

ATC for CMC eNews

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is a non-profit whose sole purpose is protection and management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) in cooperation with local A.T. volunteers and land-owning agencies. The A.T. is a unit of the National Park System, with acreage about the same as Rocky Mountain NP and visitation similar to Yosemite NP. Unlike those national parks, however, with a staff of hundreds, the NPS A.T. staff numbers about nine. The ATC has about 45 full-time staff and seasonal ridge runners and crew leaders. The difference is made up primarily by volunteers, most of whom are members of the ATC's federation of 30 A.T. maintaining clubs. In 2009, the A.T. was blessed with 6,803 volunteers, who contributed 220,565 hours. One hundred forty one Carolina Mountain Club A.T. volunteers contributed 3,922 hours.

Four full-time ATC employees and one seasonal work out of ATC's Southern Region office, located in Asheville. Our job is to facilitate the work of local A.T. volunteers by consulting with them on all aspects of A.T. maintenance, construction, management, and protection. We have coordinated, in cooperation with the USFS, an inventory of the whole CMC A.T. section to determine the best location for the A.T. and lands to be purchased to protect the route. This inventory, the Optimal Location Review, has resulted in numerous routing improvements and considerable land acquisition, including the \$40 million, 10,000-acre Rocky Fork Tract, Big Bald, Street Gap, Cold Spring Mountain, Big Rock Spring, Max Patch, and the 6,000-acre Gulf Tract.

ATC helps CMC lay out the A.T. relocations, helps train volunteers in trail construction and sawyer certifications and provides synergy for construction through the ATC Volunteer Konnarock Trail Crew, a program that brings professional trail crew leaders and volunteers from all over the world to CMC's A.T. section. ATC also works with CMC representatives to review, analyze, and mitigate USFS projects adjacent to the A.T., as well as USFS management plans affecting the A.T. viewshed. We coordinate balds management, invasive species eradication, rare species protection, community partner programs, and scientific inventories along the A.T. We provide funding for CMC A.T. projects by managing the NC A.T. license tag program, through private fund-raising, and through the NPS and USFS.

The A.T. would not exist without the continued year-round work of CMC volunteers. ATC's main role is to make their work as enjoyable and effective as possible.

To learn more about ATC or to join, visit www.appalachiantrail.org or contact Morgan Sommerville at 828-254-3708 or msommerville@appalachiantrail.org .