

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hundreds call on Appalachian Trail Conservancy to share contents of their “Voluntary Stewardship” agreement with Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC.

CONTACTS

Maury Johnson, ATC Member, Greenville, WV

maurywjohanson@yahoo.com

304-832-6085

Russell Chisholm, ATC Member, Newport, VA

russell.chisholm@outlook.com

540-404-2727

Pearisburg, VA - A [letter from over 430 individuals from 31 states](#) was submitted on February 16, 2021 to the Board of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), a nonprofit organization whose purported mission is to “protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.” The letter asked for a public release of the “Voluntary Stewardship Agreement” which ATC entered into with MVP, LLC, - whose fracked-gas Mountain Valley Pipeline has brought significant harm to WV and VA communities and waterways, and racked up over 350 water protection violations. News of the agreement, which includes a \$19.5 Million payment to the ATC, was published on August 17, 2020 via the ATC website, but did not include any content of the agreement, nor any information on why such a significant decision was reached without any input from ATC members.

The August development was met with significant outrage from those opposing Mountain Valley Pipeline, as the “Agreement” reversed the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s six year policy of opposition to the destructive fracked-gas MVP. Additionally, it caused great concern for Trail protectors, recreationists and those who have long worked to keep the Appalachian Trail, a national treasure, safe from corporate development or construction. Repeated requests have been denied for a public sharing of the “agreement,” most recently expressed in a generic response on February 22 from Board Chair, Sandra Marra, which stated that “it is an ATC policy not to share details.”

Maury Johnson, ATC Member, WV responded: “With this most recent statement from the ATC, they have fully committed to be in partnership with MVP and The Conservation Fund. This is despite what they described in their 2016 letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission about MVP as *“impacts at such unprecedented scale”* that they must oppose this project (Mountain Valley Pipeline) *“to our greatest ability.”* Exemplifying their 2016 letter, this partnership itself *“represents a serious threat to the*

scenic value of the A.T. well beyond the scope of similar projects - as many as 19 prominent AT vistas may be severely impacted from this project, many of them viewing impacts as they occur on USFS land.”

Those impacts will result in the destruction of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in Southern WV and Southwestern VA. The ATC has lost the public trust and it may be time for a change in leadership including members of the Board of Directors and the President and CEO Sandra Marra. I will continue to press for the full disclosure of the “Secret Agreement” using every legal means at my disposal. This is important not only to make sure the ATC, but every such similar organization across the country understands they cannot operate in secrecy.”

Russell Chisholm, ATC Member stated: “The ATC underwent a year of meetings with MVP, LLC without alerting membership, or providing opportunity for feedback on a plan which is to acquiesce to a corporate entity at the expense of the ATC’s integrity and responsibility to their mission. Additionally, ATC members have reached out to leadership for additional information, but they have repeatedly declined requests from the public to share the contents of the agreement. The ATC’s actions are a truly grotesque departure from their public “Identity Statement,” which claims the “...Conservancy’s staff and board embodies honesty, mutual respect, openness, continuous learning and improvement, and excellence.” Instead, the decision to enter into a Voluntary Stewardship Agreement and refuse to provide transparency about the decision inappropriately prioritizes the power of the Board over the wishes of ATC members and the public.”

The over 430 letter signees ask that the contents of the agreement be immediately released to the full ATC membership, ATC Local Clubs and the public. A sampling of responses from Appalachian Trail supporters from across the nation, in response to the MVP agreement may be found [here](#). Previous news coverage of the agreement may be found [here](#).

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