

APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY Fall 2019 Report

Organizational Updates

First, I want to thank everyone for the words of encouragement and support I've received as we move through this transition. Sudden change is always difficult but, with staff and stakeholders working together, we have well weathered this initial period.

These early days are dedicated to correcting and strengthening our foundation, focusing significant attention to growing our revenue, and putting building blocks into place that will help us strategically set, in a thoughtful and well-developed approach, our future priorities.

There have been several changes with regards to our foundation. First, we have reorganized our Membership and Development and Communications departments to now fall under one umbrella, lead by the Vice President of Advancement. We have also moved Advocacy and Education and Outreach into this new division. All these activities support and inform our overall message to the world around us. Moving them into one department will help to ensure greater alignment of message and focus. After advertising for the position, I have hired Shalin Desai for the VP slot. Many of you may already know Shalin through his work with ATC. Shalin has over 10 years of experience in operations management, sales and marketing. In addition, he is a "triple-crowner" hiker (AT-PCT-CDT) and has also hiked the Long Trail and the Oregon Coast Trail for a total of 8,200 miles – so far! I am so pleased that Shalin applied for the position and is willing to move down to our area to bring his expertise to ATC.

A second significant change is in our Finance Department. For the first time ATC has hired a Chief Financial Officer to lead this area of the organization. Nicole Prorock, CPA will start work on October 15th. Nicole was most recently the CFO for a nonprofit in Frederick, MD so she brings a good understanding to the kind of environment in which we must function. She is an avid volunteer in a variety of areas, including being a fireman for the New Market, MD Volunteer Fire Company, and is training for a biathlon. We are very excited to have her join our team.

We are also continuing to evaluate the Conservation Department's structure. One change, mentioned above, moves Education and Outreach (Julie Judkin's work) out of Conservation and into Advancement. The major consideration - regional management structure - is still a work in progress. We will be looking how best to engage Clubs and other partners in the first quarter of 2020 as we assess how things are going and what the best approach will be moving forward.

We are facing challenges this year with our budget. The last two years has seen a significant overall drop in both membership and major donor supporters. While we are beginning to evaluate in depth why this is the case, we have made some immediate changes in both our messaging and our approach. Basically, we are going back to our roots – focusing on our core mission of maintenance and protection of the Appalachian Trail. While we will continue to use "Wild East" as an advertising campaign tool, we are making sure that all the work we do is identified as the work of the Conservancy. We are also reaching out personally to both new and long-term supporters. Between now and the end of the year staff, and Board, will be visiting and calling on donors up and down the Trail to ask for their continued support.

Even with our effort to increase revenue, we do need to put stricter expense management practices in place both now and moving forward. We will be moving much of our communication to digital platforms to lessen printing and postage costs and are finding ways to use technology more effectively in order to reduce travel expenses. We will set funding priorities to first support core mission activities, and then evaluate whether we have the capability to continue broader activities that, while no less important, require funding outside of our normal streams. Through all of this, we will be looking to our partners to help us maneuver these difficult decisions.

While currently focused on short-term challenges, we are continuing to work on long-term strategy for the organization. The Board spent a full day in September working on the new Strategic Plan and has committed to another day at the November meeting. During that November meeting, the Stewardship Council will also have an opportunity to review the plan developed to date and provide input and recommendations. The current schedule includes another round of review by the RPC's during spring meetings of 2020 and we currently hope to approve the plan at the May Board meeting.

While there is much to do, we are moving forward in a positive and proactive way. We thank all the work and support our Clubs and partners bring to ATC. Please let me know how we can better support and partner with all of you.

Sandi Marra

President & CEO

CONSERVATION REPORT Fall 2019

Details about ATC's conservation staff focus since the Spring meetings are describes below. There were a few higher profile issues, these include:

Petitions to the Supreme Court appealing the Fourth Circuit Court decision on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline: In part, this decision issued last December found that the U.S. Forest Service does not have the authority to permit natural gas pipelines across the A.T. The court found that the National Park Service (NPS) has that authority as the A.T. is a unit of the National Park System. However, under the Mineral Leasing Act, the NPS cannot issue permits for natural gas pipelines across most NPS units without approval from Congress. ATC's position on the legal status of the land underlying the A.T. has not changed: the Trail itself is a national park, managed by the National Park Service in coordination with the local, State, and federal landholders whose property the Trail traverses. The presence of the Park unit on non-Park Service land does not transform the underlying or surrounding lands into National Park lands. The ultimate, unitary responsibility for the Trail by the National Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy does not diminish any another landholder's ability to manage that land consonant with the federal, State, and local laws that govern that landholder's rights and responsibilities. ATC has reviewed the certiorari petitions. The Supreme Court is expected to decide in October 2019 to hear this case, or not.

