



## FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

### DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

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## FREDERICK COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION **STAFF REPORT**

**Request:** Certified Local Government Evaluation of National Register eligibility of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Maryland Segment

**Meeting Date:** June 7, 2023

**Report Date:** May 15, 2023

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The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is nominated under National Register Criterion A.

Criterion A: The Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) is significant at the national level in the areas of Recreation and Conservation.

The A.T.'s significance in Recreation is derived from the Trail's association with the national outdoor recreation movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century and expanded considerably during the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century. The idea for a long-distance hiking trail along the ridges of the Appalachian Mountain Range was initially proposed in the mid-1910s but did not gain traction until Benton MacKaye's seminal treatise "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning" was published in the *AIA Journal* in October 1921. MacKaye proposed to solve the "problem of living" in the urban/industrial states of the eastern United States by providing recreational relief to workers through the development of a 1,700-mile footpath that would connect a series of communal recreational and farming camps along the Appalachian skyline.

Although the blazing and construction of the Trail was primarily a private volunteer effort, federal Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) projects contributed significantly to the development of the Trail's infrastructure. On August 14, 1937, the original route of the A.T. was completed from Mt. Oglethorpe in Georgia to Katahdin in Maine.

The A.T. continues to provide a recreational retreat from the cities along the populous and industrialized cities of the eastern United States where citizens can commune with nature and escape the stresses of everyday life. This significance is apparent in the amount of use the Trail has seen and continues to see from both thru-hikers and day-

users and ongoing efforts of trail-maintaining organizations to provide the best recreational opportunity for trail users. In addition, the Trail has served as a model for other recreational trails within the United States and worldwide.

The A.T.'s significance in Conservation is related to the recognition of its importance as a national recreational resource in the mid-twentieth century and subsequent efforts later in the century to secure its protection. By the early 1960s, the integrity of the A.T. was impacted by a variety of factors, including lack of maintenance during the years of World War II, hastily selected routes that incorporated large stretches of automobile roads, increasing disputes with private landowners, and encroaching development.

In the mid-1960s, within the context of the emerging environmental protection movement, advocates for the A.T. were successful in bringing national attention to these problems and garnering support for federal protection. Those efforts led to its designation as the first National Scenic Trail under the National Trails System Act (NTSA) of 1968. The NTSA made the A.T. a unit of the National Park System and established a program intended to protect the portion (more than 50 percent) of the Trail that was not already on federal or state conservation lands.

In 1984, the unusual public-private partnership that has always been a central aspect of the A.T.'s history was reinforced when the NPS delegated the responsibility for managing public corridor lands to the ATC (renamed the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in 2005). Since that time, the ATC has sought opportunities to expand the zone of protection beyond the boundaries of publicly owned lands by encouraging the integration of the Trail into local land-use plans. These activities hearken back to the regional planning aspects of MacKaye's original vision for the A.T. and, together with the public lands acquisition program, have come near to establishing the protected "Appalachian Greenway" that he envisioned.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission recommend the nomination of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Maryland Segment to the County Executive and the State Historic Preservation Officer as eligible for the National Register.