

A JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

March — April 2011



INSIDE: Weeks Act 100th ■ Beyond University Boundaries ■ A Hike Thru History

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Volume 7, Number 2

March — April 2011

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Growing beyond boundaries. Most successful plans (whether business or personal) are those that consistently allow for growth, expansion, and influence from new people, places, and points of view.

The Catawba Sustainability Center — located just below McAfee's Knob in Virginia — is steeped in this philosophy from concept to crops to every aspect in-between (page 24). Since its inception, members of the community and local farmers have worked side by side with university students and area non-profit organizations, carefully restoring the old farm on which the center is based. They grow crops that provide food to local charities, take part in demonstration plantings for university research on sustainability and health of soil and waterways, and provide organic produce to the center's Catawba Valley Farmer's Market. The center's reach does not stop on the local level though; it stretches across oceans and around the world with programs like the Victoria (Australia)-Virginia Landcare Fellowship and the recent development of a farmer training program for refugees in the Roanoke Valley. "This year we had five Somali-bantu attend the Growers Academy, a VT EarthWorks learning series," says the center's enthusiastic director Christine Gabbard. As far as the Trail goes there are also plans to draw more hikers to the center. "We plan to build a hostel where hikers can stay, live, and learn with us on their journey," says Christine.

During their journeys, long-distance hikers must continuously push beyond the comfort of known boundaries to benefit from their adventure; and the strength that results from this push is as much mental as it is physical. Bryant Baker's moving photos are demonstrative of this (page 30) as is his poignant writing (page 47). After meeting a fellow thru-hiker, he ponders her response to the question: "why are you out here?" Her answer left Bryant to awaken more vividly to the pain and pleasure of embracing every moment. "I have found that I understand her answer a little more each day," he explains. "It is when I am pushing up the last few feet of a steep climb — sweat completely saturating my shirt and pouring down my face — and just as I reach the summit, I am greeted by a gentle breeze that manages to send a chill down the length of my spine ... It is when it rains so hard that all there is to do is laugh."

From a diverse and thriving sustainability center in Virginia to a fresh, uncomplicated philosophy from a hiker, if these are the direct results of growing beyond boundaries, I'm sold. 🌱

Wendy K. Probst

MANAGING EDITOR

A.T. Journeys welcomes your comments, story suggestions and photographs. Queries may be submitted via e-mail to editor@appalachiantrail.org.

SUNRISE, KATAHDIN. BY BRYANT BAKER

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EVERY ISSUE OF *A.T. Journeys* is a pleasure to read. Many of the articles bring back fond memories of my relationship with the A.T. “Something to Behold” (*A.T. Journeys* November/December 2010) sent me back to the Bigelow range. A fellow thru-hiker and I had a big day as we crossed that range and covered 22 miles from Stratton to West Carry Pond. “Trailhead” brought back memories of my numerous trips to Damascus and section hikes north and south into town. I had some great stays at the Hiker’s Inn and Dave’s Place. “Emotional Rescue” prompted me to take the survey and contact the author. Pictures of the ponies in Grayson Highlands (Photo Essay, November/December) reminded me that this is one of my favorite places on the Trail. On one hike, my wife and I were approached by a brave pony. Meanwhile another had snuck up behind me and began to gnaw on the salty bandana hanging over my shoulder and pack.

On my thru-hike I encountered some Trail magic in Kent, Connecticut (Trail Towns, November/December). I had been hiking in a heavy rain that wasn’t letting up, so I walked into Kent. I went to what I thought was a hostel and knocked on the door. The man who answered gave me a series of bad answers: no, this wasn’t a hostel anymore and all the lodging in town was full because of the upcoming graduation of the private school in town. I asked for the laundry mat to dry my clothes. I was told it was closed. The man got a look on his face and said for me to wait a minute. He closed the door and when he returned he had an umbrella and told me to follow him. He showed me to a place that was dry and warm where I could sleep and even offered to wash and dry wet clothes.

I now live in Knoxville, Tennessee and have done a few hikes into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. I look forward to seeing an elk (Trail Natives, November/December). I’ve already seen a good number of bears. Last, I like reading about the history of any part of the A.T. I’ve always treasured hiking in Vermont. I section hiked the state from 1998-2001 and

topped out on all the 4,000-footers. I’d like to thru-hike the Long Trail someday since it is considered the first long distance trail (Club Hopping, November/December). Thank you for helping me enjoy the A.T. ... even if it is from my living room.

Ken LaFlamme
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

WITH A GREAT deal of happiness I have just received my issue for January-February. I have been meaning to send you an email to congratulate you for such a wonderful job. The only two words that I can think of to describe your magazine are “fabulous” and “great.” The pictures and stories are simply off the scale. I guess my favorites were about the black bears (“Black Bear Neighborhood,” May/June 2010) and the hostel (“Hole Lot of Love,” September/October 2010). It is a real treat when I find a new issue in my mail box. Keep up the good work. Happy Trails!

Jim Langston
SENECA, SOUTH CAROLINA

THE ARTICLE ON Kent, Connecticut, in the November-December 2010 *A.T. Journeys* immediately brought to mind an article in the August 29, 2008 *New York Times*, entitled “The Unwashed and the Upper Crust in Connecticut.” The theme of the Times article is similar to the one in *A.T. Journeys*: the mix of “blue-blazers, penny loafers, and pink shorts,” and “bedraggled backpackers” in Kent. Perhaps my favorite part of the *Times* article is a comment by Anne McAndrew, who, after helping a hiker with a stove, “was approached by an out-of-town woman who appeared perplexed; she wanted to know how a town like Kent could have such a serious homeless problem.” Ms. McAndrew is the co-owner of Backcountry Outfitters. My son, Ether, and I have been section hiking the A.T. for several years. When we tell this story, both to hikers who have passed through Kent, and to those who have yet to reach the town, we invariably get a good laugh. 🌱

Robert “Jayhawk” Goertz
PENNINGTON, NEW JERSEY

CORRECTIONS

In the January-February feature “Origins of the Trail,” we failed to publish appropriate citation to the authors of several publications used in researching and writing the piece, which was an abbreviated and edited excerpt from an 8,000-word collegiate/undergraduate paper that included all appropriate footnote and end note citations. Among several authors quoted and/or heavily relied upon for substance were: Anderson, Larry; *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail*. Buell, Lawrence; *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance*. Cutright, Paul Russell; *Theodore Roosevelt: The Making of a Conservationist*. Fisher, Ronald; *The Appalachian Trail*. Foster, Charles H.W.; *The Appalachian National Trail: A Time to be Bold*. Glover, James M; *A Wilderness Original: The Life of Bob Marshall*. Major, Judith; *To Live in the New World: A.J. Downing and American Landscape Gardening*. Marshall, Ian; *Story Line: Experience the Literature of the Appalachian Trail*. McClelland, Linda Flint; *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park System 1916-1942*. Miller, Charles; *Jefferson and Nature: An Interpretation*. Ross, John. “Benton MacKaye: The Appalachian Trail.” To view the original paper with full citation visit: www.appalachiantrail.org.


A.T. Journeys welcomes your comments. The editors are committed to providing balanced and objective perspectives. Not all letters received may be published. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.


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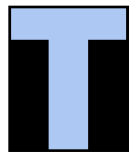


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he Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) will celebrate some important milestones this year. Each one played an important role in making the Appalachian Trail what it is today. Two of these landmark events happened decades ago while one is relatively recent. Each is part of our Appalachian Trail story.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the Weeks Act. Massachusetts Representative John W. Weeks did not have a trail in mind when he sponsored legislation to allow the federal government to acquire watershed land on the headwaters of navigable streams. The

purpose was to conserve the navigability of rivers by protecting their headwaters. How is all of this connected to the A.T.? Well, the Weeks Act started one of the largest conservation efforts in United States history — the creation of National Forests in the eastern United States. The Green Mountain and White Mountain Forest in New England and the southern National Forest from Georgia to Virginia are all a result of the Weeks Act. Without these large tracts of public land the A.T. would not be possible. There is more about the Weeks Act in this edition of *A.T. Journeys* (page 18).

This year is also the 90th anniversary of Benton MacKaye's "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning." This article was published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* and lays out the vision of an Appalachian Trail. MacKaye also had a connection to the Weeks Act. His work as a U.S. Forest Service employee on the role of forest cover in stream flows helped with the creation of the White Mountain National Forest under the Weeks Act. Without MacKaye's vision of a trail along the Appalachian Mountains, there would be no A.T.

This year is the 25th and final year that Dave Startzell will lead ATC. Dave announced his retirement in the last edition of *A.T. Journeys*. Benton MacKaye gave us the vision, Myron Avery and thousands of volunteers put that vision into reality, and Dave Startzell made sure that the A.T. would continue to

exist. He worked tirelessly to put the A.T. on public land and led the effort to protect the lands that the A.T. crosses. Dave will be at ATC's 38th Biennial Conference in July. Registration information is in this issue of *A.T. Journeys* (page 17), plan on attending so you can thank him and wish him well in his retirement.