Anyone interested in reviewing the petitions and Southern Environmental Law Center's opinion can find those [HERE](#). Additional information about ATC's federal and legislative policy work is below.

Visual Resource Inventory Pilot: Though the spectacular and diverse scenery of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST) has for many decades drawn hikers to its footpath, several factors remind A.T. management partners that the trail's scenic views cannot be taken for granted. These factors include steady population growth in the Eastern United States, intensifying land use near the trail including increasingly larger scale infrastructure development, and rapidly changing forest composition throughout the Appalachian Mountains.

To address these and other scenic quality challenges, the ATC and the National Park Service (NPS) recognize the need to 1. Document the current state of ANST visual resources; 2. Educate the public,

federal, state, and local policy-makers about important scenic resources; and 3. Advance programs and policies that will help developers avoid impacts to important scenic resources, and to adequately mitigate for impacts to scenic resources.

ATC and NPS have jointly initiated a pilot visual resources inventory based on a new protocol for documenting visual resources developed by the NPS Air Resources Division with support from Argonne National Laboratory. As we reported earlier, our team hosted a visual resource workshop in April to assess and determine protocols for an inventory, data management, volunteer engagement, and technology considerations. The past two months a team of hired interns, ATC staff, and volunteer leaders have been trained and collected visual resource quality data in four locations in Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Maine. The next phase of the pilot work will collect data on view importance. All of the data will be housed at NPS. It will be used to map visual resources and will be useful to set priorities to mitigate potential impacts in high priority areas.

Federal Managers Meeting: Several ATC conservation leadership staff, along with Sandi Marra, joined a meeting of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and NPS leadership to discuss A.T. management issues. The meeting is typically held every two years, offering cooperative management partners the opportunity to discuss pressing issues and resolve concerns. Major challenges that we discussed at this last meeting included: increased visitation to the Trail; managing bear-human interactions; the NPS and USFS sawyer training policy; and collaboration in landscape conservation.

Scott Farm: During a time when the NPS was very actively acquiring parcels for the Trail corridor, there were often parcels that were acquired that had “incidentally” acquired structures. The Scott Farm located near a bridge over Conodoguinet Creek, below Blue Mountain on the northern end of the Cumberland Valley crossing, was purchased by the National Park Service when the Trail corridor was established across the valley in the 1980s. There were several incidentally acquired structures that have been used by ATC, for training, a base camp for volunteer Trail crews, and equipment storage. ATC has had an agreement with a caretaker to live on site, maintaining a year-round presence that monitors the site and identifies maintenance issues. The caretaker position is currently vacant.

When lands with existing buildings become part of the Trail corridor, the Park Service and ATC typically arrange for demolition of structures that don't have significant historic or aesthetic value. The NPS has had the Scott Farm on its demolition list for well over a decade. As such, very little investment has been made to maintain the buildings. The buildings are falling into disrepair and the cost to restore and maintain them is very high. Problems with asbestos in the house make it expensive to rehabilitate. The structures also sit in a floodplain.

ATC's local staff were notified again two years ago that the Scott Farm structures were on the NPS demolition list and that we would operate crews and house seasonal staff at the Farm through the 2019 field season. We are actively pursuing other facility options for the 2020 season.

The Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club is exploring land exchange options with NPS so that they can acquire the property and manage it. ATC is not involved with these land exchange discussions. ATC is currently working with NPS on a land exchange to acquire the Boiling Springs office building from NPS. We anticipate that the exchange will be complete by the end of 2019.

EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP

Trail Management: Structures & Tread

ATC staff works on numerous trail management projects across all ATC regions directly through ATC managed Trail crews and through contracts with our cooperative management partners.

