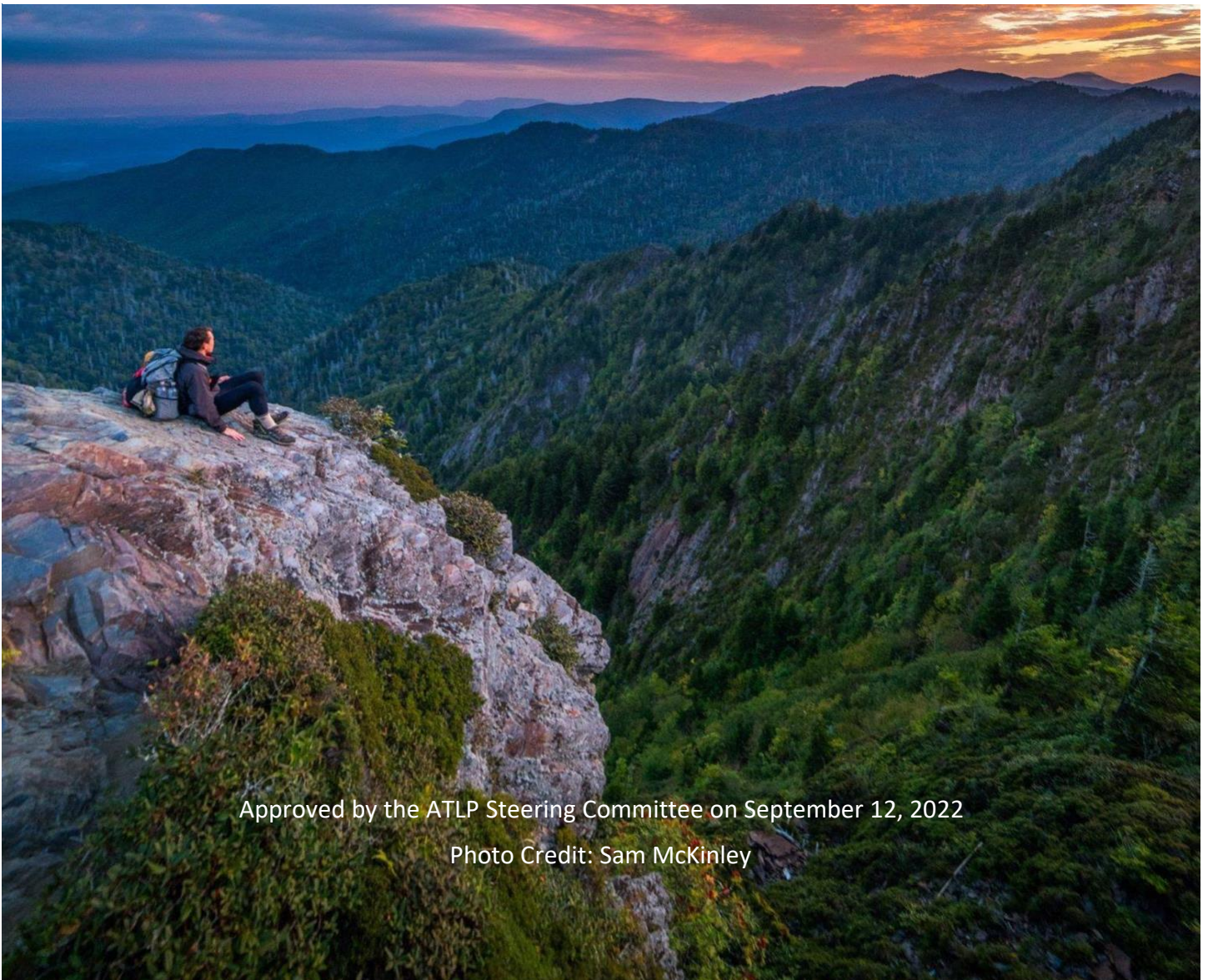




APPALACHIAN TRAIL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP CHARTER



Approved by the ATLP Steering Committee on September 12, 2022

Photo Credit: Sam McKinley

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Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership Charter

1.0 Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership Background & Purpose

1.1 Partnership History

The Appalachian Trail was first proposed by Benton MacKaye (1879-1975) in 1921. MacKaye, an American forester and conservationist, was seeking respite from the bustle of the urban sprawl creeping across the East Coast. He recognized that the Appalachian Mountains provided “a new approach to the problem of living,” providing opportunities not only for recreation, but also for health, recuperation, and connections with nature in an increasingly industrialized world.