Without these three people and the thousands of volunteers who supported them, I'm sure the A.T. would not exist today. ⚡

— Bob Almand, Chair

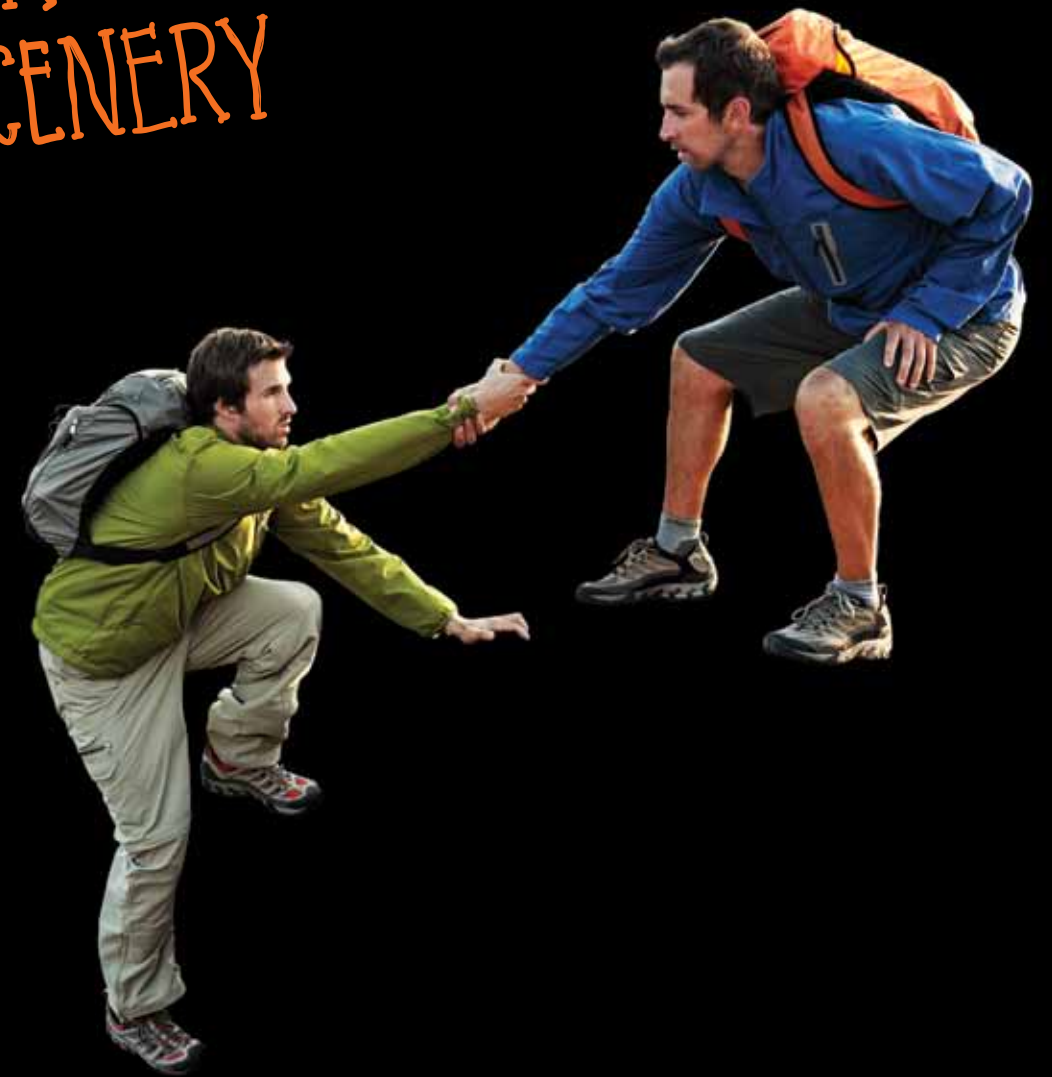
Bob Almand, CHAIR

Dave Startzell, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Home protection: the Weeks Act played a large role in creating a permanently safe home for species like the pine Warbler, whose habitat is specific to U.S. eastern pine woodlands. PHOTO BY WARREN AND LISA STROBEL

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Charles Parry

In 1980, I opened the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) first regional office for Southwest and Central Virginia, where I served as the regional representative until 2001. During that time, I worked closely with Charles Parry in his role as the trail supervisor for the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC). Charles was one of the most dedicated volunteer leaders with whom I have worked in my 30-year career in trails.

I clearly remember working with Charles, digging new trails in the pouring rain on several occasions, building trail structures, shelters, outhouses, and sitting through endless numbers of meetings with the club and with agency partners. My very first maintenance hike after being hired by ATC was on the old A.T. route from Route 42 in Newport to Craig Creek Valley — several miles longer than the current route. We started early doing regular maintenance — mostly brushing, blowdown removal, and blazing — and finished well after dark (one of Charles' trademarks in those days). Charles always did more work than anyone else and had a cold drink for you at the end of the day.

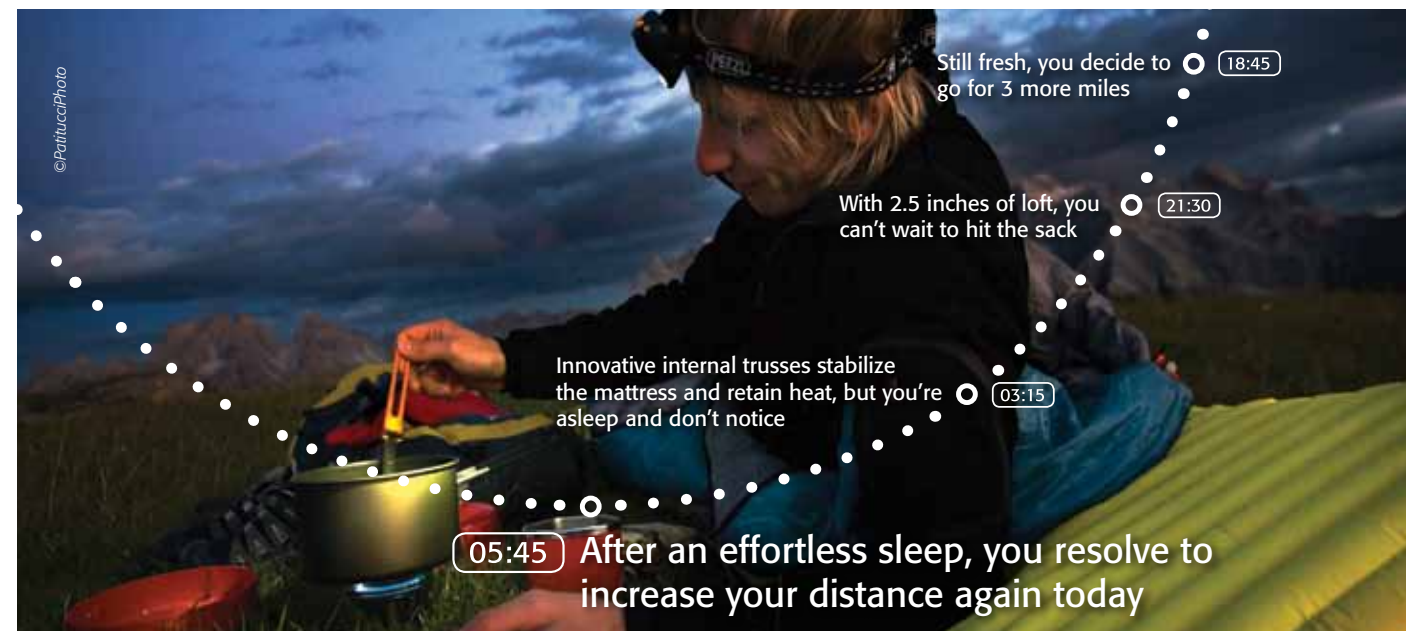
Most meaningful, though, were the many, many days that we spent together designing better locations for the A.T. in RATC's section. From eliminating miles of paved and dirt road walks to putting the Trail on sustainable locations and grades, Charles had a substantial role in crafting the experience that tens of thousands of people would have on the A.T. for decades to come. Some of the designs that come to mind are the route over Brushy Mountain at the south end of the RATC section; the days we spent

looking for a route from the New River to the top of Peters Mountain; the big descent on the north end of Mountain Lake Wilderness, the route from mountaintop to mountaintop across Sinking Creek Valley; and, most significantly, the entire section from the bottom of Dragon's Tooth, across Sawtooth Ridge, Catawba Mountain, Tinker Cliffs, and I-81 to Fulhardt's Knob.

Charles was a real bear, bushwhacking through the forest with no trail, tying flags, and looking for just the right spot for a glorious location that would be maintainable. And the design was only the first step — Charles was deeply involved in working with local landowners in acquiring the land (and then maintaining those relationships for decades), building the new trail section by section, working with agency partners to assure that the lands around the Trail were protected and well managed, and then tirelessly caring for the Trail that was built. He was one of a handful of absolutely dedicated volunteers who showed me to see what volunteers could accomplish, and taught me to always be willing to stretch the limits of what was possible with volunteers. It is a lesson that I took with me when I moved west, and one that has informed and inspired my work on the Pacific Crest Trail. I can't count the number of times that I have described the work and dedication of Charles and others to West Coast volunteers at a meeting or around a campfire.

