

A JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

September – October 2014

Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy 40th
Alpine Stewards | Celebrating the Ridge Act



A JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Volume 10, Number 5
September – October 2014

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR |

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL WOULD NOT EXIST IF IT WERE NOT

for our dedicated volunteer force. The A.T. was originally conceived, designed, and built in the 1920s and 30s by a stalwart group of individuals and organizations. Today it is maintained and managed by a remarkable volunteer force organized by 31 clubs that do everything from Trail construction, rehabilitation, and annual maintenance to environmental monitoring, boundary marking, and Trail condition assessments. Our volunteer force is also a potent and effective voice for protecting the Trail against the negative impacts of new transmission lines, gas pipelines, resort developments on adjacent lands, high elevation communication towers, and many other threats to the A.T. experience.

Last month I had the honor and the pleasure to be part of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) second biennial Volunteer Leadership Conference, which brought together more than 50 representatives of 29 different Trail maintaining clubs. We were joined by staff from the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service, more than 10 ATC staff members from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and our four regional offices, as well as ATC Stewardship Council members and ATC Board chair Sandi Marra. It was a beautiful weekend that reminded me how "working" on Saturday and Sunday can be so inspiring and so much fun!

Our discussions covered many themes and topics, ranging from backcountry sanitation to group use to our Trail to Every Classroom and A.T. Communities programs. And of course there were hikes.

However, the big topic for the weekend was the Trail maintaining clubs' roles in helping us move forward in implementing our five-year Strategic Plan. This plan is not intended to take the ATC in an entirely new direction; rather, it builds upon our success and our expertise in Trail stewardship and protection. At the same time, it establishes some new goals for our organization that align well with the priorities of the Park Service and the Forest Service.

The five goals in the plan are titled: Effective Stewardship, Proactive Protection, Engaged Partners, Broader Relevancy, and Operational Excellence. You will hear much more in the future about the plan, the goals, and the outcomes and strategies for each goal. I was very impressed by the willingness of our Trail maintaining club leaders to consider how these goals fit into each of their organization's agendas, and how they can most effectively collaborate with the ATC in moving forward with the Strategic Plan.

I want to fully endorse the main message of Sandi's column in this issue of *A.T. Journeys* regarding the critical need for the ATC and our primary partners to attract a younger and more diverse audience to the Trail as hikers and volunteers. That is the intent and the reason we selected Broader Relevancy as one of our five goals, and I believe it is the most important aspect of the plan for the long-term.

The Appalachian Trail is today the most well-known and popular long distance hiking trail in the United States. To maintain that stature, we must work together to expand its reach and its enjoyment to the America of the future. ⚡

Ronald J. Tipton | *Executive Director/CEO*

Follow Ron on Twitter at: twitter.com/Ron_Tipton



Children take in the incredible 360-degree view from Little Hump Mountain along the A.T. in North Carolina during a Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy guided hike – photo courtesy of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

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This year, the ATC asked the public to submit photographs that delighted in the grandeur and the details of the A.T. — thousands of votes were cast and six winners were chosen.

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Three decades ago, the construction of luxury condos on a mountain summit in North Carolina — within view of one of the most beloved sections of the A.T. — became the catalyst that would serve to protect a valuable natural resource: mountain views.

The protected view of mountain ridges from Grassy Ridge Bald in North Carolina — looking south toward the Yellow Mountain State Natural Area — photo by Witt Langstaff



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I LETTERS

I ENJOYED CARLIE GENTRY'S article ("Crossing Thru" July/August) very much. When I saw the cover picture of the backpackers walking through the breezeway at Neels Gap, I literally felt a rush of blood through my body. Suddenly it is 1978 or 79 and I'm driving down US 19. At Neel's Gap, I see a little sign indicating it is an Appalachian Trail crossing. There's a small rock-faced building and parking lot across the highway, and I decide to pull in. Even then, someone there was able to tell me something about the A.T. I return to the breezeway and walk away from the road about 100 yards. I wanted to keep going, and decided that I definitely wanted to know more about the A.T. Since then, [I have hiked] thousands of miles of trails — the A.T. and others in the U.S. and also in other countries. But always, that breezeway and general area of the gap will be a very special place to me.

Dell Loyless

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

I LOVED THE TRAIL TO EVERY Classroom article by Lori Innes ("Essential Education" July/August). I was so excited to hear about the program when it first launched and am even more delighted by the successes I keep hearing about from educators like her up and down the Trail. What could be better than America's greatest Trail to get kids outside to play, learn, and introduce them to a *place* that has no end. May the Trail continue to be blessed with more passionate educators and programs such as this. Long live the Appalachian Trail!

John Motz

REEDERS, PENNSYLVANIA

I GOT TO HIKE WITH A VERY diverse group of wonderful hikers [during my 2014 thru-hike]. There were five of us and four languages spoken within our group: Korean, German, Kituwah (Cherokee), and English. We began to call ourselves Team Osda Nigada, which, in my language, means "it's all good."

Gillam Jackson

CHEROKEE, NORTH CAROLINA

THANK YOU ALL AT THE Appalachian Trail Conservancy for your devoted, unwavering commitment to the Trail and its legacy. The Visitor Center was a great place for me to rest, relax, and flip through some photos while I reflected on the first half of my journey.

Curtis "Fancy Pants" Mraz

NEWFIELDS, NEW HAMPSHIRE

I SEE THAT PENNSYLVANIA NOW has an Appalachian Trail Conservancy specialty license plate. How do we get Maryland to make these? And why doesn't West Virginia, the home of the ATC, have them?

Steve Koeppen

TANEYTOWN, MARYLAND

I HAVE SPENT THE PAST 26 YEARS hiking the Appalachian Trail. I took one year off for my 25th wedding anniversary. In those 25 years, I have traveled more than 20,680 miles getting to the different sections of the A.T. I have tracked the miles but not the expense. I think it was worth it. I would just like to make it known that we [section hikers] might only represent 20 percent of the 2000-milers but we probably incur a much greater percentage of money spent on the Trail. I am an Appalachian Trail Conservancy member and will be for the rest of my life. Keep up the good work!

Edward D. Rakowsky

FRACKVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

WHILE THE A.T. IS A MAGNIFICENT trail, what impressed us most during our five-and-a-half-month journey was the people. Coming from New Zealand where trails are mostly maintained by the government's Department of Conservation, we were amazed to find the more than 2,000 miles of trail completely maintained by volunteers to a very high standard! We were overwhelmed by the kindness of "Trail angels," people in the mountain towns along the Trail who picked us up, drove us to the trailhead, and received us with warmth. In short, our biggest reward for hiking the A.T. was to get to know American people — ordinary American people.

Ian Song

QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

FACEBOOK COMMENTS

I really love the fact that the ATC acknowledges anyone who completes the Trail — regardless of it taking them years or months. Everyone is different and everyone should experience this adventure in a way that's best suited for them to get the most enjoyment out of it.

Jessica Woelk

I had the opportunity to work with the Konnarock Trail Crew. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to hike the entire Trail. I appreciate all the volunteer hours that are put into maintaining the A.T. and I am looking forward to giving a little back so others can enjoy the Trail. If you have hiked any of the A.T., think about giving back. Service to others is the rent we pay for our time here on earth.

Tim Walsh

CORRECTIONS

In the July/August Photo Essay, "The Hills of Home," the caption information was incorrect. The photos were taken near the Gabes Mountain loop Trail, which connects to the A.T. in North Carolina. We apologize for the inaccurate caption. Tenting and hammocking are allowed on the A.T. in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in a few circumstances: 1) By those with a thru-hiker permit when the shelter is full 2) On the A.T. at Birch Spring Campsite #113. Those using hammocks (under conditions where they are allowed) must use "tree saver" straps (rather than rope) to protect the tree.

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.

Please send them to:

E-mail: editor@appalachiantrail.org

Letters to the Editor

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

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THIS PAST AUGUST WE HELD OUR SECOND BIENNIAL VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP Conference. More than 75 Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) leader volunteers, partners, and staff came together to inform, inspire and cross pollinate best practices. The gathering epitomized the cooperative management system by which the Appalachian Trail is managed and maintained. I am happy to report that the “three legs of the stool” are strong and sturdy!

In addition to talking about the nuts and bolts of A.T. management, we challenged ourselves to look into the future. As you know, both the ATC and the National Park Service are hard at work in developing long-term strategies and goals to advance the Trail’s health and well-being and the strength of our cooperative system. The ATC and our Trail maintaining clubs recognize that long-term sustainability will rely on strengthening our base and expanding our memberships and constituencies. Reaching younger and more diverse populations is a critical component of our health and longevity.

The ATC’s Strategic Plan emphasizes “Broader Relevancy” as a key goal. Ron Tipton and I have both promised ourselves that when we finish our tenure, we will consider it successful only if we look to the audience of our final biennial and see many more young people and people of color. It is an audacious goal, yet much simpler to achieve than we may believe.

The keynote speaker at the meeting was Audrey Peterman, author of two books: *Our True Nature*, the first travel guide to our national parks written by an African- American woman, and *Legacy on the Land – A Black Couple Discovers Our National Inheritance and Tells Why Every American Should Care*. Audrey is a dynamic and incredibly inspiring speaker and she challenged all of us to invite people of color to the table, or in our case the Trail, and to work with them in expanding diversity among our hikers, volunteers, and leadership.

And why is this so important? Within the next 50 years, white Americans will comprise just 43 percent of the U.S. population, while Asian, Hispanic, and Black Americans grow substantially, making up 45 percent of the 2060 population. These new majorities will be responsible for ensuring the continued protection and sustainability of our environment and the national treasures of our parks, forests, and waterways. I, for one, would like to make sure we are all at the table now to start undertaking this critical responsibility.

The ATC is preparing to officially call for nominations for our 2015-2017 Board of Directors and Stewardship Council. I personally will work within

that process to bring a younger and more diverse group of people to these roles. We do not need to discuss among ourselves how to increase diversity — instead we need people of color and younger people at the table to tell us what they want and need. I will also work with the chair of the Stewardship Council to form a Youth and Diversity subcommittee to help develop programs that can encourage greater diversity among our hikers and volunteer Trail maintaining clubs and communities.

Author, historian, and environmentalist Wallace Stegner wrote: “National parks are the best idea we’ve ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.”

The Appalachian Trail, stretching from Maine to Georgia, puts a phenomenal National Park in the backyard of millions of Americans. We all must be a part of its future glory and protection. ♡

Sandra Marra | Chair



Ethan Sam experiences his first A.T. white blaze with his father, 2013 thru-hiker William Sam, and sister Rosalee Sam, during the ATC’s 2014 African American History Hike in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.



