



December 13, 2024

Via electronic mail

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Chair, Committee on Appropriations
 U.S. Senate
 S-128, The Capitol
 Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
 Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
 U.S. Senate
 125 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
 Vice-Chair, Committee on Appropriations
 U.S. Senate
 S-128, The Capitol
 Washington, D.C. 20004

The Honorable Tom Cole
 Chair, Committee on Appropriations
 U.S. House of Representatives
 H-307
 Washington, D.C. 20004

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
 Chair, Subcommittee on Interior,
 Environment, and Related Agencies
 U.S. Senate
 131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
 Ranking Member, Committee on
 Appropriations
 U.S. House of Representatives
 1036 Longworth House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairs Murray and Cole, Vice-Chair Collins, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairs Merkley and Simpson, and Ranking Members Murkowski and Pingree,

On behalf of the undersigned Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST) Maintaining Clubs (A.T. Clubs), we write to urge the inclusion of appropriate financial support for the public lands and the communities that are currently recovering from the impacts of Hurricane Helene in a supplemental disaster appropriation. As members of these communities and stewards of national park and forest lands, we know that the health of both are intertwined. As current, annual Congressional appropriations did not cover all the necessary work prior to this disaster, full recovery will not be possible unless additional, appropriate funding is provided.

Our public lands are a legacy conserved by our forebearers for our descendants. They provide clean water, air, recreational and economic opportunities, and help us understand who we are as a nation. The ANST was protected by Congress “to provide for the maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or culture qualities...” of the Appalachian Mountain region. Each of our organizations are long-time partners of the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service. While each of us are local NGO management partners of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST), several of us have responsibilities beyond trail maintenance and stewardship of the ANST Corridor. Our individual A.T. Club members have decades of experience. As organizations, many of us were present for the inception of the “A.T. Project” and our predecessors built the original Trail nearly 100 years ago. It is our honor and responsibility to serve the public, including in speaking up on the importance of this issue.

From the north Georgia communities of Dahlonega and Blairsville through Marshall, Hot Springs, and Boone, North Carolina, to Erwin and Roan Mountain, Tennessee, to southwestern Virginia communities of Damascus and Pearisburg, our communities rely on public lands to be engines of opportunity. Without dedicated appropriations from Congress to support their recovery, neither the lands nor our communities will be able to recover from the hurricane as they need to. We say this with confidence as we have operated the ANST on these lands for decades and know the resources our agency partners need to support our work and to uphold the public trust for all Americans.

Thank you for considering this request. If you would like to discuss it further, please contact Brendan Mysliwec of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at bmysliwec@appalachiantrail.org or 207-370-0540. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Carolina Mountain Club
Georgia Appalachian Trail Club
Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club
Nantahala Hiking Club
Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club
Old Dominion Appalachian Trail Club
Outdoor Club at Virginia Tech
Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers
Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
Smoky Mountains Hiking Club
Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoe Club
Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club