Charles was also an enthusiastic booster for the Konnarock Crew program, and seemed to draw on the young crew members to keep him young at heart. That program, more than any other, changed Charles' view of ATC, because for Charles it was all about getting work done in the woods, and that was what Konnarock was all about. He was one of a handful of volunteers who embodied an important concept first made clear in the Comprehensive Plan for the Appalachian Trail — that as important as the A.T. was as a recreational resource of life-changing proportions, the volunteer community that cared for the Trail was equally crucial, giving people the opportunity for service, to learn to care for the land, to take responsibility for the public good and for the relationships that are formed in that world. It is a lesson that is a real part of the organizations and agencies that care for all the national scenic trails nationwide. It was the success wrought by Charles and his cohorts up and down the A.T. that made that possible. ⬆

RATC volunteer Charles Parry passed away in December; he was RATC's trail boss for 34 years. The author, Mike Dawson is currently the director of trail operations for the Pacific Crest Trail Association.



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A HiKE *thru* HiSTORY

SITUATED ON 67 ACRES IN GROSECLOSE, THE SETTLERS MUSEUM IS AN OPEN-AIR MUSEUM ON U.S. FOREST SERVICE LAND, AND A BUFFER ZONE FOR THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL.

BY MARTHA WINQUIST EMREY

Just half an hour from Emory & Henry College, site of the 2011 Appalachian Trail Conservancy 38th Biennial Conference, in a region of Virginia rich in history, the Appalachian Trail traverses the Settlers Museum of Southwest Virginia. Several biennial hikes are scheduled to leave from this open air museum on U.S. Forest Service land and buffer zone for the Appalachian Trail.

Situated on 67 acres in Groseclose, the Settlers Museum includes the Lindamood one-room schoolhouse, Visitor's Center, 1890s Farmhouse and nine outbuildings. All buildings are original, restored by volunteers who de-modernized them. The farmhouse and visitor's center were inhabited until 1987, when the Settlers Museum was founded by Charles Philippi. The museum is listed as a Birding and Wildlife site by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The museum's trail is a 0.8-mile loop from the picnic shelter, incorporating 0.3 miles of the Appalachian Trail.

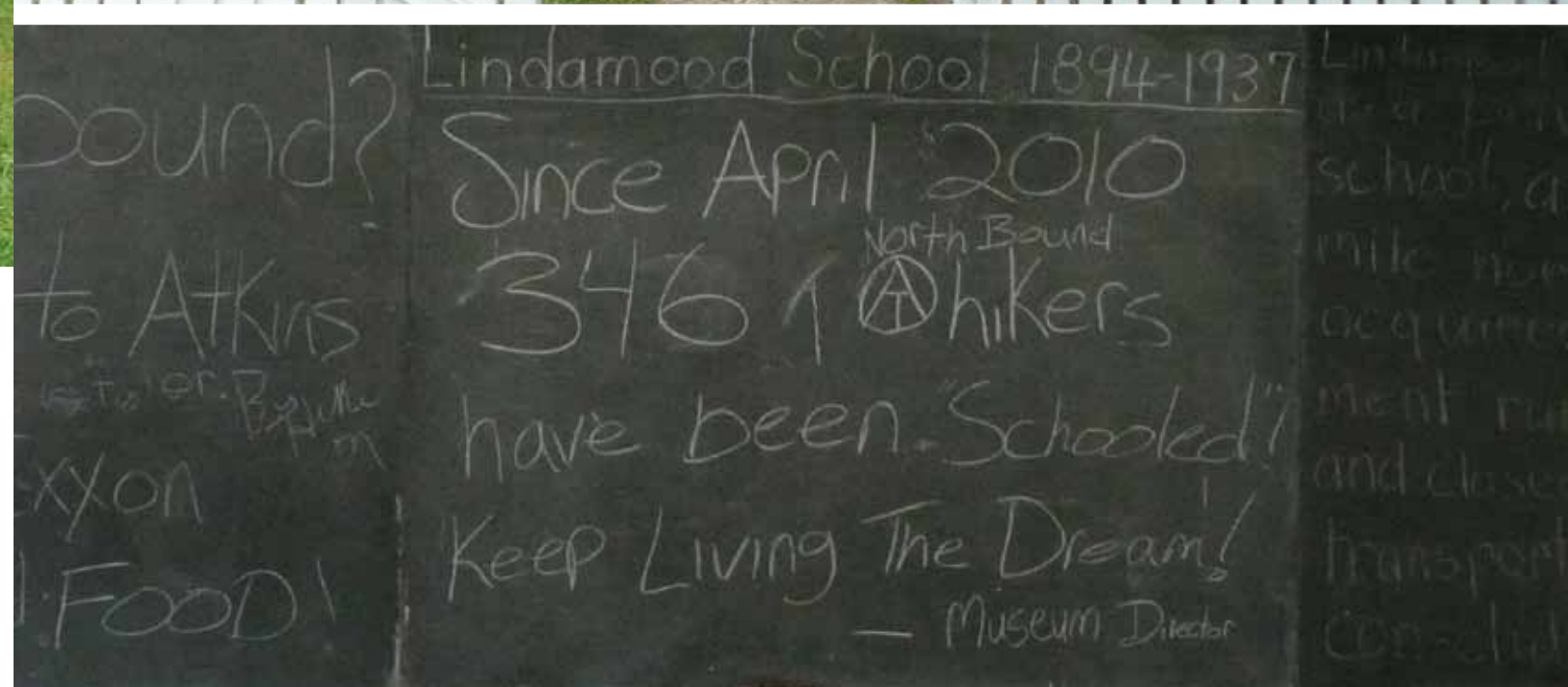
The Settlers Museum has a symbiotic relationship with the A.T. At the visitor's center, hikers learn the history of the area. The migration story tells how early Scotch-Irish and German immigrants, who first settled in Philadelphia, migrated through Maryland and arrived in Southwestern Virginia on foot. Hikers traveling over mountains on foot can relate. "Hikers are very conscientious," says Dylan House, who, until recently, was the museum's director since 2006 (for budgetary reasons, the museum is temporarily operating on an all volunteer staff). Several thru-hikers, in return for the privilege of camping nearby, offered to start building a fence at the museum's farmhouse, a short walk down the hill from the Trail. Although Dylan invited them to camp at no charge of time or money, they started building a fence, which was later finished by Boy Scouts. This project will allow the museum to pasture animals.

Some hikers have rolled out their sleeping bags and



Clockwise from above: Hands-on learning is often a part of a visit to the museum; The restored 1890s farm house; The often-used blackboard in the one-room school house.

PHOTOS BY DYLAN HOUSE, JIM HOUK, AND MARTHA EMREY



THE SETTLERS MUSEUM HAS A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TRAIL. AT THE VISITOR'S CENTER, HIKERS LEARN THE HISTORY OF THE AREA.

slept on the floor of the one-room schoolhouse, a few steps off the Trail. On chilly mornings, hikers respond to the invitation scribbled on the chalkboard that reads: “free coffee in the visitor’s center for thru-hikers.” On a hot day, the visitor’s center offers a front porch swing where a hiker can enjoy conversation, the view, and if lucky, a pleasant breeze. A.T. hikers have also helped with Heritage Days, an annual event held the second Saturday in October. These hikers bring the Appalachian Trail to life for visitors who may not know of its existence. In addition to blacksmithing, woodworking, spinning and weaving demonstrations, horse-drawn wagon rides, and music at the Visitor’s Center, Master Naturalists have also given short, guided hikes on the A.T.

The Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers (PATH) — an official Trail Club — uses the parking area and facilities during maintenance outings. PATH maintains 70 miles of A.T. from Virginia State Route 670 at the South Fork of the Holston River to US52 near Bland. The front porch is a favorite stop, though maintainers try not to tarry too long; Trail work always awaits. PATH, as well as individual members of the club, has donated to the Settlers Museum. The museum hosts field trips for schools in Washington, Wythe, and Smyth Counties. After class in the Lindamood School, students learn what it was like to live on a 1890s farm by gathering eggs and firewood, making butter, and hauling water. Since 2006, Dylan has incorporated the A.T. in school tours. He explains what the Trail is and what its benefits are as they hike a short section.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Trail to Every Classroom program (TTEC) brings additional opportunities for Settlers Museum and Appalachian Trail collaboration. Last May, Greg Weaver, a PATH member and coordinator of this section’s TTEC program, led two teachers on an orientation hike from Route 644 to Route 11. A stop mid-hike at the Settlers Museum found Greg, Dylan, and Fort Chiswell Middle School teachers Sue Porter and Patti Akers, in conversation on the front porch. Sue and Patti were planning to hike this section with their Appalachian Trail Nature Club students in June. “I jumped on board,” says Dylan enthusiastically. “I fell all over myself. ‘Oh, it’s PATH. What can we do?’” He arranged a couple of educational opportunities. Mike Evans, U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement, met them at the beginning of their hike. “Great talk on birds and bird calling,” says Sue Porter. Master Naturalist and Friends of Mount Rogers member Carrie Sparks hiked with the students, educating them on plants. The Appalachian Trail Nature Club meets monthly to study a large map of the A.T., and learn how it was started and

who takes care of it. The club is looking forward to this year’s hike in May or June. Some of these students may be future maintainers.

