

# Volunteer Impact Report



## End-of-Year 2023

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has been working to amplify volunteerism among a new generation of trail stewards. Through the [ATC's Volunteer Engagement Platform](#), more than 306 events were publicly available and promoted by ATC to new audiences. Over 1,400 registrations were made – connecting new volunteer interest with organizations coordinating the work of A.T. volunteers across 14-states.

The following accomplishments represent just a fraction of the impact made by volunteers throughout the 2023 federal fiscal year.

### A.T. Management

- Twenty-six A.T. Clubs have completed their **A.T. Experience Analysis** in order to benchmark the A.T. experience at the beginning of the Trail's second century. This benchmark is a basis for any future visitor use management efforts.
- **Regional Partnership Committees**, comprised of A.T. Clubs, their volunteers, and agency partners discussed topics of trailwide interest, including local management planning, visitor use management resources, updated resources for volunteer management as well as recognition, corridor management, and considerations for bridges and stream crossings.
- The **Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), Delaware Valley Chapter** assumed management and maintenance responsibility for 7.2 miles of the A.T. adjacent to its original 23.8 miles.



### Impact Snapshot

- **4,730 Volunteers**
- **170,147 Hours**
- **306 Events posted on the ATC's Volunteer Engagement Platform**
- **1,400 Registrations through VEP**

## Trail & Facilities

- In March 2023, the **Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC)** worked with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the ATC, and the Oconaluftee Job Corps to **build a new shelter at Rock Gap**. Beginning in December 2022, volunteers hauled 6,000 pounds of concrete mix, 2,000 pounds of concrete blocks, and 2 tons of gravel, along with timber (which included eighteen-foot-long sections that weighed over two-hundred pounds) and lumber over 0.25 miles from the trailhead to the worksite. In total, the project required over 1,300 volunteer hours.
- The **NHC** also **constructed a new privy at the Wesser Bald shelter** thanks to the help of 13 NHC A.T. volunteers, one USFS employee, and 10 counselors from the local Deerfoot Lodge. The NHC partnership with the Deerfoot Lodge, a Christian summer camp for boys in the region, began last summer when the group helped to haul out materials from the old Carter Gap privy.
- The **Maine Appalachian Trail Club** built **three privies** this season at **Pierce Pond Campsite, Fryer Notch Campsite, and Cranberry Stream Campsite**. The second privy build required a helicopter airlift to bring over 3,000 pounds of material to the construction site. Volunteers hauled in the 3,000 pounds of materials for the other two privy construction projects.
- The **AMC, Connecticut Chapter** replaced both the **Rigga and Brassie Brook Shelters**.
- The **Carolina Mountain Club (CMC)** renovated the floor of the **Groundhog Creek shelter** by replacing the warped floor of this 85-year-old shelter for a more level sleeping surface. Additionally, CMC hauled and installed a 355-pound bear box to this shelter after a persistent bear presence. This required transporting the bear box on the Trail over one-third of a mile mostly uphill.
- In December 2022, the **Georgia Appalachian Trail Club** completed a **relocation of over one mile of the A.T. in Mark Trail Wilderness on Poor Mountain** thanks to the help of the ATC, USFS, and the American Conservation Experience. A two-mile hike with tools was required in order to reach the starting point of this A.T. relocation. It took over 6 years and 998 volunteer hours to complete.
- Thirty volunteers from the **Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club** built a **temporary Trail relocation and bridge** across a stream. These will be in place while construction is underway to replace a previous bridge on the A.T. that was constructed in 2007.





- The small **relocation on the Cheoah District of the Nantahala National Forest at the Fontana Marina** is complete. The sustainably built sidehill trail in the **Smoky Mountain Hiking Club** section enhances resource protection and improves the hiker experience.
- **New York–New Jersey Trail Conference** volunteers also worked with 54 participants of the Philadelphia Outward Bound program in the Delaware Water Gap for several days performing trail maintenance.
- In Southwest Virginia, improvements made near the Settlers' Museum included a **new crossing of Phillippi Branch creek, repair of nearby trail tread, replacement of damaged culvert, and repaired fences.**
- In July 2023, storms with heavy rainfall impacted and even closed parts of the A.T. in New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont. After events like these, the **persistence of Volunteers** in restoring treadway erosion, keeping the trail clear of trees, and repairing bridges and boardwalks ensures the Trail continues to be a world-class hiking experience.



## Resource Management

- Volunteers, under the coordination of the ATC and in partnership with the Southern Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative, **planted more than 1,000 red spruce** on six plots **at White Top in Virginia** to support long-term connectivity and rare species habitat of high elevation ridgetops.



- **User-created campsites along the Dragon's Tooth Side Trail in the Roanoke A.T. Club** section were **closed to protect one of the rarest shrubs in North America, Pirate bush**, thanks to collaboration among the club, the ATC and the Eastern Divide Ranger District of the USDA Forest Service.
- Volunteers with **AMC Western MA A.T. Committee** continued **habitat restoration and invasive species management at Shaker Campsite** to protect rare species in the A.T. corridor. **AMC CT A.T. Committee** volunteers **planted wildflowers** that will benefit the **state-endangered northern metalmark butterfly** and other pollinator species. Also, invasive shrubs and vines were removed in this priority habitat.

- The **ATC Maine Land Stewardship crew** hosted two week-long **volunteer boundary work trips** in partnership with the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association and the American Hiking Society. The crew camped at Rangeley Lake Peaks Kenny State Parks, found over 50 monuments and maintained over 10 miles of boundary during the two trips.
- The **Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club (BMECC)** volunteers are actively **maintaining non-native invasive species at the 10-acre open area known as Swatara Meadow**. This location is one of the most expansive Trail openings along the A.T. from the northern half of New Jersey south to the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania.



## Trail Skills & Leadership Development

The ATC has led over 30 trainings to support A.T. Club partners and new volunteers. Training events centered on [essential trail maintenance](#) and field leadership skills development have been delivered to 250 volunteer participants. Through this program volunteers have spent over 1,170 hours learning or refreshing skills that enable their successful stewardship of the A.T.

## Visitor Information

In federal fiscal year 2023, volunteers working at **ATC managed visitor centers** ensured operations were possible 7-days a week and provided **engagement with 32,377 visitors**.

Additionally, volunteers working through Appalachian Trail Clubs engaged visitors at four high-use trail sections or parking areas to provide additional information on Leave No Trace and responsible recreation. **On-Trail visitor education** by these volunteer ridgrunners and trail ambassadors at half of these locations accounted for **1,210 hours of volunteer time** this fiscal year and provided **contact with 4,807 visitors**.

## A.T. Volunteer Program Gets a New Look

The Appalachian Trail volunteer program that represents volunteers with the National Park Service (APPA) working in 14-states through multiple private partners received a visual identity update in 2023. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy led the brand transition with consultation from APPA, USFS, and A.T. Clubs. The new logo is intended to represent all people who contribute to this project. [Read more here.](#)