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THE SEEDS OF PERSEVERANCE

Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

BY ANGELA SHEPHERD

Clockwise from this page: Hump Mountain in the Highlands of Roan was protected in the early 1980s, due in large part to the outreach efforts of SAHC's founders. The mountain was once proposed as the site for what became the Beech Mountain resort development; Hiking the A.T. through the grassy balds; The author's son heads down the A.T. from Little Hump Mountain during his first hike on the Trail. Photos courtesy SAHC



A FEW YEARS, AGO, I TOOK MY KIDS UP LITTLE HUMP MOUNTAIN TO enjoy an afternoon hike — and to revel in watching them take their first steps along the Appalachian Trail. As a couple hikers ascended the Trail in the distance, I wondered if they knew anything about the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) and the bevy of volunteers who made this experience possible. This quiet but determined group has been churning away with conservation efforts in the Southern Appalachians for decades — helping to preserve some of the most inspiring places now enjoyed along the Trail.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the SAHC, which has a long history that originated with our founders' love for hiking the A.T. We celebrate more than 63,000 acres protected in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee since our organization was “born” in 1974 — but our story begins even before that, when a small but passionate and devoted group of hikers decided to protect the rare and endangered landscape surrounding the Highlands of Roan near the North Carolina/Tennessee border.

“The seeds of what was to become the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy were sewn in the 1950s when, under the leadership of club member Stan Murray, the Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club (TEHC) put in a 72-mile A.T. relocation that included the Roan Mountain Massif,” recalls Judy Murray, recently retired SAHC Highlands of Roan stewardship director and founding member. “The Roan, with its magnificent collection of ridgeline grassy balds, provided hikers with miles of





breathtaking views, both near and far. The Roan is an ecological crown jewel — it's an extraordinary piece of our natural heritage."

The climb up the grassy slopes of the balds is deceptively steep. At the top, the world spreads out below with breathtaking 360-degree views, wrapping hikers in an almost-surreal landscape. SAHC founders wondered, "why traipse along the noisy traffic of US Hwy 19E when the Massif on the North Carolina/Tennessee



Clockwise from top left: SAHC Project Conserve AmeriCorps member Jamie Ervin surveys the view from Hump Mountain; Each summer, SAHC offers guided group hikes along the A.T. through the Roan Highlands — photos courtesy SAHC; Elk Hollow Branch, a tributary of Roaring Creek, flows through the National Trails tract, between the A.T. and the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail — photo by Witt Langstaff; The rare Gray's lily is a native to the highlands — photo courtesy SAHC

border offers such jaw-dropping views and delicate natural treasures like the native Gray's lily?" The high-elevation grassy balds of the Highlands of Roan also form a globally important ecosystem, harboring unique and diverse species that proliferated in mountaintop islands following the last ice age.

"At the Appalachian Trail Conference, now Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) meeting in 1952, Stan Murray, representing the TEHC, proposed replacing a long, mostly road walk with a relocation onto a footpath between Unaka and Holston Mountains. That relocation, completed in 1954, took the Trail for the first time across the Roan Highlands," elaborates Joe DeLoach, TEHC member and former SAHC president. "Murray went on to become, first, a member and then, in 1961, chair of the ATC Board of Managers — a post he held until 1975." A staunch advocate for not just protecting the physical Trail but also the surrounding lands, a quote from Murray's last year describes his views well: "If the Appalachian Trail is to survive as a continuous footpath along the Appalachian mountains and if it is to offer a wilderness experience, then more than a narrow path winding through second-home developments, with background noises of chainsaws and barking dogs, a trail hidden in underbrush and trees away from panoramic scenery — more than this is needed."

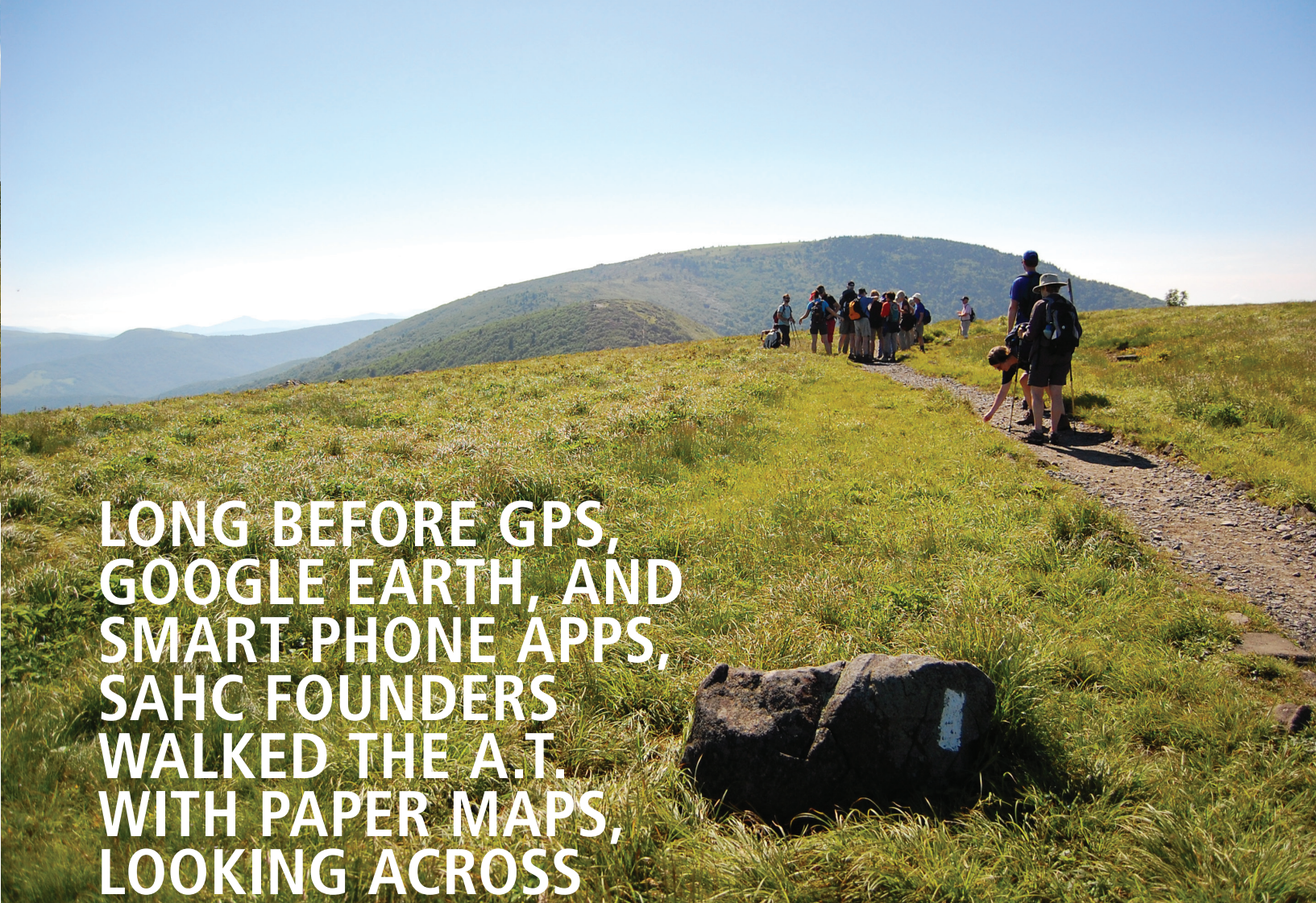
"In 1967 Murray and other TEHC members formed the Roan Mountain Preservation Committee (RMPC), an arm of the ATC with a focus on protecting lands in the Roan Highlands," adds DeLoach. "Joined by others, in 1974 this committee organized as the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy." Timing was of the essence; the SAHC founders knew they balanced on the cusp of critical changes in the landscape. Much of the Roan

Highlands through which the relocated A.T. threaded was still privately owned. Once remote mountaintops, populated only by the hearty and adventurous, faced mounting development pressures in the eastern Appalachians. Families who had previously held the mountain lands unmarred for generations felt pressure from developers far and near to sell, goaded by plans for summer rentals, second homes, golf courses, and ski resorts.

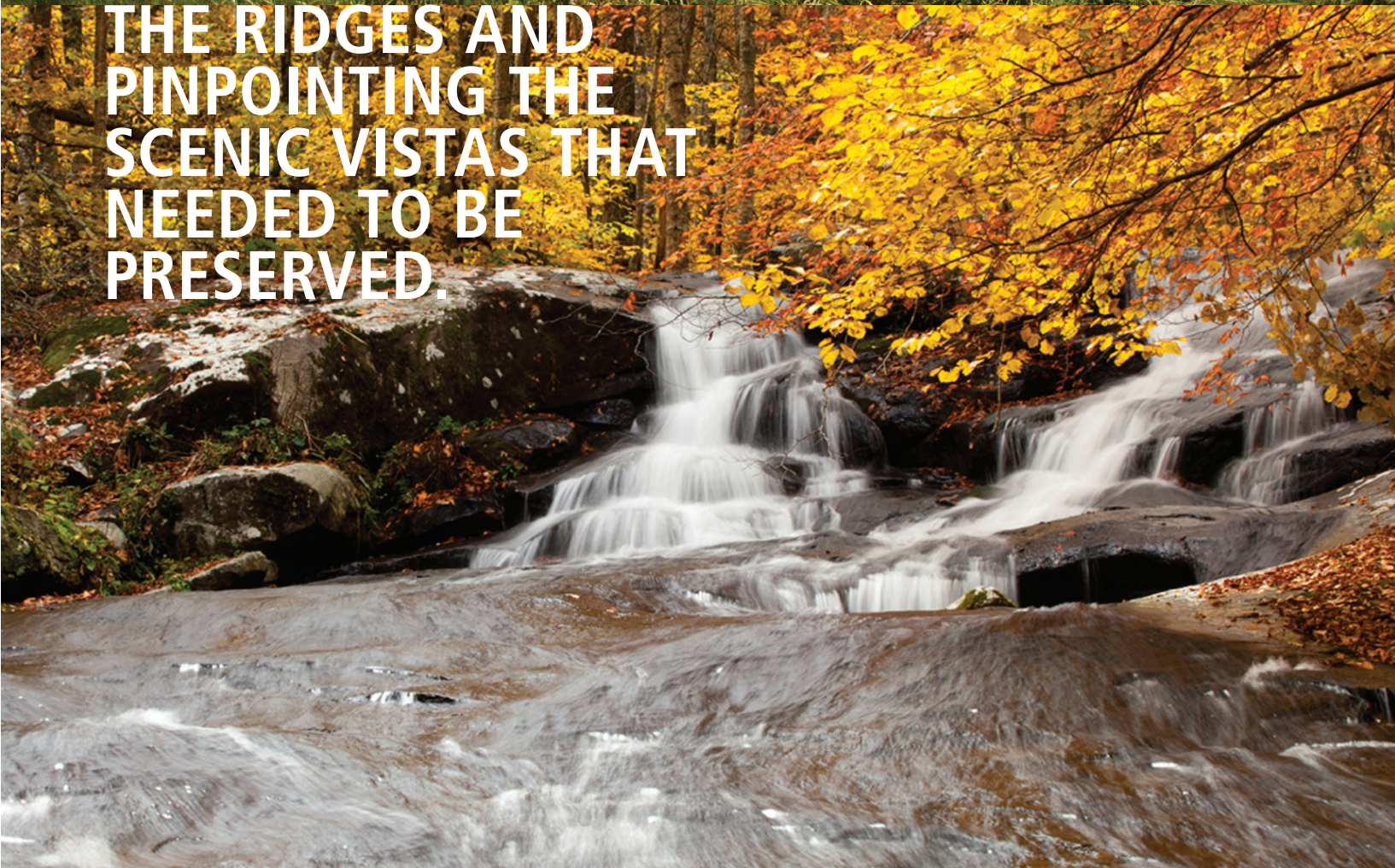
The RMPC performed with feet on the ground — researching and reaching out to local landowners adjacent to or in view of the Trail. Long before GPS, Google Earth, and smart phone apps, the committee members walked the A.T. with paper maps, looking across the ridges and pinpointing the scenic vistas that needed to be preserved. They strived to build relationships with private landowners and negotiate purchases of priority tracts for conservation — such as Hump Mountain, Big Yellow Mountain, and Grassy Ridge — the places most vulnerable for potential development.