Dylan has enjoyed slowing down a handful of thru-hikers. “One looked at me and said, ‘you know, I’ve been doing 25s and 30s and I’ve realized I don’t remember what I’ve seen,’” says Dylan. When hikers would pause, Dylan began with a brief history of the Lindamood School. If they became interested in more history, he would invite them to the visitor’s center. Admission is \$5.00, and although free for hikers, they sometimes drop extra change into the donation basket. The museum has received many postcards and notes from hikers,

Clockwise from top right: Hikers are a welcome part of the museum, as noted on the front door of the old school house; A.T. hikers and Trail to Every Classroom Students listen to Mike Evans of the U.S. Forest Service; the Lindamood one-room schoolhouse; First-time PATH volunteer, Wendy Williamson, takes a break from nearby Trail work on the farmhouse front porch; One of nine outbuildings on the farm; Elementary school students string green beans during a field trip.

PHOTOS BY DYLAN HOUSE, JIM HOUK, AND MARTHA EMREY

often with a check, to help ensure that the Settlers Museum will be there for tomorrow’s hikers. “We would get talking,” he continues, “and before they knew it, 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 2 hours have gone by and they’re still sitting there.” A rare case, Dylan says, is the hiker who returned for a visit and explained that he had purchased land in Tennessee and was building a log cabin by hand. It was a project borne of his Trail experience, which included a stop at the museum.

Walter (Gene) Hendrick, president of the board of directors of The Settlers Museum Foundation, has volunteered with the museum for nearly 20 years. A full schedule of activities, including the popular Saturday schools, where visitors learn different crafts, is planned for the 2011 season, which runs from April 1 to November 30. Gene is working with a new bottler in Marion and hopes to have donated bottles of their healthy, flavored water drinks available to hikers in the Lindamood School. Of hikers, he says, “we have made many friends over the years, and they have been generous with their donations. All hikers are welcome at the museum.” ▲



Honorary Membership Nominations

Nominations are now in order for honorary membership in the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) — an award intended to recognize long-term, extraordinary service to the Trail and ATC. More than 50 men and women have been accorded that status since the board established it as the organization's highest honor in the late 1960s. The nomination should state the type of contribution made, the years of service on behalf of the Trail project, and any other information that might be of interest to the selection committee, which will pass its recommendations on to the board's executive committee. Among other criteria for the honor is a bylaws requirement that "the service performed shall have had an inspirational or exemplary effect because of its special quality/character or innovative aspects, rather than be service of conventional nature but performed in a superior manner...if the nominee's service has been mainly within a particular club that must have had either regional implications or must bear upon the Trail as a whole, or upon the club's relationship to ATC."

Nominations can be emailed to general@appalachiantrail.org with "Honorary Member" in the subject line, or mailed, before April 8, to Charles Maynard, Chair, Honorary Membership Committee, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425.

New A.T. Museum Programs

The Appalachian Trail community is blessed with many members who have extraordinary talents, skills, and interests. With the opening of the A.T. Museum in the Old Mill at Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Gardners, Pennsylvania, we now have a place to showcase this dedication through programs that educate the public, inspire young people, entertain children, preserve the Trail's natural environment, spotlight our rich history, and celebrate all those who contribute to the A.T. community.

The museum is asking for help in filling the 2011 season with programs on topics closely related to the A.T. Among the possibilities are: story-telling, activities for children, Trail maintenance techniques, shelter building, arts and crafts of the A.T., hiker skills and equipment, early "pioneer" hikers, first person hiking experiences, history of A.T. maintaining clubs, and natural features of the Trail. Programs will be offered each Sunday at 1 p.m. from May through September, to the public, free of charge. The museum would love to hear from you. [↑](#)

For more information:

www.atmuseum.org



Franklin, North Carolina is located only three hours south west of Emory & Henry College, the location of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's 38th Biennial Conference.

"We extend a cordial invitation for you to visit us as you travel to and from the conference."



Franklin is an official designated Appalachian Community and our involvement with the A.T. is now in its 70th year. There are 60 miles of the A.T. located in Macon County, with easy access just seven miles from downtown Franklin.

Visit us and enjoy beautiful waterfalls, scenic mountain views, ruby and sapphire gem mining, and of course a walk down the A.T. and other trails.

www.franklinnc.com



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workshops on: engaging youth, A.T.
Communities, and volunteer leadership

workshops for: GPS skills and
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ATC Membership Meeting

**Enjoy the beauty, culture, and opportunities for
adventure that abound in southwest Virginia.**


Expand and share your knowledge as you meet fellow hikers and Trail community leaders, or immerse yourself in one of the many workshops and panel discussions. Many of the activities have been planned with non-hikers, and families with children in mind.

Registration opened March 1, 2011. ATC members should have already received printed registration materials. If you have not yet registered, do so by April 30 to receive the early registration discount and to ensure the best selections of the many activities.

★ **Register on-line to receive additional discounts.**

**A PDF of the registration materials
may be downloaded at www.virginia2011.org**





WEEKS ACT100th ANNIVERSARY

Almost fifty-percent of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail is located on lands administered by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service. From Springer Mountain most of the way to Shenandoah National Park, and from the Massachusetts-Vermont line pretty much to Grafton Notch in Maine, *these beautiful and bountiful wooded mountain lands are some of the most visited public lands in the USA.* They protect the headwaters of many important watersheds, supply a variety of wood products, are home to hundreds of very special places — congressionally designated and otherwise — provide critical habitat for a great variety of wildlife species, and offer an unparalleled diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities. >



WEEKS ACT 100th ANNIVERSARY

Previous page: Hikers relax atop Max Patch Bald, which is located inside one of the first Weeks Act purchases: Pisgah National Forest in western North Carolina; This page: Taking it in on Mount Liberty, New Hampshire, in the White Mountain National Forest.

PHOTOS BY BRYANT BAKER

However, as the 19th century ended and the 20th century began, these lands were in such poor condition that they were often abandoned to avoid paying property taxes. As the harvesting of the old-growth timber finished in the Northeast and moved south, the effects of this activity became evident. Stripped of their trees, overgrazed and over-farmed, severely eroding, or burned over, these lands would be unrecognizable to today's visitors. Some called them "the lands nobody wanted." Today, restored and reforested, many of these same lands have become some of our most popular and well-loved eastern wilderness areas.

The answer to this devastation was the creation of the eastern national forests. Through the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, President Teddy Roosevelt, an ardent conservationist, helped create more than 162 million acres of forest reserves (which were to become national forests) by the end of his administration in 1909. All of these forest reserves were formed from existing federal lands in the West. But there was no general authority for the federal government to establish national forests in the eastern half of the country (east of the 100th meridian) where the forested lands were in private ownership.

Conservation organizations (a new concept

at the time) that had formed in the north and South worked hard to create national forests in the East. The initial focus was on northern New England and the southern Appalachians, but support soon grew beyond those areas. President Theodore Roosevelt strongly supported a 1902 report to the Congress by the Secretary of Agriculture recommending the establishment of a national forest reserve in parts of the southern Appalachians. The Forest Service, the state geologist of North Carolina, the Appalachian National Forest Reserve Association, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the Appalachian Mountain Club, the American Forestry Association, and many others worked tirelessly to establish national forests in the Northeast and southern Appalachians and beyond. Conservation groups were joined in this effort by prominent New England economic interests. In the aftermath of flooding and heavy sedimentation caused by unchecked run-off from denuded mountain lands, owners of water-powered factories in New England realized these lands were essential to the consistent and dependable delivery of water power to their mills. Both groups had to overcome a lukewarm reception in Congress and the strong objections of a few powerful members of Congress who felt they

should not appropriate "one cent for scenery."

As a result of strong public support, legislation was passed under the leadership of Massachusetts Representative John W. Weeks and signed into law on March 1, 1911. The act allowed the federal government to purchase "forested, cutover, or denuded lands with the watersheds of navigable streams" for the purpose of "conserving the navigability of navigable rivers." The author of the Weeks Act, George Woodruff, who was Gifford Pinchot's chief lawyer, was concerned about the constitutionality of the federal government buying large expanses of lands. That is why it is tied to the watersheds of navigable streams, invoking the constitutional commerce clause. All eastern national forests grew from this act, setting in motion what many recognize as the most significant conservation achievement of the 20th century.

As with Appalachian Trail management, the Weeks Act was built on a foundation of cooperative management and required that a state had to pass enabling legislation before any land could be acquired within its boundaries, which often required approval of various state entities. The Forest Service also made it a policy to obtain the approval of county officials before any land was acquired within their jurisdiction. Through

the Weeks Act, Congress also established the National Forest Reservation Commission (NFRC), and any proposed purchase units, and each subsequent purchase, had to be approved by the NFRC. Appropriations had to be obtained, forest staffs developed and trained, and policies and safeguards put in place.

On March 27, 1911, the chief of the Forest Service submitted 13 proposed purchase units (lands identified as having areas within a specified boundary worthy of purchase) to the NFRC for approval. They approved 11 of these purchase units, located in the White Mountains of New England and in the southern Appalachians, and the first Weeks Act authorized purchase was the start of the Pisgah National Forest in western North Carolina. While many more purchase units were established over the next 18 years, more than half that were to become national forests were established during the Great Depression. Forest lands were being abandoned to avoid taxes, and landowners were eager to sell. A local public, desiring any program that would bring federal investment to their area, along with many who wanted to see better conservation and a public land base for all the people, gave a continuing impetus to the establishment of national forests in the East.