- Konnarock Trail Crew - 172 1-week volunteer spots were filled during the 2019 season and contributed 8,609 hours. Select construction numbers include: 298 rock steps, 3 miles of sidehill construction and 512 cubic feet of rock cribbing. The Spy rock project, a partnership among the ATC, NBATC and VA Department of Conservation and Recreation received a special field visit from Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources.
- Contracted with 8 cooperators to administer trail crews in New England (Trail Clubs and Youth Conservation Corps) for A.T. repair and rehab in CT, MA, VT, NH and ME.
- Rebuilding of the highly popular Guyot shelter on the White Mountain National Forest through a contract with AMC. Design was similar to the former structure and uses full scribed cedar logs through a sub-contract with the Wodden House Co.
- Held a trail crew program strategic planning retreat in July.

Trail Management: Visitor Use

More than three million people each year hike all or part of the A.T., and that number continues to grow. We will address the growing number of visitors on the A.T. when those numbers have an impact on Trail resources and conflict with visitor expectations.

- Triple Crown Volunteer Ridgerunners- Trained 11 additional volunteer ridgerunners, swelling the ranks to exactly 100 participants in the program.
- Virginia DCR funded the purchase of 5 additional bear boxes to address food storage issues, and APPA provided funding for 2 bear boxes in Vermont.
- Coordinated communications for major incident in Virginia.
- The Boiling Springs, PA Visitor Center re-opened with Visitor Center Representative, Allison Kuzar, hired for the busy season.
- A.T. Visitor Center opened for season in Monson Maine on June 5th.
- Kennebec Ferry began service in late May.
- Continued work with the US Forest Service to implement improved food storage direction for A.T. campers in NC, GA, and VT.
- Met with USFS and other partners to begin VUM process for the Carvers Gap area of the Roan Highlands.
- Trained volunteers from the Tennessee Eastman Hiking & Canoeing Club to conduct comprehensive campsite inventories to complement the Trailwide work done by recreation ecologists Dr. Jeff Marion and Dr. Jeremy Wimpey and their students.
- Visitor Use Management committees have continued work around the Max Patch area, on the entire Appalachian Trail in Georgia (PATHE), and on Franconia Ridge in NH.

PROACTIVE PROTECTION

A.T. Landscape Conservation Partnership

The landscape surrounding the world-famous A.T. is one of the most important contiguous landscapes in the eastern United States. This landscape connects rural communities and working farms and forests; squeezes through rapidly developing regions; encompasses several distinct biomes; is important in preserving Native and other cultures and in documenting the birth and progression of our country. These lands provide the foundation for unparalleled outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities.

- 2019 Wild East Action Fund – a team reviewed and awarded this year’s first round grants. \$100,000 in capacity building funding and \$200,000 in land protection funds will be awarded. The first-round grant requests totaled \$350,000 for capacity building funds and \$850,000 for the available land protection funds. 2019 requests increased significantly over the 2018 Fund requests. The land protection proposals represented more than \$48 million dollars’ worth of projects that involves over 62,000 acres of conservation lands located across the A.T. landscape. A second round of land protection grants is planned for later in the year. We will be announcing the second round of this year’s Wild East Action Fund grants for land protection projects. There will be \$300K available – bringing the total for 2019 land protection grants to \$500K.
- ATC hosted the A.T. Landscape Partnership Steering Committee Meeting
- Planning is underway for the 5th A.T. Landscape Partnership Annual Meeting to be held December 17-18, 2019 at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV.
- ATC’s participation and support to advance the conservation work of several local and regional conservation initiatives continues to build momentum. This year’s capacity building grants will strengthen land conservation work in the Triple Crown area near Roanoke, northern Virginia, and Heart of Maryland. Staff is engaged with the Kittatinny Coalition on a strategic organizing plan, renewing the Hudson Highlands Coalition in New York, and the development of a Northeast Bird Conservation Initiative in New England – conservation work that benefits the A.T. and its surrounding lands.
- ATC and NPS will be hosting the 5th Annual A.T. Landscape Partnership meeting scheduled for December 16-17, 2019 at the National Conservation Training Center. Planning is now underway for this gathering to bring conservation leaders together from across the A.T. landscape.
- ATC and our A.T. landscape conservation work were featured at a number of gatherings. The A.T. Landscape Partnership is part of the first pilot of the Peer Learning Exchange hosted by the International Land Conservation Network. Exchange participants met in Woodstock, Vermont in September to visit the A.T. and its surrounding communities. Sandi Mara was a featured speaker and Anne Baker represented ATC at the Pennsylvania Trails and Greenways Summit. Dennis will participate on a workshop panel at the 2019 Land Trust Alliance Gathering in October.
- We are happy to report that 243 acres in the Catawba Valley near McAfee Knob is protected! The Hogan Hollow property closed in late June. The Catawba Valley is a priority area for landscape conservation. Much of the viewshed (McAfee and Tinker Cliffs) is vulnerable to development in an area that is close to an expanding metropolitan area. ATC has applied for \$1.1 million dollars through the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to also purchase two properties: Smith Brooke Farm and the Rickman property, also immediately below McAfee Knob. In addition, the team is working with partners to acquire another 237 acres in this area.
- Andrew Downs is working with local stakeholders in the Peter’s mountain area to evaluate the opportunity for a Congressionally designated Cultural Heritage area. Meetings have been held in Petersburg, WV and Newport, VA.

