

Problem Statement: Economic Impact of the Appalachian Trail at Pine Grove Furnace State Park and the Surrounding Region

South Mountain Partnership Contact: Katie Hess, khess@appalachiantrail.org , 717-609-4581

Pine Grove Furnace State Park has identified a need for research on the economic impact of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) on the park and its surrounding communities. The AT brings thousands of visitors to the park, surrounding public lands, and nearby communities, annually, and the rate of visitation from AT users appears to be growing. This includes AT through-hikers, section hikers, day hikers and casual visitors. This visitation undoubtedly has economic implications for the park, and for businesses inside and outside the park. To assist Pine Grove Furnace, as well as nearby businesses and communities, the partnership is seeking research on the costs and economic benefits of AT-related visitation. The specific research components would likely include:

- Data gathering on the number of AT-related visitors to the park annually, including seasonal variability, and the type of use (through-hiking, section hiking, day hiking).
- The duration of visits.
- The patronization of park and regional businesses.
- The use of park facilities and infrastructure.
- Analysis of the data to evaluate the monetary costs and benefits to the park and surrounding communities produced by the AT.
- Recommendations for the improvement of cost-benefit balance in and around the park.

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