Numerous municipal water supplies depend on national forest watersheds that provide a stable source of clean water to their communities.

Large blocks of cut-over timber company land continued to be available into the 1960s to augment the forests — without large tracts to form a core of the new National Forests their establishment would have been unlikely.

The creation of these national forests was a wonder in itself, though the job had just begun for the Forest Service. Many of these lands had been cut over, burned over, or farmed out. For the first time in its short history, the agency now had the responsibility of restoring entire forested ecosystems across diverse landscapes. This included establishing effective fire control, stabilizing eroding areas, re-vegetating areas where fire and storms had removed much of the topsoil, planting trees, introducing professional forestry practices, dealing with trespass, controlling wild hogs, improving access to the public lands, creating and managing recreation facilities, preparing inventories and management plans for the resources and infrastructure of these new units, and many other activities. A great many agencies, organizations, and individuals helped with this effort. One of the most effective in improving the condition of these new eastern national forests was the Civilian

Conservation Corps of the Great Depression. The corps planted trees, solved erosion problems, built roads, bridges, dams, and recreation areas (and many segments of the A.T.), and fire fighting was improved.

Given all the challenges, it is amazing that this effort to create eastern national forests succeeded. However, 100 years later, 26 eastern states are home to 52 national forests encompassing 25,462,914 national forest system acres (about 6.8 percent of the forested land in the 26 states). These national forests include all kinds of forested environments, ranging from the White Mountains of New Hamp-

shire to the lakes of northern Minnesota, from the hardwood forests of the southern Appalachians to the pine woods of the coastal plain and pine and hardwood forests of the Piedmont. When added to the existing forest reserves in the West, the eastern forests round out the national forest system today to more than 192,909,000 acres.

The success of these efforts are very evident today. There are now 132 congressionally designated wilderness areas where there once were stumps and debris. There are 34 national wild and scenic rivers, nine national recreation areas, 16 national game refuges and wildlife preserves, more than 27,000 miles of hiking trails, (including 1,024 miles of the Appalachian Trail), more than 3,700 developed recreation sites, and more than 53 million recreational visits to these eastern national forests each year. Numerous organizations expand the scope and reach of the national forests through programs they administer under land-use permits from the Forest Service. The timber resource, which in many cases was practically nonexistent when these lands were acquired, now totals an estimated 42 billion cubic feet of growing stock and about 135 billion board feet of sawtimber. Streams that were degraded and choked with silt now flow with clear, clean, high quality water. Numerous municipal water supplies depend on national forest watersheds that provide a stable source of clean water to their communities. Wildlife habitats were reestablished and managed. Hunters and fishermen now enjoy some of the best outdoor experiences in the East as the fish and game have returned to many of these cooperatively managed habitats. As our population grows and encroaches into more and more formerly rural areas, the presence of these large areas of public land become increasingly important as places of respite and recreation.

As we reflect back on this outstanding accomplishment, we should also remember that there is still work to be done. World War II stopped all land acquisition as our country's

resources were focused on the war effort. As a result, several of the newer eastern national forests have fragmented ownership patterns, while others had critical gaps in important resource areas. After WWII, there were very limited Weeks Act appropriations for acquisition. The 1965 passage of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provided another source of funding for land purchases under the authority of the Weeks Act. However, while substantial monies have periodically been available through LWCF, annual appropriations have never approached what was available and have varied greatly through the years. Much of the land within the proclamation boundaries of the individual forests remains private property, including many of our Appalachian Trail Community partners. We can best commemorate and honor the incredible achievements of the past 100 years by continuing to manage these eastern national forests with care and professionalism, always looking for ways to enhance the values they provide to our citizens. These lands are of particular value because the legislative mandate to manage for multiple uses provides options for the future. The benefits from these public lands will continue to grow as the nation's population increases.

We in the Appalachian Trail community can ponder what the A.T. would look like without the eastern national forests, or whether it would even exist, and consider ourselves blessed to have such a wonderful resource over which the A.T. can make its way from Georgia to Maine through the now “wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains.” We can do our part to honor this achievement by continuing to be good stewards of the A.T. and its greenway and assure the A.T. continues to provide exceptional public access to the highlights of the eastern national forest system.

The next time you take a hike on the A.T., tell your hiking companions about the Weeks Act, and how important it is to remain engaged in conserving the areas near the Trail. Areas that are “the lands that nobody wanted” may be diamonds in the rough and become treasured resources of the future. If anything comes out of the Weeks Act centennial, it should be the realization that the job isn't really over and that the foresight of 100 years ago is just as valid today. The Weeks Act is one of the most significant environmental laws of the 20th century that nobody has ever heard of; it's time for that to change. ▲

Streams that were degraded and choked with silt now flow with clear, clean, high quality water. Above: Rocky Fork Creek in Unicoi County, Tennessee, which is approximately 50 percent comprised of Cherokee National Forest lands, through which the A.T. winds its way.

PHOTO BY DAVID RAMSEY



Hunters and fishermen now enjoy some of the best outdoor experiences in the East as the fish and game have returned to many of these cooperatively managed habitats. Above: Fishing on the Nolichucky River in Erwin, Tennessee.

PHOTO BY DAVID RAMSEY



WEEKS ACT
100th
ANNIVERSARY

TEXT BY GORDON SMALL, DAVE SHERMAN, JIM SNOW, AND MORGAN SOMMERVILLE



Growing Beyond BOUNDARIES

BY WENDY K. PROBST

Six years ago, the future of a 377-acre farm in southwest Virginia was bleak. Originally donated to Virginia Tech in 1988, it had not been used for a number of years, was slated for unwanted development, and had been ranked the eleventh most endangered historic site in the state by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

“In 2005 I worked for Virginia Tech’s College of Natural Resources as a coordinator for a new community group in Catawba, Virginia called Catawba Landcare,” says Christine Gabbard, who describes Catawba Landcare as “neighbors working together to enhance the quality of the valley.” “Their focus is on the land, the community, and the economy,” says Gabbard. “Essentially asking: how can neighbors work together to ensure a sustainable community?” In 2007 Catawba Landcare’s focus turned toward that lonely farm. “There had been concern, among residents in Catawba, faculty at Virginia Tech, and other stakeholders, that because the farm had not been actively used, it may be sold for development,” explains Gabbard. “A legitimate concern given it was listed as Virginia’s surplus property until 2008, and at different times has been proposed to be developed as a prison, golf course, and biotech facility.”

Dating back to the early 1900s, the farm was once a dairy farm, employing nearby residents to provide meat and dairy products to the staff and patients at the Catawba Sanitarium, which is now known as the Catawba Hospital. Industrialization of the nation’s food supply system diminished need for a local dairy, and in 1988 the hospital transferred the 377 acres of its land holdings to Virginia Tech. For years following, Virginia Tech’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences used the farm for research and education, but once interest and funds dwindled, the farm sat empty — an underutilized gem in the fertile Catawba Valley.

“The idea for the Catawba Sustainability Center was uniquely born out of a request from Catawba Landcare,” says Gabbard, who explains that in October of 2007, Catawba Landcare approached faculty at Virginia Tech and asked how this property, the university (i.e., fac-



Clockwise from top: The old bridge crossing the Catawba Creek on the Catawba Sustainability Center property; Students from Virginia Tech’s Constructor’s Consortium stabilize and replace portions of the roof of the old dairy and hay barns; John Robinson, from Australia, participates in a community work day in the Victoria-Virginia Landcare Fellowship program.



“CSC has maintained its community focus by providing space and opportunities for engagement — from the university to the community and from the community to the university.”

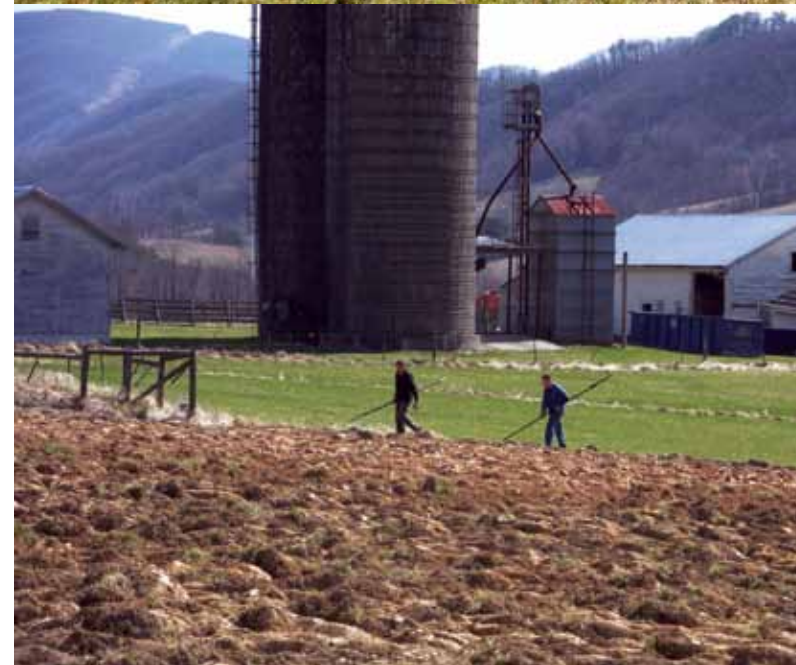
ulty, students, and other resources), and their community could collaborate to help them achieve their mission, and the mission of the University. Today, the Catawba Sustainability Center (CSC), located in the view-shed of VA 311, and adjacent to the Appalachian Trail, is an aptly, self-described “showcase for university education and engagement with the local community — a place to practice, demonstrate, learn, and teach about sustainability issues that affect our world today and into the future.” Gabbard had a vision that went beyond the university boundaries. “Issues of this scale and diversity cannot be addressed within disciplinary silos; instead they require a multidisciplinary approach and an engaged and supportive community to help ensure the application of the appropriate research and technology; and to assist in information transfer,” says Gabbard. A new and bold vision for the center came into being when, in 2009, the property found a new administrative home in the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center under Outreach and International Affairs; and Virginia Tech’s tagline: “Invent the Future,” appeared to fall perfectly into step with the CSC.