- U.S. Senator Jean Shaheen from NH visited the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funded Hudson Farm property in Hanover, NH with ATC staff and other partners. The Senator continued to express her unwavering support for fully funding LWCF.
- New England staff met with The Conservation Fund in Killington, VT at a 600-acre land acquisition project that will provide additional protection for A.T. NE team are also assessing the conservation/A.T. protection values and stewardship responsibilities for 2 additional and available parcels in NH and one in VT.
- ATC's Virginia staff hosted Governor Northam in the Roanoke office.

Resource Management- Natural, Cultural, and Scenic

Protected Trail lands and surrounding landscapes provide ecosystem function and represent the rich cultural history of the Appalachian region. Multiple threats from invasive species and forest pests, incompatible development, and climate change, challenge the integrity of these lands. ATC implements projects to abate threats and improve habitat for target species and an enhanced hiker experience. Much of our resource management work takes place in early successional areas where natural ecosystem processes (fire, grazing) have been lost.

Invasive Species Management:

- ATC continued to treat ash trees in the southern Appalachian against the emerald ash borer (EAB). This invasive pest is decimating Ash trees across its range in the United States. The treatments are an attempt to save a few individuals so that ash trees can regenerate once the EAB population declines. Without these treatments, the ash trees will go extinct much like the American chestnut did. Staff worked with partners and volunteers to treat 89 ash trees, including the first ash trees treated along the A.T. in Georgia, and the tallest ash tree in Georgia. In addition, 66 ash trees were protected in TN and NC. There are now 836 ash trees in 11 groves protected by ATC in the deep south. In New England, ash treatments were completed for priority trees in Sheffield, MA and Cheshire, MA with support from Arborjets "Saving America's Iconic Trees" program. Ash tree inventory is ongoing.
- ATC's 2nd annual "Kill the Dam Invasive Plants" at Fontana Dam happened the first week in July with over 50 partners and volunteers killing invasive exotic plants. Work occurred on land belonging to 3 federal agencies (USFS, TVA, NPS) that are connected by the A.T.
- Treatment work via a NPS Exotic Plant Management grant, has been completed for the 2019 season at Day Mountain Natural Heritage area in MA. This multi-year restoration project to protect high priority rare species habitat is nearing the final stages of intensive management.
- Project planning has begun for the 2019 Natural Resource Block Grant projects in MA, CT, ME & VA.

Habitat Management:

- Hump Mountain is one of the major hotspots for golden-winged warblers in the Southern Appalachians. Six acres of open area edge reclamation was completed, ensuring dramatic views for hikers and suitable habitat for the golden-winged warblers. A similar project will begin on Little Hump in 2 weeks.
- An 8-person Appalachian Conservation Crew performed an 8-day hitch restoring grassy balds habitat on Grassy Ridge on the Roan providing habitat for species like the threatened Gray's Lily.

