. footpath, but also the one-of-a-kind experience it provides. This will always be the foundation of what we do.

The ATC and its partners work diligently to identify, analyze, and confront the threats that could alter the ways in which we can recreate on and benefit from the Trail. In 2019, multiple conservation projects along the A.T. showcased the breadth of this work.

“Brushing” the Great Smoky Mountains
The seemingly simple act of clearing weeds, branches, and more from the A.T. footpath is, in reality, a monumental undertaking. In 2019, the Smokies Wilderness Elite A.T. Crew (S.W.E.A.T.) spent multiple weeks “brushing” 30 miles of the Trail through Great Smoky Mountains National Park, removing an estimated 1,000 pounds of overgrowth and clearing the way for oncoming hikers.
Clearing Invasive Species

Invasive plant and animal species have taken a significant toll on native A.T. habitats. In July 2019, the ATC held its second “Kill the Dam Invasive Plants” event in Fontana Dam, North Carolina. Fifty volunteers and partners spent a week removing hundreds of pounds of garlic mustard and other invasive plants, giving native flora the opportunity to regrow and thrive.

ATC staff also completed “phase one” of our effort to treat the Trail’s ash tree populations against the emerald ash borer. This small beetle has devastated ash tree stands throughout the Appalachians, leaving rows of dead and rotting trees across the landscape. The ATC administered treatment to more than 300 trees in 2019 alone, with a total of 850 trees treated so far. Without this essential work, the ash tree could one day share the fate of the American chestnut, leaving only a ghost of its majestic beauty.

By addressing invasive species, the ATC will positively impact the health of native species and A.T. habitats.

Preserving Spy Rock

Spy Rock in Virginia offers panoramic views of the surrounding mountainsides and is home to two rare plant species, Greenland stitchwort and three-leaved cinquefoil. When increased visitation led to destructive “social trails” and a risk of these rare plants being trampled by visitors, the ATC worked with the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club and the U.S. Forest Service to repair and prevent further damage to the area.

A new, sustainable path was built to the summit, rope guides were installed to help hikers avoid the rare plants, and educational signs were installed to better inform visitors.

All this work by the ATC and its partners will help ensure the grand views of Spy Rock continue to inspire visitors and even the smallest members of the surrounding habitat are conserved.
What do you picture when you think of the Appalachian Trail (A.T.)? A “Green Tunnel” through deciduous forests? Alpine views atop the White Mountains? Rolling hillsides and farmlands? Trailside creeks? The A.T. landscape contains all of these, and conserving them is an essential role of the ATC not only because of their importance to the A.T. hiking experience, but also for the protection of vital natural resources.

There were multiple successes for the A.T. landscape in 2019 thanks to efforts of the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership (ATLP). Co-led by the ATC and the National Park Service, it includes close to 100 conservation partners.

**Preserving McAfee Knob Views**
One of ATLP’s most visible successes was the purchase of Hogan Hollow in

---

**CONNECTIONS TO A.T. LANDSCAPES**

*Making an Impact: The ATC’s landscape conservation program helps secure thousands of acres of irreplaceable lands and preserves the land’s essential values: natural beauty, climate resiliency, and biodiversity. This work protects the A.T. experience and the critical ecology of the A.T. corridor.*
Reinforcing Natural Protections
Protecting sweeping vistas is only a portion of our conservation efforts, as many areas provide natural buffers against development or preserve environments for wildlife, clean water, and climate resiliency. Established in 2008, the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Pennsylvania protects the Delaware River watershed and hosts thousands of migratory birds. A multiyear collaboration between the ATC, The Conservation Fund, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service added 4,350 acres to the refuge, safeguarding this important environment and protecting five miles of the A.T from development threats.

Funding Landscape Protection
Land preservation efforts of this magnitude are not possible without a network of partners connected by the goal of protecting A.T. landscapes. To facilitate these partnerships, the ATC’s Wild East Action Fund provided over $500,000 in 2019 alone to help preserve 56,489 acres of land. The ATC also committed an additional $125,000 to help multiple partner organizations build needed capacity to secure high-priority landscapes.

Without a conserved landscape, the A.T. is just a trail. By securing lands around the A.T., we help ensure that, centuries from now, visitors will be able to stand on the footpath — from Springer Mountain to Katahdin — and gaze upon the landscape that inspires so many to advocate for its protection.
CONNECTIONS TO A.T. VOLUNTEERS

Making an Impact: The ATC recruits and trains 6,000 volunteers, who dedicate over 200,000 hours annually. The A.T. would not exist today without this legion of volunteers dedicated to the conservation of the Trail and its surrounding lands.

