Mid-Atlantic Trail Crew Volunteer Job Description

The Mid-Atlantic Trail Crew tackles large-scale projects and focuses on trail relocations and tread rehabilitation. The crew is active from late August to late October or early November each year, working on projects that can be located between Rockfish Gap in Virginia and the New York-Connecticut border. Trail Crew work weeks typically last for five days.

TRAIL WORK IS HARD, PHYSICAL LABOR
It may involve working with hand tools, power tools or power equipment; and getting dirty is guaranteed. The crew works eight- or nine-hour days, rain or shine, hot or cold, regardless of annoyances of insects. Crew members must be able to live and work cooperatively and in close proximity to fellow volunteers of all genders, ages, and backgrounds. All crew members are expected to participate equally in routine tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and tool care, both at base camp and the project site.

BASE CAMP
For most crew weeks, volunteers gather at base camp in south-central Pennsylvania for introductions and orientation the day before departing for the project location. Base camp includes dining and recreation facilities, a shower/bath house, and simple cabins.

Once at the project location, accommodations vary, but range from primitive backcountry tent camps to tenting in developed campgrounds to enclosed cabins. With the primitive backcountry experience, volunteers can expect to be without showers, bathrooms, or running water for the duration of their week.

Once you arrive at the base camp, shelter, food, transportation to and from project sites, tools, safety equipment, and group camping gear are provided. Crew members need to bring work clothing, sturdy boots, any of their own available basic camping gear and personal items such as toiletries, towels, pillows, headlamps, etc.

ESSENTIAL VOLUNTEER FUNCTIONS
Volunteers spend five consecutive days and four nights working in a variety of conditions. Project locations range from front country to more remote backcountry locations, often far from medical facilities. Volunteers are expected to perform physically demanding manual labor in mild to intense weather conditions. In addition to trail work activities, volunteers also actively contribute to community chores and always practice Leave No Trace.

Essential functions may include:
- Traveling without assistance over uneven, variable terrain, including but not limited to flat, uphill and downhill, with varying trail width, where obstructions include rocks, roots, steps, water bars, log bridges, slick surfaces, streams, muddy areas, or standing water.
- Carrying of personal and group gear, as well as tools and safety equipment, which combined could weigh between 20-50 lbs.
- Performing trail work tasks that include but are not limited to lifting 50 lbs of weight, swinging hand tools, cutting annual growth, raking or digging out drains, installing
erosion control features, moving heavy logs or rocks, vegetation clearing, tread definition or side hill bench construction, constructing rock steps, waterbars, cribbing, shutting down user-created/social trails, and extensive rockwork.

- Sharing in duties at field camp for the project associated with preparing, cooking, and cleaning up from meals, maintaining sanitation at camp and worksite, cleaning and storing group tools and gear, and other tasks to cooperatively share in work of the entire crew

In addition to those functions, volunteers who see the greatest success
- have an enthusiasm for the experience
- possess an ability to get along with and work cooperatively with others
- keep safety top of mind
- have a desire to work hard

QUALIFICATIONS & REQUIREMENTS
Volunteers must be physically and mentally ready for the challenges of crew life.
- Ability to perform essential functions of the position listed above.
- Respect, understand, and follow instructions from crew leaders.
- Understand and apply the training you receive for associated trail work and safety practices.
- Communicate well with others, resolve conflicts effectively, and promote positive interpersonal relationships.

APPLICATION PROCESS
For any potential volunteer, new or alumni, individuals should:
- **Be Motivated!** Whether you're looking to just get out on the A.T., give back after a section or thru hike, interested in challenging trail construction projects, or gain & develop new skills, individuals who arrive with a clear objective during their time on crew have the most rewarding experience.
- **Not Afraid of Manual Labor.**Trail crew projects are completed with handtools, teamwork, and strong minds & backs. You don’t need to be a construction foreman with lots of experience, but you will need to be open and able to help move huge rocks, swing a sledgehammer dozens (sometimes hundreds!) of times throughout the week, and hike up to 3 miles one way to projects. Most crew weeks average 40 ‘working’ hours.
- **Experience/Interest in the Outdoors.** You don’t need to be an expert survivalist or thru hiker to be successful on trail crew, but you will need to be confident or willing to learn how to live in a front/back country setting. Pooping in the woods, sleeping in a tent, cooking meals in a field kitchen, and not having a sink to brush your teeth, will all be day-to-day experiences while you’re on crew. Crew staff are there to teach, guide, and help with any camping or field situations you may not be experienced in.
- **Be Flexible and a Team Player.** Trailwork, precipitation, humidity, temperature, etc. are rarely ideal – being aware that every day won’t be perfect, but tomorrow might be is a welcome mindset for all crew volunteers. Crew volunteers don’t operate in a vacuum, helping your fellow crew members and crew staff only helps ensure a crew week is a success. Offering to hike in a heavy piece of equipment in your backpack, or volunteering to help clean dishes and the kitchen after dinner goes a long way in contributing to the entire crew. Teamwork makes the dream work!
If the above sounds great, complete your registration via the online form sent to you! We’d love to have you join our trail crew. When completing your registration forms, be sure to provide the requested information. Part of you having success while on crew is making sure ATC and crew staff have the information we need. **Critical Information Potential Volunteers Need to Provide:**

- **Dietary Restrictions** – vegetarian? Gluten-free? We need to know!
- **Allergies** – Drug, Food, Insect, Latex, Environmental; Prescribed Epi-pen?
- **Pertinent Medical History:**
  - Medications & side effects – describe how they may impact your ability to perform trail crew activities
  - Musculoskeletal, Lung, and Cardiac Issues, Diabetes, Seizures
    - Has a physician limited your activities in the past?
    - If your activities have been limited by a physician, have you been cleared for trail crew activities?
- **Emergency Contact Information** – Name and Phone Number

Once you’ve completed your registration, your application enters the screening process which entails an ATC trail crew program staffer contacting you. For alumni, this will be quick – we’ll just confirm which crew week you’re interested in, travel plans, and confirm dietary restrictions, allergies, or pertinent medical history hasn’t changed since the last time you volunteered, etc.

For new volunteers, it might be a more thorough conversation. We’ll want to learn a little about your outdoor & hiking/backpacking experience, and motivation in volunteering with our trail crew. We’ll also want to ensure trail crew expectations are shared and are clear – neither ATC nor you should be surprised when you arrive and start your time with us!

**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 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. Decision on potential additional crew weeks will be made at 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Trail crew applicants will be informed, in a timely manner after their screening conversation, of their registration status. Once a confirmation email is received, your spot on trail crew is verified.

Any updates or changes to either the trail crew week by ATC, or the volunteers’ plans or medical info will be shared with the other party as soon as possible. If you have questions about
anything in the handbook such as completing your registration, gear list, or any aspect of your work with the crew, please ask. No query is insignificant.

- Questions? Contact: volunteer@appalachiantrail.org

THE ATC WILL PROVIDE

- All necessary tools and training on their use
- Loaner camping gear (as available)
- Professional Trail crew leaders
- Plenty of high-energy food
- Off-day housing for multi-week volunteers
- Transportation to and from the Trailhead