In 1925, the first Appalachian Trail Conference was organized by MacKaye. In 1937, the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) was fully connected from Georgia to Maine. In 1968, the National Trails System Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, establishing the A.T. as a national scenic trail with federal protections as a unit of the National Park Service (NPS).

In 1981, the NPS completed a Comprehensive Management Plan for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The Plan states that NPS is responsible for the administration of the A.T. in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service. The Plan also establishes the framework of a “Cooperative Management System” for NPS to delegate some management responsibilities to the Appalachian Trail Conference, states, other private organizations, and individuals. In turn, the Conference works with trail clubs and volunteers to operate, develop and maintain portions of the Trail.

In 2005, the Appalachian Trail Conference became the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) to reflect the top priority of preserving the Trail corridor and its natural and cultural resources.

Today, the trail is protected, and you can walk from Georgia to Maine through the East Coast’s largest swaths of intact forest. As the dream of the Appalachian Trail is realized, threats to the integrity of the greater Appalachian Landscape make it apparent that developing and maintaining the footpath is not enough to ensure the longevity and richness of this enduring landscape. Greater effort must be taken to preserve the unique characteristics of this region that enhance the A.T. hiker’s wilderness experience and support countless human and wildlife communities.

To truly protect the footpath, the hiker experience, the connectivity of wild places and the wildlife that call the Appalachian Mountains home, we must expand our focus to the land and people that support the trail.

In December 2015, the ATC and NPS unit of Appalachian National Scenic Trail (APPA) co-hosted a workshop to launch the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership. The workshop, attended by nearly 70 conservation leaders from up and down the Trail, served to establish the foundation for partnership building; initiate the process to identify high-priority conservation areas; discuss

communication strategies that serve to build diversity and engagement among all partners, and consider strategies to access multiple public and private conservation funding sources.

The ATC and APPA formed the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership (ATLP) to enable an expanded network of partners to better protect and connect the mosaic of forests, fields, farms, parks, and trails that make up the A.T. landscape. Together with dozens of other organizations, agencies, and regional conservation networks, the ATLP seeks to support ever more effective, inclusive, and collaborative partnerships to address trends that cause major impacts on the Trail's viewsheds, soundscapes, ecological systems, public access to outdoor recreation and cultural resources.

The ATLP includes work on climate change mitigation, connecting with cultural and historic resources and ensuring the Trail is appealing to a wider and more diverse audience. The ATLP embodies a unique perspective of working from the Trail looking out across the A.T. landscape and from the perspective of local communities looking back across the landscape to the Trail.

1.2 The Case for Conserving the Appalachian Landscape

Conserving the A.T. landscape and the sources of life found within it — air, land, and water — sustains, protects, and enhances ecological integrity and the quality of life of humans.

This fact compels us to conserve the A.T. landscape's essential values:

Climate and Biodiversity:

- The impacts of climate change are being felt now across the entire A.T. ecosystem, which includes people and our communities. A connected and conserved landscape increases adaptability and resilience to the impacts of climate change. The A.T. landscape forms the foundation of the largest climate-resilient corridor in one of the most densely populated parts of the United States. If protected, its rich biodiversity will help safeguard critical ecosystem benefits like clean air and clean water for generations to come.

Natural Beauty:

- The A.T. landscape is home to majestic natural beauty that motivates people to connect with nature. Threats to natural beauty - from light pollution impacting night skies, to extensive forest degradation by non-native pests and invasive species, to poorly planned development impacting connectivity, habitats, and vistas — require urgent action.

Outdoor Recreation and Equitable Public Access:

- Access to the outdoors is a human right. Conserving the A.T. landscape can and should make outdoor recreation more broadly accessible and equitable, including opportunities to connect with ourselves, history, culture, scenic beauty, and nature.

1.3 Partnership Mission

The Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership's mission is to connect the wild, scenic, and cultural wonders of the Appalachian Trail and its surrounding landscape.

1.4 Partnership Vision

The Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership envisions an Appalachian Trail and surrounding landscape that connect people of diverse communities and nature, forever safeguarding the backbone and heart of the Wild East.

