



Appalachian Trail Conservancy

FOUNDED IN 1925, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) works passionately to manage and protect the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. As the only non-profit devoted exclusively to the entirety of the Trail and its landscape, we endeavor to keep its vast natural and scenic beauty healthy, resilient, and connected, so that everyone can experience its transformative power for generations to come.

To ensure the A.T. Treadway, Corridor, and Landscape are maintained and conserved, the ATC operates within the **COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**, which is a public-private partnership between the multiple entities that care for the Trail.

The ATC is the unifying entity between the government agencies that manage the federal and state public lands and resources for the A.T. and the A.T. Clubs and their volunteers, who provide local stewardship and on-the-ground knowledge of every section of the footpath. While different in structure, every National Scenic and Historic Trail has public-private management partnerships.

The A.T. Runs Through...

- 📍 14 States
- 📍 8 National Forests
- 📍 6 National Parks

NO ORGANIZATION CAN MANAGE A NATIONAL TRAIL ON ITS OWN.

The Appalachian Trail Centennial Act will bolster the Cooperative Management System and strengthen the public-private partnerships needed to protect National Trails.



The Appalachian Trail Centennial Act

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is championing a legislative proposal, the Appalachian Trail Centennial Act, to mark the ATC's 100th anniversary. Introduced by U.S. Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) and U.S. Representatives Mike Lawler (R-NY-17) and Don Beyer (D-VA-08) on September 4, 2025, this legislation seeks to secure the Cooperative Management Systems of National Trails and provide a better understanding of how people use National Trails.

The Centennial legislation recognizes what the ATC has known for the last 100 years – no single entity can manage a National Trail on its own. Instead, collaborative and flexible partnerships are necessary to care for these spread-out and heavily used conserved public lands.



THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CENTENNIAL ACT WILL:

Authorize Designated Operational Partners for National Trails

The legislation will statutorily establish a class of non-governmental (NGO) partners in National Scenic and Historic Trail management to clarify the roles and responsibilities of organizations like the ATC, and recognize the ATC as the first. The "Designated Operational Partner" distinction will enable NGOs to take on enhanced stewardship roles, provide formal input on trail management decisions, and work more effectively with federal agencies to protect and maintain the trails.

Bolster Land Protection

The legislation fosters stronger partnerships to address the growing need for land protection within greater Trail landscapes. Because of the scale of the National Scenic and Historic Trails, without dedicated attention and local engagement, it is very difficult to build out their conserved Corridors. This legislation will add replicable structure and direction for the agencies to coordinate and advance land and resource conservation to support the National Scenic and Historic Trails as large landscape conservation projects.

Demonstrate Economic Value and Impact

The legislation directs federal agencies to assess and report on the economic impact of National Scenic and Historic Trails on gateway communities and explore systemic challenges and possible opportunities to further develop the trails. These studies will help quantify the significant economic benefits these trails bring to local businesses and rural economies, and support the case for continued investment in trail infrastructure and protection.

Better Coordinate Partners

The legislation will increase the length of agreements between each National Scenic and Historic Trail's Designated Operational Partner — like the ATC — and the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service to 20 years. It will also streamline funding processes, support volunteer needs, and encourage consultation among government entities, trail administrators, and designated partners to ensure greater stability.

As the ATC enters its second century, it continues to set the standard for cooperative management for National Trails throughout the U.S.