

MRATC – ATC Hurricane Helene Recovery Stewardship Agreement

Background: Hurricane Helene caused significant damage to Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST) network roads, trails, parking areas, overnight sites, and natural resources. Helene recovery funds from the American Relief Act (ARA) that have been transferred through a five-year agreement from the USFS to the ATC will be used to restore recreation access, improve habitat, and repair damaged infrastructure. Work will include assessing the trail and facilities from GA through central VA, identifying and developing projects, implementing projects, and coordinating trail management during Helene recovery. All work will be coordinated with A.T. Maintaining Clubs and the USFS.

Purpose: This five-year agreement reaffirms the existing partnership between MRATC and ATC, while also stating specific obligations that are expected of both parties relating to Hurricane Helene recovery and associated USFS funds.

Statement of Mutual Interest & Mutual Benefit:

As identified in the MOU for the ANST between the Club and ATC, both parties are responsible for the cooperative management of the trail, facilities, and natural resources within the trail landscape. This working relationship will carry over into Helene recovery. Party responsibilities include:

- **ATC is responsible for:**
 - Provide regional staff to lead/facilitate the overall scope of work for projects in the Cooperative Management of the A.T. for ARA agreement.
 - Supply additional capacity for project implementation support, including training and volunteer recruitment.
 - Cooperatively plan, design, and implement projects with the Club and USFS.
 - Monitor, track, and report progress, challenges, performance, and outcomes of the agreement on a monthly to quarterly basis.
 - Be responsible for the coordination and payment of reimbursable expenses
 - Support the following projects, programs, or needs on MRATC section through staff and/or ARA funding for five years:
 - Golden-winged Warbler habitat management and monitoring
 - High Country spruce-fir fuels mitigation and restoration
 - A termed ATC restoration coordinator
 - A termed ATC Non-native Invasive Species (NNIS) coordinator
 - NNIS treatments and inventory
 - Direct-to-club purchase of saw equipment (crosscuts, folding, chainsaws, saw kits, axes, wedges, etc.) and PPE

- Contracted chainsaw and crosscut training & evaluation courses
 - A termed ATC Trails Specialist to support field work and add ATC capacity
 - Assessment of the ANST, A.T.-network side trails, and associated facilities in cooperation with the club and local USFS unit.
 - Provide club-identified contracted skills trainings
 - Coordinate overnight site assessments, plan and develop treatment plans with Club and USFS unit.
 - Repair and improve selected parking areas
 - Coordinate the replacement of the South Fork of the Holston trail bridge
 - Support five seasons of the High Country Ridgerunner
 - Coordinate five-year VUM action plan, engage and inform trail users at Damascus Trail Center
 - Comprehensive information distribution to A.T. visitors via infographics, visitor centers, community events, ATC's website, ATCamp.org, and other channels.
 - Supply clubs with infographics and other materials related to their sections.
- **MRATC is responsible for:**
 - Track and report individual club member volunteer hours by month to ATC (using the online form). These hours will be used as an in-kind contribution to assist with the ATC-USFS ARA agreement cost sharing requirement.
 - Club hour reports will include at minimum the date or span of dates, volunteer name, hours, type of activity, USFS/NPS/other land manager
 - Club hours that are submitted to ATC cannot be funded or supported by other federal grants or awards
 - Club hours that are submitted to ATC cannot be used as an in-kind contribution for any other cost-sharing agreement.
 - MRATC volunteer ATC-hour sharing target per year is 1,330 (MRATC reported 2,659 USFS hours in 2024)
 - Once the ATC-ARA agreement cost sharing match is met, club reporting and sharing of volunteer hours will be suspended.
 - Coordinate with USFS unit and ATC on any USFS ARA agreement-funded project listed above
 - Share club tools, supplies, equipment, and training needs that can be funded through the USFS ARA agreement with ATC for timely acquisition, purchase, and/or scheduling.