- ATC participated in the Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative (NBHCI) Summit hosted by Highstead on September 5th. The summit included the New England Regional Conservation Partnerships and other partners to discuss opportunities to collaborate and the possibility of a habitat demonstration area pilot effort.
- ATC received a \$10,000 donation from Vermont Woodchuck Cider for Open Area maintenance and habitat improvement for pollinators at Open Areas along the A.T. in Vermont. Woodchuck cider employees also provided a day of service with ATC staff
- Worked with partners regarding a culvert replacement on the KI road in the Maine 100-Mile Wilderness, near popular Gulf Hagas. Removal of this last remaining culvert on the Henderson Brook will open 3.4 miles of restored habitat for the federally endangered Atlantic salmon population on the Pleasant River system. The Nature Conservancy donated \$8,500 for the completion of engineering plans for a clear span bridge to replace the antiquated culvert which is currently impeding fish passage. The Appalachian Mountain Club has offered expertise and in-kind materials and staff time to support the work. Funding to complete the project is being sought through an opportunity with Bass Pro.
- ATC's New England office hosted a Hazard Tree identification and assessment training in June in Vermont with 28 participants from USFS, NPS, state agencies, four trail clubs, ALDHA, and ATC staff. A Hazard Tree removal training using arborist rigging is being planned for later this fall.

Corridor Stewardship:

- ATC applied for and received an AmeriCorps NCCC team that will be working full time on boundary management in Massachusetts and Connecticut from October 27th - November 21st. Dan Hale will be leading the team during their 4 week visit.
- ATC Corridor staff have assisted with over 31 miles of boundary maintenance in the Mid-Atlantic thus far in 2019, including the maintenance of 530 monument locations. The fall 2019 field season is about to begin.
- 55 volunteers have signed up to use the Boundary Maintenance Reporting ArcGIS map. At the completion of the mapping project, all NPS exterior corridor surveys will be entered into the GIS data set and will be available for monitors tracking maintenance objectives. Approximately 1,000 monuments and survey points have been added to the map, over 150 control points have been collected in 2019 as a part of the mapping project.

ATC Lands

As a functional land trust, ATC will continue to comply with Land Trust Alliance standards for the 60+ easements and 27 fee tracts we hold.

- The 2019 annual monitoring for the 90 plus fee-owned and conservation easement lands held by ATC is nearing completion. We are on track for completing monitoring visits to 100% of these properties to insure compliance with the terms of the conservation easements and to detect possible encroachments into the fee properties.

ENGAGED PARTNERS

Cooperative Management

Volunteers and A.T. clubs are an integral part of the cooperative management of a nearly 2200 mile long trail. ATC works closely with A.T. clubs towards sustained capacity and attention to programs that protect all volunteers working on public lands. Good working relationships with all cooperative management partners – state and federal agencies, volunteers, and communities, is critical.

- Volunteer program staff provided support to other ATC conservation staff in the use of the new database to register participants and track accomplishments of crews, corporate work days, natural resources stewardship days, and other events.
- ATC posted over 120 volunteer opportunities, connected to 916 event registrations for ATC-hosted, club-hosted, and other partner-hosted events or activities since mid-March.
- For events specifically hosted by clubs, new registrations by people who provided a birthdate demonstrates that the age group with the highest number of registrations is 25-35, followed closely by the age group 36-54, then by people age 19-24.
- One club-member response to posting volunteer events to ATC's system: *"The thing works well. It generated new interest and opportunities to participate that never would have existed."*
- ATC staff are supporting Nantahala Hiking Club in their adoption of a new system for tracking volunteer hours and accomplishments.
- Staff facilitated online sessions for Sustainable Trail & Campsite Management, cooperative management sessions with APPA and ATC leadership, a club-resource group on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Trail Asset Inventory Roll-Out.
- Worked with the A.T. Saw Working Group to submit a waiver application to NPS for chainsaw operations.
- Relaunched [The Register](#) newsletter, centered on volunteer stewardship of the A.T. Since mid-July, there have been 130 new subscriptions, and open-rates are trending upward.
- Worked with Brendan Mysliwiec, ATC's Director for Federal Policy and Legislation to mobilize action by A.T. clubs in support of acts to fund deferred maintenance in National Parks and USDA Forest Service lands.
- Leanna Joyner attended the International Trails Symposium in April and presented at the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail-hosted Regional Trail Conference in May.
- Under the leadership and coordination of Agreements Taskforce Chair Trudy Phillips and APPA, new Job Hazard Analysis (JHAs) continue to be reviewed, finalized, and posted to ATC's volunteer safety webpage.
- ATC staff will be attending and presenting at the 38th Annual Gathering of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association (ALDHA) October 11-14 at Williams College in Williamstown, Mass.