1.5 Goals & Strategies

ATLP's goals and strategies are outlined in more detail in our Three-Year Strategic Plan. The Plan can be found under *Resources for Partners* on the Landscape Conservation page of ATC's website or by clicking the following link: https://appalachiantrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ATLP_Strategic_Plan_2022_2024.pdf

ATLP's first Strategic Plan was released in 2022. It was developed to build on ATLP's prior success and focus current efforts to sustain and grow the Partnership. The Plan is a broadly owned strategic roadmap that articulates the mission, vision, and values of ATLP as well as four strategic goals with corresponding tactics and milestones for measuring ATLP's progress. The Strategic Plan builds on the established functions of the Partnership to drive further collective impact as the largest landscape conservation collaborative on the East Coast.

Goal 1: Accelerate the pace and scale of strategic conservation by working with our partners to protect 100,000 acres of high-priority lands between 2022-2024.

Goal 2: Engage active participation by elevating the recognition of the Appalachian Trail Landscape as the backbone of an East Coast Climate Corridor

Goal 3: Ensure an equitable landscape by working with our partners alongside Appalachian communities to understand the values and needs of those who live, work, and play in this important area

Goal 4: Create a diverse partnership by assessing our governance and functions and taking necessary steps to build a more active and inclusive partnership.

2.0 Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership Structure & Function

2.1 Organizational Framework

The Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership is comprised of partners, Steering Committee members, co-conveners, and coordinators. Our work is accomplished through consensus decision-making, committees, and regular convening of the Steering Committee and Coordinating Committee.

The Coordinating Committee is a small, agile group of dedicated partners that guide the Partnership, undertake the function of nominating new Steering Committee members and address matters that arise between Steering Committee meetings. The purpose of the Coordinating Committee is to support the Steering Committee, develop strategies to

implement the Strategic Plan, expand capacity to achieve conservation goals, and ensure the sustained function of the Partnership (see Section 2.4.1).

Our work is further advanced by individual partner organizations of our Partnership who carry our mission forward and implement land conservation in the field. By leveraging our combined resources and expertise, we can achieve our conservation goals at a faster pace and larger scale than could be accomplished by the efforts of any one organization working independently.

All entities working on land conservation along and aside the Appalachian Trail, and those interested in advancing our mission, are invited to join ATLP as a partner. Partners engage in the work of ATLP through annual meetings, workshops, and committees. Our partners are engaged in their community of place and/or community of practice and assist in implementing ATLP's mission by catalyzing local action driven by community priorities across the Appalachian Landscape.

The ATLP operates informally and is not incorporated. ATLP partners retain their identity and autonomy. Participation is voluntary and reflects a cooperative commitment by members to work together to support our collective goals as a partnership.

2.2 Steering Committee Purpose

The ATLP Steering Committee represents ATLP in the Appalachian community and broader conservation world by advancing landscape-scale conservation of the Appalachian Trail and its surrounding landscape. The committee strives to be a representative microcosm of the trail-wide landscape with diversity across individuals, professional backgrounds, geography, and projects.

The diversity in the scale of our partners provides a unique opportunity to share information and resources among large, national partners and small, local partners. The diversity in the scale of our projects allows us to conserve large parcels with thousands of acres and small parcels with distinct features such as nesting habitat for an endangered migratory birds or sensitive wetlands.

The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives of partner organizations with specific expertise in land conservation or specific interest in the Appalachian Landscape. New Steering Committee members are nominated by the Coordinating Committee and approved by the Steering Committee. There are around 20 members representing partner organizations on the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee guides the Partnership through consensus decision-making on matters that determine the overall direction and strategy of ATLP. Specifically, the Committee is tasked with:

- Approving new members nominated by the Coordinating Committee
- Suggesting agenda items for Steering Committee Meetings and the Annual Meeting
- Assisting the Coordinating Committee in Annual Meeting planning

- Guiding iterative updates of the Strategic Plan and tracking progress towards implementation
- Identifying and selecting committee chairs, informing committee work plans, and addressing committee recommendations presented to the Steering Committee for approval
- Strategizing how to coordinate the many resources provided by partners to ensure all partners are equipped with the tools they need to be successful

The Steering Committee works to advance implementation of the Strategic Plan through committees chaired by Steering Committee members and others. Qualified and available members are encouraged to lead or participate on committees.

