

Regional Conservation Organizations By [Ruth Hartzler](#) and [Marianne Newman](#)

As the CMC Conservation Committee studies and acts on issues impacting hiking in Western NC, we consult and work with many conservation and environmental organizations. Who, exactly, is who in this group? In this issue of the eNews, we'll introduce them. Then, in subsequent issues, representatives of these organizations will explain their work and goals in more detail. As you learn who's doing what, you may find one or more groups you want to affiliate with and/or support or whose work you want to follow. (At the very least, you'll know what the acronyms stand for.)

WNC conservation/environmental organizations with whom we work include the following:

Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is a volunteer-based organization dedicated to the preservation and management of the natural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources associated with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. It works to provide primitive outdoor-recreation and educational opportunities for Trail visitors in cooperation with its federation of 30 AT maintaining clubs. CMC is an AT trail-maintaining club. www.appalachiantrail.org

Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (CMLC) helps landowners protect local land and water resources vital to our natural heritage and quality of life. As a local nonprofit organization, CMLC is helping to create a regional network of protected farm, forest, park and natural lands. CMC leads hikes and maintains trails in the Florence Preserve, which CMLC protects. www.carolinamountain.org

Conservation Trust for North Carolina (CTNC) is a non-profit conservation organization that provides aid and services to the state's 24 local land trusts and works directly with willing landowners to protect their property, mainly along the Blue Ridge Parkway. It works with governments, agencies, local land trusts and other conservation groups. www.ctnc.org

Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, a regional land trust, works cooperatively with landowners and public and private conservation partners to preserve and protect important natural areas and open spaces of the Blue Ridge and Foothills region, including watersheds, environmentally significant habitats, forests and farmland in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Lincoln, McDowell and Rutherford Counties. CMC leads hikes and maintains trails in the Catawba Falls area, which the Foothills Conservancy helps protect. www.foothillsconservancy.org

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) preserves the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. TNC has protected more than 700,000 acres

across NC, including Grandfather Mt., Hickory Nut Gorge and Panthertown Valley. www.nature.org

North Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club advocates across the state for a clean, healthy North Carolina. Past issues range from ending hog waste pollution to protecting the integrity of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Local groups include the Western North Carolina (WENOCA) and Pisgah Groups. www.nc.sierraclub.org

Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition (SAFC) is a regional non-profit organization whose mission is to protect and restore the wildlands, waters, native forests and ecosystems of the Southern Appalachians. It is comprised of 21 conservation groups spanning Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. SAFC advocates for trail protection. www.safc.org

Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) is a land trust that works to conserve the unique plant and animal habitat, clean water, working farms, and scenic beauty of the mountains of North Carolina and east Tennessee. It forges and maintains conservation relationships with landowners and public agencies, owns and manages land, and works with communities to accomplish their conservation objectives. www.appalachian.org

Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) uses the power of the law to protect the environment and health of the Southeast. Working in all three branches of government, this non-profit organization shapes, implements, and enforces the laws and policies that determine the quality of the air, the water, and the landscapes and communities around us. SELC has worked hard to protect the North Shore area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. www.southernenvironment.org

Western North Carolina Alliance (WNCA) is a grassroots organization that promotes a sense of stewardship and caring for the natural environment. The Alliance's primary goal is to protect and to preserve our natural land, water and air resources through education and public participation in policy decisions at all levels of business and government. WNCA is active in protecting our national forests. www.wnca.org

The Wilderness Society (TWS) works to protect America's wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places as a thriving ecological community that is central to life itself. It provides scientific, economic, legal and policy guidance to land managers, communities, local conservation groups and state and federal decision-makers. www.wilderness.org

WildLaw is a nonprofit environmental law firm defending national forests, public lands, endangered species, and protection of waters, wetlands and coastal

areas. Its mission is to defend the environmental integrity of human and natural communities through education, administrative actions, community capacity building, and litigation. www.wildlaw.org

WildSouth is a non-profit grassroots organization headquartered in Asheville whose mission is to inspire and empower people to protect and restore the native ecosystems of the Southeast. It uses grassroots campaigns, advocacy and science to pursue these goals. www.wildsouth.org