



100

Appalachian Trail
Conservancy

Centennial Campaign

Ensuring the Appalachian Trail and its landscape
are protected, resilient, and connected for all.



Celebrating 100 Years of Stewardship and Vision

One hundred years ago, a visionary group of volunteers gathered to bring the dream of a hiking trail stretching along the Appalachian Mountains from Maine to Georgia to life.



“A realm and not a trail marks the full aim of our effort.”

—BENTON MACKAYE, Appalachian Trail Visionary

Benton MacKaye, the New England dreamer who had the grand idea to establish the Appalachian Trail, wanted it to be more than just a path through the woods. It would be, he hoped, a place where people could find solutions to “the problem of living” caused by world war, economic dislocation, and the ever-increasing stresses of urban society.

MacKaye also said, “A realm and not a trail marks the full aim of our effort.” He understood, after seeing the rapid expansion of industrialization firsthand, that a 2,000-mile footpath alone would not provide the respite he envisioned. To preserve the Trail for future generations, a “realm” of forests, clean water, and other sources of life surrounding it must be established, nurtured, and protected.

On March 3, 1925, almost four years after MacKaye first published his grand vision of the Appalachian Trail project, a meeting was called in Washington, D.C. “...for the purpose of organizing a body of workers (representative of outdoor living and of the regions adjacent to the Appalachian range) to complete the building of the Appalachian Trail.” That day, the Appalachian Trail Conference was born, later renamed the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) to reflect the critical importance of conserving the natural and cultural resources of the Trail.

Today, hikers along the Trail encounter views that have changed very little since MacKaye’s time. This is largely due to the ATC and its partners, who have ensured that the lands surrounding the Trail remain protected. Of course, our responsibility includes not only the Trail, but also the flora and fauna that live around it, the lands and the communities that surround it, and the hikers who step upon it.

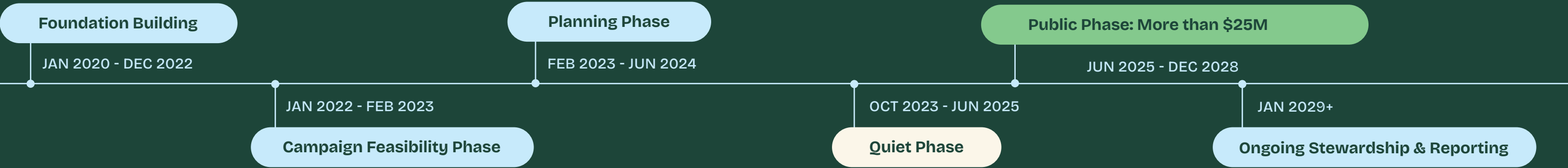
Our focus must encompass a realm of healthy forests and wildlife habitats, of sweeping vistas and landscapes, of thriving trailside communities, and a growing community of stewards and supporters who are ready to tackle challenges old and new.

To bring this vision to life, the ATC launched its **Centennial Campaign**, a comprehensive, five-year campaign to ensure the Appalachian Trail and its landscape remain protected, resilient, and connected for all.

The Centennial Campaign went public in June 2025, one hundred years after the ATC was founded.

Centennial Campaign Timeline

A multi-year, comprehensive campaign to keep the Trail alive.



“More than a century after Benton MacKaye first envisioned the Appalachian Trail, the A.T. endures as a source of national pride and a testament to American ingenuity, collaboration, and volunteerism. Today, as the Trail and its surrounding landscape face mounting threats, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Centennial Campaign is essential to completing MacKaye’s original vision and safeguarding the A.T.’s ecological integrity, scenic beauty, and irreplaceable experience across all 14 states. The time is now, and we welcome everyone to join the call and keep the Trail alive.”

