



# Appalachian Trail Community Conservation Collaborative

A Community-Driven Project for  
Conservation & Engagement



[www.appalachiantrail.org/atccollab](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/atccollab)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **What is the Appalachian Trail Community Conservation Collaborative?**

The Appalachian Trail Community Conservation Collaborative (ATCCC) is a new initiative led by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) to empower Pennsylvanian communities near the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) to lead local conservation efforts while strengthening their economies and sense of place. Building on a century of trusted partnerships and programs like the A.T. Community Program and South Mountain Partnership, this initiative **seeks to bring together community teams** made up of local leaders representing a diversity of community expertise from conservation, agriculture, tourism, government agencies, and humanities (to name a few) to work together and **co-create solutions that address community needs and conservation benefits** such as the protection of natural resources, support for outdoor recreation economies, and ultimately sustain the Appalachian Trail Landscape for future generations.

### **Why now?**

Many communities are eager to balance economic growth with conservation and stewardship goals, and some may be interested in exploring how to expand into the outdoor recreation economy. The A.T. is an anchor for outdoor recreation access, spanning 230 miles across the state of Pennsylvania, and is much more than just a trail. The A.T. corridor in Pennsylvania is an ecologically vital home to rich biodiversity, clean water sources, and irreplaceable forests adding to the vibrant network of rivers, forests, and unique landscapes connected across the state.

This Collaborative provides communities with planning tools, peer networks, tailored technical assistance, and access to underutilized regional resources enabling participating communities to shape their own conservation priorities while leveraging resources from other state and regional initiatives, such as Pennsylvania's Conservation Landscape Initiative and Natural Heritage Areas. This is a timely opportunity to strengthen community assets, enhance quality of life, and explore conservation and stewardship goals. Together, we can ensure that the Appalachian Trail continues to connect not just landscapes, but people, economies, and shared futures.

## What do participating community teams receive during the program?

Community teams will receive the following benefits at no cost for their commitment:

- **Customized Information, Summaries, and Resources:** Teams will be connected to *tailored resources and technical support* for your project's needs as well as *networking* with skilled specialists. A customized *Community and Conservation Assessment* which will include a tailored report identifying your community's conservation opportunities, environmental risks and/or vulnerabilities, and an analysis of local assets, ecological, community health, and economic data.
- **Training & Team Development:** Team participation in an in-person *Impact & Innovation Workshop* in your region for community teams and local conservationists to identify shared community priorities, spark action, and develop concrete, data-supported *conservation project(s) and plan* for implementation.
- **Technical Assistance & Peer to Peer Learning:** Up to six months of *professional support* to implement your project and support skill development. Engage with other communities along the Appalachian Trail and beyond, share successes and challenges, and learn through facilitated peer exchanges and summits.
- **Funding Access & Navigation:** Guidance and support to access underutilized state and federal funding (e.g., Highlands Conservation Act, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Kittatinny Sentinel Landscape) to fund locally led projects.
- **Recognition and Networking:** Public recognition, networking, and visibility at a final event that highlights your community project to elected officials, community members, and potential funders.
- **Data-Driven Planning Tools:** Access and support to use powerful GIS tools like ATLAS IT and the Appalachian Trail Visual Resource Inventory to inform land use planning, identify conservation opportunities, and support grant applications.
- **A.T. Community Designation:** Voluntary opportunity to become a designated A.T. Community through ATC's A.T. Community™ Program.

## What are the long-term benefits for communities joining the Collaborative?

Joining the Appalachian Trail Community Conservation Collaborative offers a range of tangible and strategic benefits for communities, local leaders, and conservation partners not just now but into the future.

1. **A Bigger Toolbox:** The customized information and summaries can be used in a variety of ways in your community outside of this work. Perhaps you will use them in future funding

conversations and applications, in municipal planning updates, and/or to attract businesses and investors that align with your community's values.

- 2. Capacity Growth:** Increased community capacity gained through workshops, training, and networking will strengthen your team's and your community's abilities. Your team will reach a new skill level in project development and planning - identifying goals, creating plans, and sourcing resources for implementation not only for this initiative but for future projects as well.
- 3. Enhance Economic Opportunities:** Link conservation with sustainable development to position your community for long-term growth and development as a gateway to nature-based tourism. Use your community's increased capacity and investment in this project to attract and retain businesses and workers and emphasize the health and wellness benefits for local residents.
- 4. Increase Visibility & Recognition:** This nationally recognized initiative led by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy will help you to elevate your community's conservation leadership and attract potential partners while better leveraging your community's existing A.T. Community designation. Not an A.T. Community? Participants who opt-in will be fast tracked for designation as an official A.T. Community.
- 5. Long-Term Partnership & Sustainability:** Continued peer-to-peer learning, information sharing, and partnership with other communities, businesses, and groups to enhance conservation and the economic impact of nature-positive development through this growing network of communities that are working toward community resilience, environmental stewardship, and landscape-scale conservation along the iconic Appalachian Trail.

## **How to join the Appalachian Trail Community Conservation**

### **Collaborative:**

**Step 1: Consider the commitment:** This is a one-year commitment and requires travel to one workshop and one summit, along with sustained work on the chosen project.

**Step 2: Form a team:** A community team made up of community leaders representing a diversity of expertise (such as conservation, agriculture, tourism, humanities, etc.) needs to be confirmed to participate and commit to the Collaborative. Each team is required to have one elected official, one government staff member, and one conservation organization representative.

**Step 3: Apply:** Each community team is required to submit an application to join the ATCCC. Community Eligibility Guidance & Application Instructions as well as Frequently Asked Questions documents are available at <https://appalachiantrail.org/our-work/conservation/landscape/community-conservation-collaborative/>.

Community teams are required to apply to join the ATCCC. This opportunity is limited to 15 communities, and community teams will be accepted on a rolling basis ending October 31<sup>st</sup>. We recommend forming your team and applying as early as possible.

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

Sign Up for Periodic Emails about the ATCCC:

<https://forms.office.com/r/vbi8AqXsW2>

Register for October 1<sup>st</sup> Informational Webinar: [Register Here!](#)

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

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