



# Wild East Action Fund

Administered by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy *in service to* the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

## Wild East Action Fund – 2025 Program Overview

In celebration of the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership's (ATLP) 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the coordinators of the ATLP are excited to announce the opening of a 2025 Wild East Action Fund cycle! Beginning in June 2025 the ATLP will be accepting applications for projects advancing land protection, community resilience, and conservation planning that support the vital conservation work of our partners operating within the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Landscape. The Wild East Action Fund is a competitive grant opportunity, administered by ATC, supporting the mission of the ATLP. Funding is available to qualified organizations for active projects that aim to advance the protection and conservation of natural, cultural, historic, scenic, recreational, agricultural, and community assets found within the A.T. Landscape.



### About the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

The mission of the ATLP is to connect the wild, scenic, and cultural wonders of the A.T. Landscape. Co-convened by the ATC and the National Park Service in 2015, the ATLP is a broad coalition of federal, state, and local government entities, nonprofit organizations, foundations/philanthropists, private businesses, and academic institutions, forming the largest conservation partnership in the Eastern United States.

### What is the Appalachian Trail Landscape?

The A.T. Landscape can be thought of as both expansive and increasingly restrictive. But for the purposes of land protection, ATLP action, and the Wild East Action Fund, a *soft* boundary has been adopted to provide clarity on project eligibility. Often referred to as the HUC10 shell, the ATLP adopted a boundary delineated by the outer perimeter of each Hydrological Unit Code 10 (a USGS sub-watershed designation) boundary that is transected or abuts the A.T.'s treadway. A project is eligible for a Wild East Action Fund grants if it occurs entirely or partially within the A.T.'s HUC10 shell. Projects that occur outside the HUC10 shell *may* be considered for funding if the scale of the project will likely have a substantive impact on the A.T. Landscape (as designated by the HUC10 shell) or A.T. experience. Follow this link for an interactive map of the [A.T. Landscape](#).

## About the Wild East Action Fund

The purpose of the Wild East Action Fund is to provide private, flexible financial support for a variety of conservation-related projects located within the A.T. Landscape. The goals of the Wild East Action Fund are to:

- ♦ Accelerate the pace and scale of land protection and conservation in our Landscape.
- ♦ Increase the capacity of our partners to achieve strategic and targeted conservation outcomes.
- ♦ Strengthen community and ecological resiliency to better address the impacts of climate change.
- ♦ Champion an A.T. Landscape that encourages everyone to feel welcomed, respected, and supported.
- ♦ Foster and support community and collaborative conservation outcomes in the A.T. Landscape.
- ♦ Grow our network of partners dedicated to improving the A.T. Landscape for generations to come.

## Organization & Project Eligibility

To be eligible for the Wild East Action Fund, applicants must demonstrate a project focus and organizational mission that is aligned with the ATLP's mission of connecting the wild, scenic, and cultural wonders of the A.T. Landscape. The applicant's project should occur within, serve the needs of, or explicitly benefit the A.T. Landscape. Previous grant awardees are eligible to apply. Previously awarded projects may re-apply for additional funding but will be less competitive. To qualify to receive funding, organizations must be a Tribal, State, or Local government entity/agency or a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Regional partnerships without 501(c)(3) nonprofit status may have a qualified 501(c)(3) apply on behalf of the partnership.

## Application Deadlines & Requirements

To apply, please complete the 2025 Wild East Action Fund online application form, found [here](#). The application period will open on June 11, 2025, and the application form will *go live* at that time. Please complete the application by 11:59PM (Eastern) on Friday, July 18, 2025. Each grant category will require or recommend multiple file uploads (preferred file types include .pdf, .docx, .xlsx, .png, & .jpg). For more details, see grant category descriptions and requirements below. 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](mailto:molsen@appalachiantrail.org).

## Award Disbursement

In August, a small team comprising ATLP steering committee members will review applications and determine grant awardees and award size. Grantees will be notified of their selection and award amount in early fall. Once grant agreements are finalized, funding will be released (Q4, 2025) and award recipients celebrated through ATC and ATLP channels.

