



# Appalachian Trail Community Conservation Collaborative

A Community-Driven Project for Conservation & Engagement



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is the AT Landscape?

- The Appalachian Trail Landscape is a 26 million acre, 2,000-mile network of mountains, forests, rivers, and valleys. This landscape is part of a globally significant corridor of critical habitats for thousands of wildlife and plant species, sources for drinking water, and dense carbon-storing forests, set amongst a landscape with a variety of downtowns and population centers. It is the larger, broader landscape along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail that stretches from Georgia to Maine. The landscape is ancient. The now eroded mountains were once as high as the Himalayas and have since worn down to the ridges and valleys seen today. The unique geology of the region supports biologically diverse and resilient ecosystems, including a vast canopy of resilient forests and a network of streams and rivers. This natural network provides more than 119 million people with critical resources like clean water. More than 38 million people make up the diverse communities and cultures across this land – everything from rural to urbanized. No natural region in the U.S. is as integrated into the economies and livelihoods of communities as this region.

The Appalachian Trail Community Conservation Collaborative looks to connect communities in this broader landscape in the state of Pennsylvania, anchored by the Appalachian Trail and part of a significant network of ecosystems reaching from Georgia to Maine.

[For more visit our website.](#)

### Tell me more about what my community will receive from joining the Collaborative.

- Your community will take part in a process that will help you to determine a project to work on together. Along the way, here's what you will create together:
  - *Community and Conservation Assessment* - a customized report that spells out some conservation opportunities, environmental risks and/or vulnerabilities, and an analysis of local assets, ecological, community health, and economic data for you to consider as you determine what project to work on.
  - *Determine a project and develop an Implementation Plan* – your team will develop this at the in-person Impact & Innovation Workshop in your region.
  - *Skill development, networking, and professional support* - up to six-months of professional technical support to implement your project, plus skill development through peer-to-peer exchange, networking with other communities and skilled specialists, and identification of potential funding opportunities.

- *Public recognition, networking, and visibility* – your team’s work, accomplishments, and next steps will be highlighted to elected officials, community members, and potential funders.
- *Voluntary opportunity to become a designated A.T. Community* through ATC’s A.T. Community™ Program.

**What are community-led conservation projects?**

- Community-led conservation projects are conservation-focused initiatives that are typically spearheaded and managed by local or Indigenous communities, rather than by external organizations or governments. Effective community-led conservation projects ensure that outcomes meet locally identified needs, as well as making sure that benefits are equitably distributed throughout the community.

**Would communities with project ideas pertaining to conservation zoning, land use regulations or policies, and ordinances be eligible to participate in the Collaborative?**

- Yes! The ATCCC process would be a great opportunity for communities to explore and learn about issues affecting the community and/or land and how local government tools can be used or updated to address challenges.

**Are there any constraints/limitations for project choice?**

- Community teams are encouraged to focus on any conservation outcome or environmental risk/challenge that is most relevant to their community’s needs. Other than that, there are no current constraints or limitations for project choice.

**If you don’t have a project in mind, are you still able to participate?**

- Yes, you are still able to participate! There is no requirement to have a project in mind or a fully planned project before applying – and if you already have a well-defined project in mind, that’s great too! We simply ask that teams have a general understanding of the conservation work happening in their community or of the type of conservation work they hope to pursue in the future.

**What do we have to do to prepare to join the Collaborative?**

- Read the general information, eligibility requirements and application instructions on the ATCCC Website: <https://appalachiantrail.org/our-work/conservation/landscape/community-conservation-collaborative/>

We recommend that you begin to speak with your local municipal officials and staff or county officials and staff, local conservation groups, and downtown business or economic development groups. See what you have in common and build a team around your common challenges and/or goals. Then, attend a webinar to learn more about submitting an application.