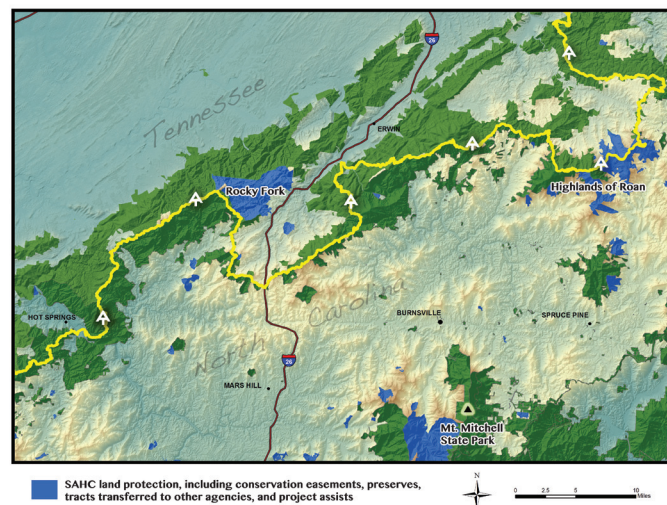
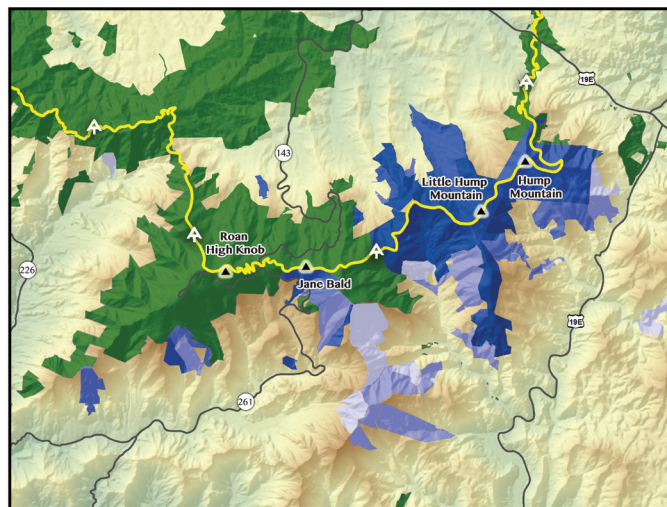
In the 1960s, the ski resorts of Beech Mountain, Sugar Mountain, and Hound Ears had opened nearby, and without proactive conservation efforts, it seemed the Roan might follow suit. In fact, Beech Mountain resort was originally proposed for Hump Mountain, but landowner Oscar Julian would not sell. Years later, Julian honored his commitment to preserve the mountain, and SAHC assisted the U.S. Forest Service in the acquisition of the 1,387-acre tract on Hump Mountain.

"Shortly after I came to work for the ATC at the beginning of 1983, the U.S. Forest Service acquired most of the high-elevation grassy balds on Hump Mountain in the Roan," says Morgan Sommerville, the ATC's southern regional director. "I



LONG BEFORE GPS,
GOOGLE EARTH, AND
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SAHC FOUNDERS
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PRESERVED.





From top: SAHC's conservation work in its flagship focus area over the decades; SAHC's conservation work in the vicinity of the A.T. — maps courtesy SAHC

soon came to find out that the purchase of the tract was negotiated in large part by SAHC. I, of course, had never seen or held such a large check, and that transaction at such an early stage in my career had a huge influence on the seriousness with which I approached land protection for the A.T. and the importance of partnerships in assuring the future of the Trail.”

In the 1990s, the blossoming SAHC branched out to expand conservation efforts across the region. While continuing preservation of the Roan, the growing land trust's long list of conservation successes swelled to include protected tracts in the Shining Rock Wilderness, working family farms, and in-holding parcels added to Mount Mitchell State Park. In 2006, SAHC and partners embarked on a six-year endeavor to purchase the 10,000-acre Rocky Fork Wilderness.

Angela Shepherd is the communications director for SAHC.

For more information about SAHC and upcoming guided hikes visit: appalachian.org.

For more info about volunteering with SAHC's stewardship program in the Highlands of Roan contact Marquette Crockett at: Marquette@appalachian.org.

“The synergy between the ATC and SAHC reinvigorated numerous joint A.T. protection ventures, from Wesser Bald in the south to the Roan and Laurel Fork watersheds in the north,” says Sommerville. “This included the acquisition of the 40-million-dollar Rocky Fork tract, a wonderful achievement built on mutual development of a larger partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, State of Tennessee, the Conservation Fund, Unicoi County, Tennessee, and more than 25 other local, regional and national partners.” The rough shoulders of the Rocky Fork Wilderness rise above the Tennessee/North Carolina border like a sentinel. At one time the impressive tract — boasting miles of pristine trout streams, wildlife habitat, and ties to cultural history — was also prey for developers. “The Rocky Fork watershed has long been of vital importance to the Appalachian Trail and the ATC,” explains David Ramsey, local angler and Unicoi County native. “More than 3,500 of its total 10,000 acres lie within the viewshed of the A.T. Currently, the ATC is relocating several additional miles of the A.T. into the Rocky Fork area to strengthen the Trail's protection.”

SAHC remains active in land protection across the A.T. landscape today. In 2012, the land trust purchased a 600-acre tract sweeping down from Grassy Ridge, which had been a conservation priority for forty years. Although seemingly impossible at times, persistent outreach to landowners eventually led to preservation of this stunning high-elevation tract. Just this past summer, SAHC secured a 77-acre tract located just 500 feet from the A.T. in Unicoi County and a 58-acre tract in the Highlands of Roan, approximately one-half mile south of the Trail near Hughes Gap. Additional projects are still underway.

“SAHC's success and the longevity of our organization is due in large part to the culture of commitment that carries us forward,” says Carl Silverstein, SAHC executive director. “Our founders had a vision for the future and pioneered a landscape-scale approach to conservation, which now serves as a model to others. However, it is the seed of perseverance passed through our ranks that makes fulfilling this vision possible. That's what drives the soul of SAHC — the dedication to partnership and an indomitable spirit to never give up.”

Over the years, SAHC's conservation work has grown to include an emphasis on local farmland preservation, stewardship, and outreach to strengthen healthy communities. In addition to volunteer work days and group hikes on protected properties throughout the year, each summer SAHC offers the June Jamboree — a day of free, guided hikes in the Highlands of Roan to commemorate and celebrate their origin along the A.T. “We are thrilled to continue working with our partners in habitat restoration, invasive species removal, and managing the grassy balds along the A.T.,” says Marquette Crockett, new SAHC Highlands of Roan stewardship director. “We welcome volunteers of all experience levels to contact us and become involved in our work.”

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I TRAILHEAD I

A.T. NEAR BLUE MOUNTAIN SHELTER, GEORGIA – BY ARDEN MEYER

ATC License Plate Now Available in Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) specialty license plate is now available, with a portion of the proceeds dedicated to help manage and protect the A.T. As a revenue sharing plate, \$21 of the \$50 fee is transferred to the ATC to help support the conservation efforts of the A.T. in the state of Pennsylvania. Personalization of the license plate is available with five letters or numbers in combination. A disabled symbol is also available.

“The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is very pleased to see this project come to fruition in the state of Pennsylvania,” said Karen Lutz, ATC’s mid-Atlantic regional director. “Not only will this help raise awareness of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, it will also help generate some much needed funds to help support our mission.”

Volunteers have been working for more than eight years to help make the ATC specialty license plate a reality in the state of Pennsylvania. To date, the ATC has a total of five specialty license plates in the states of Pennsylvania, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia. The program has generated more than a million dollars to help complete a broad range of projects including Trail and facilities maintenance, environmental monitoring and natural heritage projects, and education and community outreach.

For more information or to order an ATC specialty license plate visit: appalachiantrail.org/plates

Opposition to Proposed Resort near the A.T. in New York

IN AUGUST, THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) ANNOUNCED its opposition to the proposed Sterling Forest Resort in the town of Tuxedo in Orange County, New York — a project that would threaten the scenic beauty and integrity of the A.T. corridor through the 22,000-acre Sterling Forest State Park. The resort is billed as a “world-class destination” with an estimated 6.9 million annual visitors, a casino, ski area, 1,000 hotel rooms, and a 7,000 car, multi-story parking garage. The project would be built by Genting Americas, an affiliate of the Malaysia-based Genting Group. Genting has applied for permission to construct one of the new casinos in New York allowed by recent legislation, but intended for low income, high unemployment communities, not for a state and federal park.

The proposed site of Sterling Forest Resort is in the center of the northern section of the state park, which was protected after years of litigation. The park, which features a six-mile section of the 2,185-mile long A.T., was created through a strong collaboration between the National Park Service, the states of New York and New Jersey, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and private conservation and trail organizations including the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and the ATC. Approximately \$55 million was contributed toward the purchase and protection of Sterling Forest by the federal government, the two states, and the private sector.

“The magnitude of the proposed casino resort development would inevitably have a devastating impact on the immense value of the public investment to date to protect Sterling Forest,” said Ron Tipton, the ATC’s executive director, in a written statement to the New York State Gaming Commission. “Distinct ecologic communities, unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities, and a magnificent scenic landscape are afforded to visitors of Sterling Forest. These values are the essence of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and projects of this magnitude are incongruous with the scenic and culturally significant experience that the A.T. provides to its visitors.”

Preliminary viewshed impact assessments indicate the resort would likely be visible from one or more places on the A.T. above Sterling Forest. In addition to these impacts, the area is a critical habitat for nesting and migratory birds and is a nationally recognized Important Bird Area. The proposed resort site is also in an area critical to the regional water supply.

The ATC has formally requested that the potential visual and noise impacts on the A.T., as well as the potential natural and cultural resource damages, be carefully evaluated according to the State Environmental Quality Review. “The Appalachian Trail Conservancy believes that the Tuxedo site is clearly the wrong location for a casino resort,” said Tipton. “Sterling Forest is one of the most treasured natural and cultural resources in the eastern United States, and we should keep it that way.”

Read the ATC’s complete statement to the New York State Gaming Commission at: appalachiantrail.org/news

“The magnitude of the proposed casino resort development would inevitably have a devastating impact on the immense value of the public investment to date to protect Sterling Forest”

HUNTING SEASON SAFETY

HUNTING REGULATIONS VARY WIDELY ALONG THE APPALACHIAN

Trail. Although the A.T. is a unit of the National Park System, it traverses a patchwork quilt of public lands managed for many different purposes. Hunting is permitted within close proximity of some parts of the A.T. in every Trail state. Many segments of the A.T. in Pennsylvania north of the Cumberland Valley and a few miles of the A.T. through the G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management area in northern Virginia are game lands managed primarily for hunting. Both hikers and hunters are advised to “know before you go.”