## Grantee Expectations

Grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement with ATC further detailing how funding will be used, timeframe, and other stipulations related to the grant award. As appropriate, grantees will be asked to document the impacts related to the funded project. 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. ATC and the ATLP seeks to promote the great work of all Wild East Action Fund grantees and will work directly with each recipient to share stories of success and impacts of the grant program toward accelerating the pace and scale of A.T. Landscape conservation, protection, and resiliency.

# Wild East Action Fund – 2025 Grant Categories

For the 2025 grant cycle, three grant categories will be opened for project proposals: 1) Land Protection, 2) Conservation Planning, and 3) Community Resilience. Funding for the Land Protection grant category is made possible, in part, by the National Park Foundation. Funding for the Conservation Planning and Community Resilience grant categories are made possible through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's A.T. Resiliency Fund. Continue reading for descriptions of projects sought, funding restrictions, allowable expenses, evaluation criteria, and required application materials for each grant category. The following buttons will link you to additional application resources.

**Application  
Instructions**

**Project  
Description  
(prompts)**

**Project Budget  
(template)**

## Anticipated Award Amounts

In 2025, Up to \$400,000 will be granted through the Wild East Action Fund to qualified land protection, conservation planning, and community resiliency projects. Land Protection grant requests up to \$75,000 will be considered. Conservation Planning and Community Resiliency grant requests between \$5,000 and \$20,000 will be considered.

*A Note on Match:* All funding opportunities require a cash or in-kind match. Match ratio will be considered on a case-by-case basis, evaluated on the circumstances of the organization and project context. The match should be secured or demonstrate with confidence that it will be secured during the grant period.

## Program Contact

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](mailto:molsen@appalachiantrail.org).

## Grant Category Snapshots

	Purpose	Available for projects in...	Award Range	Maximum Available Funding
<b>Land Protection</b>	Protecting privately held land through fee-simple purchase, conservation restrictions, or transfer to public trust.	ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, NY, NJ, PA, MD, WV, VA, TN, NC, & GA	\$20,000 – \$75,000	\$300,000
<b>Conservation Planning</b>	Building organizational, partnership, or community capacity/buy-in for future strategic conservation actions.	WV, VA, TN, NC, & GA	\$5,000 – \$20,000	\$100,000
<b>Community Resilience</b>	Recover from and build community capacity to address/mitigate the impacts of climate change.	WV, VA, TN, NC, & GA	\$5,000 – \$20,000	

## Land Protection

**Special Consideration:** When allocating the available National Park Foundation funding, special consideration will be given to projects that have a clear Appalachian National Scenic Trail Park Unit (APPA) takeout strategy supported by the APPA Superintendent.

**Project Guidance:** Land Protection grants will be awarded to projects that contribute to the protection and stewardship of the exceptional values of the A.T. Landscape for future generations. These values reflect, but are not limited to, the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, recreational, agricultural, and community assets found within and benefit the landscape. Competitive projects will use collaborative and/or community-driven conservation approaches, advance climate resiliency, protect clean water, and improve public access to outdoor recreation where appropriate. See examples of past recipients [here](#).

**Allowable Expenses:** Funding is broadly constrained to costs associated with the process of protecting private land through fee-simple purchase, easement, and/or transfer to the public trust, to ensure that the property is protected and conserved for future generations. Eligible funding requests can include, but are not limited to, land acquisition, due diligence, and transaction costs (e.g., appraisals, surveys, titles, environmental assessments, legal costs, etc.).

**Funding Restrictions:** Grant awards *cannot* be used for organizational overhead/administration, scholarships, lobbying efforts, or supporting political groups.