The Steering Committee convenes at least three times per year. A one-day to one-and-a-half day in person meeting is held in mid-to-late spring. A virtual Steering Committee meeting is held in late summer to early fall. The Annual Meeting brings all ATLP partners together in person in the winter or at another time determined by the Steering Committee. There is an opportunity to convene the Steering Committee in-person during the Annual Meeting, at the Committee's discretion.

2.3 Consensus Decision Making

Steering Committee members meet regularly to share information, brainstorm ideas, receive committee updates, and review recommendations. Decisions are made by consensus. Consensus is reached when each partner organization present at a meeting either supports a position or has a neutral stance.

When consensus cannot be reached, the group may choose from two options. For items that are not time-sensitive, the decision can be tabled until the next meeting, at which point it will be re-discussed. When an item is tabled, the coordinator(s) will work with individual Steering Committee members to bring the group into consensus before the next regularly scheduled meeting.

When decisions are time-sensitive and consensus cannot be reached, or if a recommendation has been discussed at two previous Steering Committee meetings without resolution, a super-majority vote will prevail if two-thirds of the partners in attendance vote for a decision.

Each organization has one vote regardless of how many representatives are at a meeting. An organization does not receive a vote if they are not in attendance at the meeting.

2.4 Standing & Ad-Hoc Committees

The ATLP Strategic Plan is implemented and tracked through committees. These groups are chaired by ATLP Steering Committee members who have the technical expertise and time available to coordinate the members and address the purpose the group was convened around. Committees are strongly encouraged to select a non-Steering Committee member to co-chair

the committee to foster future leaders and provide the committee chair support. All partners are invited to participate in Partnership committees.

Standing Committees are considered a permanent part of ATLP's structure. They are charged with performing functions that are essential to the continued success of the Partnership. Members of a standing committee change as needed, but the purpose of the committee and its duties remain the same.

Ad-hoc committees are typically convened for one of two short-term purposes: to investigate a topic or to carry out an action that has been adopted. These committees should not be created to do work that is within the designated function of a standing committee. The committee disbands after the delivery of a final report to the Steering Committee. Because of the short-term nature of ad-hoc committees, it is important that the members remain the same throughout the period of convening. An example of an ad-hoc committee is the 2022 Strategy Team that convened to discuss the need for implementing the Coordinating Committee.

Working groups are a sub-committee of a standing or ad-hoc committee. They are implemented by a committee chair to work on a particular project related to the committee's purpose. An example of a possible working group is a subset of the Communications Committee that develops an outreach strategy for the Climate Action Group Report.

2.4.1 Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee was convened as an implementation action in support of the 2022-2024 ATLP Strategic Plan, Goal 4, Tactic 1 which calls for the establishment of an executive committee within ATLP. The committee is a small, agile group of dedicated partners that guide the Partnership and address matters that arise between Steering Committee meetings. The purpose of the Coordinating Committee is to develop strategies to implement the Strategic Plan, expand our capacity to achieve conservation goals and ensure the sustained function of the Partnership.

The Coordinating Committee is comprised of the designated Appalachian Trail Conservancy and NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail representatives (*see Section 3.2*) and 3 other Steering Committee members. All Coordinating Committee members have specific expertise in land conservation and/or the Appalachian Landscape and have a vested interest in the success of equitable, place-based conservation.

Members have the time and resource capacity to commit to regular convenings, at least quarterly. Ideally, our mutual goals will allow committee members to incorporate their work with the ATLP Coordinating Committee into their work plan for their partner organization.

Coordinating Committee members are appointed by the Steering Committee during regularly scheduled Steering Committee meetings and are asked to serve a 3-year term, which can be renewed. Coordinating Committee members' terms should be staggered. The Coordinating Committee makes decisions through the consensus decision-making process described above.