- Consult a current official A.T. map to learn which agencies own and regulate the land.
- Know local hunting seasons.
- Wear a blaze-orange hat, clothing, or gear visible from 360 degrees.
- Avoid deer firearm season (usually October through January) by hiking in one of these national parks: C & O Canal National Historical Park, Maryland; Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia; Shenandoah National Park, Virginia; Blue Ridge Parkway, Virginia; Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina.

For more information and to see the ATC’s “2014-2015 Hunting Season Guide by State” visit: appalachiantrail.org/hunting

RECORD NUMBER of Thru-hikers Reach Harpers Ferry, Again

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY VISITORS CENTER IN Harpers Ferry, West Virginia photographed a record 1,262 northbound thru-hikers this year — surpassing last year’s 1,130. This is the fourth year in a row the record has been topped.

Section-hikers and thru-hikers who complete the A.T. can report their journey to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy by filling out an Appalachian Trail 2,000-Miler application. Hikers who report their hike of the entire Trail will be added to our roster of 2,000-milers, and will receive a certificate of recognition and a 2,000-miler rocker and an A.T. patch.

To fill out a 2,000-Miler application visit: appalachiantrail.org/ATcompletion



Aries “Ronin” Austria and Emilio Cucciniello



2015 ATC Calendars Now Available

The double blazes on an isolated, flaming-fall-red tree in Virginia’s Grayson Highlands State Park have nearly faded, but can still be seen in the November image in the official Appalachian Trail calendar for 2015, now on sale at the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store and bookstores everywhere.

Perhaps that is a fitting last testament to Michael R. Warren of Washington Heights in New York City, a quiet, restrained hiker-photographer (and typographer by day) who almost certainly had more of his Appalachian Trail photographs published than anyone else in the last three decades. His images appeared in Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) calendars starting in 1988 (on the cover of that first one) and running to 2015, in at least one book of his own with Sandra Kocher, in other books, on guidebook and map covers, in the *Appalachian Trailway News* and *A.T. Journeys*, and as posters and postcards.

Early on, the National Park Service hired him to document virtually the entire Trail to provide visual testimony as it and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy successfully sought congressional funding to protect the footpath with a modest corridor from Maine to Georgia. Those images on file were used in many varied ways over the decades — and will live on, as will those published. Mr. Warren, husband of Sharon Moir, passed away this past January at the age of 79. 🍂

To purchase your A.T. calendar visit: atctrailstore.org

THE VIEWSHED IS SUPREME

Three decades ago, the weather in the last days of 1983 in North Carolina was particularly fierce. *The Charlotte Observer* reported 20-below temperatures and a county-wide electrical blowout due to the cold in Avery County in the state's northwestern mountainous region known as the High Country. Among the victims, were condominiums atop the 5,000-foot summit of Little Sugar Mountain where burst pipes soaked some of the recently completed units of the Sugar Top Condos — at the time and perhaps still — North Carolina's most well-known and to some, most notorious structures in the state. Even the condos' own website calls the Sugar Top Condos the "most controversial living quarters" in the state of North Carolina. But unless you live there, the structure exudes about as much cheer as a pile of lumber. Within view of one of the most beloved sections of the Appalachian Trail, the construction of the ten-story steel and concrete structure launched a public debate on how North Carolina should protect one of its most valuable resources: mountain views. ☹

Maintaining Unhindered Mountain Views

BY JACK IGELMAN
PHOTOS BY WITT LANGSTAFF



Looking east from Yellow Mountain Bald on Big Yellow Mountain, the condos are an unnatural part of the ridgeline view; Inset: The placement of the condos made them visible from every prominent peak for as far as 50 miles.

FOR ADVOCATES OF PROTECTING THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL — THE VIEWSHED IS SUPREME.



The legislation that the high-rise inspired — the Mountain Ridge Protection Act of 1983 (the ridge law), which banned tall buildings on ridge lines above 3,000 feet — is considered a landmark piece of legislation and helped jumpstart the fledgling conservation movement in North Carolina.

Jay Leutze, a trustee of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy based in Asheville, North Carolina, views the debate over the ridge law in 1983 as a sea change in how the public considered the scenic value of the state. “The consensus that building on ridges is a bad idea for local economies was impressive,” he says. “It is fascinating to me how scenery was quickly identified as an economic engine.” And for advocates of protecting the wilderness experience on the Appalachian Trail — the viewshed is supreme. “The A.T. is about trying to provide a gateway from normal, everyday life,” says Morgan Sommerville, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) deep south regional director, who began work with the ATC in 1983 during the uproar over Sugar Top. “It’s our job to provide that opportunity. We want the scenery to not only be beautiful, but natural.”

While the protected corridor of the A.T. is, on average, 1,000 feet in width, a National Parks Conservation Association report identified incompatible development as a primary threat to the A.T. and advises vigorous defense of the Trail from external projects that impact the viewshed including wind-energy, wireless towers, and buildings. And while the ridge law came too late to block the Sugar Top condos, the contentious edifice stands as a reminder of the fragility of maintaining unhindered mountain views.

Ironically, when blasting began in late 1982 to make way for the living quarters, there was little opposition from community members who welcomed the economic impact of a home building boom in the midst of a national economic downturn. It wasn’t until the building itself starting to rise that the ire of mountain residents soared. Sommerville recalls being shocked and disappointed when the building went up. “The southern parts of the Trail — particularly around Sugar Top — are some of the most remote sections of the A.T., so it’s particularly obvious when something goes wrong,” he says.

Leutze — whose home is within five miles of the structure — felt the same and says that the placement of the building made it visible from every prominent peak for as far as 50 miles, including the heights along one of the A.T.’s most beloved sections in the Roan Highlands. And, while three decades have passed since its construction, the ten-story structure — what the late state senator and ridge law leader R.P. Thomas called “Avery County’s Abomination” — still raises the blood pressure of many North Carolinians. “It’s still a slap in the face when I see it,” says Catherine Morton, whose late father Hugh developed Grandfather Mountain, one of North Carolina’s most revered tourist attractions, and played a pivotal role in the drafting and passage of the legislation. “We know development is going to happen,” she adds. “But it has to be developed for longevity, to be humane, to be respectful of the environment, and have a light footprint.” Initially, her father believed the project was slated to be three stories, but it was when the fifth floor went up that the building came into view and a concentrated effort to oppose future ridge top projects was established.

Above: A.T. Hikers enjoy the protected view from a grassy ridge in the Roan Highlands looking south toward the recently created Yellow Mountain State Natural Area; Right: WNC Tomorrow chair, Hugh Morton at work in the highlands — photo courtesy of Grandfather Mountain

While building restrictions on ridgelines seems an obvious place for regulation, it wasn’t. Not in western North Carolina anyway. “A lot of people have negative feelings about any regulations that say what they can do with their land,” Watauga County manager Gary McGee told the *Watauga Democrat* in January 1983 in response to a call for a ridge law. At the time, Morton was aware of that sentiment as well as failed attempts in ’73, ’74, and ’75 to pass legislation to regulate development in the mountains modeled after similar regulations governing the North Carolina coast. Those efforts died under angry opposition from mountain lawmakers who sought to protect a tradition of mountaineer pride and independence.

In decades past, high ridges in the southern mountains had little value. Few roads led to them, the conditions were difficult for farming or grazing, and land owners generally bought and sold ridge tops for cut-rate prices. Yet, the value of ridge tops with stellar views was about to defy gravity, particularly in northwestern North Carolina. For decades, towns in the region, such as Blowing Rock and Linville were destinations for the wealthy, but in the 1960s a ski boom in the mountains led to a wave of development. Slowed in the 1970s by a crippling recession, the boom was revived in the early 1980s.

At the same time, as developmental pressure mounted, locals became uneasy. “People were becoming concerned about



losing the way they’ve related to the landscape for generations,” says Leutze whose 2012 book, *Stand up that Mountain*, chronicles a five-year effort to shut down an illegal mining operation within view of the Appalachian Trail in Avery County. So when WNC Tomorrow — a planning organization chaired by Hugh Morton — prepared a resolution calling for a ridge law on January 7, 1983, they knew it had to maximize local control of development while still having enough teeth to restrict ridge top projects.

Not everyone was on board with the lofty goals of the legislation and the public rhetoric often flared in public meetings and in the media. Many mountain law-makers and local government officials, and of course, developers were leery of a state law that could lead to excessive restrictions on development. Dan Tomlin, president of U.S. Capital Corporation, the building’s developer, put it bluntly: “What is world class to [one person] is not world class to another. Some like red ties,



THREE DECADES LATER, MANY BELIEVE THE RIDGE LAW HAS WITHSTOOD THE TEST, BUT THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHER CHALLENGES AHEAD IN THE PROTECTION OF NOT ONLY RIDGELINES AND SCENIC VALUE IN NORTH CAROLINA, BUT ALONG THE ENTIRE A.T. CORRIDOR.

some like green ties,” Tomlin was widely quoted in a statement to the media. “The public desires a view. Everybody who is rich desires to be on top of a mountain. Period.”

Advocates of the law didn’t back down and the drafters of the ridge law generally felt that this type of land regulation — in spite of the mountain tradition of distaste for government rules — would be widely supported given the public fury over the building. They were right; after several months of heated public debate, the law passed unanimously in the state senate and was ratified on July 5, 1983 — three months before the Sugar Top condos opened for residents on October 18, 1983. The Mountain Ridge Protection Act would ban the construction of buildings greater than 40 feet on ridges above 3,000 feet that are 500 feet above an adjacent valley floor in 24 North Carolina mountain counties.

Three decades later, many believe the ridge law has withstood the test, but there are plenty of other challenges ahead in the protection of not only ridgelines and scenic value in North Carolina, but along the entire A.T. corridor from Springer Mountain to Katahdin. Other states in the A.T. corridor have passed legislation to protect the viewshed: the Pennsylvania Appalachian Trail Act of 1978 requires counties and townships along the A.T. to enact zoning ordinances, and “Act 250,” Vermont’s 1970 Land Use and Development Act regulates construction above 2,500 feet to protect scenic beauty. However, the buildup to the 1983 North Carolina ridge law is evidence that passing legislation is costly and challenging.

“The ATC is very solution oriented in dealing with Trail issues. If legislation were proposed that would benefit the A.T. and our traditional management of the Trail then we would certainly advocate for it,” says the ATC’s Somerville, who



From top: Sugar Top abruptly disrupts the iconic layering of blue ridges — epitomizing what the ridge law is now preventing; A hiker enjoys the undeveloped scene from Grassy Ridge Bald looking south.

adds that the organization favors collaborative partnerships with people who live along the Trail in addition to initiating land-use protections by other means — such as a partnership with the cellular industry for early notice of plans for towers that impact the viewshed. “If locals don’t support the Trail in the future then it may cease to exist,” he explains. “Our hope is to assure that local citizens love the Trail as much as we do and advocate for the A.T. experience we’re trying to provide and protect. Hopefully people will continue to agree it’s a nationally, and internationally, significant resource in their backyard.”

