



EMERGING LEADERS' SUMMIT

100 Years. One Future. Blazing the Trail Ahead.

From October 10-12 ATC brought together young changemakers from across the country for three transformative days of connection, learning, and leadership development at the Emerging Leaders Summit.

This year's summit empowered participants ages 18-30 to explore the intersection of conservation, community, and leadership. Through immersive workshops, outdoor experiences along the Appalachian Trail, and shared storytelling, participants built lasting connections and developed the skills to become stewards of the Trail and advocates for inclusive, outdoor spaces.



Nestled in the heart of the New Jersey Highlands, just a couple miles from the Appalachian Trail, the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC) provided the perfect natural classroom for the 2025 Emerging Leaders Summit. Surrounded by forested ridges and abundant wildlife, this historic environmental education campus offered an inspiring setting for reflection, collaboration, and connection to place.

Impact Snapshot

34

Total Participants

28

First-time Participants

6

ELS/Next Gen Alum

4

Ridgerunners and Club Partners

6

ATC Staff Members

2025 Emerging Leaders' Summit

Program Highlights



Friday

Welcome, Orientation, Introductions & Keynote

Saturday

Hikes on the A.T. led by NJ Ridgerunners, *Conference-Style Workshops, Trail Design Activity

Sunday

Optional Sunrise Fly Fishing 101, Career Exploration & Networking led by Next Gen/Alum, Story Exchange, Closing and Goodbye's

*Conference-Style Workshop Options

Eyes of a Trailbuilder *led by partners from the NYNJ Trail Conference

See trails like a builder by spotting issues, appreciating stonework, and learning how features work, all on a hands-on walk-and-talk.

Public Lands in the U.S.: Exploring the History and Mobilizing for the Future

Explore the history, policy, and conservation of U.S. public lands and learn how young leaders can make an impact through advocacy and civic engagement.

Stronger Together: Partnership, Trail Resiliency, and Recovery on the AT

Discover how partnerships between agencies, volunteers, and organizations built resilience and enabled recovery after Hurricane Helene.

Informing Belonging: A Focus Group *led by D. Goodwin Experiential

Join a facilitated discussion to share your insights on how the ATC can strengthen community, improve programs, and advance the Belonging Pillar of its strategic plan.

Stewardship and Corridor on the A.T.

Explore how land protection, community partnerships, and emerging leaders help preserve the Appalachian Trail's ecological, cultural, and recreational value for future generations.

Hiker Panel

Hear firsthand stories, lessons, and insights from Appalachian Trail thru and section hikers about life, gear, and challenges on the 2,000+ mile journey from Georgia to Maine.

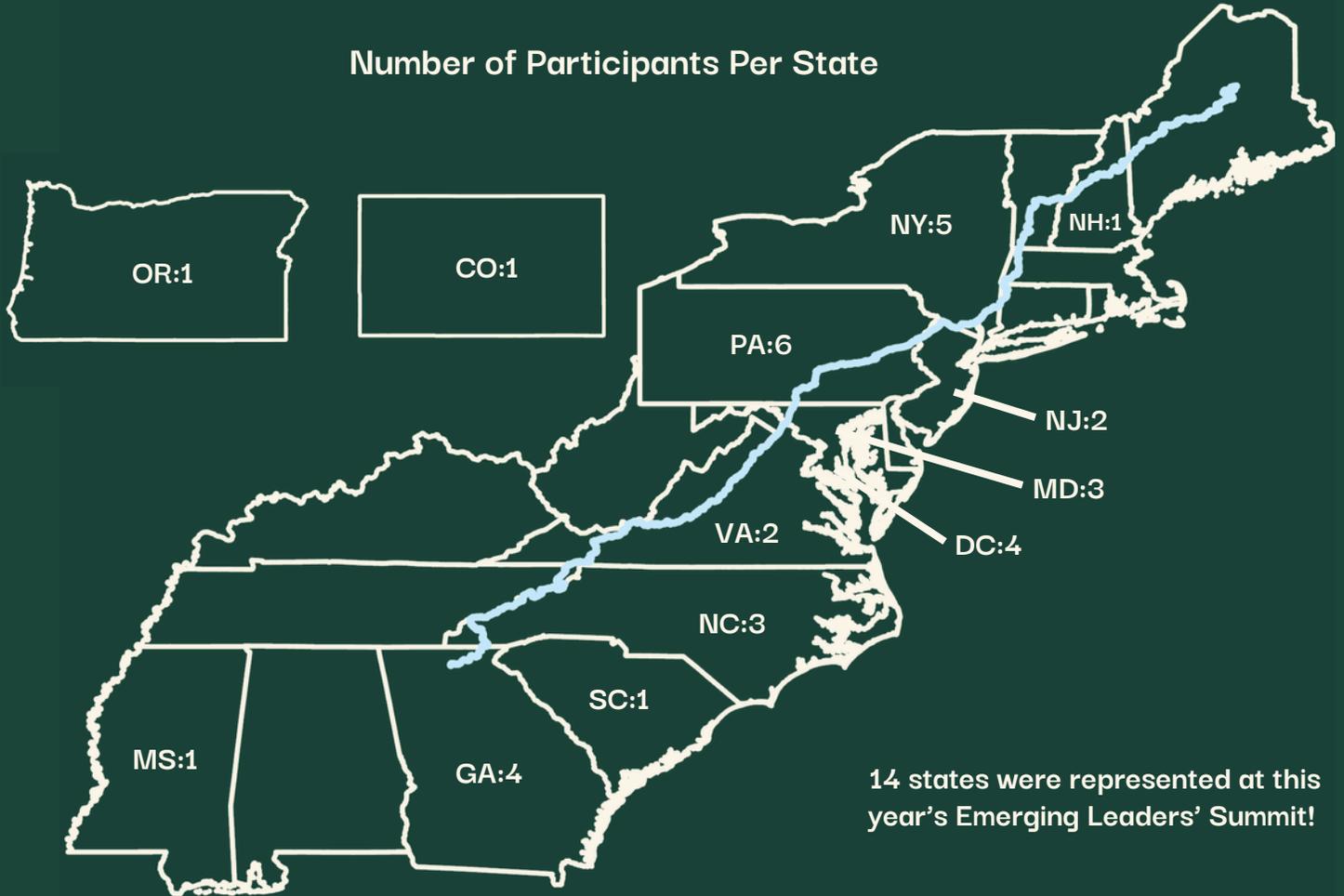
Managing the Flow: Visitor Use on the Appalachian Trail