Conservation Department Staffing Updates

The Conservation Department has continued to operate with an interim structure. We have been hosting regular calls and seeking feedback with staff and partners to evaluate the new approach.

Julie Judkins received the American Trails' International Symposium Award on behalf of ATC for her work with the Children's Forest Network in Georgia providing youth and education summits.

In June, Paige Gregory was hired as Regional Manager-Maine and Dan Hale was hired as Natural Resource and Land Stewardship Manager for New England. Paige and Dan are both based at ATC's leased office in Farmington, ME.

Andrew Downs was elected president of the Virginia Trails Alliance.

Brooks Mountcastle, ATC Environmental Specialist serving the Kittatinny Ridge and Delaware Water Gap areas of PA has accepted an offer for another job. This position is funded by grants from the William Penn Foundation and the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Evaluations are underway to determine the best strategy for managing this work going forward.

LEGISLATIVE & FEDERAL POLICY

The September work period was very full, with advocacy pertaining to three efforts in particular (the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund full-funding bill, and protection around sec. 401 of the Clean Water Act) taking up the bulk of direct lobbying and partnership time.

Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 was featured in both a briefing hosted by the Clean Water For All Coalition (Brendan secured the 401 speaker from a partner organization) and in a hearing before the Transportation and Infrastructure's Water Resources Subcommittee. 401, which as of the beginning of this Congress was a niche issue, has bubbled to the top of the conservation community's Clean Water Act defense strategizing. Brendan continues to coordinate with other conservation organizations, as well as with NGOs that represent domestic sovereigns as well as the states themselves (tribal outreach has been slower on the uptake). The EPA comment period for the proposed rule under 401 closes on October 21st, so Brendan will be in a mad dash for much of October coordinating technical comments, opposition letters, and beginning outreach to states on litigation strategy.

The *Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act* (ROPPLA) advocacy continued over much of September and included a hearing in the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry highlighting the Forest Service's deferred maintenance needs. Although the Ag hearing did not specifically address ROPPLA, ATC co-led a letter to the subcommittee requesting they support USFS' inclusion in the legislation when it comes up for a vote on final passage (nine of the 15 clubs with National Forest land in their service areas were able to sign onto this letter with less than 24-hours' notice). The path forward for ROPPLA is at this point tied to LWCF (below), so the October work period will include Brendan spending time in the Senate seeing how it may react to a series of legislative opportunities that may bring both bills to the northern side of the Capitol.

Brendan was welcomed by the Appalachian Mountain Club to join their *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)* fly-in targeting Pennsylvania Members. After five months of not being directly engaged on LWCF, the addition of crack intern Tom Derr to the Federal Policy team enabled ATC to engage at a higher level in that policy advocacy. LWCF received approximately half of its authorized funding in the Senate Interior-EPA appropriations bill (passed only out of committee as of this writing) and around \$160 million more in the House-passed version. As the chambers move to reconciling their legislation, ATC will advocate for the House levels until the full-funding bill is enacted (which we will continue to press for this Congress).

ATC has been blessed to have the addition of Strategic Communications intern *Tom Derr* in the month of September. Tom will be interning at ATC through December and brings a wealth of experience to the organization, including as a program manager for the Northwest Youth Conservation Corps and a trail

runner. Tom will be mostly focused on direct lobbying support and landscape conservation policy (including LWCF and heritage areas), but will also be exploring ways in which ATC can engage more actively in policy that supports volunteerism and stewardship.

Brendan is getting up to speed with the *Outdoor Alliance for Kids* and has begun coordinating the ATC side of *Hike the Hill*, which is currently scheduled for February 8-13, 2020, overlapping with *The Corps Network's Thrive Conference*, which is taking place February 9-12, 2020. Brendan will be coordinating closely with the Conservation staff, Julie and the Next Generation Council on these as Q4 gets underway.