—GREG WINCHESTER, Centennial Campaign Co-Chair, Appalachian Trail Conservancy Board of Directors

The Appalachian Trail

 2,197.9 Miles	14 States	 370,000 Acres of Protected Landscape
16.9M Annual Recreation Visits		
464,500 Feet of Elevation Gain/Loss		
 30 A.T. Clubs	 5,000+ A.T. Volunteers	



The Challenges and Opportunities Before Us

To ensure our vision for the Trail in the next century takes root, the **ATC’s Centennial Campaign** will address the challenges of this moment and safeguard the Trail’s future.

Aligned with the ATC’s strategic plan, the Centennial Campaign has three main areas of focus: to **protect** the Trail and its landscape, to provide a world-class A.T. **experience**, and to make sure the A.T. is a place where everyone feels they **belong**.

With your support of the Centennial Campaign, the ATC will have the necessary funding to respond to immediate needs and remain agile and resilient as we address these challenges and opportunities.

Together, we will raise \$50 million to **keep the A.T. and its landscape protected, resilient, and connected for everyone to enjoy.**

Protect

CHALLENGE

Environmental Threats

The Trail and surrounding lands represent one of the last remaining contiguous natural areas in the eastern United States, an increasingly rare expanse of connected, undeveloped land. Both provide an unparalleled outdoor experience for millions of people annually and a vital wildlife corridor. Yet this landscape faces constant pressure from development and a changing climate, which have negative impacts on biodiversity and ecological integrity.

OPPORTUNITY

A Conserved and Connected Trail Landscape

We work to safeguard the Trail's ecological integrity and biodiversity, ensuring it remains a vital wildlife corridor and a haven for outdoor enthusiasts.

With your support, we will:

- Increase the pace and scale of landscape conservation to preserve the natural beauty of the Trail
- Restore connectivity for critical habitats and healthy forest cover to support biodiversity and carbon sequestration
- Lead the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership—the largest conservation partnership in the eastern United States—to protect land critical to the Appalachian Trail
- Refine and expand the mission of the A.T. Community™ program to promote conservation values and support community action toward a more sustainable future

Experience

CHALLENGE

Sustainability

A surge in visitors demonstrates the Trail's enduring appeal—but also means more impact on the footpath and facilities than ever before. An increase in severe weather events affect hikers' safety as well as the resilience of the Trail's infrastructure including the treadway, overnight sites, and bridges.

OPPORTUNITY

Responsible and Accessible Management of the Trail

By enhancing the Trail's infrastructure, we are improving outdoor experiences for millions of visitors each year. To realize this opportunity, we will identify and implement modern and innovative ways to improve Trail infrastructure to meet the demands of increased use and minimize impacts from misuse.

With your support, we will:

- Prepare the Trail for the next century of use
- Expand on-the-ground educational programs that impart responsible use and the rich cultural histories of the region, a priority of which is a Trail-wide Ridgerunner Program
- Increase and optimize visitor access to information at ATC's visitor centers, digital trailhead kiosks, and online

Every day presents challenges to protect an enduring and intact landscape from conversion and incompatible development.



Belong

CHALLENGE

Access and Inclusivity

The ATC is dedicated to making the A.T. a place where everyone feels safe and welcomed. We have undertaken a number of initiatives to introduce the Trail to new audiences and remove barriers to access, but our work is far from complete.

Although millions of people enjoy the Trail annually, only a fraction are involved in trail maintenance, stewardship, and financial support. The future of “the People’s Trail” requires a broad coalition of supporters who care about its continued protection.

OPPORTUNITY

Cultivate a Community that Supports, Volunteers and Advocates for the ATC and our Mission

We are committed to fostering an engaged and expanding community of trail stewards, volunteers, and supporters who share our passion for the Appalachian Trail.

With your support, we will:

- Create access and break down barriers to the resource by creating meaningful and positive opportunities for all who want to experience the A.T.
- Strengthen and expand support for the ATC and the Trail to enable long-term success
- Support A.T. Clubs and other partners so they remain resilient and continue the crucial work of maintaining the A.T. treadway and facilities



“My love for the Appalachian Trail began with the countless hikes during my years in the Boy Scouts and later at Dartmouth College. Over the years, this passion deepened from more than just a physical challenge and a cherished opportunity to clear one’s head to an appreciation for the breathtaking vistas and the diverse environments found along this true national treasure. Together with Dr. Katherine Kirby Dunleavy, my wife and co-founder of the foundation, we believe it’s critical to protect vital pieces of America’s natural heritage for generations to come, and we are pleased to do our part to help keep the Trail alive.”

