

# Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership

## Thinking Locally: Regional Perspectives on Community-Driven Conservation in the Appalachian Landscape

July 19, 2022 | Final Virtual Learning Session Materials

### Helpful Links

ATLP Three-Year Strategic Plan

- [https://appalachiantrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ATLP\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2022\\_2024.pdf](https://appalachiantrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ATLP_Strategic_Plan_2022_2024.pdf)

Wild East Action Fund Information

- <https://appalachiantrail.org/our-work/conservation/landscape/wild-east-action-fund/>

Virtual Session 2 Registration

- <https://appalachiantrail.org/event/appalachian-trail-landscape-partnership-2022-all-partner-virtual-session-2/>
- September 22 from 10:00-12:00 EST

Resource Links from Presentations:

- Pennsylvania Department of Cultural and Natural Resources:
  - <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Recreation/DirectorOutdoorRec/Pages/default.aspx>
  - PA Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
    - <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Recreation/PAOutdoorRecPlan/Documents/PASCORP2020-2024.pdf>
- Nikwasi Initiative
  - <https://www.nikwasi-initiative.org>
- Appalachian Mountain Club
  - <https://www.outdoors.org>

- Access Trails, Parks, and Green Spaces in Springfield, MA (GIS Map):  
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/85aae29231f442f790a91350104621cd>

ATLP's Landscape Conservation webpage

- <https://appalachiantrail.org/our-work/conservation/landscape/>

Beyond the Boundary – ATLP eNews

- <https://appalachiantrail.us2.list-manage.com/subscribe/post?u=64f18e8ab0289e37511640181&id=70c5b18297>

ATLP email

- [Atlp@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:Atlp@appalachiantrail.org)

## **Breakout Room Feedback**

**From your experience, what are the ways community priorities for conservation are identified/determined? Who is engaged? Who is missing?**

- 001 More **local elected need** to be invited, listened to and partnered with.
- 002 Folks that are engaged are a subset of the community that are really **engaged in public access to outdoor recreation**
- 003 **Local land trust** has strategic priority maps. Reviewed by volunteer lands committee.
- 004 Who is missing? **Black and brown folks**, those that do not seek outdoor recreation as a passion.  
Need to develop relationships with **local elected officials, state legislatures** to elevate conservation projects that demonstrate community needs and values.
- 005 **Town committees and residents** are about to update a plan that would affect these decisions.

006 Need to expand beyond outdoor recreation users - and think of the **private landowners/working lands** as the potential footprint for expanding the sector and could bring substantial resources that would protect and steward those resources

007 Conservation organizations embedded in communities for a long time, working with landowners, advancing conservation projects.

**Engage land use and land conservation staff from local communities.**

Do a **collaborative needs assessment** with local community.

**Green infrastructure planning** at regional level.

**Strategic planning to develop GIS layers for conservation priorities.**

Engage **local soil and water staff** to connect to key community members.

008 **Federal government priorities for funding.**

Classic bands of grassroots citizens.

Existing special interest groups.

Hearing the voices of what people are saying - listening.

009 I secure funding for ATC and APPA to create information tools and to do work. Does not seem to be many opportunity to integrate local community priorities in this work.

010 **Community created scenic locales study** was created and is a layer in conservation priority mapping.

011 Think about how communities beyond the Trail connection that can be incredibly important to conservation connections and outdoor rec networks. Into the "realm"

012 In SC Pennsylvania, **the missing side is the average resident**. They are not really engaged in expressing their expectations and wants for the future.

013 PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED

Special Interest groups develop in response to a threat or perceived threat to the natural resources or landscape vision.

**Public forums and town halls.**

**Comprehensive planning efforts** (municipal or county level).

**Local outdoor recreation groups** are a liason for commercial **outdoor recreation partners.**

WHO IS ENGAGED?

Conservation groups/stakeholders.

Outdoor rec enthusiasts.

WHO IS MIXING?

A representation of the local community demographics.

**Vulnerable populations that would highly benefit the multi-facted health benefits. (for example, recovering drug/alcohol addiction, PTSD, chronic illness).**

**Those who have safety concerns** that limit them from engaging rec.

014 **Missing: Native, immigrant, minority communities.**

015 **Under-resourced communities**, community needs (economic development, family experiences), how communities identify themselves (let the community decide what their priorities are). our Our orgs/agencies need to learn how to better build trust with oppressed communities.

016 Partnerships form to identify priorities between non-profits, local groups, local government. Local groups are key to keep community involved in process. Potential for missing groups within user groups that are coming to outdoors but may not have access to direct involvement. Local groups can serve to meet this gap.

017 Natives. Seems to be difficult for traditional land trust approach to align with Tribal Government in process and timeline.

018 Missing:

**Young people**

People from every sector.

What are the physical barriers?

What are the psychological barriers?

019 Who is engaged in SC PA county planning: **influencers** who are invited to the table by county planning departments and municipal supervisors.