The Supreme Court's October 2019 term is about to start, and a decision on whether to grant certiorari on the *Cowpasture* decision could come at any time. The October recess will include some reconnaissance on how fast and how hard Dominion et al. are pushing for a legislative fix.

CULTIVATE the NEXT GENERATION/ BROADER RELEVANCY

ATC will engage and connect to a younger and more inclusive audience to sustain future support for Trail stewardship and protection.

Youth Summits: The goal of youth summits is to provide an opportunity for youth to connect with public lands and public land stewardship as an initial step in a ladder of engagement towards longer-term volunteerism. The summits offer interactive experiences and partner connections to provide knowledge of public lands, trail stewardship, conservation, and outdoor recreation issues.

- All summits provide inspiration and connection to multiple partners for stewardship opportunities, and several include stipends for participants. The model began at the spring Next Generation Forest Ambassadors summit in Georgia this year. Participants used their stipends to create brochures, invite family and friends on camping trips and volunteer work trips on National Trails Day, petition their school for more outside time, and participate in trail crew programs.
- Everybody's Environment Emerging (E3) Leaders Summit took place over National Public Lands Day (Sept 27-29) at the new YMCA Camp Watia adjacent to the Trail. It included keynote speaker Blackalachian (Daniel White) and a service project on the Trail.
- A Maine Youth Trails Stewardship Coalition (MYTaSC) will hosted a summit Oct 11-13th and is being led by NextGen member Alivia Acosta. Massachusetts Youth (MY) Trail Summit will also be hosted on Oct 11-13th.

Next Generation Advisory Council: ATC's Next Generation Advisory Council provides valuable perspective and energy as ATC's considers strategies and projects to make volunteering and working at ATC more accessible to more diverse people.

- Next Gen Advisory Council accepted five new members: Deidra Goodwin, Lauren Wiggins, Yuri Owens, Brianna Johnson, and Melissa Guevara. Look for their pics and bios on ATC website soon. The Next Gen hosted its annual meeting is on Sept 12-14 in Georgia.
- NextGen Council members Michela Williams and Natriefia Miller participated in the PGM ONE conference in Philadelphia.
- NextGen Council members on a DEI task force supported a web forum with YDC and PCRC for clubs. This launched the first of quarterly web forums to encourage ongoing learning and troubleshooting for clubs to engage in.

- Because of the success of the first NextGen Forest Ambassadors youth summit in GA this year, USFS committed \$14,000 of support for 2020.

A.T. Communities:

- Round Hill, VA held a designation ceremony in conjunction with their A.T. Festival. A gubernatorial proclamation was received from the governor.
- Hot Springs Wild East tour and reception brought together close to 50 participants and community leaders to share stories and progress as an A.T. Community through history, interpretation, education, natural resources, and more. ATC leadership shared remarks on the opportunities with Wild East and ended the day with a reception for donors.

Expanding Access to Volunteer Opportunities:

- Latinx Partnership Coordinator Luz Lituma led ATC's first Latinx Trail Crew - a 3 day volunteer crew in Georgia as part of Latino Conservation Week.
- ATC led a Wild East Helen, GA day for 18 University of Georgia students from the Odum School of Ecology at the University of Georgia on May 18. ATC discussed their conservation, advocacy, and stewardship efforts at the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River. ATC and GATC led the group in trail maintenance at Dick's Creek Gap.
- The new affinity group, Wild East Women, launched a blog and instagram site. Over 7 women's work days are being planned in coordination with clubs in 2019.
- Staff participated in the NPS Park for Every Classroom workshop mid-August. The workshop brought 10 national park units together for continued learning to provide Place Based Service Learning education workshops. ATC continues to host education workshops for formal and non-formal educators, with a workshop expected for Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina in the coming year.
- REI is supporting the ATC affinity group, Wild East Women, to organize women's work days this year. Nine work trips are being co-planned with clubs and have already attracted new volunteers and stewards.
- ATC's National Outreach Coordinator developed materials for an REI display in its Asheville location.