

Hello,

In this letter, I am doing what we are all doing with our friends and family right now: checking in, seeing how we are coping with a new reality that is both unprecedented and full of uncertainty, and making sure we are all keeping safe and healthy. We find ourselves physically distanced not only from each other, but also from the spaces that we love like the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). While we cannot gather as we typically would in a crisis, I will commit to regularly connecting with you and prioritizing the health and safety of everyone in the A.T. ecosystem.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) continues to monitor the situation closely; to issue guidance to ATC's staff, members and the Trail's visitors, volunteers and communities; and to take appropriate actions to mitigate the spread or contraction of COVID-19. We are committed to following the advice from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and incorporating their guidance into all of our communications and actions.

Since my [previous letter](#), we have taken additional actions in light of the continued spread of COVID-19:

- **The ATC's visitor centers will be closed until further notice.** We will continue to assess this closure and prioritize the health and safety of our visitors, staff members, and visitor center volunteers. We will send a notice through all of ATC's communication channels as soon as our visitor centers reopen.
- **The ATC's ridgerunners and caretakers have been recalled from the Trail for the next two weeks.** This decision was made following the ATC's guidance to not congregate with large groups and to avoid Trail shelters, which prevents ridgerunners from fulfilling their assigned responsibilities in the field. Ridgerunners are now assisting with ATC's communications around COVID-19 while working remotely.
- **Guidance has been issued to all section and thru-hikers to cancel or postpone their hikes.** [In a letter to all registered multi-day hikers](#), we shared our concern that the practices necessary to support a section or thru-hike may make A.T. hikers susceptible to spreading COVID-19 — whether by congregating at shelters or around picnic tables, traveling to trailheads in shuttle vans, or lodging at the various hostels up and down the Trail. We know this is not an easy decision to make, but in the interest of preventing the continued spread of COVID-19, we urge all section and thru-hikers to come off the Trail until the CDC announces that it is once again safe to return.

This situation is constantly evolving, and we will do our best to keep you informed. For additional guidance and downloadable handouts, please visit appalachiantrail.org/covid-19. For any questions or concerns, please contact us by email at info@appalachiantrail.org or by phone at 304.535.6331.

As always, **the health and well-being of the greater A.T. community is our top priority.** Please let us know what we can do to keep you safe and healthy during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Sandra "Sandi" Marra
President & CEO
Appalachian Trail Conservancy