The Trail’s maintenance and management face new challenges as we approach the second century of A.T. protection. The A.T. continues to grow in popularity, causing significant impacts from overuse and crowding. Extreme weather fueled by climate change causes severe erosion, washouts, and wildfires. The ATC recognizes the growing need for trained, dedicated volunteers and is actively recruiting the next generation of volunteers to meet these issues head on.

Gooch Mountain Relocation
The Georgia section of the A.T. is consistently one of the busiest sections of the entire Trail, drawing visitors from Atlanta and thousands of aspiring thru-hikers each year. Designed in a time before modern trail engineering, this section of the
A.T. was built straight uphill, causing water to follow and badly erode the footpath. To address this growing problem, the ATC collaborated with the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club and LatinXHikers, an affinity group introducing communities of color to outdoor recreation and conservation. They spent an intensive week to rerouting the Trail to an erosion-resistant location using modern engineering practices. This section will now require less maintenance and provide a better hiking experience for visitors.

Maintaining Iconic Viewpoints and Critical Habitat

Locations like Cole Mountain in Virginia are known for their treeless summits, providing panoramic views for visitors and habitats for monarch butterflies, golden-winged warblers, and rare bees, that require open, shrubby areas, or grasslands. Without the large grazers that formerly roamed the Appalachian Mountains, these spaces must be maintained regularly. In 2019, A.T. volunteers and ATC staff removed hundreds of pounds of woody vegetation from dozens of acres atop Cole Mountain and other locations, helping preserve these beloved Trail spaces and conserving the habitats that native species depend on.

Other Successes

The list of other volunteer accomplishments in 2019 is astonishing. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club successfully removed hundreds of downed trees after a historic ice storm swept through the Mid-Atlantic Region. The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club finished upgrading the A.T. shelter and privy systems throughout Great Smoky Mountains National Park, completing a 23-year effort. Significant Trail reroutes near Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and Palmerton, Pennsylvania, were either planned, started, or nearly completed.

This work and more is only possible through the dedication of A.T. volunteers. In 2019, the ATC officially recognized Tip Ray and Charly Lee, who achieved 1,000 hours of volunteer A.T. work. The Trail is fortunate to have stewards like Tip and Charly, and it is part of our mission to foster the same passion and dedication in the next generation of volunteers.
CONNECTIONS TO OUR PARTNERS

Making an Impact: As the organization that coordinates a system of partners to protect and conserve the A.T., the ATC has worked with a broad network — from individuals to national organizations — to make the A.T. a reality for a nearly a century.

Only through the coordination of a diverse network of partners and advocates does the dream of the A.T. continue. Central to this partnership is the Cooperative Management System. Comprised of local, state, and federal agency partners, 31 Trail maintaining clubs, and coordinated by the ATC, this system oversees all aspects of the Trail’s protection.

A “Small” Smokies Project
A 2019 privy upgrade at Spence Field Shelter in Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM) showcased how even a seemingly small project can take massive coordination between A.T. partners. After careful planning,
One of the most essential roles for the ATC and its partners is to locate, recruit, and train the next generation of A.T. stewards. The ATC works with A.T. Communities™ and organizations along the East Coast to develop youth summits that provide onsite instruction and immersion in the outdoors. Four summits were held in 2019 in Georgia, North Carolina, and Massachusetts thanks to partners at the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, Greening Youth Foundation, Montreat College, Everybody’s Environment, and Greenagers. These summits featured Trail building courses, studies of the surrounding environment, and in-depth discussions with career conservationists, helping dozens of youth — some stepping onto the A.T. for the first time — learn about future career and volunteerism paths and empowering them to lead the way in the protection of America’s public lands.

The A.T. survives today due to the dedicated work of the collaborative system of partners, each sharing the expertise and passion that ensures the Trail is conserved and protected. As we look back at the legacy of partnerships that led to the Trail’s creation, the ATC remains driven to strengthen its current connections and foster new relationships, helping us fulfill the vision of an A.T. protected forever for all to enjoy.
CONNECTIONS TO OUR VISITORS

Making an Impact: As stewards of the A.T., the ATC takes pride in its role of educating and informing the Trail’s visitors, preparing them as they forge their story of adventure and inspiration, and encouraging them to become advocates for its protection.

1,159: the number of successful thru-hikes completed in 2019.

50 years ago, only 778 intrepid hikers completed a full thru-hike of the Trail throughout the entire 1970s.

