

Problem Statement: The Effects of Climate Change and Increasing Visitor Use on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail

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The Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) corridor is the first and most heavily used National Scenic Trail. The AT traverses the South Mountain landscape, primarily on DCNR lands. The AT has seen a substantial increase in visitor use since the advent of the Covid-19 epidemic in late 2019. It is also seeing increasing effects from environmental changes due to global climate change. The Partnership is prioritizing research on the implications of climate change and increasing visitor use on the footpath and related infrastructure (shelters/campsites, treadway, parking facilities). The partnership is seeking research on

- The current and expected/projected effects to trail infrastructure from continued climate change over the next decade.
- The current and expected/projected effects to trail infrastructure from increased visitor use over the next decade.
- Syntheses of best management practices (BMP's) that address these effects from other heavily used trail networks in the Eastern United States and elsewhere.
- Proposed BMP's for addressing these effects for the South Mountain section of the AT.

Proposed projects should address these priorities, and multidisciplinary and inter-university partnerships are encouraged.