Webinar registration information: [INSERT LINK]

**Do the eligibility requirements specify that the elected official must represent a specific level of government (such as a county or borough)? Or can the elected official represent a coalition or group of communities working together?**

- The elected official does not need to represent a specific level of government. Eligibility is considered on a case-by-case basis, with priority given to elected officials who can effectively share knowledge gained through this program with their local government, leadership team, and/or broader community. Ideally, this person should be a strong communicator, well-connected, and able to champion the effort within their networks.

**Do we have to be a designated A.T. Community or near the Appalachian Trail to participate?**

- No. We do require that communities be within the Appalachian Trail Landscape. A map of the landscape [linked here](#). To be eligible to participate in the 2025 ATCCC cohort, your community must fully or partially be found within the black lines illustrated in the map. A list of eligible municipalities organized by county is [linked here](#).

If you are interested to learn more about ATC's Appalachian Trail Community Program, visit [www.appalachiantrail.org/explore/communities](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/explore/communities).

**What happens after our first year participating in the Collaborative?**

- Year 1 is our pilot of this initiative. Throughout Year 1 we will be observing and learning about the next steps needed. Community teams will inform much of what we learn and determine as next steps. Our consultant will also help us to wrap up observations and lessons learned into recommended next steps. We look forward to building stronger connections between participating communities, the ATC, and regional initiatives like PA's Conservation Landscapes for ongoing support and collaboration beyond the first year.

**Is funding available for projects?**

- At this time, no, we do not have dedicated funding identified to fund projects. However, we do have a plan for connecting participants with potential funding sources and funders.

Participation in the ATCCC is at no cost to communities. Travel assistance can be provided upon request for community team members to attend ATCCC events.

**How will communities be accepted?**

- Applications will be reviewed for completeness, commitment, and alignment of expectations. An Advisory Committee will serve as a review team. Each team will be contacted by Katie Allen, Director of Landscape Conservation at ATC, about your team's application and invited to participate once all requirements are met.

The cohort is limited to 15 participating communities. The Collaborative will prioritize geographic diversity by aspiring for a maximum of 5 teams representing each of the following regions:

- Cumberland Valley (including the South Mountain Partnership Conservation Landscape),
- Susquehanna Valley (including the Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape)
- Lehigh Valley and northeast PA (including the Kittatinny Ridge Schuylkill Highlands, Lehigh Valley Greenways, and Pocono Forest & Waters Conservation Landscapes)

**Tell us more about the “geographic diversity” aspect, and why the regions were chosen?**

- Up to 15 teams will be accepted into the program and we aim to ensure to the best of our abilities geographic diversity by selecting approximately five community teams from each of the three regions within the [AT Landscape Boundaries](#) (Cumberland Valley, Susquehanna Valley, and the Lehigh Valley and northeast PA). Regional workshops are planned to be hosted within these three regions to encourage peer exchange and collaboration at a regional level. While the final distribution of teams may not be perfectly balanced, this approach is intended to help foster regional connections and make in-person participation more convenient and meaningful.

**Is there a role for partner organizations to play, without necessarily being involved as part of a community team?**

- Yes, absolutely! Partner organizations are encouraged to participate even if not as a community team. Throughout the regional workshops, end-of-year summit, and other touchpoints there will be opportunities to contribute technical expertise in areas such as funding, conservation, stewardship, and project development. Those interested in getting involved can reach out to Katie Allen at [kallen@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:kallen@appalachiantrail.org). However, we also encourage partner organizations to help build a team and/or serve on a team as well.

**I still have questions – who can I contact?**

- Please contact Katie Allen at [kallen@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:kallen@appalachiantrail.org). Please also sign up for email updates

**Visit:** <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/atccollab>

**Sign Up for Periodic Emails about the ATCCC:** <https://forms.office.com/r/vbi8AqXsW2>

**View our October 1st Informational Webinar:** [Here!](#)

**Apply Online:** <https://arcg.is/1qe8rX2>

**Contact Katie Allen, Director, Landscape Conservation at [kallen@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:kallen@appalachiantrail.org) for more information.**