



PATHWAYS

Across America

April 2023



IN THIS ISSUE

CAPACITY

New Potomac Heritage Superintendent Moves Trail Protection Forward

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy Refines and Revamps their Volunteer Program

PROTECTION

Three New and Proposed National Monuments that will Protect Landscapes and Cultures along the National Trails System

CAPACITY

NEW POTOMAC HERITAGE SUPERINTENDENT MOVES TRAIL PROTECTION FORWARD

BY RON TIPTON, PNTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeri DeYoung has a plan for securing a well-protected Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHT).

Last summer, Jeri was selected by the National Park Service to be the Superintendent of the PHT. She has over 33 years of experience with the federal government, beginning as a museum specialist, archeologist, and Tribal Liaison at Flagstaff Area National Monument. She later took on a variety of roles with the Parks Service, including Interpretive Ranger, Natural Resources Manager, and most recently the Cultural & Natural Resources Manager for the C&O Canal National Historic Park.



In her new position as Superintendent of the PHT, Jeri intends to elevate public awareness of the PHT and complete the Trail by connecting its numerous sections. Her first priorities to achieve those goals include:

- Completing a Feasibility Study for the PHT route from Harpers Ferry National Historical Park through Loudoun County, Virginia;
- Funding a Comprehensive Management Plan, which would achieve a high level of resource protection as well as sustainable management for the Trail;
- And developing a five year overall funding plan for the Trail.

Long-time leader within the Potomac Heritage Trail Association Bill Niedringhaus and other volunteers are working with Jeri to expand protection of the Trail and connect the missing links to provide more than 700 miles of continuous, high-quality trails for hikers, bikers and equestrians through Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland.

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY REFINES AND REVAMPS THEIR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

BY PNTS STAFF & LEANNA JOYNER, APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

With the launch of its last strategic plan in 2020, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) embarked on a mission to make volunteer service open to all.

The organization took on several projects to reduce barriers to volunteer activities, expand volunteer training, and strengthen communication and volunteer relationships.

To improve accessibility, the ATC updated their volunteer activities search page to help people find opportunities based on the volunteer experience they want to have. To compliment this, they have developed a monthly newsletter that invites volunteers to service opportunities.

ATC has also expanded their volunteer training. ATC has long published printed materials like A.T. Design Construction and Maintenance, and the A.T. Fieldbook. They have now moved trainings online through a series of essential trail maintenance videos and updated the curriculum for Foundations of Trail Maintenance, their training resource for volunteers, into digestible modules to establish consistent curriculum.

To foster even more support for the development of the new training curriculum, ATC invested in a Technical Trail Specialist to support bringing in new volunteers and to offer enrichment training for existing volunteers. The ATC also offers field-based experiences for like-identity and intact groups to learn new skills and gain confidence in Appalachian Trail volunteerism.

Finally, to strengthen their overall relationships and communications with volunteers, the ATC invested in a market analysis of volunteers to identify volunteer needs. With this improved understanding, ATC is more precise with its efforts to convert basic awareness of the Appalachian Trail into stewardship, and to convert active volunteers into leadership roles. Having the foundation of the market analysis led to improvements to ATC's website in the area devoted to partners and volunteers and served as a launch pad to update the Appalachian Trail Volunteer Visual Identity. Through a highly participatory process between ATC and volunteers, they landed on an image that reflects the "onward and upward" virtue that their dedicated volunteer community is known for.

"We brought a multi-faceted approach to inclusion and equity in the A.T. volunteer program arena because we know that disenfranchisement can happen through multiple systems," said Leanna Joyner, ATC Senior Director for Partnerships and Trail Operations. "By addressing access through technology, training through multiple means, improved invitations, and an updated brand, we aim to actualize our commitment to everyone belonging on the Appalachian Trail and in our stewardship community."



ATC volunteers carrying a boulder. Photo provided by Appalachian Trail Conservancy.



A volunteer clearing the footpath and the new Appalachian Trail Volunteer Visual Identity. Photo provided by ATC.



PNTS Updates

New Interim Executive Director

On April 1, former Executive Director Valerie Rupp left The Partnership to pursue an important role with the City of Baltimore government. Mike Wollomer, former Executive Director for the Ice Age Alliance, has filled her shoes as the Interim Executive Director. Mike is a welcome addition to the team, after working closely with PTNS for many years between roles within the Board of Directors and Trail Leaders Council.