The Catawba Sustainability Center has since developed into a thriving mix of local and regional projects involving Virginia Tech students of varying disciplines, and engaging with a broadly diverse group of partners and advisors from the area. “This ensures that we are able to address specific needs in the region, transfer lessons learned beyond university boundaries, and receive feedback from community partners to inform future research and demonstrations,” says Gabbard. As the CSC’s director, Christy Gabbard

oversees all aspects of the university’s work related to the center, and works closely with individuals who utilize the center to help them achieve their business, research, and education goals. She also participates in numerous public outreach and community service activities and creates programmatic platform for students, faculty, and staff for the development and application of best practices in sustainable development, regionally-focused “green” business development, and best land management practices.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is one of the CSC’s more than 27 enthusiastic partners in the region ranging from Roanoke County, local community groups and businesses, academic institutions, and Virginia state agencies to various branches of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Park Service, Catawba Hospital, and other non-profits like the New River Land Trust, Roanoke League of Artists, and Chesapeake Bay Foundation (the center is situated in the Upper James River Basin in the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay watershed). ATC’s director of conservation, Laura Belleville, serves on the CSC’s advisory committee. “The center sits under one of the most popular overlooks in Virginia — McAfee’s Knob. My role is to help the center connect to Benton MacKaye’s original philosophy for the A.T., which was very much about inspiring sustainable communities,” says Belleville. “I believe that the CSC offers a model approach, one that I would welcome seeing in many areas along the Trail corridor. As we honor the 90th Anniversary of Benton MacKaye’s 1921 article that presented his concepts for

Above from left: Catawba Valley residents and members of Catawba Landcare, Rob Guiles and Ned Yost, Virginia Tech student Katie Trozzo, New River Community College student Travis Mills, and Tadd Hopkins of the Virginia Tech Corp of Cadets participate in various sustainable planting projects. Opposite page, clockwise from top: Looking across CSC towards the A.T. ridge line; Youth from churches in the Roanoke area volunteer with local, church-based non-profit Ekklesia Acres to prep the buildings to store produce grown on site, which would be donated to food banks in the area; Volunteers from Living Water Christian Church work to prepare the soil for Ekklesia Acres in 2009. PHOTOS BY COURTNEY KIMMEL AND LARA EGBERT





the A.T., it is organizations like the Catawba Sustainability Center that reveal to me that MacKaye was onto something that is still very relevant today.” As one of their current projects, called the Appalachian Trail Connection, the CSC has partnered with Roanoke County, ATC, and the U.S. National Park Service to establish a blue-blazed connector trail to the adjacent Appalachian Trail. “[It] will get hikers into the village of Catawba without having to hike on Route 311,” says Gabbard. “During their hike they will learn about the research and demonstrations supported by Virginia Tech and our partners; and about the community and businesses in Catawba. We also plan to build a hostel where hikers can stay, live, and learn with us on their journey.”

To address sustainability issues and keep the property connected to and serving as an asset to the community and the university, the CSC has employed a three-pronged approach that includes: community engagement and

outreach, learning and discovery, and land-based business incubation. Among these is a program called VT EarthWorks. “In 2009, we launched VT EarthWorks, an incubation program providing support services for agriculture-based businesses,” says Gabbard, who directs the development of the program. “We offer learning opportunities on low-input and organic food production, business management and planning skills, and access to direct and wholesale markets. In addition we provide land for growers at the CSC.” VT EarthWorks, developed with support from the Blue Moon Fund — a global, environmentally-focused foundation — offers programming focused on support services for local food providers. Land for lease is offered at the CSC to growers in need; the Catawba Valley Farmers Market offers a place for producers to sell; and the Roanoke Valley Locavore Directory and the New River Valley Local Food Directory provide free marketing outlets. VT EarthWorks has partnered with VT Knowledge Works, VT Business Technology Center, and VA Cooperative Extension to integrate Virginia Tech’s multidisciplinary intellectual assets to foster business development and to create new opportunities for agriculture and natural resource businesses, partnering organizations, the university, and the region.

“CSC has maintained its community focus by providing space and opportunities for engagement, serving as a two-way conduit for information transfer — from the university to the community and from the community to the university,” says Gabbard. This has included onsite demonstrations, community focus groups, meetings and workshops, and commitment from CSC staff to serve as a representative in local community groups. “CSC is a living, learning classroom/laboratory available for innovative research and projects related to sustainability issues. The center provides opportunities to explore the interplay between economics and the environment, and their impact on relationships in the home, on the land, and in the community,” she continues. “In addition to Virginia Tech students, it is available to K-12 and community colleges.” Since 2008, CSC has hosted service learning events and projects affecting hundreds of undergraduates, graduates,

It is organizations like [this] that reveal that MacKaye was onto something that is still very relevant today.”

and interns from Virginia Tech. Gabbard says that one student, Ritchie Vaughan, who completed her undergraduate research project at CSC, described it as “the most intensive and educational course I have taken in my undergraduate studies at Virginia Tech.” Vaughan was later awarded the Outstanding Academic College Senior Award for the College of Natural Resources in 2009.

The CSC represents an investment of almost \$1 million in funding annually. Current funding falls under two categories: projects that showcase innovative land-management practices, which create better environmental stewardship; and support for new and expanding agriculture and natural-resource businesses. On the cutting edge of farming technology is the Soil Sensors project, which integrates soil sensors and hand-held mobile devices (think: iPhone) into land-management practices. Emerging technologies demonstrated at the CSC will be introduced to Roanoke County Public Schools to teach the sciences. A newly formed partnership between the CSC and USDA National Agroforestry Center has resulted in a project focused on demonstration plantings of medicinal plants, floral products, and edibles. One key payoff of this project is better water quality. A demonstration of this type of buffer was planted in 2010 by an eclectic volunteer group of community members, Virginia Tech students, and the Virginia Tech Corp of Cadets. In one of the center’s earlier projects in 2009, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, along with Goodman & Company, planted more than 300 trees along a tributary feeding Catawba Creek, which runs for 2.5 miles through the property, and serves to remind people that, even in southwest Virginia, changes to the land impact water quality in the Chesapeake.

The future of the Catawba Sustainability Center looks vast. Gabbard is particularly looking forward to developing a farmer training program for refugees in the Roanoke Valley. “This year we had five Somali-bantu attend the Growers Academy, a VT EarthWorks learning series,” she says. “Recently we have written a few proposals to support development of a more targeted program that includes translation and curriculum with a strong visual component, and will help get them farming at the CSC.” For her part, ATC’s Laura Belleville is also thrilled with the center and its bright future. “The Center evolved out of the energy of a few community members in Catawba and the bold vision of Christy Gabbard and others at Virginia Tech,” says Belleville. The development of the Catawba Sustainability Center assures protection of the agricultural fields that are in the viewshed of the Trail. “Newer facilities at the site may also offer venues to host Trail to

Every Classroom teacher training and A.T. volunteer training,” continues Belleville. “I hope that ATC’s connection with projects like the sustainability center can help us forward concepts that support protection of agricultural systems along the corridor. At the same time we are offering hikers and members an opportunity to learn about innovative programs near the A.T. that, in the long run, will help conserve the landscapes that are an important part of our hiking experience.” Great expectations now flourish for a once neglected farm in southwest Virginia, where the collective aspiration is to “transfer lessons learned beyond university boundaries.” ▲

Clockwise from below: Students from Virginia Tech’s Leadership Tech program walk up the farm lane, tired from a day of stream monitoring in the Catawba Creek; The center contains nearly 2.5 miles of stream frontage along the Catawba Creek, a tributary of the Upper James River; Susan Short (left) director of VT Outreach Program Development with Christine Gabbard; Nick Funk, a Junior Environmental Policy and Planning major at Virginia Tech stands in the Catawba Creek on a cold October day to conduct soil and stream surveys; VT EarthWorks member Bo Wines hays most of the property and works with CSC to transition some of his cow herd to rotational grazing. PHOTOS BY COURTNEY KIMMEL

For more information visit: www.vtrc.vt.edu/catawba





MAGNIFICENT DISPLAY

Bryant Baker (“Sunrise”) and his wife Laura (“Lola”) work as whitewater rafting guides on the New and Gauley Rivers in West Virginia and as wilderness therapy instructors in southeast Utah. In 2010, they completed a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, accomplishing a dream that began when they were married five years earlier. “It was the most beautiful and the most painful, the most empowering and, at the same time, the most humbling experience,” says Bryant.