Jack Igelman is a writer based in Asheville, North Carolina. A version of this story was originally published in *Carolina Public Press*. Learn more about Witt Langstaff and view his photography at: wittlangstaffphoto.com



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10/16 @ 7:00 PM
Cintas Center
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10/23 @ 7:00 PM
The Carlisle Regional
Performing Arts Center

ATLANTA, GA
10/25 @ 7:00 PM
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Atlanta Technical College

CHARLOTTE, NC
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High Altitude AMBASSADORS

BY ALISON SCHEIDERER



THE FRANCONIA RIDGE SECTION OF THE Appalachian Trail is one of the most popular hiking trails in New England and one of the most spectacular. Hikers who follow the A.T. or use one of several blue-blazed side trails to access the ridge face an arduous climb to achieve more than 4,500 feet in elevation, but sweeping views reward their exertion. Above treeline and completely exposed for more than 2.5 miles, hikers have time to take in the Kinsman Range to the west, the green abyss of the Pemigewasset Wilderness below, and to the east, the often snowcapped peaks of the craggy Presidential Range and Mount Washington. On top of the ridge on a sunny day, hikers can feel the solitude and tranquility that comes from being above the fray, surrounded by undeveloped

land — despite the fact that more than 700 other visitors may join them during weekends from summer to fall.

This unique alpine zone wilderness, only three blue-blazed miles from the interstate and within a day's drive of 70 million people, is guarded by a small cadre of passionate volunteers, the Alpine Stewards. Every Friday, from June through October, one of these stewards travels hours along I-93 from Boston or Montreal or Vermont and hikes up to the ridge planning to spend the entire weekend on only two-and-a-half miles of Trail. As part of a completely volunteer-led effort that operates in partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), and the White Mountain National Forest, the Alpine Steward volunteers spend their summer weekends

traversing the Franconia Ridge as well as the slopes of Mount Washington, talking to hikers, educating them about Leave No Trace principles, safety and alpine ecology, and monitoring alpine flora and Trail conditions.

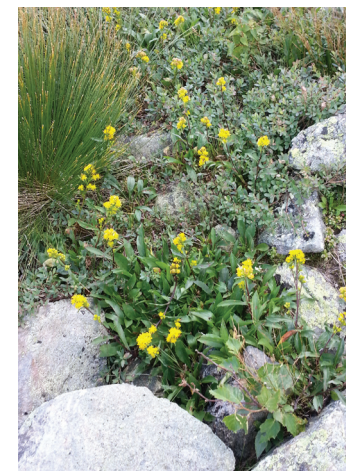
The exposure that enables the spectacular view also creates harsh growing conditions so that only a few hardy plants can survive here. While able to withstand sustained frigid temperatures of 30 and more degrees below zero Fahrenheit and desiccating winds, many of these plants, like the tiny white and yellow flower, *diapensia*, grow over the course of decades and are thus extremely vulnerable to damage from hikers' wayward feet. This exposure can get hikers in trouble too. The exposed ridge is colder, windier, and wetter than the Trail below treeline and many of the hikers that ascend to the ridge are unprepared for the weather they face there. Weather that is comfortable for hikers climbing up can be dangerous for them once they are exposed to lower temperatures and higher wind speeds on the ridge. Through their messages about preparedness and traveling lightly, the stewards work to educate hikers about the fragile alpine ecology and protect both the hikers and the flora.

For the past 15 years, one of about 20 volunteers climbs up to the ridge dressed in an Alpine Steward uniform — a U.S. Forest Service green shirt and hat, adorned with the ATC ridgerunner, Forest Service volunteer, and the stewards' own logos — each weekend of prime hiking season. The stewards' identifying uniform spurs conversation with visitors and calls attention to them as a resource to hikers. With them on their ridge-top rounds, stewards carry information on the flora, fauna, history, and geology of the Franconia Range as well as complete first aid kits, radios, extra food, and extra layers for any hikers they may encounter who are in need of assistance. Before they assume their posts, all stewards are trained as Wilderness First Responders and Leave No Trace trainers. At night, stewards bunk one mile below the summit of Lafayette at the AMC's Greenleaf Hut. There, they continue to inform hikers and educate guests about hiking on the ridge.

Each steward commits a minimum of two weekends a year to their cause, preserving all aspects of the experience of a hike on Franconia Ridge. All weekend, they roam between Mount Lafayette and Little Haystack, answering questions and helping hikers to participate in the protection of the beautiful place they have come to enjoy. These countless short conversations have an enormous impact. The stewards carry "before and after" photos in their packs — pictures that show what the ridge looked like before a small group of devoted volunteers approached AMC and the White Mountain National Forest with their idea for the program. In these photos, the treadway blends with the surrounding erosion and there is little vegetation — a sharp

contrast to the well-defined tread surrounded by thriving alpine vegetation that years of Trail work and visitor education have enabled. Since 2000, stewards have explained to hikers the importance of staying on the designated trail. They build and maintain the scree walls that help guide hikers' feet. They help maintain the cairns that guide hikers to remain on the Trail even when weather or snow obscures the footpath. Without Trail adopters and Alpine Stewards, the vegetative recovery would not have occurred.

Much of their success is due to the dedication of the stewards themselves. The steward's founder, Scott Monroe, created a program structure that should outlast his own involvement. Even so, 15 years later, he still spends weekends on the ridge. "The dedicated volunteer stewards are what make



Clockwise from above: Alpine plants, like *diapensia*, are extremely vulnerable to damage from hikers' wayward feet; A.T. — Franconia Ridge Trail from Falling Water Trail; Steward Karen MacKnight on Mount Lafayette; Alpine Stewards in training at AMC Greenleaf Hut; Franconia Ridge — by Sally Manikian

THROUGH THEIR MESSAGES ABOUT PREPAREDNESS AND TRAVELING LIGHTLY, THE STEWARDS WORK TO EDUCATE HIKERS ABOUT THE FRAGILE ALPINE ECOLOGY AND PROTECT BOTH THE HIKERS AND THE FLORA.

the program a success," says Monroe. In fact, most Alpine Stewards come back year after year, deepening their knowledge of and love for this place and making them among the longest term ridgerunners along the Appalachian Trail. "I do it because I love it. If you hike Franconia Ridge, then you know how cool it is to be there, just enjoying it," says 14-year volunteer Yves Gauthier.

The success of this program on Franconia Ridge led to the expansion of the Alpine Stewards program to Mount Washington in

2013. They have further inspired the White Mountain National Forest to create a Trailhead Stewards volunteer program that began installing volunteers at the popular Lincoln Woods, Ammonoosuc Ravine, and Old Bridle Path/Falling Waters trailheads on weekends to promote Leave No Trace ethics and provide conservation and safety information to visitors this past summer. Thanks in part to the thousands of hours that the volunteer stewards have contributed to the place they love, one of few New England alpine zones, the Franconia Ridge trail, has recovered to where *diapensia* and mountain cranberry can thrive alongside throngs of hikers. Volunteer programs like the Alpine Stewards help to preserve natural resources and ensure them the opportunity to recover. ⚡

Alison Scheiderer is the ATC's land protection associate in the New England Regional Office.

Beyond the Usual POSSIBILITIES

Building Trail to Every Classroom Communities

BY KATHY SEILER

IN AN EFFORT TO CULTIVATE MORE

awareness, support, and future stewards for the Appalachian Trail, the Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) professional development program was created by the National Park Service, in partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), in 2006. Teachers in areas near the Trail are invited to apply for the program, through which they create curriculum that incorporates hands-on A.T. service learning into social studies, science, language arts, and other subjects they teach. Community outreach and parent involvement are also key to the success of the objectives, as well as partnership with local governments and other organizations (Scouting, watershed organizations, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources, etc.). Depending on available funding, a yearly workshop series for new teachers and TTEC alumni gatherings are offered. And this past summer a new level of training was launched.

The TTEC-work: Building Your Trail to Every Classroom Community Network workshop was held July 21 to 23 at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) in Front Royal, Virginia. This focused and action-packed workshop covered a wealth of Trail-related topics. Projects for both community and student involvement, strategies for building awareness and education, and methods to align group activities with community, state, and national partnerships were explored.

TTEC alumni groups were invited to apply for the program with the team concept in mind, which is to bring a TTEC alumnus, a “new” teacher not yet trained in TTEC, and a community member or local Trail club representative together. Bringing different backgrounds of experience and points of reference creates stron-

ger possibilities for networking back in home areas, and strengthens Trail ties for students and communities alike.

This new model of TTEC, as a network focused on specific goals and ideas, allows for teams to work together and create a plan of action for their community. Brainstorming sessions to generate ideas, share obstacles, and suggest possible solutions covered many situations. Teachers and community members from Dalton, Massachusetts; Harlem Valley, New York; Waynesboro, Pennsylvania; Franklin, North Carolina; and Blairsville, Georgia kept busy from morning until mid-evening after-dinner sessions. The group also tested a new interactive board game (Thru-Hike: The Appalachian Trail Game) and gave feedback to its creators, participated in a “quest” (scavenger hunt) in Front Royal, and hiked part of the Appalachian Trail in Shenandoah National Park, collecting data for the Trail-wide American chestnut MEGA Transect project along the way as an example of citizen science on the A.T. Each team member also received a full set of hiking maps for their state.

The Georgia team shared how their TTEC activities are integrated into their middle school. Sylvia Garner uses the Trail as a year-long theme/point of reference for art activities. During the unit on Georgia O’Keefe’s style, Appalachian flowers are used as subjects for students’ art creations. Bob Williams showed photos of their sixth- through eighth-grade students hiking the Trail at various sections near Blood Mountain, and utilizing outdoor spaces as living classrooms. Michael Smith-Foot voiced his passion for continuing the mammoth but rewarding challenge of “No Child Left Inside” for their students.

The Waynesboro team set a goal of creating a quest, with student involvement throughout the upcoming year. This project, a type of treasure hunt/scavenger hunt using facts and history in a rhyming format, will invite curious students to explore the town in a fun way. Having it available and ready to use by next summer’s first area “Appalachian Trail Festival” is the goal. (Check out the Facebook page for “The Greater Waynesboro, Pennsylvania Appalachian Trail Community” for updates.)

Kristina Moe, a librarian from Franklin, North Carolina, seemed to speak from the community-at-large group when summarizing her insights into sharing student learning project ideas with teachers, and how both groups can be helpful for each other. She explained that the key is awareness — and time to coordinate goals, strategies, outcomes, and evaluations. This TTEC-work workshop afforded such an opportunity.

Dalton, Massachusetts teacher Meg Donovan remarked that this was her first professional development conference that was multi-state, multi-subject, and sponsored by multiple organizations. She was pleased to find herself energized and excited about taking home more than just a binder of notes. Working together



Clockwise from above: The entire TTEC-work group at Mary’s Rock in Shenandoah National Park; A.T. artwork from a Purcellville, Virginia middle school student; Teachers, Catherine Hade, Tawnya Finney, and Kathy Seiler, on the Trail; The group plays a game of “A.T.-opoly” in the courtyard of the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation in Front Royal.

with teachers of various grades and subjects definitely spans beyond the usual possibilities.