Trail Apprentices for the 2023 program have been selected!

During the 2023 program the Apprentices will participate in career exploration, participate in the 2023 National Trails Workshop in Orlando, Florida, and have the opportunity to develop hard and soft skills through the completion of a project with PNTS Committees and staff. The Apprentices bring diverse perspectives and experiences to PNTS with a shared passion for creating a trails system for all. Congratulations to the eight new Trail Apprentices:

Gabriel Pacheco Santa (He/him/el) – San Juan, Puerto Rico

Abi Glaum (She/her) – Minneapolis, Minnesota

Nieves Vazquez (They/she) – Tucson, Arizona

Carina Burgher (They/she) – Stockton, California

Olivia Hall (She/her) – Asheville, North Carolina

Wyatt Wilson (He/him) – Durango, Colorado

Kat Finck (She/her) – Washington, DC

Adrian Wilson (He/him) – Tallahassee, Florida

PROTECTION

THREE NEW AND PROPOSED NATIONAL MONUMENTS THAT WILL PROTECT LANDSCAPES AND CULTURES ALONG THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

BY PNTS STAFF

Over the past year, President Joe Biden has designated two key National Monuments (NM) that directly impact the National Trails System: Camp Hale—Continental Divide NM and Avi Kwa Ame NM. These designations are important for strengthening and enhancing the National Trails System because they permanently protect environmentally, culturally, and historically significant places that make Trails so breathtaking and unique. While pre-existing activities such as mining and livestock grazing are allowed to continue after designation, NMs prevent future environmentally harmful developments so that the landscapes—and the trails that travel through them—remain scenic and sacred for future generations.



Camp Hale. Photo by Brenda Yankoviak, Continental Divide Trail Coalition

The Camp Hale—Continental Divide NM, on the ancestral homelands of the Ute People in Colorado, was designated by President Biden in October 2022. This designation includes over 20 miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT). It also serves as a home habitat and migration corridor for many wildlife, making it a critical area for preserving the biodiversity along the Divide.

This NM also preserves the rugged landscape where the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division prepared for their service in World War II, making it a significant place in United States military history. The area is also cherished by the Ute Tribes, who were forced to leave their ancestral homelands by the U.S. government in the mid-1800s. However, the Ute return to pray, hold ceremonies, honor their ancestors, hunt, fish, and harvest plants there. With this new designation in place, the NM will be protected while supporting the many recreational and cultural activities that take place there.



Avi Kwa Ame, or Spirit Mountain. BLM Photo.

Next, the Avi Kwa Ame NM in southern Nevada was designated by President Biden in March of 2023. It is considered to be among the most sacred places on Earth by the Mojave, Chemehuevi, and some Southern Paiute people. In the mid-19th century, the U.S. government attempted to force the Mojave from their homeland. Around this time period, the Indigenous trails that made this area accessible for thousands of years were then used by Euro-Americans for trade, ultimately leading to the formation of what is now known as the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, which bisects the Avi Kwa Ame landscape.

After years of work to reclaim their rights and protect this landscape, the new designation will allow local tribes to play a key role in its stewardship while preserving the diverse history of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. This newly protected wildlife corridor will also connect millions of acres of existing public lands to secure crucial habitats for iconic species like the desert bighorn sheep and Joshua tree.

Just over 200 miles east of Avi Kwa Ame NM lies the Grand Canyon, where efforts are underway to designate a third NM.

The proposed Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni Grand Canyon NM would include 1,102,501 acres adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park and includes 40 miles of the Arizona National Scenic Trail just south of Grand Canyon National Park.

The landscape is culturally and spiritually significant to the Havasupai, Hualapai, Hopi, Navajo, Yavapai-Apache, Zuni, and several Paiute Tribes. The designation would honor the Tribes deep cultural ties to the Grand Canyon and protect the area by making the temporary 20-year mining moratorium permanent, while also enhancing the cultural, natural, recreational, and scientific resources of the region.

Formally designating and protecting these landscapes does so much more than protect the recreational experiences on and off National Trails; they allow ecosystems to flourish, prevent environmental degradation, and bring Indigenous Communities back into the conversation of stewardship for their ancestral lands.



Grand Canyon National Park. Canva Creative Commons.