### **Project Evaluation Criteria:**

Projects that effectively include or demonstrate the following attributes will be competitive:

- ♦ Significant climate resiliency, habitat/wildlife connectivity, scenic attributes, cultural/historic value or sites, water resources, prime agriculture lands, or abutting/near existing protected lands.
- ♦ The land is considered a priority in a local or regional conservation plan/conservation prioritization.
- ♦ A real threat of development or incompatible land use.
- ♦ A conservation approach that provides due consideration for public access for outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, foraging, and other cultural or traditional uses.
- ♦ The project is community-drive or reflects broad community support.
- ♦ The project is collaborative in nature, bringing together multiple partners representing different perspectives and backgrounds.
- ♦ A sound stewardship plan and sustainable funding model.
- ♦ Projects have secured or *likely* matching funds.

### **Application Materials:**

- ♦ **REQUIRED: Completed online application form.** The following required and optional application materials should be submitted through the online form. Find the online application instructions [HERE](#).
- ♦ **REQUIRED: Project description** (not to exceed two pages), find prompts and details [HERE](#).
- ♦ **REQUIRED: Project budget** detailing anticipated project expenses, total project cost, sources amount of match, and the requested grant amount aligning with allowable expenses, see template [HERE](#).
- ♦ **REQUIRED: If applicable, a letter of nonprofit status** from the IRS
- ♦ **OPTIONAL:** Additional supporting materials: letters of support, project photos, and maps (recommended). If a viewshed layer is included, please provide a *brief* overview of the analysis used.

## Conservation Planning

**Special Restriction:** Funding for this category is only available for projects occurring within the A.T. Landscape in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

**Special Consideration:** Special consideration will be given to projects that support the Hurricane Helene impacted area through long-term planning that incorporates nature-based solutions to climate change.

**Project Guidance:** Conservation Planning grants are available to support the strategic conservation planning efforts of organizations, regional partnerships, or local governments or agencies that aim to catalyze local or regional land protection and nature-based solutions for climate change within the A.T. Landscape. Eligible projects can include, but are not limited to, developing strategic conservation or open space plans, pre-planning needs such as data collection or analysis, building parcel prioritization/decision support tools for land protection, or creating natural resource stewardship/restoration planning. Competitive projects will use collaborative and/or community-driven conservation approaches, support public access to recreation opportunities, advance climate resiliency, and protect clean water where appropriate. It is important that conservation planning projects clearly demonstrate how efforts will result in or catalyze future landscape conservation, address climate change, and strive to strengthen community support for conservation. See examples of past recipients [here](#).

**Project Evaluation Criteria:** Projects should present clear objectives, outcomes, and measurable or concrete deliverables that ultimately produce community, conservation, and climate resiliency benefits. Projects that effectively include or demonstrate the following attributes will be competitive:

- ♦ Clearly illustrate how the project will catalyze or result in higher impact conservation outcomes.
- ♦ Meaningfully engage local community members and other conservation-aligned organizations resulting in robust and holistic conservation outcomes.
- ♦ Sufficient organizational capacity and commitment to complete the proposed activities.
- ♦ The requested grant amount can be appropriately used before 12/31/2026.
- ♦ Measurable outcomes that can assess the project's success in achieving its goals and objectives.
- ♦ Project has secured or *likely* matching funds.

**Allowable Expenses:** Funding is broadly constrained to costs associated with the development of conservation planning, process documents, and tools. Funding requests can be used for, but are not limited to, staff time, contract support, and direct costs associated with facilitation, planning, communication, and coordination necessary for project completion.

**Funding Restrictions:** Grant awards *cannot* be used for organizational overhead/administration, scholarships, lobbying efforts, supporting political groups, refinancing/servicing existing debt, marketing materials, venue or food costs.

### **Application Materials:**

- ♦ **REQUIRED: Completed online application form.** The following required and optional application materials should be submitted through the online form. Find the online application instructions [HERE](#).
- ♦ **REQUIRED: Project description** (not to exceed two pages), find prompts and details [HERE](#).
- ♦ **REQUIRED: Project budget** detailing anticipated project expenses, total project cost, sources amount of match, and the requested grant amount aligning with allowable expenses, see template [HERE](#).
- ♦ **REQUIRED: Letter(s) of Support** from local government officials and/or community organizations
- ♦ **REQUIRED: If applicable, a letter of nonprofit status** from the IRS.
- ♦ **OPTIONAL: Additional supporting materials:** Additional letters of support, project area photos, or maps. If a viewshed layer is included, please provide a *brief* overview of the analysis used.