The growing number of thru-hikers is just one indicator of the Trail’s increasing popularity. In many ways, we celebrate this — more people experience and benefit from the A.T. and public lands.

However, there is a pressing need to address the impacts of such an increase, providing audiences old and new with information they need to help preserve the Trail’s fragile ecosystems.

Start Smart
In early 2019, the ATC held “Start Smart,” a program for northbound thru-hikers located at Amicalola Falls.
State Park in Georgia — the location of the A.T. Approach Trail. Here, thru-hikers were provided a free overview of essential skills including Leave No Trace principles, effective food storage in black bear habitats, and gear selection for their journeys. This also provided hikers an opportunity to enter the ATC’s voluntary registration system, ATCamp, which helps thru-hikers choose less crowded starting dates and locations, and helps the ATC keep track of the number of hikers on the Trail each year. In 2019, over 2,400 individuals participated in the in-person Start Smart courses, and 3,200 hikers registered their hikes through ATCamp. The Start Smart class was later adapted for a web video series on the ATC’s social media platforms, helping spread these key messages to new audiences. These efforts have helped lessen impacts to the Georgia section of the Trail and better prepare thousands of hikers for their A.T. adventures.

**Backpacking Basics**

The ATC established a series of comprehensive “How to Hike the A.T.” courses aimed at beginner and intermediate hikers. These courses ranged from day-long conferences in Harpers Ferry covering the basics of backcountry hiking, to weekend-long backpacking seminars led by ATC staff. Through these courses, the ATC helps individuals become more experienced A.T. hikers and equips them to teach others about the positive impacts of ethical hiking practices. These new initiatives coupled with established ATC events, such as the annual Flip Flop Festival in Harpers Ferry, help the ATC educate a new audience of outdoor enthusiasts and future conservationists.

**McAfee Knob Task Force**

One of the Trail’s most visited locations, McAfee Knob has been severely impacted by crowds of hikers seeking inspiration from its views. The McAfee Knob Task Force was established in partnership between the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club and the ATC to address these impacts, as well as to better educate visitors on Leave No Trace principles. In 2019, the Task Force deployed 52 volunteers to patrol the surrounding area, advise visitors, and remove litter and fire rings. These volunteers dedicated over 1,600 hours toward monitoring this section, ultimately contacting 15,261 visitors, removing 468 gallons of trash, and dismantling 56 fire rings.

With ongoing support from the ATC and the National Park Service, the Task Force will continue its efforts to conserve one of the Trail’s most beloved landmarks.

The Appalachian Trail would be nothing without its dedicated visitors. As we move forward, we pledge to continue engaging with Trail visitors to ensure they grow to view the A.T. as more than a footpath through the woods, but rather a national treasure to be conserved for future generations to enjoy and benefit from.
ANNUAL FUND LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

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Estate of Julia Lyman
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Estate of Robert M. Emerson
Charles Ermert
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David R. Goode
Martha K. Goode
Christina L. Goode
Jaime Gorum
Stephen Graf
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The Volgenau Foundation

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The William Penn Foundation

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Axos
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Network for Good
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Sanctuary Charitable Trust
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BearVault
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BNY Mellon Charitable Gift Fund
Darn Tough Vermont
Davies Family Foundation
Devils Backbone
END Nation
Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC
Fontana Village
Georgia Appalachian Trail Club
Harmony and Sons Fine Teas
IBM Employee Services Center
Karten Muchin Rosenman LLP
Kreger Charitable Trust
L.L. Bean Inc.
National Audubon Society
Osprey Packs
Partnership For The National Trails System
Schwab Charitable Fund
The National Christian Foundation
The R.J. Salerno Foundation
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Willmer Hale

