



APPALACHIAN TRAIL
CONSERVANCY®

Appalachian Trail Communities



**Virginia Main Street
Toolkit Workshop**

July 17, 2013







ATC

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is a private, non-profit organization, designated by the National Park Service to manage and maintain the Trail.

Our organization works with 31 Trail-maintaining clubs, the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service.



The Appalachian National Scenic Trail



Trail Clubs

Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC)

Old Dominion Appalachian Trail Club (ODATC)

Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club (TATC)

Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club (NBATC)

Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC)

Outdoor Club of Virginia Tech (OCVT)

Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers (PATH)

Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club (MRATC)

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and **The National Park Service** and Other Federal or State Land Management Agencies

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

Boiling Springs, PA

Central & Southwest VA Regional Office

Blacksburg, VA

USFS: George Washington & Jefferson; Sky Meadows State Park; G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area

NPS: Shenandoah; Blue Ridge Parkway



The Birth of a Trail ...The Early Years





Benton MacKaye



...a path interspersed with planned wilderness communities where people could go to renew themselves...

...to seek respite from an increasingly industrialized, urbanized society.





1922-1923

First segment completed

= 80 =

EASTWARD FROM BEAT MT. = BEAT MT. BRIDGE = ANTHONY'S NOSE





1937

Final segment of the Appalachian Trail was connected



MacKaye and Avery



1960's



1968

1984





ATC

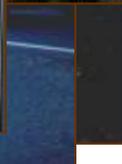
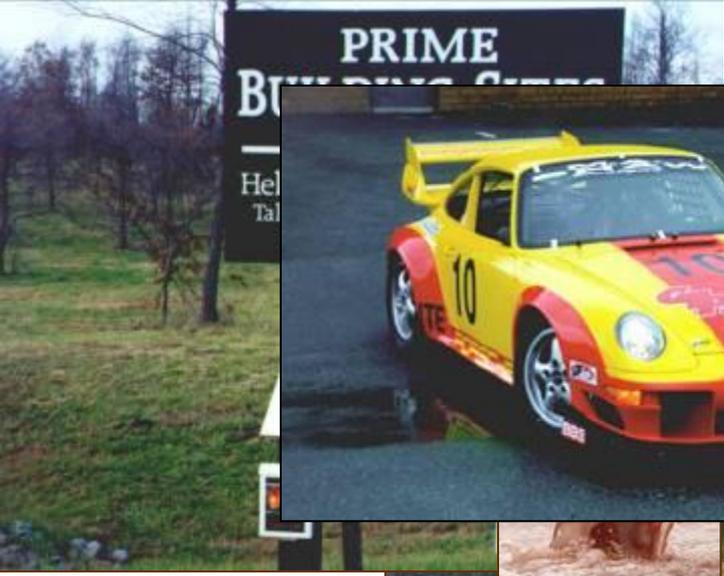


Last year, more than 6,000 volunteers contributed over 239,000 hours to Trail maintenance projects.



A life time of service







ATC programs

Trail Management Programs:

- ↗ Ridgerunners and Caretakers
- ↗ Training Programs (Saw certification, CPR, etc)
- ↗ Trail Crews
- ↗ Exterior Corridor Boundary Maintenance
- ↗ Resource Management
- ↗ Open Areas
- ↗ Agricultural Land Management



ATC programs: Citizen-Science

The Appalachian Trail is not only the world's most renowned hiking trail, it is an important ecological corridor from which we can gauge the health of high elevation forests along the eastern seaboard of the United States.