# Community Resilience

**Special Restriction:** Funding for this category is only available for projects occurring within the A.T. Landscape in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, *excluding land that is directly managed as the Appalachian National Scenic Trail*\*\*.

**Special Consideration:** Special consideration will be given to projects that emphasize the near-term recovery efforts as a result of Hurricane Helene.

**Project Guidance:** Community Resilience grants are available for projects that support community resiliency in the face of weather-related impacts and a changing climate. We anticipate three types of resilient community projects to be competitive in this cycle; the most competitive applications will address more than one of the following themes:

- ♦ Recovery, rebuilding, development of outdoor recreation, cultural, or historic assets.
- ♦ Restoration, stabilization, recovery of natural resources, ecological systems, or open space.
- ♦ Community building, place-making, or preparedness.

Eligible projects can include, but are not limited to, volunteer workdays/clean-ups/events, youth leadership and workforce training related to conservation or natural resource stewardship, public education or outreach campaigns or events, downtown recovery, beautification, revitalization, and resiliency planning or pre-planning activities, and recreational/cultural/historic asset improvements. Competitive projects will advance climate resiliency, be collaborative and/or community-driven, support public access to open space and recreation opportunities, and/or address Hurricane Helene recovery. It is important that applications clearly demonstrate how the project will help the community recover from the impacts of Hurricane Helene and/or strengthen a community's capacity to respond, mitigate, or adapt to future risk and uncertainty associated with the increasing severity of weather events and a changing climate. As much as possible, project outcomes should include, or strive to strengthen community support for, conservation actions and nature-based solutions to climate change.

**Project Evaluation Criteria:** Projects should present clear objectives, outcomes, and measurable or concrete deliverables. Competitive projects will demonstrate outcomes that have a high likelihood of success sustained beyond the grant period and ultimately produce community, climate resiliency, and conservation benefits. Projects that effectively include or demonstrate the following attributes will be competitive:

- ♦ Result in or catalyze recovery efforts addressing the impacts of Hurricane Helene; rebuild/develop outdoor recreation, cultural, or historic assets; restore/stabilize natural resources, ecological systems, or open space; or enhance/strengthen community bonds, place-making, or preparedness.
- ♦ Meaningfully engage the local community and conservation-aligned organizations resulting in robust and holistic conservation and climate resiliency outcomes.
- ♦ Measurable outcomes that can assess the projects' success in achieving its goals and objectives.
- ♦ Sufficient organizational capacity and commitment to complete the proposed project/workplan.
- ♦ The requested grant amount can be appropriately used before 12/31/2026.
- ♦ Projects have secured or likely (cash or in-kind) matching funds.

**Allowable Expenses:** Funding is broadly constrained to costs associated with the planning and implementation of projects as outlined in the paragraphs above. Funding requests can be used for, but are not limited to, staff time, contract support, and direct costs associated with facilitation, planning, communication, and coordination necessary for project completion.

**Funding Restrictions:** Grant awards *cannot* be used for organizational overhead/administration, scholarships, lobbying efforts, supporting political groups, or refinancing/servicing existing debt.

## Application Materials:

- ♦ **REQUIRED: Completed online application form.** The following required and optional application materials should be submitted through the online form. Find the online application instructions [HERE](#).
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- ♦ **REQUIRED: Letter(s) of Support** from local government officials and/or community organizations.
- ♦ **REQUIRED: If applicable,** a letter of nonprofit status from the IRS.
- ♦ **OPTIONAL:** Additional supporting materials: maps, project photos, other letters of support.

\*\*Projects occurring on land that is managed explicitly for the benefit of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail can seek similar financial support through their local Regional A.T. Manager.