Learn how data, planning, and collaboration guide Visitor Use Management to balance conservation and visitor experience on the Appalachian Trail.

2025 Emerging Leaders' Summit

Participant Demographics

Number of Participants Per State



14 states were represented at this year's Emerging Leaders' Summit!

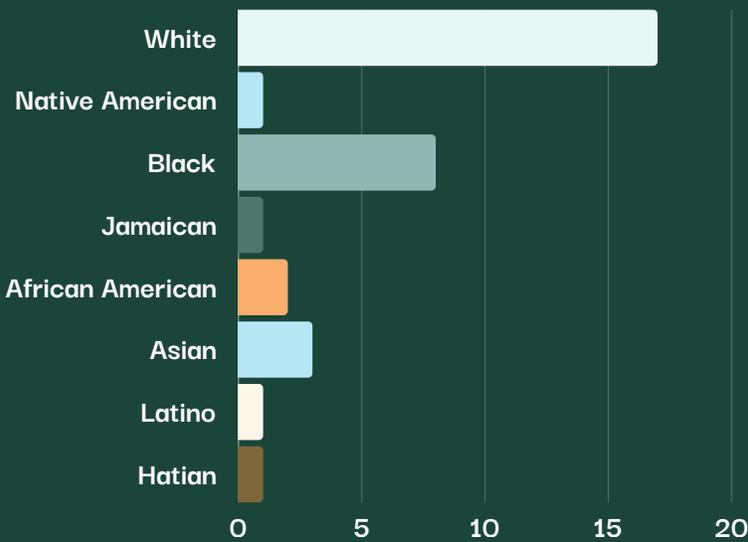
Participant Affiliations

Oregon Department of Land Conservation of Development
Mobilize Frederick
Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
Carolina Mountain Club
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps
Soul Trak Outdoors
Baltimore Public Schools
Jackson State University
National Park Foundation
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
Penn State's Bellisario College

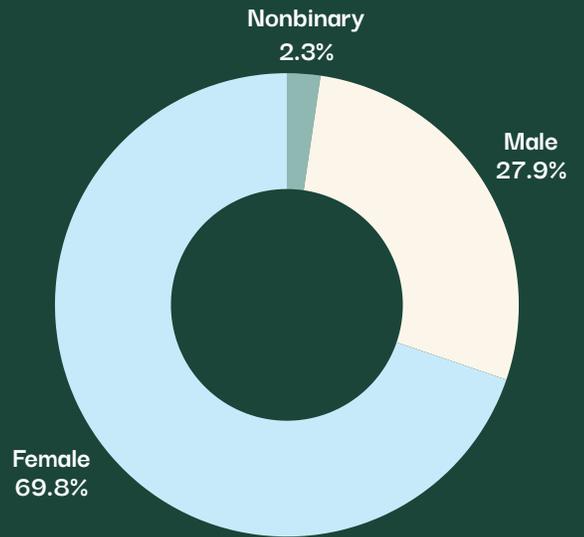
Nature Forward
White Mountain National Forest
United Nations Foundation
Student Conservation Association
University of Pittsburgh
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Open Space Institute Land Trust
National Wildlife Federation
Kennesaw State University
National Arboretum Community Center
E4TheFuture
Center for American Progress