SUNSET WITH A SIDE OF COFFEE; MAX PATCH BALD, NORTH CAROLINA



"LOLA" AT SUNRISE, MOUNT LIBERTY, NEW HAMPSHIRE.



CAIRN AND SUNSET, SADDLEBACK MOUNTAIN, MAINE.



Clockwise from top right: Venado and Tecolote begin their A.T. hike in Harpers Ferry; Reunited with mother Regina and sister Oona at Mount Washington; Taking on Saddleback Mountain in Maine.

the story of VENADO AND TECOLOTE

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY PAUL MOLYNEAUX

THERE WAS A LITTLE BOY, WHOSE FATHER WORKED ABROAD MOST OF HIS LIFE — sometimes with the family (including his adoring mother and older sister), often, unfortunately without. His father once told him about the Appalachian Trail, a long hike from Georgia to Maine — the boy's birthplace.

In November 2009, in Mexico, the father entertained his children in the evenings by reading *The Last of the Mohicans* to them, and one night they watched the movie based on the book. "The story takes place along the Hudson River and Lake George," the father explained. "But they made the movie in North Carolina, near where the Appalachian Trail goes through." That led to more questions from the boy. "The Trail skirts the country of our first ancestors in North America," the father said. "The Dutch, French, and Mohawk. Some people like to say they had ancestors on both sides of the Civil War, or the Revolution, but we had ancestors on both sides of the French and Indian War.

A few days later the boy asked the most important question: "Can we do that? Can we hike that Trail?" "We can think about it," said the father. They started researching and quickly discovered the essays of the Trail's architect, Benton MacKaye, who wrote about sustainability in the early twentieth century, before it was cool. He said that long-distance hiking trails should anchor what he colorfully called "a barbarian invasion," a countermovement to the metropolitan invasion of America's fast disappearing wilderness. "I'm not sure what all that means," said the father, who had picked up these tidbits on the Internet, out of context. "But I'm sure I'd like to find out." He ordered an out-of-print book of MacKaye's essays, *From Geography to Geotechnics*.

They contacted the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and in January they received a standard thru-hikers' packet from the ATC, announced their plans to hike the Trail on whiteblaze.net, and chose Trail names. They were speaking Spanish most of the time, so the boy, inspired by Uncas, from *The Last of the Mohicans*, whose name in French was *La Cerf Agile* — the swift deer — came around to the name "Venado," which means deer in Spanish. In the book, Uncas's father was *La Gros Serpent* — the big snake — but Venado's father did not want to be a snake, so he chose another animal, and took its Spanish name, *Tecolote*, the owl. In February, MacKaye's book arrived. On the ninth of March, the father and son started off from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, heading north on a three-phase thru-hike. They planned to hike as far as Vermont, arriving in late April, then take a train to Atlanta and, starting from Springer Mountain, the Trail's southern terminus, hike north again to Harpers Ferry. From there they would take

the train back to Vermont and continue hiking north to Katahdin, the northern terminus of the A.T. “We’ll do the middle part first,” said Tecolote. “Not many people leave here heading north this time of year,” warned Laurie Potteiger at the ATC headquarters in Harpers Ferry. “You’ll be chasing winter all the way.” “We’re from Maine,” they told her. “We can handle the cold; it’s the Lyme disease we’re worried about.”

The Barbarian Utopia

“IF THESE PEOPLE WERE ON THE SKYLINE, AND KEPT THEIR EYES OPEN, THEY WOULD SEE THE THINGS THAT THE GIANT COULD SEE.” “AN APPALACHIAN TRAIL: A PROJECT IN REGIONAL PLANNING,” —*Benton MacKaye, 1921*

Venado and Tecolote wake up to more rain, and decide to make a fire and stay put for the day, drying their gear. All morning they chat with their shelter mates from Philly. “Poppy grew up there,” Venado tells them, and in answer to their questions he explains his and his father’s thru-hiking plan. “Where do you live now?” asks the guy, Chip, a puppet maker. “East Machias, Maine, and Mexico,” says the boy. “East Machias? Do you know...?” Chip’s been there and reels off the names of people they know in common, and they comment on the small-world-ness of the Trail. Chip’s companion Shinara and he had planned to go to a spiritual retreat, but money got in the way and they decided they could find just as much spirituality on the Trail. “That’s what Benton MacKaye wanted,” says Tecolote. Chip and Shinara have not heard of MacKaye, and Tecolote fills them in on their unwitting roles as participants in what he interprets as the “barbarian invasion.”



Venado in his name-appropriate head gear on top of Mount Madison in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

“MacKaye wasn’t really a barbarian, he was Harvard educated, very civilized. They called him a 19th century Utopian stuck in a 20th century reality. Maybe he picked up the barbarian thing from Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt said: ‘Unless we keep the barbarian virtues, gaining the civilized ones will be of little avail.’ Or maybe Teddy got that from MacKaye. The idea is that people need to understand how natural systems work, and make that the basis for development decisions. MacKaye said that people need connection to three critical things in order to understand life: community, rural processes, and wilderness; and his vision of

the Trail provides all three to the urbanites, the ‘civilizees’ as he called them, who have become more and more disconnected from anything real.”

Tecolote is lecturing, and the pair’s attention ebbs and flows as they pack to leave. Tecolote presses on. “We got the idea of a hike, and then we wondered if there were other trails. We thought about Machu Picchu.” “How come we didn’t go there, Poppy?” Venado chimes in as they put more wood on the fire. “It wasn’t long enough, and once I read MacKaye’s essays, ‘An Appalachian Trail,’ — which I highly recommend, and his “barbarian Utopia” speech (the actual title of which was “Outdoor Culture:

The Philosophy of Through Trails”) — that was it. I was totally hooked. He wanted to have communally owned camps at intervals along the Trail; they’d be self-supporting through sustainable logging and farming. That’s where you’d get the connection to community and rural processes, and then get in touch with wilderness by hiking between the camps. A lot of what we’re planning to do is to try and find the places where MacKaye’s vision manifested, intentionally or naturally, and hopefully write about it.”

Chip and Shinara have their bags packed and are sitting on the edge of the lean-to, enjoying the fire and looking out at the rain, the gray dripping forest, the wet ground where every upturned leaf holds a little handful of water, and run-off burbling down the Trail. “We were heading for Harpers Ferry,” says Shinara, “but the rain.” “What’ll you do now?” Tecolote asks. She announces their new plan is to hike to the road, get to their car, and go home. Venado and Tecolote say goodbye and watch them go.

“Poppy, did Benton MacKaye invent the trail?” asks Venado. “No there were other trails, he just put the pieces together for this one.” And Venado puts the pieces together by questioning and listening to his father expound about MacKaye’s vision to virtually anyone willing to listen. Tecolote pulls out MacKaye’s book, *From Geography to Geotechnics*, and begins to read.

The next morning they eat bowls of granola, soaked in powdered milk, and head up the Trail in a fading drizzle, bound for Pennsylvania, Tecolote’s native state. “What do you think of when you think of a barbarian?” Tecolote asks. “Um, a Native American?” answers Venado apprehensively. “That’s kind of a stereotype. I think the way MacKaye meant it was anyone who connected with wilderness in a positive way,” says Tecolote. “But what is a Utopia?” the boy asks. “According to MacKaye, it’s a pipedream. There’s two kinds, one is the Utopia of making your pipedream come true, like us here on the Trail. The other is to go to the movies and identify with characters who make their pipedreams come true. What do you prefer, hiking the trail or watching movies?”

“I like both,” answers Venado. “Me too,” says Tecolote. “But this hike is real, and the movie is not. MacKaye said there are two kinds of Utopias: one of creative thought, and the other of effortless escape. I think barbarians choose creative thought.”

Venado has heard a lot about MacKaye and the Utopian qualities of the Trail. Back in Mexico, he listened as his father lobbied his mother to support the hike.

“Listen to this, listen,” Tecolote had said, reading from a handful of papers that still smelled of the printer.

The problem of living is at bottom an economic one. And this alone is bad enough, even in a period of so-called ‘normalcy.’ But living has been considerably complicated of late in various ways — by war, by questions of personal liberty, and by “menaces” of one kind or another. There have been created bitter antagonisms. We are undergoing also the bad combination of high prices and unemployment.

This situation is world wide — the result of a world-wide war.

“MacKaye wrote that in 1921. You’d have thought he wrote it last week. He came up with this just few months after his wife committed suicide; he saw the Trail as a healing thing, in all kinds of ways,”



Venado’s sister, Oona, studies a map somewhere north of Rutland, Vermont.



Venado and Oona exploring the Trail-side town of Hanover, New Hampshire.

ridge tops, looking out through the bare trees at the valleys below, “seeing what giants can see,” as MacKaye said; and in the afternoon of their seventh day they cross the Pennsylvanian line and reach their goal, Deer Lick Shelter, a ten-mile hike from Devil’s Racecourse. As they unpack, two women, both in their late 40s, and a dog come by; they quickly sign the register, and prepare to leave.