Attendees enjoyed blackberry ice cream milkshakes at Elkwallow Wayside, four black bear sightings, and the valley view from Mary’s Rock while in Shenandoah National Park. On campus, pockets of free time afforded walks to see the endangered animals bred at SCBI, such as maned wolves, red-headed cranes, cloud leopards, and Clint, the Marianas crow. As each day passed, the group evolved from sitting with “who you came with” to new cross-Trail acquaintances, demonstrating the program’s early success through meaningful human connections. As part of the concluding ceremony for participation certificates, the group sang Tora Huntingdon’s original “The Appalachian Trail Song” written by her second grade class in Dalton.

Speaking not only for myself but for the entire group — kudos to the fantastic team of TTEC-work facilitators: Delia Clark, trainer from Woodstock, Vermont; Rita Hennessy, assistant superintendent of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail; Karen Lutz, regional director of Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s mid-Atlantic area; Kathryn Herndon, of the ATC’s southwest and central Virginia regional office — who also coordinated the

workshop; and Betty Gatewood, Shenandoah National Park naturalist/interpreter, and her husband, Mark. Other speakers included Sonja Carlborg from Front Royal, Bonnie Harvey of Portland State University, Dick Hosteley of the Potomac A.T. Club, Marlene Jefferson from Loudoun County, Virginia, and Pete Irvine of George Washington and Jefferson National Forests.

Feedback from the entire group, from leaders to participants, was positive. Nurturing those willing to use their time, energy, and student/parent/community ties with expertise from Trail professionals and the supporting A.T. maintaining clubs will help to keep the Trail in good stead for its future. Getting folks of all ages out on the Trail is the main goal — it’s always amazing to find locals who know it’s there, but don’t use it. After all, as the African environmentalist, Baba Dioum, remarked in 1968: “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.” Teaching what the wonders of the Trail can reveal to those who pass over it, and what the Trail needs for its conservation, is why we band together. 🌲

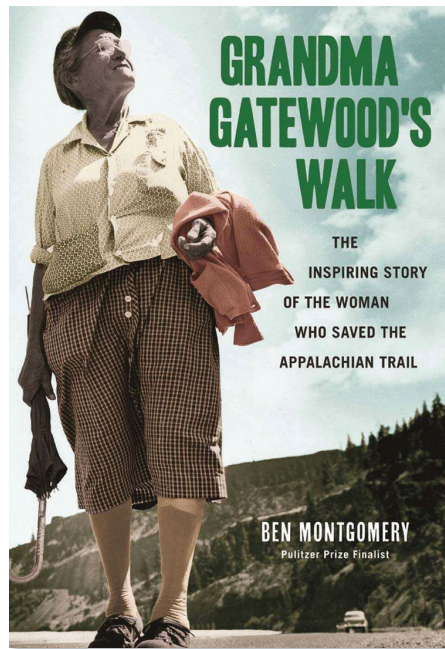
For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/TTEC



The Rest of the Story

BY JUDITH MCGUIRE

AN OLD LADY WEARING KEDS WITH a laundry bag slung over her back — the first woman to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail — that about sums up what most people in the Appalachian Trail community know about Grandma Gatewood. Boy, is that assessment incomplete. *Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail*, by Ben Montgomery, is a page-turner that presents the rest of Emma Gatewood's story and a lot more as well. Long before her thru-hike, Emma Gatewood proved herself to be a survivor. She lived through a difficult marriage for 34 years, during which she gave birth to eleven children, worked hard as a farmer's wife, weathered her husband's financial failures, and suffered repeated and severe physical and mental abuse. The woods became her safe haven and place of peace. Then, long after her children were grown, she saved up a small amount of money and went off to hike the Trail in 1955 at the age of 67.



Montgomery skillfully weaves together details about her hike with the saga of her marriage and sprinkles the text with interesting historical digressions. Even knowing the outcome, the reader is kept in suspense as the story toggles between the progress of her thru-hike and the evolution of her family life decades before. That interplay shows how surviving an abusive relationship gave her the toughness she needed for a solo thru-hike at a time when the Trail was poorly maintained, shelters infrequent, and basic Trail information scarce.

The book provides many previously unpublished details about her hike. Even an experienced A.T. hiker will marvel at the challenges she faced (including two hurricanes). It paints colorful pictures of the interesting people with whom she camped along the way and her pain, in-

juries, and hunger — showing that some aspects of thru-hiking haven't changed that much. She was not a wealthy woman or experienced hiker and so she repurposed commonly available items for camping equipment (a shower curtain for a shelter and rain gear, for instance) and was unprepared for much of the weather she experienced. Much of the time, she didn't even have the crude maps that were available. The book cites many examples of her begging for meals or a bed for the night. Some might call her a mooch, but the book makes it clear that she was a product of her times. Many of today's hikers would regard her as an ultralight pioneer who "yogi'd," well, slackpacked when she could, and encouraged "Trail magic."

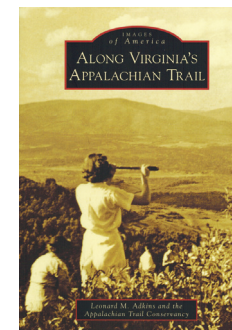
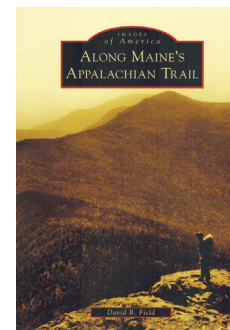
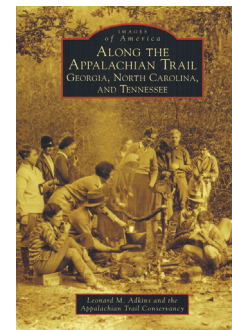
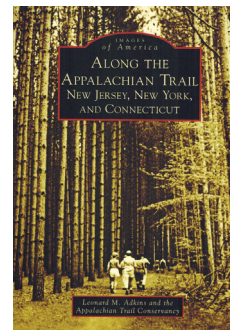
As engaging as the book is, it is hard not to object to its subtitle. Emma Gatewood certainly brought publicity to the Trail. Montgomery argues, though, by citing the bump in the number of thru-hikers after 1955, that she actually "saved the Trail." That argument is weak and denigrates the work of countless volunteers, public officials, and others who saved it more directly. There is no doubt though that Emma (Grandma) Gatewood has inspired the general public, particularly women and older people, to hike the Appalachian Trail. For many, this absorbing book will provide even more reasons to be awed by her. 🏔️

Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail is available at the Ultimate A.T. store: appalachiantrail.org — proceeds go to protect and preserve the Appalachian Trail.

ULTIMATE APPALACHIAN TRAIL STORE

atctrailstore.org

The Photographic Treasures in our “Attics”



Two-thirds of the Appalachian Trail is now covered in the well-known “Images of America” series of historical photographic books from Arcadia Publications. A few of these photographs are often-used classics, but most are never-before-published gems culled from the scrapbooks and file folders of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), Trail club archives, and some state historical agencies.

Former ATC chair and half-century volunteer David B. Field compiled the book on Maine, while Leonard M. Adkins, also a longtime volunteer and author, compiled the others: Virginia, the three Trail states south of it, and Connecticut — south through New Jersey. (One covering Pennsylvania through West Virginia is in the works.) Hikers, early maintainers, and vintage scenery get equal billing.

Each 128-page volume of about 200 photographs from the first four decades of the Trail, with explanatory text and A.T. trivia-stumpers, is available for \$19.75 for ATC members.

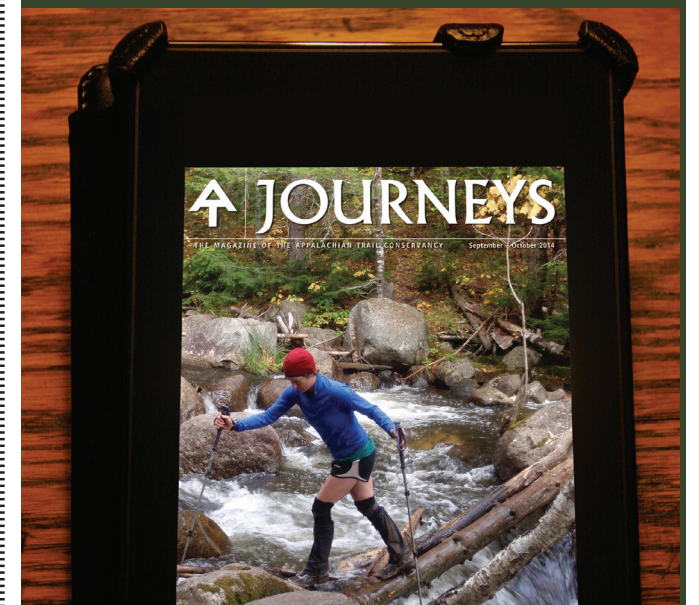
You can find them all in the Explore the A.T./History and Nature section of the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store.

Visit: atctrailstore.org or call toll-free 888 287-8673 (888 -AT STORE)

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Rainbow Over McAfee Knob – by Mark Marchiori



ZOOM INTO THE A.T.

2014 ATC Photo Contest Winners

THIS YEAR, THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) launched “Zoom Into the A.T.,” an online photo contest. We asked the public to submit photographs that delighted in the grandeur that stretches for miles before us along the Trail, as well as those that savor the beauty in the details. Photographs were submitted via Facebook. Thousands of votes were cast. Three winners were chosen.

With more than 300 submitted photographs, the staff at the ATC decided to vote on an additional three winners. These “Staff Picks” are featured here alongside the photographs that received the highest number of votes from the public. All six winners received a yearlong membership to the ATC.



Kennebec River Ferry Crossing – by Stephanie Mize



Mahoosuc Ladder — by Kadra Casseday



Staff Pick 2nd Place: April Showers — by Joe Celona



Staff Pick 3rd Place: Luna Moth — by Thomas Perrochon



Staff Pick 1st Place: Rise and Shine, It's Trail Hiking Time – by Dillan Forsey



ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

Betsy near her home in
Ridgefield, Connecticut
— photo courtesy of
Ken Doll Photography

RELOCATION IS STRESSFUL FOR A FAMILY. The adults are adjusting to new jobs, the kids to new schools — not to mention packing and unpacking. As a wife and mother of two, Elizabeth Thompson had her hands full moving her family not once, but *ten* times, nationally and internationally. So when

Elizabeth's husband retired and her kids flew the nest, one might have thought a more peaceful time was in sight. This was not the case.

As her hectic family life slowed down, her professional life went into overdrive. Elizabeth, fondly known as Betsy, became a member of the

Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) Board of Directors and so much more. Now Betsy is a board member, small business owner, international traveler, and environmental and equal rights advocate in addition to a wife and mother.

A longtime lover of the outdoors, Betsy did not begin her experience with the Appalachian Trail until she was 40 years old. She and family friend Sky Cole decided to leave their less-inclined spouses at home to section hike together, starting in 1992. "I was renewed, energized, empowered, and giddy with life and the natural world!" Betsy says.