Specific duties of the Coordinating Committee include:

- Focus on the overall progress of the Partnership and strategies to implement the Strategic Plan
- Identify opportunities and challenges related to partnership engagement and governance, funding and resource needs, and resolution of matters that arise between Steering Committee meetings
- Support all efforts of the coordinators, including but not limited to, meeting agenda review, funding proposal review, communications review, and ongoing understanding of the Partnership funding resources and projects
- Identify and recommend new Steering Committee members (nomination function described below)
- Assist the coordinators and other Steering Committee members with Annual Meeting planning
- Convene a working group to identify Strategic Plan updates and propose recommended updates to the Steering Committee for approval
- Approve the allocation of funding from a partner organization to ATC for ATLP coordinators to conduct activities that implement the Strategic Plan

As the Partnership grows and membership is more representative of the trail-wide landscape, this group may decide to reconfigure the committee to elevate geographic representation. This reconfiguration will allow the Partnership to highlight the unique challenges and opportunities that exist across the A.T. Landscape and ensure that messaging and communications materials are tailored to the needs of regional communities.

2.4.1a Nominations Function of the Coordinating Committee

An essential function of the Coordinating Committee is to identify and recommend new members for the Steering Committee. Steering Committee seats are filled as they are vacated to keep the Steering Committee around 20 members. Representatives of the Coordinating Committee, with assistance from the ATLP coordinators, use their knowledge of existing conservation efforts in the A.T. Landscape to identify potential new Steering Committee members and field Steering Committee member inquiries from potential partner organizations.

Once a relationship has been established and interest to participate on the Steering Committee has been confirmed, a prospective Steering Committee member is included in a nominations packet with other prospective members. The nominations packet is shared with current Steering Committee members to review before regularly scheduled Steering Committee meetings. New Steering Committee members are approved by the Steering Committee.

New representatives from existing partner organizations currently serving on the Steering Committee can be approved by the Coordinating Committee. All new Steering Committee members are provided an orientation with the Partnership manager and, if possible, the Coordinating Committee representative they communicated with, to ensure they understand our mission and purpose, and to share the location of Partnership guidance materials.

2.4.2 Strategic Conservation Committee

The Strategic Conservation Committee undertakes an iterative and evolving process to develop strategic landscape-scale and place-based conservation goals and strategies that will provide the ATLP with priorities for the conservation, restoration, and protection of the A.T. Landscape. The strategies they propose advance ATLP's mission and vision within the context of pressing landscape-scale challenges, such as climate change, and local community needs. The committee is grounded in the best available science, shared values of the Partnership, and shared goals of the landscape's communities.

2.4.3 Communications Committee

ATLP's Communications Committee develops a communication framework to address the communication needs of the ATLP. They oversee the collection of communication data and development of messaging needs to enhance internal and external communications. The committee strives to better articulate, inspire, and drive action of ATLP and create broader relevance of A.T. Landscape conservation to diverse audiences.

3.0 Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership Roles & Expectations

3.1 Steering Committee Member Role & Expectations

The Steering Committee works to create a shared conservation vision with strategic goals and a roadmap for achieving them. Individual members advance the mission of the ATLP within their member organizations and with their partners. Members share successes and opportunities with the Partnership, identify and recruit new partner organizations and participate on committees.

Steering Committee Members agree to:

- Serve for at least two years
- Attend all virtual and in-person Steering Committee gatherings
- Respond to communications from the coordinators in a timely manner and communicate remotely between Steering Committee meetings to advance ATLP's mission
- Prepare for and actively participate in regularly scheduled ATLP meetings
- Participate in consensus decision-making to approve recommendations from committees
- Participate in the review, approval and update of Partnership guidance documents and strategic plans
- Provide guidance formulating ATLP's implementation strategy
- Provide guidance and assistance, as welcome, to identify and implement landscape conservation initiatives

3.2 Co-convenor Role & Expectations

The ATLP is co-convened by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail (APPA). The co-convening organizations support ATLP with coordinating

capacity in the form of staff and financial resources. Although in a leadership position, the co-conveners have the same decision-making power as other Coordinating Committee members on the strategic direction of the Partnership.

Up to two staff members from ATC and up to two staff members from APPA serve ATLP at the discretion of the ATC Chief Executive Officer and APPA Superintendent, respectively.

Currently, the ATC serves as the nonprofit organization that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services to help build the capacity of ATLP coordination and projects. As such, financial resources for the Partnership, as directed by the Steering Committee and Coordinating Committee, will be held by ATC unless an alternative sponsor is mutually agreed upon by the Coordinating Committee.

3.3 Coordinator Roles & Expectations

The ATLP maintains a full-time partnership manager to advance the functionality and effectiveness of the Partnership. Currently, the ATLP is coordinated by ATC's Landscape Partnership Manager with assistance from the Director of Landscape Conservation and the Landscape Conservation Program Assistant.