—DR. KEITH DUNLEAVY, Co-founder,
The Dunleavy Foundation

The ATC is dedicated to making the A.T. a place where everyone feels safe and welcomed.





"The Appalachian Trail stands as a living testament to what collaboration, dedication, and a shared love of the natural world can achieve. As we celebrate a century of protecting this national treasure, we rally together to keep the Trail alive, resilient, and connected in the face of growing threats and challenges. The Centennial Campaign is our vision to ensure the A.T. and its surrounding landscape continue to inspire, sustain, and transform all who walk its path."

—CINDA M. WALDBUESSER, President & CEO, Appalachian Trail Conservancy



Centennial Campaign High Impact Initiatives

As the only non-profit devoted exclusively to the entirety of the Appalachian Trail and its landscape, the ATC is committed to keeping its vast natural and scenic beauty healthy, resilient, and connected, so that everyone can experience its transformative power for generations to come.

To stay true to this commitment, the ATC's Centennial Campaign is comprehensive, including areas of greatest need, like ongoing operations and mission fulfillment, as well as program expansion and growth opportunities.

The following pages share Centennial Campaign high impact initiatives. These initiatives are already in progress, and they serve as examples of the meaningful work being led by the ATC.

A contribution to the Centennial Campaign supports these high impact initiatives and helps maintain and scale our critical conservation, stewardship, and outreach efforts.



HIGH IMPACT INITIATIVES

Land Conservation Program

For 100 years, the ATC has been a trailblazer in conservation across the A.T. landscape. We continue to lead innovative efforts and work at a geographic scale that requires as much vision as it does action. Every day presents challenges to protect an enduring and intact landscape from conversion and incompatible development. **This investment will allow us to continue our efforts to build trust and engagement with conservation partners and identify and act on opportunities to expand the protected land surrounding the Trail.**

Wild East Action Fund

In its first five years, this grant program supported more than 90 land protection and conservation planning projects in all 14 Trail states. The Wild East Action Fund often provided initial funding that gave a conservation project credibility, or it gave the last critical dollars needed to bring a project to completion. **Thanks to a generous donation to the Centennial Campaign, the ATC's Wild East Action Fund is poised to conserve more than 200,000 acres of the A.T. landscape in the coming years.**

A.T. Community™ Program

The ATC established the A.T. Community™ Program in 2009 to assist trailside communities with sustainable economic development through tourism and outdoor recreation. To date, 56 communities in 13 Trail states have joined the program, and many more have expressed interest. This growing network has voiced needs for increased regional collaboration, access to funding, and planning resources. **To propel continued success among participating communities, the ATC seeks to increase its internal capacity to refine and expand the program.**

Natural Resource Stewardship

This long-term adaptive approach includes active management, monitoring, research, evaluation, and revision of the landscape surrounding the Trail. At this scale, the ATC is the only entity that can comprehensively identify, coordinate, and carry out this critical work. Over the last decade, the ATC built a skilled team to manage hundreds of acres of habitat and protect populations of rare species. **This investment will accelerate the pace and scale of natural resource stewardship by doubling our capacity to restore habitat and control invasive non-native species, grow our field teams, invest in monitoring systems and tools, and keep up with the increasing threats to native habitats.**

GIS Mapping Capacity Building

ATC's GIS Mapping capacity is essential to protecting the Appalachian Trail landscape, providing local partners with the data they need to make informed conservation decisions. While previous efforts focused on developing new tools, our next priority is sustaining the core infrastructure—licenses, data, and cloud services—that underpin this work. **An investment in this work ensures fast, reliable, and actionable data remains available to support land protection from Georgia to Maine.**