Section hiking led Betsy to become a member of the ATC. Regular issues of the *Appalachian Trailway News* (now *A.T. Journeys*) demonstrated the immense effort required to keep the A.T. open, safe, and protected. It turned her into a life member. Since then, Betsy and Sky have hiked all of New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and part of Vermont. Injuries prevent her from hiking these days, but she still gets her fill of the Appalachian Trail through the ATC.

Betsy was elected to the ATC's Board of Directors in 2007. A degree in advertising from the University of Illinois and previous work in sales and marketing at a national insurance agency gave Betsy valuable communications knowledge. These skills, combined with experience in fundraising and political engagement mixed with a passion for the Appalachian Trail, made her an excellent addition to the board. "Betsy is in so many ways an ideal board member, and I love working with her," says the ATC's executive director/CEO Ron Tipton. "Her passion, enthusiasm, positive energy, and honesty are qualities that enable her to make a major contribution in protecting and promoting the A.T. We also very much appreciate her generosity as one of our top level donors."

Now, as the Chair of the ATC's Marketing and Communications Committee, Betsy's current focus is developing licensing opportunities. "We are working with a licensing agent, Woody Browne of Building Q, and are looking for retailers and businesses interested in the ATC bringing them new business while they license the use of our name, logo, expertise, cachet, and all we bring with it," she explains. This is an untapped revenue stream and could possibly secure more stable funding for the ATC. Stable revenue generation is especially important for the organization as the U.S. economy recovers from the financial devastation of prior years. The preservation and protection of the iconic Appalachian Trail depends on this revenue.

When Betsy is not working on behalf of the future of the A.T., she can be found at a local wine shop called Wine Cellar XV, which she co-owns with her

husband and son. Located in Ridgefield, Connecticut, the shop is open seven days a week and requires numerous hours of labor from Betsy to compete with big chains and internet sales. "We've created our own niche that customers appreciate. Lots of personalized service of course, but we also bring in almost exclusively small production wines from smaller wineries. These wines are the heart and soul of the winemakers — usually small families."

As if the ATC and a family business wasn't enough to occupy her, Betsy is a fierce advocate for the environment and equal rights in local government. She helps Congressman Jim Himes balance a district that is home to a financially and educationally diverse group of constituents. She believes in a citizenry that is engaged with its government. Betsy also worked on both of President Obama's election campaigns and serves on the Ridgefield Democratic Town Council. Her rich background in political activism is evident in her work. Thanks in part to Betsy, the ATC



Betsy on the A.T.
with her hiking
partner Sky Cole

will at least be adequately funded to continue its mission and its promotion of social action to sustain, protect, and improve the A.T.

Yet, Betsy can't do it alone. The Appalachian Trail is a community that depends upon every one of its supporters. Betsy said it best: "We are the caretakers of the world for the next generation, just as they will be for the generation that follows. I believe it is therefore incumbent upon each of us to do our part to protect, preserve, use responsibly, and replace — where possible — all that we use and enjoy in our lives so the next generation can take the reins of a healthier world." 🌱

Current photo of Betsy is
courtesy of Ken Doll Photography:
KenDollPhotography.com

Find out more about Wine Cellar
XV at: **www.cellarxv.com**



I TRAIL STORIES
BY HEATHER "WHIRLED PEAS" LANEY

my beautiful DISTRACTION

Heather takes in the picturesque view of Katahdin at the Abol Bridge Campground in Maine.

WHEN I SET OFF FROM AMICALOLA FALLS on March 15, 2013, I had guesstimated that it would only take about five months to reach Katahdin. In my mind, that would be more than enough time to cover the 2,185 miles and still make it home to upstate New York to welcome home my husband, Tom, from Afghanistan. Tom is a Major in the United States Army, and for the greater part of 2013 he would be away on his fourth deployment to the Middle East. In his absence, I would hike the Appalachian Trail. The way I reasoned it, if he was going camping, so was I.

I first proposed the idea of hiking the A.T. to my husband the year before; he didn't flinch. In fact, he agreed immediately and kept prodding me along during preparations. Had I figured out what shelter I wanted to bring? What about a backpack? Was I utilizing the online resources? He had more questions about the hike than I did. He spent hours in the basement making various camp-stove prototypes, testing each one and ultimately presenting me with the one he deemed best. He tutored me through various wilderness survival skills and even spent his

last hours before deployment making me a survival bracelet. If he couldn't hike with me — as he had agreed to do 10 years earlier when I agreed to marry him — he would do everything in his power to ensure that my hike was a success. The only request he made of me was to upgrade my cellphone to something more reliable.

Within days of starting the hike, I realized that the hiking schedule I had laid out for myself was overly ambitious and completely unrealistic. Bad weather, injuries, over-estimated abilities, underestimated terrain, and a deep affinity for town food and hot showers had slowed me down. The A.T. was a more daunting feat than I had anticipated. But I was determined. I kept telling myself that no matter how bad my day might be going or what obstacles I might encounter, they didn't compare to whatever Tom was probably facing.

The fact is the A.T. was my escape, my beautiful distraction. From deployments past, I knew I fared much better mentally if I could completely immerse myself into something all-consuming. An A.T. thru-hike definitely fit that bill. It gave Tom peace-of-mind to know I wasn't at home worrying about him. Instead, I was attempting something adventure-some and daring, and it made him immensely proud. Before he left, I gave him a wall map of the Appalachian Trail, which he hung beside his desk. Every few days I emailed him a photo along with a note of my location and accumulative mileage. He

would print out the photo, tack it to a wall, and connect a string between the photo and its corresponding spot on the map. My progress became part of his morning briefings as the entire Brigade Staff began tracking my hike. I might be the one physically hiking, but this endeavor had become something that extended far beyond me.

As with any thru-hiker, I had good days and bad days. One moment I would be laughing and singing, the next I would be sobbing uncontrollably on the side of the Trail. I watched countless sunrises and sunsets. I stood atop mountains and looked to the East, wondering what Tom might be doing at that moment. I blew him kisses and longed for him to be there beside me. When I got into a town, we would talk on the phone. I would describe where I was, and he would look it up on Google Earth. Technology is a miraculous thing. Occasionally, if I was having a severe Trail meltdown, I might manage to send him a message, and he would call to give me a pep-talk. Those conversations followed a similar script. I'd answer in an emotionally fragile state. I would hear the excitement in his voice at hearing mine, and immediately I would fall to pieces. For the next two to three minutes he would sit patiently — trying not to laugh — as high-pitched screeching sobs flowed thousands of miles across the phone lines. Once I got the cry out, we would both have a good laugh. Crisis averted, my hike would continue. In all honesty, if he had been at home rather than in Afghanistan, I'm not sure that I would have had the same drive to continue. As it was, if I had quit, I would have had an empty house to go home to, and there would be no more photos for his bragging wall.

As spring turned to summer and summer turned to fall, I continued my march northward to Katahdin, to Tom. In my mind they had become one. They were my proverbial carrots. (Before Tom left, we had decided that his Trail name, should he be able to join me, would be "Carrots" — as in: Whirled Peas and

I KEPT TELLING MYSELF THAT NO MATTER HOW BAD MY DAY MIGHT BE GOING OR WHAT OBSTACLES I MIGHT ENCOUNTER, THEY DIDN'T COMPARE TO WHATEVER TOM WAS PROBABLY FACING.

Carrots). If I could just get to one of them, then I knew I could get to the other. Tom's redeployment date was pushed forward, and we came to realize that I would not finish my thru-hike before he got home. I wanted so badly to be there when he returned, but Tom insisted that I stay and finish the hike. All the time alone in the woods had given me ample opportunity to imagine our reunion. I had played out dozens of scenarios in my mind. Some were elaborate and far-fetched (he could get helicoptered to the top of Katahdin in full uniform with flowers, balloons,



From top: Tom kept track of Heather's progress along the Trail, which became part of his morning briefings in Afghanistan — and the entire Brigade Staff began tracking her hike; Tom and Heather in front of the Appalachian Trail Lodge in Millinocket the day after their summit. Heather's best hiking buddies joined them — from left: Tom, Heather, "Pressure D," "Hobo," "Tough Cookie," "Hypsy-Gypsy," "Oak," "Walking Stick," and "Cheech."





and a TV crew, right?). Some were simple and romantic. Others were devastatingly tragic.

I was in Stratton, Maine when I got the call that Tom was safely back on American soil. He had caught an earlier flight, and he wanted to meet me on the Trail. We decided to link up at White House Landing in the middle of the 100-Mile Wilderness in 10 days' time. Now I had to get there. With a heavy heart, I parted ways with my hiking buddies "Hobo," "Walking Stick," "Pressure D," and "Tough Cookie," and I set out alone. Getting to Tom became my singular focus. The upcoming section of Trail was far more difficult than I had imagined, and I struggled to make the necessary mileage. I badly twisted my right ankle and growled at section hikers who dared to congratulate me on my hike. I grew disgruntled with the Trail for standing between me and my "Carrots." What had started as a beautiful distraction was now a formidable obstacle keeping me from what I wanted the most, Tom.

On October 1st, I was racing through the woods. The Trail had relented, and I grew increasingly confident that I would get to White House Landing and Tom by that evening. I came around a corner of trees, and I saw three hikers sitting about 10 yards off the Trail huddled around a camp-stove cooking up lunch. I recognized two of the group as thru-hikers, but the third hiker had his back to me, and I didn't recognize his clothes — after 2,000 miles you generally know who is wearing what. I assumed the third hiker was a section hiker and didn't pay him much mind. One of the thru-hikers shouted out that I should really come have a look at the view of Katahdin from the

lake's edge. I wasn't the least bit interested and quickly racked my brain for an excuse to keep moving. As I was about to decline, something about the third hiker caught my eye, something about the way he squatted. It took my brain a fraction of a second to process what I was seeing. Oh my goodness. I knew who it was before he could stand up and turn around. I threw my hiking poles down, and I tore at the straps on my pack trying to free myself of it. Sobs poured out of my throat and tears streamed down my face. I ran to him and wrapped my arms around him and buried my face in his neck. He held me tightly as I just cried and cried and cried. Tom had found me, just as I had dreamed that he would. He'd come and found me in the 100-mile Wilderness of Maine.

The Appalachian Trail bestowed countless gifts upon me over the almost seven months it took me to see it end to end, but the gift I'll treasure most was the next five days we spent together in the solitude of the woods getting reacquainted. Deployments are tough on a relationship, and any military spouse will attest that reunions, though initially joyful, soon become awkward and difficult. Yet, without the distractions of the outside world, we were able to walk and talk and share and open up in ways I'm not sure that we would have otherwise. Our universes reconverged seamlessly. For that, I will be eternally grateful.

On October 6, on a beautiful blue-bird day, swathed in the colors of a Maine autumn, we summited Katahdin together. I cried, and Tom beamed — Whirled Peas and Carrots. What a glorious day it was. 🌲

Clockwise from opposite page: Together at the end of the hike — emotion takes over; Tom holds his exhausted and elated wife during a quick stop on their way back to Millinocket soon after the hike's completion; Gratefully sharing a peaceful moment at Abol Bridge Campground; Tom enjoys every minute as he heads up Hunt Spur on route to the top of Katahdin.



