



Wild East Action Fund 2022 Grant Criteria

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), on behalf of the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership (ATLP), is accepting proposals for land protection and organizational conservation planning support grants intended to support conservation work within the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Landscape, also known as the Wild East. The Wild East Action Fund provides funding to qualified organizations working to advance protection of the unique environmental and community benefits that the A.T. and the surrounding lands provide.

The mission of the ATC is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The generous donor support of the ATC helps fulfill the mission to protect the trail and the landscape beyond the footpath.

I. About the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

The mission of the ATLP is to connect the wild, scenic, and cultural wonders of the A.T. and its surrounding landscape. Co-convened by the ATC and the National Park Service, the ATLP is a coalition of federal, state, and local government agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, and academic institutions. The Wild East Action Fund, administered by the ATC, supports the mission of the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership to catalyze and develop land protection efforts in the A.T. Landscape.

II. About the Wild East Action Fund

The purpose of the Wild East Action Fund is to:

- Accelerate the pace and scale of conservation in the A.T. Landscape.
- Increase capacity for strategic and targeted conservation activities throughout the A.T. Landscape.
- Strengthen collaboration among diverse partners across the A.T. Landscape.
- Champion an A.T. Landscape that encourages all people to feel welcome, respected, supported, and valued.
- Build broad community support and engagement to meet the urgent need to sustain the environmental and community benefits of the A.T. Landscape as it relates to the impacts of climate change.
- Promote projects that demonstrate equitable and inclusive approaches to land protection and strategic conservation planning.

III. Organization Eligibility

To be eligible for the Wild East Action Fund, applicants must demonstrate a project focus or organizational mission that is aligned with the ATLP's mission of connecting the wild, scenic, and cultural wonders of the A.T. and its surrounding landscape. Organizations should broadly serve the needs of a geographic area within the A.T. Landscape. Previous grant awardees are eligible to apply. To qualify for funding, eligible organizations must:

- Be located in or serve the A.T. Landscape
- Be a tribal, state, or local agency or a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Regional partnerships without 501(c)(3) nonprofit status may have another organization apply on behalf of a partnership.

IV. Funding Opportunities

The Wild East Action Fund offers two potential funding opportunities: Land Protection Projects and Conservation Planning Support.

1. Land Protection Projects

Land protection grants will be awarded to projects that contribute to the permanent protection and stewardship of the exceptional values of the A.T. Landscape, including (but not limited to) the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, recreational, and community values the landscape holds. Projects should advance climate resiliency, use innovative models for collaboration and/or community engagement, and improve public access to outdoor recreation where appropriate.

Funding is restricted to land protection (fee land interests or permanent conservation easements) costs and associated stewardship planning costs. Examples of eligible funding requests include land acquisition and transaction costs (e.g., appraisals, surveys, titles, environmental assessments, and legal costs). Grant funds may not be used for organizational overhead and/or administration.

2. Conservation Planning Support

Grants are available to support the strategic conservation planning of organizations and regional partnerships that catalyze local or regional land protection within the A.T. Landscape. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, developing strategic conservation plans, creating parcel prioritization/decision support tools, and natural resource stewardship or restoration planning. Projects should strive to strengthen community support in land conservation, engage diverse and underserved stakeholders, support public access to recreation opportunities, and advance climate resiliency where possible. It is important that conservation planning projects clearly demonstrate how efforts will result in or catalyze future landscape conservation.

Funding may be used for staff or contract support to advance or accelerate conservation objectives and direct costs associated with facilitation, planning, communication, and outreach efforts. Funding may not be used for organizational overhead/administration, lobbying efforts or political groups, refinancing or servicing existing debt, scholarships, marketing materials, venue costs, or food.

V. Project Evaluation

Projects for either funding opportunity should be tangible, presenting clear objectives, outcomes, and measurable or concrete deliverables. Competitive projects will demonstrate deliverables that can be accomplished within one year, have a high likelihood of success sustained beyond the grant period, and ultimately produce community and environmental benefits. Projects with matching funding that is firmly secured will rank higher than projects with undetermined or unlikely funding.

Land Protection Projects will specifically be evaluated for their ability to meet the following criteria:

- Show the extent of significant natural habitat, scenic attributes, public access to outdoor recreation opportunities, cultural and/or historic sites, and connections to existing protected lands.
- Permanently conserve important climate resilient areas or connections between resilient areas designated by The Nature Conservancy's [Resilient Land Mapping Tool](#).
- Lands that have been identified as a high priority in a local and/or regional conservation plan or land prioritization.
- Demonstrate the threat and/or conservation opportunity presented.
- Demonstrate an approach that is inclusive of meeting equitable access needs for recreation, hunting, foraging, or other traditional land uses.
- Demonstrate broad community support and diverse collaborative partnerships.
- Provide evidence of a sound stewardship plan and funding.

Conservation Planning Support Projects will specifically be evaluated for their ability to meet the following criteria:

- Clearly articulate how the project will result in or catalyze land conservation and a more climate resilient future.
- Demonstrate engagement with diverse and underserved communities through collaborative partnerships resulting in robust, resilient, and holistic conservation outcomes.
- Demonstrate sufficient organizational capacity and a commitment to complete the proposed activities.
- Demonstrate measurable outcomes that can assess the organization's success in achieving the project's goals and objectives.

VI. Award Information

The ATC expects to grant up to \$500,000 to qualified land protection and conservation planning support projects in 2022. For **land protection projects**, single year grant requests up to **\$100,000** will be considered. For **conservation planning support projects**, single year grant requests up to **\$25,000** will be considered.

Both funding opportunities require a cash or in-kind match. Matches will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may depend on the circumstances of the organization. Matches should be secured or demonstrate with confidence that they will be secured during the grant period. Matches should be well explained, and verifiable.

A small committee representing the ATLP will review proposals and determine awards.

VII. Grantee Expectations

Grantees will be required to sign an award agreement further detailing how funding will be used, timeframe, and other stipulations related to the grant award. Funded projects will be asked to provide a short, mid-grant (6 month) progress report, a final progress report, and a final financial expenditure report. Grantees will be asked to document the impacts related to the funded project and any additional evaluation of outcomes.

The ATLP seeks to promote the great work of all Wild East Action Fund grantees and will work directly with each to share stories of success and impacts that continue to accelerate the pace and scale of A.T. Landscape protection.

VII. Application Materials

To apply, please complete the 2022 Wild East Action Fund online application form. The application period is expected to open in late August, and the online application form will be shared at that time. Please complete the application no later than 11:59pm Eastern on Friday, September 30, 2022.

The online application form will require and accommodated several file uploads:

- **REQUIRED:** Project budget that details allowable expenses, total project costs, sources of match, and requested grant amount.
- **REQUIRED:** Project description (not to exceed three pages), see form for more detail.
- **EXPECTED:** A letter of nonprofit status from the IRS, if applicable.
- **OPTIONAL:** Additional supporting materials. Location and project maps (highly recommended). If a viewshed layer is included, please provide a *brief* overview of the analysis used. Letters of support maybe included as well.

If you have questions, need support, or your organization is unable to provide the application materials because of technical constraints, please contact Max Olsen at molsen@appalachiantrail.org.