HIRER
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Aetna Foundation Inc
Amazon Smile
America’s Charities
American Backcountry
American Endowment Foundation
Ameprise Financial Annual Giving Campaign
Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association
AT&T United Way
Bank of America
Betty A. Lewis University Environmental Charitable Trust
Bright Funds Foundation
Brookfield White Pine Hydro Llc
Catherine Paris Foundation
Charles Schwab
Colle Limited Partnership LP
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Community Foundation Of Greater Memphis
Community Foundation of New Jersey
Community Foundation of Western North Carolina
Courtney Knight Gaines Foundation
David R. Goede Charitable Lead Annuity Trust
Diversified Trust Company
E. R. Bane Trust
Eastern Outdoor Sales
Emerging Technologies Inc
Estate Of Catherine Lynch
Estate Of Joan Sibley
Exxon Mobil Foundation Inc.
Fidelity Investments
First Giving/FrontStream
Frenzel Family Foundation
Garden Homes Management Corporation
Gettysburg Travel Council, Inc
Goldman Sachs & Co.
Goldman Sachs & Co. Matching Gift Program
Granite Gear
Hoechst Celanese Foundation
Home Assn of American Legion Post 262
Games of Chance
Impactassets Inc
J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation
Johnson-Kazar Charitable Foundation, Inc
M Powered Strategies Inc
Maine Appalachian Trail Club
Mathworks
McLeod Foundation
Merrill Lynch
Morgan Stanley Gift Fund
Morgan Stanley Global Impact Funding Trust, Inc
Morgan Stanley Smith Barney
National Financial Services LLC
Neal Family Charitable Foundation
Nester Hosiery/Farm to Feet
New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
Norman & Doris Fisher Foundation
Parks Project
PayPal Giving Fund
Peckham Family Foundation
Pennsylvania St. Emp Charity Appeal
Pfizer Foundation
Pledging Foundation
PNC Institutional Asset Management
Public Lands Coffee
Ralph Burnham Charitable Lead Trust
Raymond James Charitable Endowment Fund
Raymond James Financial
RBC Wealth Management
Renovation Charitable Foundation, Inc.
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
Shelburne Farms Resources
TD Ameritrade Clearing, Inc
The Cleveland Foundation
The Danny Cramer Foundation
The Hayes Foundation
The John A. Rodger Jr Foundation Inc
The Len Foote Hike Inn
The Maxey Family Foundation
The Powell Family Charitable Trust
The Reed Foundation
The Steven & Joyce Tadler Charitable Trust
The Thomas Rosato Charitable Foundation Inc
The US Charitable Gift Trust
Thrivent Financial Bank
TIAA
TIAA Charitable, Inc
TIAA FSB
TisBest Philanthropy
Top Of The World Headwear
Travelers
Trust
UBS Donor Advised Fund
UBS Financial Services, Inc
Ursack, Inc
Voya Financial Advisors Inc
Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC
X CHANGE
Your Cause, LLC

16 APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY
Revenues

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<tr>
<td>Annuity Actuarial Adjustment</td>
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<td>Increase/(Decrease) in Net Assets</td>
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| ANNUITY ACTUARIAL                | 2018       | 2018       |
| Adjustment                      | (38,100)   | (30,833)   |
| INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS|           | 327,522    |
## Statement of Financial Position

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<th>GENERAL FUND</th>
<th>LAND ACQUISITION FUND</th>
<th>MONITORING FUND</th>
<th>DAVID M. STARTZELL STEWARDSHIP FUND</th>
<th>ANNUITY FUND</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS</th>
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### ASSETS