020 Look at demographic data in communities to understand how to implement outreach and who to reach out to.

021 - Hikers tend not to be biggest advocates; foresters/farmers tend to be good advocates

- **Framed as what like about the place you live/work and what are concerns**

- **Meeting people and asking what they care about (not raising conservation)**

- Beginning to build relationships with Indigenous communities; standardizing land acknowledgements within region

- Bringing together **trail maintaining clubs, community conservation groups**

- Engaging **town boards and planning boards, conservation advisory groups**

- **Not about a transactional relationship;** how we can be a part of what other orgs/issues are working on

022 **Missing: Those with physical disabilities.** Whether permanent to temporary.

023 Tendency to always invite the same organizations.

Look for the quiet voice in the room.

People who are overweight or out of shape that could benefit from the AT.

- 024 **The federal allocation of funding provides significant focus for what programs are initiated and focused.** The typical roles are invited and engaged. Who is missing varies but it is an essential question at the start of any initiative **“who is affected or influenced that is not here?”**.

## How can the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership support partners in implementing conservation driven by community priorities?

- 001 Better access to **matching resources**. Peter
- 002 Round tables that take place with no predetermined agenda.
- 003 **NEED: Community matching \$\$** for federal/state conservation programs (NFWF) - is there a role for ATLP to support relief and get more communities access to those funds
- 004 Provide **mini-grants** that fund partners to engage focus groups.  
*Engaging with focus groups outside standard engagement groups that represent aging populations, mental health & substance abuse recovery, chronic illness therapy, low income, transportation services, people of color).*
- 005 Find out who the **local influencers** are and work with them.  
Make sure AT groups are seen as broad in mission.  
Request proposals that are open ended, more than predetermined.  
What is the community's relationship with the AT? (Is there crime associated with it, do they know it is nearby, etc.)
- 006 **NEED: Can ATLP support engaging community engagement in forest planning, rec planning by state and federal entities** - communities usually strapped for time and capacity
- 007 Work to solve the problems or the perspectives that are presented.
- 008 Outreach, continue with community liaison help, awareness of available help (through grants/funds and NGOs), **identifying similar orgs within states and communities.**
- 009 Funding opportunities for conservation projects within the region is key to supporting this effort. **Establishing community priorities as a requirement for funding can tie these two activities together.** Grant can provide

guidance for how to gain this buy in within local community. ATLP can continue to collaborate with key partners to expand community conservation awareness.

- 010 Education - ATLP needs to educate on community conservation program - community forestry, grant writing, breaking down barriers
- 011 Providing engage groups in the landscape to help foster appreciation and advocacy & opening conversations to understand barriers to engagement.
- 012 **Wild East Action fund** for community planning/ conservation planning.  
**Host programs/networking in specific geographic regions.**  
**Sharing information, training, success stories.**
- 013 NPS ANST unit **leverage relationship with other NPS programs like the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance** program to provide soft skills, facilitate, or project planning for communities
- 014 - **Convening role** (e.g., help bring trail maintenance communities and community-based orgs together)
  - Understanding roles - what Partnership does on daily basis (beyond newsletter and events)
  - **Wild East funding** great
- 015 Need help getting beyond a small group of people (enlarging the circle) already involved in community conservation planning and actions.
- 016 Meet with leaders of groups ie pastor of church serving underserved peoples
- 017 **Facilitation support.**
- 018 Request for proposals to communities of how they visualize a local conservation project that could partner with ATLP to gain info on what local communities are prioritizing—and getting them to think locally about what might be possible.  
  
Review how information is disseminated and received. Who are we sending information and invitations to? Who are we not including?  
  
finding pockets of organization within communities eg. a church group, scouting, hiking club and invite them into the conversation (including people who we are not seeing on the trail).
- 019 People don't know if they can trust you. Trust is huge. It is a difficult barrier.
- 020 **Be prepared to do what's asked of you, even if it is not what you expected to do**
- 021 **Make sure to give back**

- 022 highlighting that good planning goes out of its way to engaged all residents in identifying conservation priorities. It's all about what we want for the future of our land and our families and communities.
- 023 **Advocate for LWCF funding** - projects across the landscape that are advanced by ATLP organizations.
- 024 **Bring USFWS, USFS into priority AT Landscapes** to support with federal partnership engagement - **look at overlapping efforts like Friends of the Conti and the Chesapeake Bay** to elevate AT landscape opportunities
- 025 The ATLP wants and needs to reach out beyond hikers at the community level to expand support for the trail, both to promote the value of the A.T experience and the need to manage effectively the growing number of hikers.

### **What is missing/needed for you and/or your organization to implement equitable, place-based conservation that is driven by community priorities?**

- 001 **Story maps, case examples written from the perspective of community members**
- 002 **Time to build relationships** to eliminate transactional experiences and meet at real partnerships
- 003 **Consistent community connection.** For example, there are benefits to working remotely, but it really takes out the social/humanness aspect that is so important to creating long-term relationships. Plus, **recognizing that we need to listen more and talk less** - this is more so in reference to established conservation organizations that can sometimes dominate a space (whether intentionally or not).
- 004 Most organizations need **Boards of Directors** who are creative and risk tolerant.
- 005 **Additional funding, technical support for DEI work**



## Word Cloud

What is one thing that must be present for community driven conservation to be successful?