Citizen Science



Trail to Every Classroom

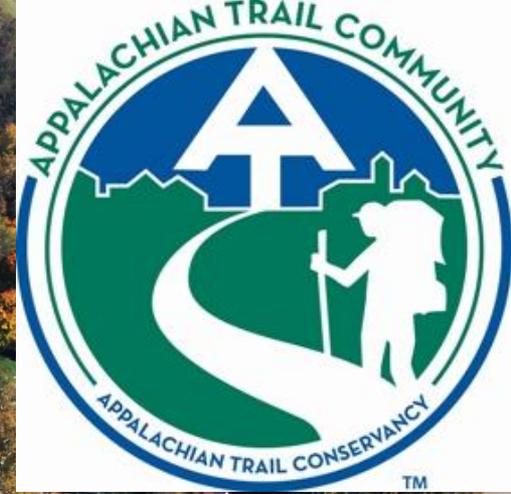


APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Join the Journey™



Trail to Every Classroom



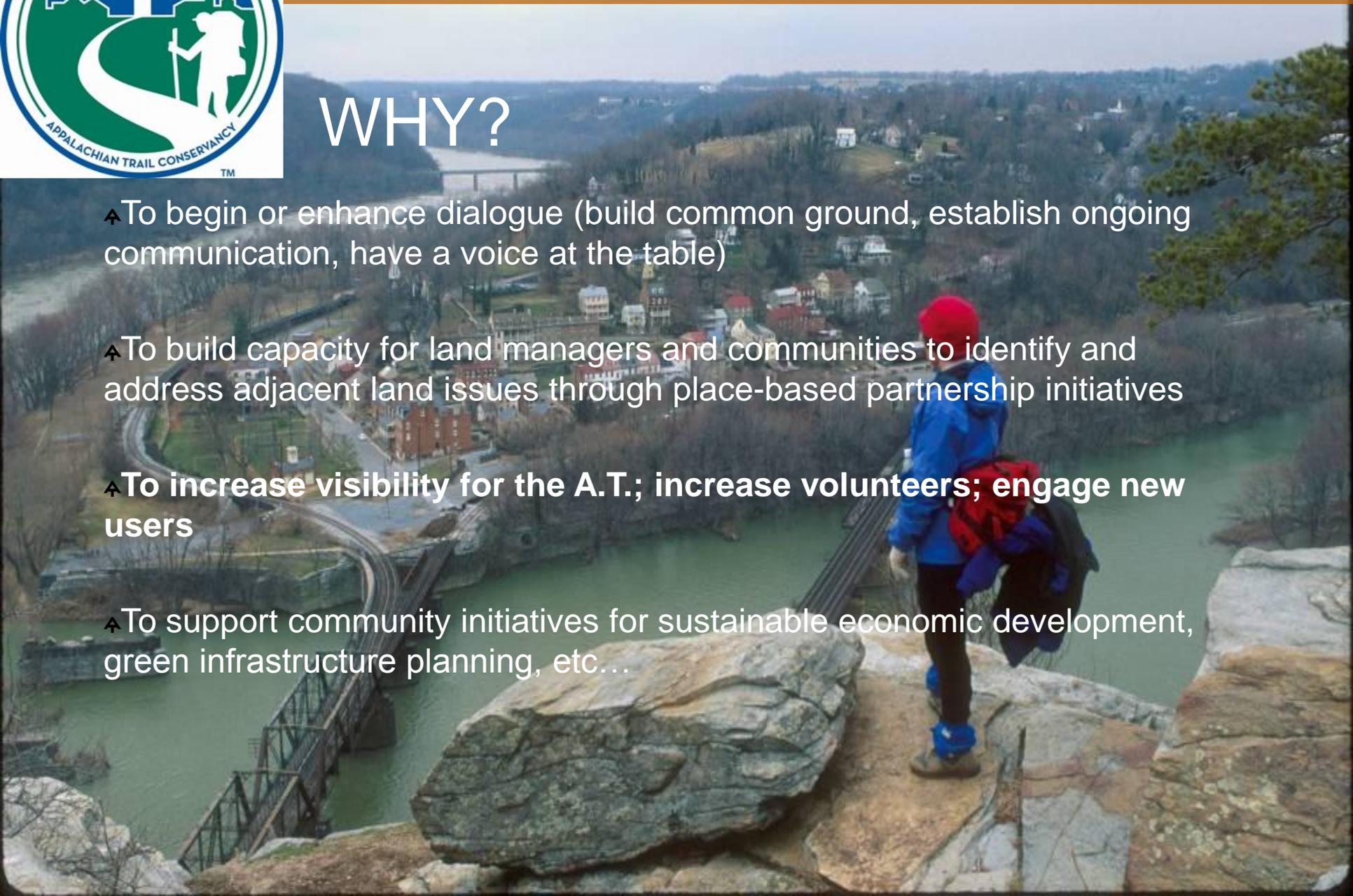
Appalachian Trail Communities



Appalachian Trail Communities

WHY?

- ⤴ To begin or enhance dialogue (build common ground, establish ongoing communication, have a voice at the table)
- ⤴ To build capacity for land managers and communities to identify and address adjacent land issues through place-based partnership initiatives
- ⤴ **To increase visibility for the A.T.; increase volunteers; engage new users**
- ⤴ To support community initiatives for sustainable economic development, green infrastructure planning, etc...





How the Trail Benefits Communities

- ↗ **Protecting Natural Resources:**
vital habitat corridors, species diversity, **ecosystem services** that citizens depend on such as watershed, air quality, foodsheds and even medicine
- ↗ **Protecting Rural Character and Place:**
ridgelines, river corridors, visual relief by framing neighborhoods in the face of sprawl, preserving farmland (e.g. in PA)
- ↗ **Healthier lifestyles:**
encouraging hiking, walking, jogging from a close location, positive life-long exercise and experience, free!
- ↗ **Education:**
citizen scientists, outdoor classrooms, experiential learning, teaching stewardship
- ↗ **Enhanced quality of life for residents**



Economic Impact of Long Distance Trails

Have the potential to

- ↗ Create jobs,
- ↗ Enhance property values,
- ↗ Expand local businesses, attract new or relocating businesses,
- ↗ Increase local tax revenues,
- ↗ Decrease local government expenditures,
- ↗ Low cost health care (Let's Move!),
- ↗ and promote local communities



Economic Impact of the A.T.