Secretary Sally Jewell's first stop on her recent tour to promote reauthorization and full funding of LWCF was the A.T. in North Carolina's Roan Highlands. Her five-mile hike along the Trail took her through a nationally significant landscape, acquisition of which has been largely funded by LWCF. She was accompanied on this visit and hike by Senator Richard Burr, principle Senate Republican sponsor of LWCF full funding and reauthorization, and USDA Deputy Undersecretary Butch Blazer. From top: — pictured from left:

The Nature Conservancy's director of government relations Tom Cors; Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy and LWCF coalition representative Jay Leutze, and ATC regional director Morgan Sommerville on Grassy Ridge Bald; Pictured from left: Tom Cors, Appalachian National Scenic Trail Superintendent Wendy Janssen, Jay Leutze, and Senator Richard Burr on Round Bald.

IF YOU ONLY READ ONE PARAGRAPH IN THIS COLUMN, read this one. If you are employed or retired, your donations to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) may be matched by your employer. To find out visit: appalachiantrail.org/matching or call us and we'll check for you. Please take advantage of all the benefits you may be offered as a current or former employee and make your gifts to the ATC go twice as far.

In the last issue we had some highlights from our annual Leaders in Conservation Awards Gala in Washington, D.C., and on the opposite page we feature more photos from the event. In an era when you mostly hear about the discord in Washington, the Appalachian Trail continues to be a uniting force. Just this past August, two of our honorees at this year's gala (Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Senator Richard Burr of North Carolina) shared another stage, at the Blue Ridge Parkway visitor center in North Carolina, to promote full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Once the November elections are decided, we will, once again, ask you to show your support for full LWCF funding with petitions to your new or returning members of Congress.

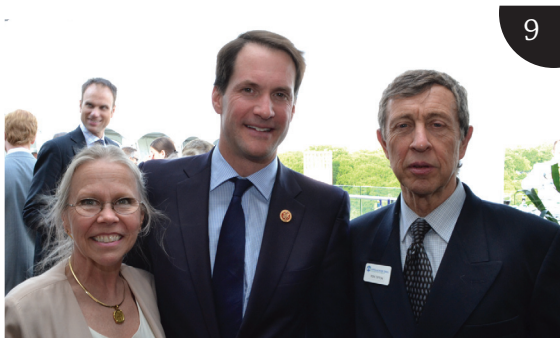
Over the next few months you will be hearing and receiving information about the ATC's strategic plan for the coming years — 2015 will mark our 90th anniversary and the beginning of a strategy to see us into our second century. I hope you will embrace the direction that our board of directors, staff members, and volunteers have set. Two years of careful, considerate, and dedicated work have gone into the final plan. We seek to do five things: be effective stewards of the Trail, proactively protect the Trail, broaden our relevancy to the general population, engage our current and future partners, and be operationally effective.

We couldn't achieve any of the goals of the strategic plan without your support and enthusiasm. Thank you for your continued commitment to our work. Your donations, planned gifts, and volunteer efforts enable us to do great things! ⬆

Sincerely,
Royce W. Gibson | Director of Membership & Development

P.S. As I write this we are preparing to say goodbye to the ATC's summer interns. Over the last few years our intern program has grown in popularity and the applicants are plentiful. We have been fortunate to have a group of highly enthusiastic and talented individuals who have helped the ATC further its mission. Thanks to all of you who have given of your time and talents and a special thank you to Kelly Perkins for the energy and value provided to the Membership and Development Department. Best of luck to all our interns.

spotlight on the 2014 Leaders in Conservation Awards Gala Washington, D.C.



1 Congressman Jim Moran with ATC board member Terry Lierman 2 ATC executive director/CEO Ron Tipton and Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell 3 Walk Off the War's founder Sean Gobin 4 Senator Richard Burr 5 ATC deep south regional director Morgan Sommerville, Congressman David Price, and Ron Tipton 6 ATC board chair Sandi Marra, Congressman Tom Price, and Jan and Greg Winchester 7 ATC assistant director of membership and development Amy McCormick, the Honorable Tom Davis, Megan and Don Beyer (former U.S. Ambassador) 8 ATC director of membership and development Royce Gibson, ATC director of conservation Laura Belleville, Chris Brunton, ATC director of marketing Javier Folgar, Megan and Don Beyer 9 ATC board member Betsy Thompson, Congressman Jim Himes, Ron Tipton



Harpers Ferry's Step Into Autumn Festival

September 26 through 27 will feature guided hikes, bluegrass music, and a “Pedal through the Past” supported cycling event through historic sites throughout the countryside and in nearby national parks. Saturday will feature a family hike on the A.T. Sunday’s highlight will be a “Hike through History” touring lesser-known spots of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s 1892 building — with a colorful history — will be part of the hike.

More information is available at: appalachiantrail.org/events and historicharpersferry.org

| PUBLIC NOTICES

For Sale

Terrapin Station Hostel. Located near Appalachian Trail, mile post 961.4 northbound in Front Royal, Virginia established 2003-present. Proven income with shuttle services and hostel. Currently operates 4/27 to 7/4 yearly but, could be expanded. Immediately adjacent to Shenandoah National Park, 1/2 mile to A.T. Shuttles operate PenMar to Rockfish Gap (busy March to November). Licensed and approved by Rappahannock County with annual water test and health department visit. Sleeps 15 or more; room for 6 cars. Upstairs separate includes 3 bedroom split level, one full bath, back deck, dining room — shed included. Asking \$250,000. Contact owner, Mike Evans (The Grateful Greenpeace Guy, A.T. ’95, PCT ’98) at: (540) 539-0509 or gratefulgg@hotmail.com.

Hiking Gear: Two Kelty Ex. Frame Packs, a Trekker 4300 and 3900, with rain covers, a MSR Remote Canister Stove, and a Sweet Water Micro Filter, all for \$150 plus shipping. Items are slightly used and in good condition. Contact Jim at: (828) 586-0777.

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For Your Information
Help with 2,000-miler
recognition needed at ATC Headquarters in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia so this year’s record number of hikers can get their certificates

and patches in a timely fashion. If you are comfortable using a computer, are good at deciphering cryptic handwriting, and would take joy in making sure quirky Trail names get spelled exactly right, we need you. Volunteers should be able to devote part of a day or more, most weeks from September through April. Contact Laurie Potteiger at: lpotteiger@appalachiantrail.org.

Come to the Gathering.

Appalachian Long Distance Hiking Association is sending out a call to all long distance hikers, announcing the 2014 Gathering. This year the event will be at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. There are many restaurants and two museums within easy walking distance of the college. Both the college and our camping are within a few miles of Mount Greylock. The campsite is in a beautiful farm field just west of the mountain, with a view of the long ridge that so many of us scrambled along. If you haven’t been able to get out to a Gathering in a while, start planning now. We will have the usual great workshops and seminars. The opening ceremony will be on October 10, workshops and seminars will run on October 11 and 12. Chris Gallaway will show his new A.T. movie on Saturday night, and a work trip will take place on October 13. The Gathering will take place over Columbus Day weekend. Come on out and reunite with those who shared your journey. For more information visit: www.aldfa.org or contact: alpha@aldha.org. 📌

Public Notices may be edited for clarity and length. Please send them to: editor@appalachiantrail.org
Public Notices
P.O. Box 807
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807

WILL “GREEN LEADERS” CHOOSE ENVIRONMENTAL COLLAPSE OVER INCLUSION?

“I urge you to think about how you can use this opportunity to engage people who represent what will soon be the majority in the United States ... people of color. The long term retention of all that you have dedicated your careers to will be in these peoples’ hands before our kids know it,” wrote our friend John Reynolds to his colleagues in conservation agencies and boards across the country.

The recently-retired and highly respected career National Park Service employee was referring to the launch of the Diverse Environmental Leaders (DEL) National Speakers Bureau at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on August 25. More than 40 other members of the bureau include our country’s leading academics and authors on the subject of the outdoors and inclusion, such as Dr. Carolyn Finney, author of the new book, *Black Faces, White Spaces*, Majora Carter, green entrepreneur who is transforming blighted urban neighborhoods through parks and green infrastructure, and a host of hikers, birders, nature photographers, and millennial leaders.

So having the opportunity to speak at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) Volunteer Leadership Conference recently, where an overwhelming number of members are white and older, felt somewhat anachronistic. How is this possible in a country where the demographic shift is upon us, and communities of color have the fastest growing numbers? Who doesn’t know that the fate of our public lands rests in the hands of the American public, which is increasingly black and brown?

When I learned that Benton MacKaye conceptualized the A.T. as a means of “refuge from work life in [an] industrialized metropolis” and “as a moral equivalent to war,” I was completely blown away. How could I not have heard about this genius before? As someone who’s dedicated to the protection of our National Park System and who has traversed 170 units from Alaska to Florida, including parts of the A.T. in Georgia and elsewhere, it was hard to believe I had never heard his name mentioned. He instantly became one of my heroes, and I am in awe of the legacy that he has left for us to emulate.

Like many people who’ve been instrumental in protecting our great American landscapes, Mr. MacKaye had a mission and vision far larger than himself and others who look just like him. So I would expect that the people who voluntarily take on the role of perpetuating that legacy lead the way in responding to the challenges of diversity today. The recently released Green 2.0 report on the state of State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations (<http://diversegreen.org/report/>) identifies these inequalities and lays them squarely at the foot of bias, overt or covert.

The A.T. spans 14 states, which makes it the perfect way to connect nearby and urban communities to the Trail and to the National Park System. I emphasized to the ATC’s volunteers that it’s important to engage people where they are, instead of where you want them to be, and offer Trail experiences that can attract a diverse population. Many people can be inculcated with the love of the Trail simply by being invited to take a drive out to see the mountains through which the Trail runs. From there, it’s a short step to engaging them with its protection as part of our shared natural and cultural heritage. I also urged the volunteers to learn more about the people they’re trying to attract, as misconceptions on both sides can be dispelled by communication and contact.

The challenge of today is to engage our growing population in the enjoyment and conservation of our national, natural treasures such as the Appalachian Trail. For anyone aspiring to leadership, it will no longer be sufficient to lead a group that is monochromatic. We must increasingly refer back to the people who were instrumental in establishing the places we treasure, and ask ourselves, what would they think of us? How are we measuring up? Only by being self-reflective can we hope to shift our narrow focus and see America for what it is — a whole country, to whose people all our natural treasures belong. In our hands rests the sustainability of these treasures “for the benefit of this and future generations.”

“We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune,” said our great conservation President, Theodore Roosevelt. Today we must ask ourselves: are we worthy? And if we find ourselves lacking, it is time to hasten the change. 📌

Audrey Peterman is an environmental writer and advocate for our publicly-owned lands system and the involvement of all Americans in enjoying and protecting them. Learn more about Diverse Environmental Leaders at: www.delnsb.com

“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 (700 words or under) 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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TOM "CARROTS" AND HEATHER "WHIRLED PEAS" LANEY
AT ABOL BRIDGE CAMPGROUND, MAINE