The ATLP coordinator(s) are not members of the Steering Committee and do not get a vote during consensus decision-making.

3.3.1 Landscape Partnership Manager

The Partnership's Manager performs the day-to-day management and operation of the Partnership. Together with the Steering Committee, Coordinating Committee, and other Partnership committees, the Manager is responsible for facilitating support for and implementing the decisions of the Partnership. The Manager has three primary responsibilities:

Partnership cultivation and development:

- Track and promote membership in ATLP
- Maintain partner relationships
- Coordinate work with partners on special projects
- Participate in other regional conservation partnership meetings when appropriate

Implementation of internal and external communications within the Partnership and across the A.T. Landscape:

- Work with the Communications Committee, ATLP coordinators and ATC Advancement to develop and share strategic communications with ATLP partners, the Steering Committee and others to:
 - Promote the values of the A.T. Landscape internally and externally
 - Produce and design communication materials
- Build and maintain content on the ATC website, social media content and a monthly eNews
- Produce promotional and informational materials for fundraising, publications, press releases, and public outreach

Advancement of ATLP programs and strategic initiatives:

- Support the work of the ATLP Steering Committee
- Work closely with the Coordinating Committee and the facilitator to facilitate meetings, coordinate meeting communication, and execute delivery of ATLP steering committee meetings, ATLP committee meetings, and other meetings as needed
- Develop and implement the necessary systems to track progress related to Strategic Plan implementation and iterative plan updates
- Participate in the development and advancement of the A.T. landscape as an internationally recognized climate corridor
- Coordinate the planning and execution of the ATLP Annual Meeting inclusive of all venue logistics, funding requirements, and agenda setting
- Provide staff support to committees within the ATLP and attend committee meetings when appropriate

3.3.2 Director of Landscape Conservation

The Director of Landscape Conservation is the leader of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Landscape Conservation Program. The Director oversees ATC's landscape conservation vision and its implementation across the 14 states that the Appalachian Trail traverses. They lead a team that develops and implements conservation strategies, including cultivating leadership for the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership. The Director works with the Manager to build networks that inspire support from an array of external partners and funders.

3.3.3 Landscape Conservation Program Assistant

The Landscape Conservation Program Assistant supports ATLP's strategic initiatives and assists with all functions of ATLP. The Program Assistant implements and assists with a wide array of programmatic needs including strategic communication, grant administration and writing, administrative support, and special project development.

ATLP Assistance:

- Assist with logistics and execution of the ATLP Annual Meeting, Steering Committee Meetings, and committee meetings
- Provide support for or lead the development of strategic communication materials including the ATLP eNews, social media content, press releases and website content for promotional, educational, and informational uses
- Assist with the development and maintenance of pertinent Partnership records including membership lists, work plans, contracts, grant tracking, project tracking and meeting notes

In addition to supporting the ATLP, the Landscape Conservation Program Assistant coordinates the Northern Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership and manages the Wild East Action Fund.

3.4 Facilitator Role & Expectations

Professional facilitation services are currently sponsored by a co-convening organization of ATLP. A facilitator may help lead the Partnership through organizational growth, stakeholder consensus-building, conservation goal-setting, and strategic plan development and implementation.

The main responsibilities of a facilitator are agenda setting support and meeting facilitation for Steering Committee meetings, the ATLP Annual Meeting and other in-person and remote meetings organized by ATLP. The facilitator may participate in meetings with the coordinators, Coordinating Committee and Steering Committee as appropriate. The facilitator may participate in select committee meetings based on capacity and remaining contract funding. ATLP facilitators are not a member of the Steering Committee and do not get a vote during consensus decision-making.

Professional facilitation services are an optional role provided by a co-convening organization. Future decisions made on retaining or releasing these services are determined by the Coordinating Committee and approved by the Steering Committee. Since no partner organization can be made to take any action on behalf of ATLP, if the partner providing these services does not wish to continue doing so, alternative funding must be identified and agreed upon by the Steering Committee to retain a professional facilitator.

Appendix A: Graphic Structure of the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

- 😊 Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- 😊 NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- 👤 ATLP Steering Committee Member
- 🟢 ATLP Partner

