

**MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING FOR THE
APPALACHIAN NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL BETWEEN THE MOUNT ROGERS
APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB
AND THE
APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is an agreement between the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club (MRATC). This MOU replaces any prior MOUs between the Parties for the management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Any prior MOU is terminated once each Party has signed this MOU.

I. Purpose. The purpose of this MOU is to set forth the understanding and mutual agreement of the Parties regarding the working relationship between them for activities that affect or involve the A.T. Through this signed agreement the ATC hereby confirms, and the Club hereby acknowledges, the Club's authority and responsibility for the management of the A.T. and related facilities as delineated between the Tennessee/Virginia state line and the South Fork of the Holston (Rte. 670, Teas, VA). This MOU formalizes the Parties' respective responsibilities for the management of the Trail for that section, as described below.

II. Background. The A.T. is a way, continuous from Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia, for travel on foot through the wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. The Trail was conceived in 1921 and was initially completed in 1937. Since 1925 the ATC has worked with clubs, and fostered the development of new clubs, to create and maintain the A.T. This partnership evolved into a federation of clubs, coordinated by the ATC, towards the common goal of perpetuating and protecting the A.T. Together, the ATC and the clubs have constructed, preserved, maintained, and managed the A.T. and played a leadership role in defining policies and practices to ensure its proper protection and care.

In 1968, the National Trails System Act designated the A.T. as a National Scenic Trail and gave overall responsibility for the A.T. to the United States Secretary of the Interior. The A.T. is administered by the National Park Service, a unit of the United States Department of the Interior (NPS), in consultation with the United States Forest Service, a unit of the United States Department of Agriculture, and in cooperation with State agencies through whose lands the A.T. passes. The NPS and the ATC retain a Cooperative Agreement that renews the shared commitment to preserve

the A.T. and keep it open to the public. The Agreement outlines the responsibilities each Party commits to perform, including: volunteer administration and capacity building; facilities and treadway management; interpretation, education and outreach; resource management; visitor use and resource protection; with all the above relying on the foundation of effective communication and collaboration through the unique A.T. Cooperative Management System.

Today, 30 volunteer-based clubs maintain their ATC-assigned sections of the A.T. from Georgia to Maine. Remarkably stable over the years, these clubs are the “institutional memory” of the Trail, able to recollect and act on lessons learned from long experience. They are also the bedrock upon which the creation and continuing maintenance and stewardship of the A.T. have been based for more than eight decades. Run by people who are dedicated to the outdoors and to the perpetuation of the Trail as a volunteer-based enterprise, the clubs represent a built-in constituency that carries out basic construction, maintenance, and marking of the Trail and associated structures; implements other land-management programs related to the A.T. and surrounding lands and resources; and tackles critical Trail priorities and combats threats to the A.T. This MOU acknowledges that the overall strength of the federation of A.T. clubs depends on the important role each individual Club plays, with support from the ATC and in cooperation with agency partners, to ensure that the A.T. is managed to standards for a National Scenic Trail now and into the future.

Brief note about MRATC’s history and structure:

The Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club was formed in 1960 and was given maintenance responsibility by the ATC for the trail in Washington, Grayson, and part of Smyth counties in Southwest Virginia. The club’s current maintenance responsibility extends from the TN/VA state line south of Damascus north to the South Fork of the Holston bridge (Rte. 670), in Teas, VA.

The club began a new leadership structure in 2018, consisting of a five-person Steering Committee (Trails, Natural Resources, Outreach, Club Activities, and ATC RPC Representative), plus a Secretary and Treasurer and Board members at large. All are elected by the club’s membership. In addition, there are several Task Coordinators (including newsletter, website and membership).

III. Cooperative Management System. The A.T. Cooperative Management System is based on a commitment to cooperation, consultation, and collaboration by all partners. The unique framework of the cooperative management system assures involvement in the management of the Trail from clubs, land managers, and the ATC, optimized by regular communications on all matters affecting the Trail. The Regional Partnership Committees (RPCs) are one facet of the Cooperative Management System, whereby club representatives to their RPCs serve as the working groups to identify and resolve issues concerning the A.T. and advise ATC regional directors on Trail management issues. RPCs serve as a forum to review, discuss, and make recommendations on proposed policies to the ATC’s Stewardship Council. This Council, which includes club representation, oversees policy development and programs related to the stewardship of the A.T. and surrounding lands. This is the key body that advises the ATC’s conservation program on overall

strategic direction and recommends policy to the Board of Directors for consideration. The ATC's Board of Directors is responsible for approving policy and strategic direction. Regular communications among local management partners, including the local club, land management agencies, and the ATC's regional offices, are a vital component of the Cooperative Management System.

IV. ATC Responsibilities. The ATC will regularly provide the Club with information on laws, regulations, and Federal or State agency policies with which the Club must comply, and regularly communicate ATC policies, A.T. standards, and local management planning procedures to the Club. The ATC's responsibilities include:

A. Trail and Facilities Management:

- Develop and publish policies and standards to ensure that the Trail meets National Scenic Trail standards.
- Advise in the planning, design, construction, management, and/or maintenance of the A.T. assets in cooperation with agency partners and with the Club, in accordance with ATC's current published standards.
- Provide necessary training to the Club and its volunteers to ensure skills to meet trail management standards.
- Conduct condition assessments of A.T. assets on a periodic cycle and work cooperatively with the Club to develop plans and identify resources to address needed improvements.

