



# Wild East Action Fund

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

## Wild East Action Fund – 2026 Program Overview

The coordinators of the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership (ATLP) are excited to announce the opening of a 2026 Wild East Action Fund cycle! Starting in May 18, 2026 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 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. An interactive map of the A.T. Landscape can be found [here](#). 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 governmental entity or a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Regional partnerships or collaboratives without 501(c)(3) nonprofit status may have a qualified 501(c)(3) apply on behalf of the partnership.

# Wild East Action Fund – 2026 Grant Categories

For the 2026 grant cycle, three grant categories will be open for project proposals: 1) Land Protection, 2) Conservation Planning, and 3) Community Resilience. Funding for the 2026 Wild East Action Fund was made possible by the generous support of the Dunleavy Foundation and other donors to the ATC. Additional funding through the Conservation Planning and Community Resilience grant categories is made possible through the support of ATC'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 Budget \(template\)](#)

## Anticipated Award Amounts

In 2026, up to \$1,000,000 will be granted through the Wild East Action Fund to qualified land protection, conservation planning, and community resiliency projects. Land Protection grant requests for up to \$75,000 will be considered. Conservation Planning and Community Resiliency grant requests up to \$20,000 will be considered.

*A Note on Match:* All competitive applications are expected to have 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	Available Funds
Land Protection	To help protect 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	\$700,000
Conservation Planning	To build organizational, partnership, or community capacity and support for future strategic conservation action.	ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, NY, NJ, PA, MD, WV, VA, TN, NC, & GA	\$5,000 – \$20,000	\$150,000
Community Resilience	To strengthen community capacity to reduce and respond to the impacts of climate change.	ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, NY, NJ, PA, MD, WV, VA, TN, NC, & GA	\$5,000 – \$20,000	\$150,000

## Land Protection

*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, supporting political groups, marketing materials, and venue or food costs.

### *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-driven 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* will secure 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: A project budget** detailing anticipated project expenses, total project cost, sources of match, and the requested grant amount aligning with allowable expenses, please use the template found [HERE](#).
- ◆ **REQUIRED: If applicable,** a letter of nonprofit status from the IRS
- ◆ **OPTIONAL:** Supporting materials (project photos or maps – acceptable formats include png, jpg, jpeg, & pdf).
- ◆ **OPTIONAL:** Other additional supporting materials (e.g. letters of support – acceptable formats include pdf, doc, docx, xls, xlsx)

## Conservation Planning

**Special Consideration:** Special consideration will be given to projects in NC, TN, & GA that support Hurricane Helene impacted areas 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 regional conservation partnerships, organizations, 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 plans. 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 12/31/2027.
- ◆ Measurable outcomes that can assess the project's success in achieving its goals and objectives.
- ◆ Project has secured or *likely* will secure (cash or in-kind) matching funds.

**Allowable Expenses:** Funding is broadly constrained to costs associated with the development of conservation plans, process documents, and tools. Funding requests can be used for, but are not limited to, staff time, contract support, and costs directly 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 A project budget** detailing anticipated project expenses, total project cost, sources of match, and the requested grant amount aligning with allowable expenses, please use the template found [HERE](#).
- ◆ **REQUIRED: If applicable, a letter of nonprofit status from the IRS.**
- ◆ **OPTIONAL:** Additional supporting materials (project photos or maps – acceptable formats include png, jpg, jpeg, & pdf).
- ◆ **OPTIONAL:** Other additional supporting materials (e.g. letters of support – acceptable formats include pdf, doc, docx, xls, xlsx)

## Community Resilience

**Special Consideration:** Special consideration will be given to projects in NC, TN, & GA that support the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts resulting from Hurricane Helene's devastating impact.

**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 climate 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 community-driven and collaborative, and support public access to open space and recreation opportunities. It is important that applications clearly demonstrate how the project will help 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. The most 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 strong applications:

- ◆ 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 climate 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 12/31/2027.
- ◆ Project has secured or *likely* will secure (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, marketing materials, 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](#).
- ◆ **REQUIRED: A project budget** detailing anticipated project expenses, total project cost, sources of match, and the requested grant amount aligning with allowable expenses, please use the template found [HERE](#).
- ◆ **REQUIRED: Letter(s) of Support** from local (municipal or county) government officials.
- ◆ **REQUIRED: If applicable,** a letter of nonprofit status from the IRS.
- ◆ **OPTIONAL:** Additional supporting materials (project photos, maps, etc. – acceptable formats include png, jpg, jpeg, doc, docx, xls, xlsx & pdf).