Scenic View Protection

As a National Scenic Trail, the Appalachian Trail provides hikers with thousands of breathtaking vistas. Scenery is one of the most common reasons that people visit the Trail. In 2019, the ATC began the enormous undertaking of documenting and assessing every view along the Trail to create a comprehensive inventory. This baseline data enables the tracking of viewshed changes over time, and it will assist the ATC and its partners in making decisions about conservation and management priorities. **Future growth of the program includes expanding assessments to remaining A.T. states.**

Ridgerunner Program

As advocates of Trail stewardship, Ridgerunners embody the ATC's mission. They act as boots-on-the-ground in protecting Trail's most beloved places, while respecting Trail values of self-reliance and solitude in nature for those who seek it. Working with A.T. maintaining clubs and federal partners, the ATC is expanding the Ridgerunner Program by extending the Ridgerunner season, providing funding assistance for partner organizations who employ Ridgerunners, and ensuring high visitation areas have enough Ridgerunners to support necessary trail operations, safety, and education. **This investment will secure its existence into the future.**

Visitor Engagement Program

Record numbers of people with varying degrees of outdoor experience are visiting the A.T. year-round. They deserve consistent information that meets their level of preparation and knowledge and reaches them via their preferred communications method. We look forward to expanding our visitor education and engagement program so that people derive maximum benefit from their Trail experience and have the least impact on the footpath and surrounding landscape. **Optimized visitor centers, digital trailhead kiosks, interactive web resources, and expanded information services will meet more visitors' needs.**



Visitor Use Management
Sustainable Overnight
Sites Program

The Appalachian Trail has 387 overnight sites, including 280 shelters and 107 campsites. Many overnight sites, created in bygone days, were not designed or situated to provide the best possible experience and to minimize the human impact on the Trailway. The ATC is evaluating all overnight sites and will rehab, replace, or remove those that do not meet sustainability criteria. The assessment will begin in the southern half of the Trail, where thru-hiker overnight site usage is the highest. After completing initial evaluations and remediation efforts in the southern region, the ATC will scale the program throughout the entire Trail.

Young Adult Engagement Programs

Now in its fifth year, the **Emerging Leaders' Summit** is a multi-day gathering of young people to learn about conservation and public lands management. The **Next Generation Advisory Council** is a group of 16 young people tasked with connecting the ATC to a broader network of people, ideas, and resources that further equity for the organization. **The ATC seeks to elevate and expand these well-established initiatives and apply a more holistic approach to young adult engagement efforts.** This work is essential to cultivate new generations of people who feel welcome and accepted on the Trail, connected to the resource, and inspired to protect it.



Volunteer Engagement
and Club Capacity Building

The ATC convenes and connects 30 A.T. Clubs across 14 states, which recruit and organize volunteers for maintenance projects. **The ATC seeks to provide clubs with more technical assistance in the areas of recruitment, training, recognition, and communications.** Pilot programs with limited funding have shown the effectiveness of the desired approach.

Youth Stewardship Development

Managing the Trail and its natural resources offers pathways for skills development and employment for young people. By building internal capacity and cementing partnerships with youth-serving organizations that align closely with our mission, **the ATC aspires to develop a youth stewardship program that deploys youth crews to complete maintenance projects in a systematic and coordinated manner Trail-wide.** Additionally, the ATC will develop a special curriculum to educate participants about conservation, natural resource stewardship, and management of public lands.

“The ATC Centennial Campaign is designed to assure the Appalachian Trail will be well managed, maintained, and welcoming for the growing number of A.T. visitors while the ATC continues to have the resources necessary to add a huge amount of protection to the entire A.T. landscape.”

—RON TIPTON, Centennial Campaign Co-Chair, former President & CEO, Appalachian Trail Conservancy



We Invite You to Keep the Trail Alive

We have surpassed the halfway mark in funds raised for the Centennial Campaign, thanks to the generous support of our dedicated community. This milestone is a testament to the collective commitment to preserving the Appalachian Trail and its surrounding landscape.