“How far you going?” asks Tecolote. “Antietam or Tumbling Run,” says the smaller of the two. “Where’d you start?” asks Tecolote. “Ensign Caldwell. We do that many miles a day, every day.” And they’re gone. “What do you think Venado, should we go to Antietam?” “Okay, let’s go,” says Venado, who still has plenty of energy.

Those early experiences set the tone for their entire hike: enjoying each day and living in the moment. Through perseverance, and with help from many fellow hikers, they met the various challenges presented by weather, terrain, and simply endless days of walking. The father had set out to teach the son, but Venado’s determination and many sage observations educated Tecolote just as much. On the ninth of October, they headed up Katahdin. It was a “Class III” day, and when Venado hit the 45-mile-per-hour winds above the tree line and felt himself being torn from the rocks — with heavy encouragement from his father — he called it good. So they called it a thru-hike, and went home. Someday they may go back and perform the ritual of touching the sign atop Katahdin, but coming down the mountain they felt they had reached their goal. 🏔️

Editor’s note: “Class III day” refers to Baxter State Park’s classification regarding the suitability of weather and trail conditions for hiking Katahdin. A “class III” rating means at least one trail on the mountain is closed, and hiking above tree line is not recommended.

said the father. “But why now?” Venado’s mother had asked.

“Look, I’m 52, I have friends who get cancer and are gone in six months. This feels right, it’s the right time. Besides, can you imagine being a kid and asking to hike the Appalachian Trail, and having your father say ‘yes?’”

“Two months of sending food,” she had said. “After that no promises.” Two months is a long time on the Trail. “I’ll be happy if we make two weeks,” says Tecolote. But every day the sounds of their own footsteps — in mud, on rock, slapping through wet leaves — grow more familiar. They stride along the

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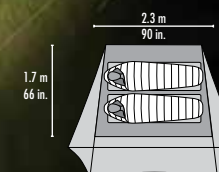


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If you sign up to become a monthly donor with a gift of \$15 or more a month, we'll send you an autographed copy of Leonard Atkins book *Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail* while supplies last. Call our office at 304.535.6331 x120 visit: appalachiantrail.org/guardians to sign up today. 

**Thank you,
Royce Gibson**

DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

p.s. Everyone should have received their 2011 biennial registration package in the mail by now. Please take advantage of the early bird and on-line registration discounts by registering today at virginia2011.org/register. See details in this issue of *A.T. Journeys* (page 17).



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Female, 35, seeks female partner(s) for **100-mile north-bound section** hike in Vermont this summer. GA – NY ‘01, NY – VT in sections ‘02-‘10. Contact: gportia@gmail.com.

Looking for **partners for the GR11** (follows the Spanish side of the Pyrenees from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean) in 2012. 2011 section hike somewhere in U.S. for planning/discussion. Paul “Patagonius” Labounty, age 66, retired, completed CT 2010, LT and Camino ‘08, JMT ‘07, A.T. in sections ‘01-‘06. Contact: plabounty9000@yahoo.com.

I am going to begin hiking the Appalachian Trail around the middle or end of April of this year. I **plan to thru-hike**. I am a female in her forties and my

expected pace is slow to moderate, but I plan on making it to Maine before October 1. This is a dream I hope to accomplish and I would like someone to accomplish it with me. If you are interested in hiking with me, contact: happytrails34@yahoo.com.

Female, 52, retired teacher, seeking companion(s) for **2-3 week section** hike on the A.T. starting after June 15. Flexible on the section, but strongly prefer somewhere south of Harpers Ferry. Contact: ronpaulaherion@bellsouth.net.

Partner wanted for Florida hike. I’m looking for an experienced backpacker who can hike 166 miles in 11 days to join me on my final stretch of the **Florida National Scenic Trail** (Eglin AFB and Gulf Islands Seashore) in

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Still for sale: a **very tiny cabin** (less than 200 square feet); it is more like a base camp, situated on six acres of rugged mountain land in western North Carolina. This property has a commanding view of Max Patch. Must sell. Any reasonable offer considered and owner financing may be



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For Your Information
Stewardship Council
Selections. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is calling for candidates for the 2011-2013 Stew-

ardship Council. This special committee of the ATC board oversees policy development and programs related to stewardship of the A.T. and its surrounding lands and resources. Candidates should demonstrate skills and experience conducive to effective management of the A.T., a conservation mindset, a holistic view of Trail stewardship and a commitment to volunteer leadership. Please send candidate recommendations by April 15 to council@appalachiantrail.org, or Stewardship Selections, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425.

Franklin's **April Fools Trail Days** and Hiker Bash. Franklin, North Carolina, a designated Appalachian Trail Community will host its third annual April Fools Trail Days to include the seventh Annual Hiker Bash Friday and Saturday April 1-2, 2011. The

event, will take place in downtown Franklin on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Hiker Bash will include food, music, and entertainment at the Sapphire Inn Motel Friday and Saturday night. For more information visit: www.aprilfoolstraildays.com, www.thesapphireinn.com, www.appalachiantrailservices.com, or contact Linda Schlott at lschlott@franklinnc.com.

1981 A.T. **Hikers 30th Reunion** on "Golden Pond" in Holderness, New Hampshire; June 10-12, 2011. A gathering of hikers at Rockywold-Deephaven Camps (RDC) on Squam Lake at the southern edge of the White Mountain National Forest. A.T. hikers from any year to join us. Visit: www.rdcsquam.com or contact John at johnjurczynski@yahoo.com or Peter at abcbu-tryn@yahoo.com.

Grand Reopening of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Visitor Center. May 7, 2011 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. : 799 Washington Street, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The event will feature new and exciting exhibits, a Q&A session with recent thru-hikers, kids' activities, a movie featuring the A.T., a chance to learn about hiking and caring for the A.T., a one-day-only, ATC membership special, and more! Snacks and refreshments will be provided. Contact: Laurie Potteiger (304) 535-6331, ext.128 or lpotteiger@appalachiantrail.org.

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My feet hurt. My knee hurts. They do not simply ache, and they are not just sore and stiff. They hurt. My feet are calloused and blistered. My heels are bruised and tender to the touch. Where the nail of my right pinkie-toe used to be there is now ... well, I don't really know what that is. My knee is swollen; I touch it with my index finger and can feel the fluid that has built up around my knee cap. One-hundred-and-eight days, 12 states, and more than 1,600 miles of walking have taken their toll. I gently massage my feet and knees after another long day on the Trail, mainly out of obligation, feeling guilty for what I have been putting them through. Sometimes I imagine them looking up at me and yelling obscenities, asking me what in the world I am thinking.

As my mind drifts, I remember a story of a woman. She was also attempting to thru-hike the A.T., and, as every thru-hiker is at one point or another, she was asked the question, "why are you out here?" Her reason was somewhat shocking. Shortly before starting her hike, she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Her doctor had given her months, a year at most, to live. She said she wanted to be on the Trail because every day that she was in the wilderness, every time she struggled to make it up a mountain, every moment of pain, every step, was another moment that she knew she was alive. I have found that I understand her answer a little more each day. It is when I am pushing up the last few feet of a steep climb — sweat completely saturating my shirt and pouring down my face — and just as I reach the summit, I am greeted by a gentle breeze that manages to send a chill down the length of my spine. It is when I am bending down over the coldest, clearest spring I have ever seen, cupping my hands, and tasting its refreshing purity. It is standing atop an exposed ridge, trying to comprehend the magnificence of the sunset that is on display before me, and all I can do is throw my arms out wide and scream. It is waking up to the beautiful songs of birds and falling asleep to the soothing hoot of an owl. It is when it rains so hard that all there is to do is laugh. It is getting to wake up on the morning of our fifth anniversary and look at my wife asleep next to me. We are in our tent, on the Appalachian Trail, living out

a dream that was just some crazy idea we began talking about when we were engaged. These are the moments that remind me that I am alive, the moments that remind me that I am blessed.

A friend of mine once shared with me his analogy for life. He explained to me this idea of how life is like a big sponge that is totally saturated, and that the harder we squeeze, the more life pours out onto us. I have thought about that image for a while now. Often times I have envisioned myself squeezing every last drop of life out of that sponge, squeezing so hard that it even begins to hurt. I look back down at my feet, realizing I have a new understanding of my friend's analogy. Maybe they are not yelling obscenities at me after all. They are simply reminding me that I am alive. Maybe life is less about being comfortable and more about learning to thrive in the



uncomfortable. Maybe sometimes we need to embrace the struggle instead of trying to find an easier way. As I lay back and slowly begin to drift to sleep, I think about the experience, the moments, and the adventure that still lies ahead. Such a gift life is. I hope I will always remember this truth. I hope I will always remember to live life 'til it hurts and to laugh louder the harder it rains. ⬆

*Bryant Baker and his wife Laura
thru-hiked the Trail in 2010
THEY LIVE IN MCCAMEY, TEXAS.*

"As I See It" is a monthly column from guest contributors representing the full range of ATC partners, members, and volunteers. To submit a column for consideration, please email journeys@appalachiantrail.org or write to Editor/As I See It, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425.





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