#### CURRENT ASSETS

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<td>$32,619</td>
<td>$1,310,238</td>
<td>$160,846</td>
<td>$9,576,780</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### NON-CURRENT ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset Description</th>
<th>GENERAL FUND</th>
<th>LAND ACQUISITION FUND</th>
<th>MONITORING FUND</th>
<th>DAVID M. STARTZELL STEWARDSHIP FUND</th>
<th>ANNUITY FUND</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term investments</td>
<td>$895,270</td>
<td>$232,234</td>
<td>$76,196</td>
<td>$76,196</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction loan interfund receivable</td>
<td>$812,772</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$812,772</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and equipment, net</td>
<td>$7,004</td>
<td>$1,644,157</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,644,157</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other assets, deposits</td>
<td>$719,270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$719,270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land held in conservancy</td>
<td>$2,539,427</td>
<td>$232,234</td>
<td>$8,942,667</td>
<td>$13,298,893</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total non-current assets</td>
<td>$819,776</td>
<td>$2,539,427</td>
<td>$8,942,667</td>
<td>$13,298,893</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ASSETS</td>
<td>$7,025,560</td>
<td>$4,406,720</td>
<td>$264,853</td>
<td>$10,252,905</td>
<td>$925,635</td>
<td>$22,875,673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### CURRENT LIABILITIES AND DEFERRED REVENUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liability Description</th>
<th>GENERAL FUND</th>
<th>LAND ACQUISITION FUND</th>
<th>MONITORING FUND</th>
<th>DAVID M. STARTZELL STEWARDSHIP FUND</th>
<th>ANNUITY FUND</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable and accrued expenses</td>
<td>$1,088,910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,088,910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred revenues</td>
<td>$3,719,407</td>
<td>$408,391</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,037,412</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interfund payables</td>
<td>$1,129</td>
<td>$627,892</td>
<td></td>
<td>$194,327</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction loan interfund payable</td>
<td>$13,219</td>
<td></td>
<td>$13,219</td>
<td>$37,833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current maturities of annuities payable</td>
<td>$4,822,665</td>
<td>$627,892</td>
<td>$408,391</td>
<td>$37,833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total current liabilities</td>
<td>$4,822,665</td>
<td>$627,892</td>
<td>$408,391</td>
<td>$37,833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liability Description</th>
<th>GENERAL FUND</th>
<th>LAND ACQUISITION FUND</th>
<th>MONITORING FUND</th>
<th>DAVID M. STARTZELL STEWARDSHIP FUND</th>
<th>ANNUITY FUND</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction loan interfund payable</td>
<td>$76,196</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$76,196</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annuities payable, less current maturities</td>
<td>$194,327</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$194,327</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total liabilities and deferred revenues</td>
<td>$76,196</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$194,327</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### NET ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset Description</th>
<th>GENERAL FUND</th>
<th>LAND ACQUISITION FUND</th>
<th>MONITORING FUND</th>
<th>DAVID M. STARTZELL STEWARDSHIP FUND</th>
<th>ANNUITY FUND</th>
<th>TOTAL FUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net assets without donor restrictions</td>
<td>$1,167,045</td>
<td>$13,064</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,336,813</td>
<td>$6,979,181</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets with donor restrictions</td>
<td>$959,654</td>
<td>$3,765,764</td>
<td>$264,853</td>
<td>$4,507,701</td>
<td>$9,792,188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total net assets</td>
<td>$2,126,699</td>
<td>$3,778,828</td>
<td>$264,853</td>
<td>$9,844,514</td>
<td>$16,708,369</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</td>
<td>$7,025,560</td>
<td>$4,406,720</td>
<td>$264,853</td>
<td>$10,252,905</td>
<td>$925,635</td>
<td>$22,875,673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connections to the Trail, to the Trail’s surrounding landscape, to our volunteers, to our partners, and to the Trail’s visitors. These connections were critical from the moment the Trail was first conceived. As A.T. visionary Benton MacKaye said in an essay penned for The New York Times in 1923:

“We build for ourselves, on the frontier, a better, wider place in which to live a better, wider life.”

Note the “we.” MacKaye knew the Trail would only become a reality through a collective and coordinated effort. The ATC organizes this collective effort through its numerous connections, providing the coordination and expertise to make this Trail a reality — not just for now but for generations to come.

As we look to the future of the ATC’s work, our impacts will go far beyond managing and protecting the Trail and its surrounding landscape. We also preserve the Trail’s fragile ecology including the flora and fauna that call the A.T. corridor their home. We recruit, train, and deploy a volunteer corps of over 6,000 Trail stewards. We advocate for the Trail by advancing legislation and policies that help protect the A.T. experience. We engage with over 50 designated A.T. communities to ensure Trailside cities, towns, and villages can engage with this world-renowned recreational resource.

Among these impacts, we’ve set out several priorities for the upcoming years:

Orient our work, community, and culture to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). Our focus on JEDI was borne out of a recognition that the Conservancy must ensure the Trail is safe, welcoming, and inclusive for all.

We acknowledge we have a lot of work to do, but we are dedicating the time, resources, and attention to educate ourselves and, ultimately, to do better when it comes to JEDI.

Protect the natural beauty and climate resiliency of the A.T. landscape. Conserving the land around the A.T. protects a footpath following a continuous line from Georgia to Maine. It protects a critical avian skyway and wildlife migration routes. It creates a climate corridor with global environmental impacts. It creates an outdoor recreation resource on a scale matched by few others. Landscape protection, in short, is something we take for granted but is essential to human life.

Balance conservation of and responsible recreation on the Appalachian Trail. This priority is a response to the ever-increasing popularity of the A.T. and outdoor recreation, in general. It is not uncommon to find cars parked along the highway and trailheads crowded shoulder-to-shoulder with hikers. We love that the Trail continues to be discovered by new adventurers — why manage and protect a trail if no one hikes it? — but, as a result, the impact to the Trail’s resources becomes more of a concern. We must ensure the Trail retains its essential character even with more people visiting the A.T., year after year.

As we look back to 2019 and look to the future, we’ve laid out a set of priorities that will help us define the second century of A.T. management. As with the first century, the A.T. will only remain the cherished resource it is through the coordinated and collective efforts of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.