

ATC Land Conservation Criteria

Considering the limitations on ATC's resources and the widely accepted notion that ATC should be a convener and coordinator and therefore the holder of last resort for both easements and fee properties, ATC should accept direct stewardship responsibility only for:

- #1. Properties that lie directly across the trail or are adjacent to the trail corridor, and
- #2. Properties that provide access to the trail (i.e. secure side trails...) or offer other needed trail amenities (parking lots, etc.).

The justification is as follows:

#1. ATC is best equipped to deal with a contiguous land base centered around the corridor.

#2. Considering the large number of existing land trusts, it is very likely that some other organization can be found to hold easements on lands farther away from the trail corridor.

ATC recognizes that specific parcels important in preserving the trail experience as defined by the criteria below may not fulfill the conditions outlined above for direct stewardship: in those cases ATC will exert all possible efforts to find and work with local or agency partners to protect these properties. In cases where no local or agency partners can be found to hold the interests, ATC may consider taking on these interests provided that:

- the benefit to the trail experience is unarguably demonstrable and considerable
- ATC is capable of stewarding and enforcing the interest: resources will come with the interest and the responsibilities being accepted are reasonable and within ATC's means and capacities.

We suggest the following as criteria in deciding whether specific parcels are of interest to ATC, and as such should be pursued either directly if above conditions are met, or through partners and possibly co-held (i.e part of the "partnershed" or Appalachian Trail Countryside) -

The parcel:

- 1) Is in a priority area as defined by the strategic planning process
- 2) Is contiguous to the trail corridor
- 3) Is contiguous to other protected lands – the parcel will have a landscape level impact
- 4) Contains the viewshed – visible from the trail
- 5) Is vulnerable to development pressures
- 6) Is of significant size: the bigger the natural area protected the better (though size is relative in different regions).
- 7) Is adjacent to Wilderness or remote areas that the Trail passes through
- 8) Contains important conservation or ecological values:
 - a. Protects water resources important to the trail

- b. Would protect landscapes of historical significance or documented cultural resources
- c. Is wooded, in traditional agricultural use or similar natural state

As these criteria reflect the conservation values of importance to ATC, all easements involving ATC in the future should contain language specifically addressing these values. Conversely, ATC should not be responsible for monitoring activities and conservation values and that are not of direct import and consequence to our stated priorities and criteria.