- **2 million recreation visits annually**
- **700,000 tourist visits**
- **\$125 – 168 million annual spending**
- **\$27 million tourist spending locally**
- **\$36 million local economic spinoffs**
- **626 jobs supported by tourism**

Taken from study of J.M. Bowker, S.J. Zarnoch, H. Ken Cordell – **USDA FS**
Neelam Poudyal, Gary Green – **UGA**
Matt Owens – **GA DNR**



Appalachian Trail Communities



Benefits for Communities:



“We know that the Appalachian Trail hikers have a positive economic impact on our town and we want to celebrate that.”
Linda Schlott from Franklin



Appalachian Trail Communities



How?



Appalachian Trail Community Ambassadors

- ⤴ Local community representatives trained to facilitate outreach to community members and youth groups for volunteer stewardship projects.
- ⤴ Ambassadors will connect community citizens and new volunteers with ongoing and new ATC and Club events, functions, and volunteer opportunities such as invasive-exotic plant monitoring and control, club or ATC trail crews, club maintenance trips, etc...



Outcomes and Successes



Luray/Page County As the County seat, Luray businesses are recognizing the positive economic impact that hikers bring to their business and to our community.

- ↗ The Luray-Page County Visitors Center is a favorite for information on local services
- ↗ Appalachian Outdoors Adventures can provide hikers with all the gear, supplies and information they may need
- ↗ Our library is very hiker-friendly, located right beside the Visitor's Center
- ↗ The Luray Fitness Center offers showers at a rate of \$5 per day
- ↗ Many restaurants in town provide meals to go, packaged expressly to fit in a backpack. These affordable meals are provided onsite and at an affordable price.
- ↗ Shuttle Services throughout the County cater to A.T. hikers.
- ↗ Free tent space designated for A.T. hikers behind the Warehouse Art Gallery



Outcomes and Successes

Bland County

- ↗ Festival of Trails event initiated
- ↗ Family Fun Hikes established by A.T. Ambassador, bringing over a dozen new volunteers to the club
- ↗ PATH Summerfest brought campers, maintainers, trail neighbors, thru-hikers and families out to celebrate the 75th Anniversary
- ↗ Outreach to farmers and outreach extension to educate about invasive exotic plants issues.
- ↗ Participation in Great Girl Scout Hike





Outcomes and Successes:

Buena Vista

- ↗ Buena Vista and Glasgow have a shared A.T. Community Advisory Committee so that they can work on regional collaboration pertaining to the Trail.
- ↗ Buena Vista has great plans to for expanding hiker services by getting local churches, organizations, residents, businesses and others involved. They see themselves taking an active role in increasing the visibility and awareness of Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club to local residents.
- ↗ Host an annual Mountain Day Festival each fall
- ↗ They also hope to incorporate the A.T. into their annual Maury River Fiddlers Convention held in June.
- ↗ Committee reps were instrumental in helping to create the newly launched A.T. Community Supporter initiative.





A.T. Community™ Towns in Virginia

- ↗ Front Royal/Warren County
- ↗ Luray/Page County
- ↗ Harrisonburg
- ↗ Albemarle County
- ↗ Waynesboro
- ↗ Nelson County
- ↗ Buena Vista
- ↗ Glasgow
- ↗ Salem
- ↗ Pearisburg
- ↗ Narrows
- ↗ Bland County
- ↗ Marion/Smyth County
- ↗ Damascus
- ↗ Abingdon



Outcomes and Successes

Waynesboro

- Waynesboro committee highlights the A.T. at the following events; *XtremeFest*, *Riverfest* and *Touring Your Town*.
- Partnership between Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Staunton, Waynesboro and Augusta County to implement Appalachian Trail education, awareness and community service programs to over 200 children that attend the clubs daily.
- Waynesboro is leading the collaborative effort with Front Royal and Abingdon, in developing the Virginia A.T. mobile application to present community information to hikers and their families.





Outcomes and Successes

Pearisburg

- ↗ Pearisburg has an annual Festival in the Park which now highlights the Trail.
- ↗ County Tourism Task Force received a grant to purchase outreach materials for a traveling booth volunteers can use to promote the A.T. and other hiking opportunities.
- ↗ A Trail To Every Classroom alumni worked with the Committee to develop an A.T. Postcard competition among local schools; now available at local businesses.
- ↗ They are working with the New River Valley Planning Commission to develop a local hiking brochure, highlighting the A.T. and National Forest in Giles County.
- ↗ Created a Local Hikers Guide Pamphlet listing services, food and lodging in the area.





Join the Journey