B. Manage, monitor, and maintain the boundaries of A.T. Corridor Lands acquired by the NPS and ATC owned lands.

C. Manage and monitor the A.T.'s natural and cultural resources.

D. Offer visitor information and education programs that reach diverse audiences to promote an understanding of trail resources and trail safety.

E. Offer opportunities to volunteer and support Trail stewardship and protection.

F. In consultation with the Club, review and revise documents and agreements that describe the relationship of all A.T. management partners, including MOUs, Local Management Plans (LMPs), and delegation agreements. The ATC will collaborate with the Club to reach mutual agreement on any revisions to agreements impacting the Club.

G. Provide necessary training to the Club and volunteers to support the Club's development and ensure skills and capacity to meet the Club's responsibilities.

H. Assist with obtaining funds for significant improvements and maintenance of the Trail, and to facilitate the work of the Club. This includes facilitating input into the NPS's capital plan, and where applicable, coordinating State license plate programs.


- I. Support the efforts of the RPCs by facilitating meetings and providing information to the Club via its RPC, and by providing resources to support Club participation in its RPC.
- J. Address club capacity limitations by identifying non-club partners, volunteers, or staff to accomplish the responsibilities below.
- K. Lead advocacy campaigns aimed at protecting A.T. resources (scenic, cultural, and natural).


V. Club Responsibilities. The Club accepts day-to-day responsibility for operations, construction, management, and maintenance of the Club's section of the A.T. and the A.T.-related facilities within that section. These activities will be carried out in coordination with its RPC, the ATC Regional Office, and Federal and State management partners, as described in the Club's LMP and other documents. The Club's LMP will reflect and comply with the policies set forth in ATC's Local Management Planning Guide.


Specific Club responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- A. Maintain the A.T. and A.T.-related facilities in accordance with the ATC's current published standards, including construction and modification as needed to protect and improve the Trail and its use.
- B. In consultation with ATC Regional Director, regularly review and revise documents and agreements that describe the relationship of all A.T. management partners, including MOUs and the Club's LMP, and participate in developing and revising ATC policies.
- C. Appoint one representative and at least one alternate to its RPC, participate in RPC meetings, and work with other clubs to provide leadership for the RPC.
- D. Assisted by ATC staff, monitor and maintain boundaries on A.T. Corridor Lands acquired by the NPS. This should include walking the exterior corridor boundary survey line to record and report on its condition and any encroachments; finding monuments and witness trees and recording and reporting their condition; ensuring that the boundary is visible and clearly marked.
- E. Other responsibilities specifically developed by and agreed to between the Club, ATC, and other management partners.

The following provisions are optional depending on the Club's resources and capacity, and the specific requirements of management of the Club's Trail section. The Club agrees that it will, in good faith, strive to accomplish the following tasks, if initialed to indicate assent:

- F. . Protect A.T. resources by assisting the ATC with management and monitoring of natural resources.
- G. _____. Protect A.T. resources by assisting the ATC with management and monitoring of cultural resources. (Note: No cultural resources to monitor have been identified on MRATC's trail section. If in future some are identified, the club and the ATC will then discuss club responsibility for monitoring these.)


H. . Take steps to support community outreach and engagement to promote public awareness of the A.T. and assist in the development of public information and education programs to enhance the use, enjoyment, and protection of the A.T., including proactive engagement with social, cultural, and age diverse communities.

I. . Engage in advocacy campaigns aimed at protecting A.T. resources (scenic, cultural, and natural).

VI. Dispute Resolution. Disagreements that arise should be resolved as close to the source as possible. The Club has sole authority for dealing with issues among its volunteers. The Club president or designee will represent the Club in resolving differences between the Club and the ATC. An ATC Regional Director will represent the ATC in local and regional issues that involve the Club. Questions of Club territorial jurisdiction, acceptance of ATC policies, or Club status with the ATC, and matters that cannot be resolved locally or regionally, are the responsibility of the ATC.

VII. Term and Termination. This MOU is effective upon execution by representatives of both of the Parties. This MOU shall remain effective until 90 days after either Party provides written notification to the other Party of its desire to terminate this MOU. Termination by ATC may also require reassignment of a trail maintenance section per the ATC Policy on Assignment and Reassignment of A.T. Club Maintenance Responsibility. The Parties agree to review this MOU periodically as needed, but not later than four years after its effective date, to determine if the MOU needs revision. If the MOU needs to be revised, the Parties agree to expeditiously review and replace this MOU.

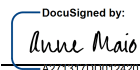
For the Appalachian Trail Conservancy:

Signed:  _____

By: Sandi Marra, ATC CEO/President

Date: 2/6/2025 | 8:06:39 AM EST

For the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club

Signed:  _____

By: Anne Maio, Administrative Assistant to the MRATC Board

Date: 2/6/2025 | 1:50:35 AM PST