Participant Demographics

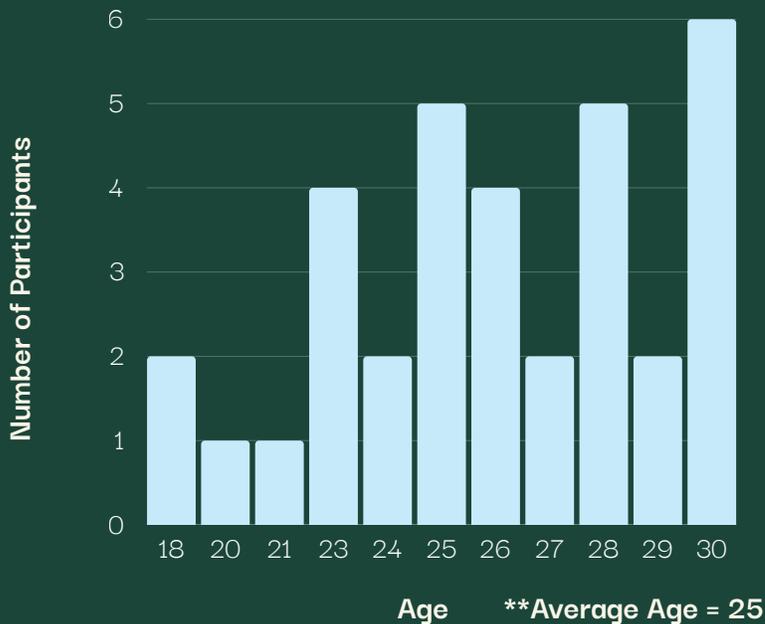
Participant Ethnicity Representation



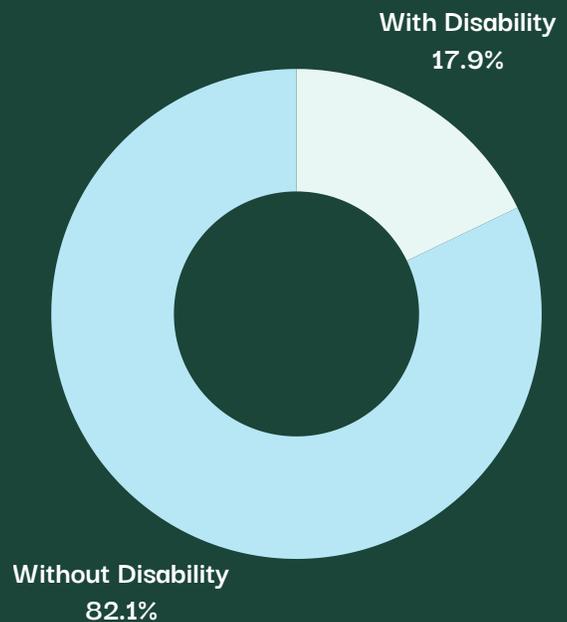
Participant Gender Representation



Participant Age Distribution



Participant Disability Representation



2025 Emerging Leaders' Summit

Photos & Quotes

“The ELS provided a great space for connecting with other young environmental professionals who are in a similar headspace and facing similar challenges in the workforce”



“The group hike blew my mind and blended everything I love about the interconnectedness of life”



“My favorite presentation was about the history of the Appalachian Trail and the ATC. I learned things about the trail I had never known, and it made me excited about the prospects of conservation through trail work”



“As someone who came into this field later in life after serving in the Navy, I’ve learned the importance of spaces that bring people together, share knowledge, and create momentum—and this summit feels exactly like that”

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Special Thanks

Thank you to to the individuals that assisted with planning and facilitation:

ATC's Next Generation Advisory Committee

Deidra Goodwin and Elyse Cogburn, D.Goodwin Experiential

Katie Kourakos, Volunteer Engagement Manager, NYNJTC

Mike Morris, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, NYNJTC

Charlene Luthi & Luke McKeon, NJ Ridgerunners

Brandon Elgun, AMC Ridgerunner Coordinator

NJ School of Conservation Education and Kitchen Staff

And to everyone who helped us recruit participants, especially:

A.T. Maintaining Clubs, ATC Staff, Next Gen Advisory Council,

ELS Alumni, New York New Jersey Trail Conference,

Soul Trak, SCA, and many other A.T. partners including

universities and non-profits in the 14 A.T. States