Your support is crucial to taking us across the finish line. Together, we can ensure that the Appalachian Trail continues to inspire for the next 100 years and beyond.

WE INVITE YOU TO:

- ➔ **Make the Appalachian Trail Conservancy a philanthropic priority** by making a pledge to join our leadership-level Centennial supporters.
- ➔ **Share your legacy** by including the ATC's in your will, trust, retirement, or other estate plans.
- ➔ **Amplify the ATC's Centennial Campaign** to a broader audience by hosting a donor gathering or offering introductions to fellow outdoor enthusiasts.

The Appalachian Trail is more than just a path—it is a symbol of our commitment to conservation and a testament to the power of collective action.

As we embark on our next century, we look forward to working with you to keep the Trail alive for generations to come.

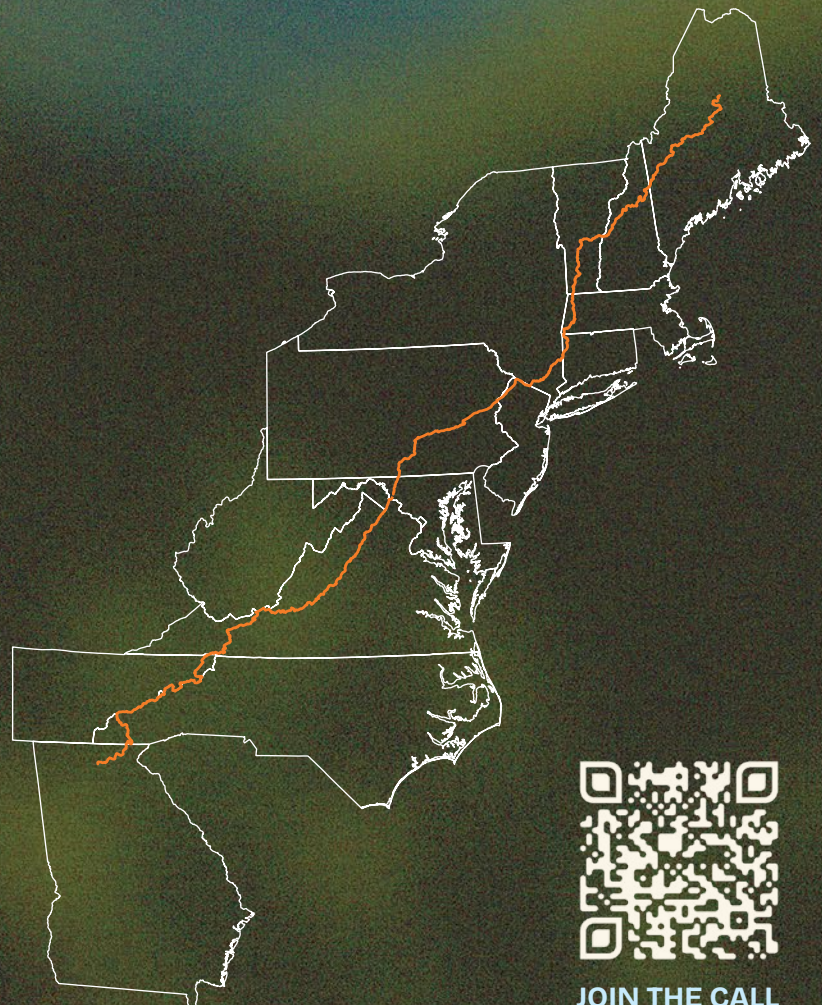
To learn more, please visit our Centennial website, [keepthetrailalive.org](https://www.keepthetrailalive.org) or contact philanthropy@appalachiantrail.org.





ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Founded in 1925, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy 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. Together with our supporters, partners, and thousands of volunteers, we **keep the Trail alive.**



Appalachian Trail Conservancy
799 Washington Street, PO Box 807
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
304.535.6331



[keepthetrailalive.org](https://www.KeepTheTrailAlive.org)



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