

Georgia Appalachian Trail License Plate Grant Program Guidelines and Instructions

Grant Goals

This unique grant program helps ATC fulfill its mission for the portions of the Appalachian Trail located within the state of Georgia. ATC's mission is multi-faceted and broad in scope: to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail – ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come. A wide range of grant proposals can be considered, but it is imperative that all applicants must show how implementing the proposal will benefit the portions of the Trail within Georgia. All grant funds must be spent within Georgia, unless specific supplies, services and equipment are not available in state.

Grant Background

Funding for this grant program is provided through the sale and renewal of Georgia Appalachian Trail license plates as part of the specialty license tag program authorized by the GA General Assembly. Revenue generated through this program is used to protect, maintain, and conserve the Georgia portion of the Appalachian Trail and connecting trails, and to promote awareness of wilderness, hiking, and back country recreation. ATC may award up to \$70,000 in grants from these revenues.

Grant Guidelines

A separate form is required for each grant project request. Please submit your grant project requests electronically by emailing them to soro@appalachiantrail.org. Grant requests may not exceed \$10,000, however special consideration may be given to higher levels of funding for large projects. Applicants will be notified of the status of their applications in October.

Grant funds must be spent in Georgia.

Projects eligible for grants must document that implementing the project will enhance, conserve, protect, and/or maintain the portions of the Appalachian Trail located within Georgia. **All grant projects must relate to the Appalachian Trail in Georgia.** Examples of types of projects that would be considered include:

1. Physical projects
 - Shelter or privy construction, relocation or repair work
 - Materials for appropriate signs
 - Major tool purchases. An effort should be made to purchase tools from Georgia companies or vendors whenever possible
 - Trailway bridge construction
 - Trail construction
 - Trail maintenance

2. Start-up funds for major public-service projects
 - Initial development of Trail, Community, or GATC brochure
 - Development of materials for new educational programs (i.e., slide shows, written materials, specialized training) incorporating the Trail's resources

- Costs of contract staff on a short-term basis to assist Trail or GATC programs
 - Training for Trail work, publications, club organizations, volunteer motivation and development, etc.
3. Major one-time financial needs
 - Assistance to complete construction of major Trailway relocations including capital improvements (e.g., bridges, parking areas)
 - Assistance in developing a fund-raising or membership drive for the Trail
 - Repair or replacement of damaged Trail or Trail-related facilities due to unanticipated event(s)
 4. Projects to enhance long-term A.T. management abilities
 - Strategic planning
 - Leadership development
 - Development of viewshed and/or watershed conservation plans and projects (especially involving local communities, see #7)
 5. Natural heritage and environmental monitoring projects
 - Monitoring tools for volunteers
 - Invasive plant, wildlife, water or air quality monitoring, workshops or mitigation
 - Rare species protection
 6. Education and outreach
 - School service-learning initiatives
 - Workshops and educational lectures
 - Outreach initiatives to diversify Trail users and Trail stewardship, including outreach partnerships with the Len Foote Hike Inn
 - Interpretive exhibits
 - Trail-related safety or emergency preparedness initiatives
 - Ridgerunner and caretaker programs
 7. A.T. community partnerships
 - Trailhead enhancements
 - Maps
 - Interpretive signs
 - Joint planning efforts
 - Development of physical facility for public information/education center for the Trail

Matching requirement

Applicants are expected to provide matching contributions with labor, money, or in-kind goods. The match should be at least half the value of the amount of grant funds requested (e.g., a request of \$2,000 should have a match of at least \$1,000). Volunteer time for projects may vary based on the [Independent Sector](#) research. A higher level of matching funds is a positive grant evaluation factor.

Publicity

In order to increase the visibility of the A.T. License Tag Program, the A.T. cooperative management system, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Appalachian Trail, ATC requires that grant recipients meet public relations requirements, such as local news releases or appropriate signage documenting that the project was funded in part through this program. Documentation of this publicity will be required in the final grant report. ATC reserves the perpetual right to use any photos or written materials submitted by the grantee, including the final report.

Project Endorsement

Applicants must submit the Agency Endorsement Form to the appropriate Federal land managing agency for the area where project work will occur. Applicants are encouraged to submit this form to the agency at least three weeks prior to the application deadline. No projects along the A.T. will be funded without agency endorsement. The Agency Endorsement Form should be submitted to ATC at the same time as the Grant Application form.

The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC) will review all proposed projects submitted to ATC to ensure that they are consistent with the GATC mission and benefit the citizens of Georgia. Members of the GATC Board may contact applicants during the review period with specific concerns or questions regarding a proposal. The GATC Board of Directors will vote to endorse or not endorse each project application.

Agency and GATC endorsement for your project does not guarantee funding; nor does the lack of GATC endorsement preclude funding. The Georgia A.T. Tag Committee will consider these endorsements in the final determination for funding.

Adherence to Guidelines and Policies

ATC's Southern Regional Office is available to assist in identifying and following appropriate guidelines and policies for grant-funded projects. While ATC staff is always glad to help, ultimate responsibility for all aspects of proposed projects remains that of the applicant.

- All volunteers participating in A.T. license plate funded projects on federal property must be enrolled in the volunteers in Forests (VIF) and/or Volunteers in Parks (VIP) programs and must adhere to certification and safety procedures of those agencies. Go to the Volunteer Protections section of the [Safety & Training page](#) on the ATC website for instructions and support materials that deal with volunteer safety.
- Projects may also require a Special Use Permit (SUP) from the USDA Forest Service or National Park Service. Contact the appropriate agency to learn requirements. The federal SUP process can take up to 60 days to complete. In order for this proposal to be considered, all required SUPs must be approved or pending approval at the time of application.

Call the ATC Regional Office for assistance in signing up volunteers for the VIF or VIP programs for work on the A.T., for contact information in obtaining a Special Use Permit, or A.T. club contact information.

- No volunteers may operate a chainsaw or crosscut saw along the A.T. or in national forests or parks unless they are certified for use of those tools by the USDA Forest Service, the National Park Service, or ATC. Refer to [Chain-saw and Crosscut Saw Training and Certification Policy](#).

All grant recipients should follow Leave No Trace backcountry guidelines and be aware of [group-use and primitive-ethics](#) policies. Refer to the [Local Management Planning Guide](#) on ATC's website. Section 2(J) details managing the Trail for a primitive experience. Section 3(B) provides information on special events and large group use. Section 3(F) provides information on Leave-No-Trace and minimum-impact programs. Additional information on Trail crew safety and skills training can be found in Section 2(K).

If your project involves new facility construction, please coordinate the project with the ATC Southern Regional Office and the appropriate agency. If you would like assistance with preparing your proposal, please contact us at (828) 348-1911 or soro@appalachiantrail.org.