The Future of Landscape Protection

Parallel Passages from Hawk Mountain

Summit Seekers Tell Their Own Story
MISSION
The Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail — ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

ON THE COVER
A.T. – Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey [Photo by Raymond Sidney III]

The Magazine of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy / Fall 2017

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I know that many of you attended the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) Biennial at Colby College in Waterville, Maine in August. More than 800 ATC and Trail club members, volunteer leaders, government and non-profit partners, and outdoor recreation industry representatives came together for this unique event—the largest regular gathering of hikers in this country and maybe anywhere. We were motivated, inspired, and entertained in the many workshops, meetings, hikes, excursions, and entertainment events. The more than 250 volunteers from the Maine Appalachian Trail Club and the Appalachian Mountain Club were outstanding hosts for the Biennial.

The first ATC general meeting was held in Washington, D.C., in 1928, three years after our founding meeting. My initial Biennial experience was in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in 1977, when this event reverted to every two years after 35 years of longer stretches between gatherings.

Over the years, the ATC Biennial has offered many different experiences to the A.T. community. It has been a forum for great debates on Trail management and protection and a place for the Trail clubs, government partners, and ATC staff to come together in an informal setting. Many important strategies and decisions and inspiring discussions about the future of the Trail experience happened at Biennial business meetings, as well as in informal conversations. We charted the progress every two years toward the ultimate goal of a completely publicly owned and permanently protected A.T. corridor.

However, we have decided to use a different model for the future of the Biennial. It is logical to ask why this is happening, given the success and popularity of the event over the past 86 years.

There are several reasons. First, the ATC is now required, by a recent change in the laws governing non-profits incorporated in Washington, D.C., to have a meeting of its members every year. Second, organizing each Biennial is a hugely challenging and time-consuming two-year project for both the host Trail clubs and ATC staff. It is also increasingly difficult to find a venue for each Biennial. And there is a great deal of uncertainty and considerable financial risk in staging an event of this size.

A working group representing A.T. clubs and chaired by former ATC Board member Marcia Fairweather has spent the past two years looking at future options for the Biennial. They have recommended a new approach called A.T. Vista to begin in 2020 and happen every two years thereafter. The Vista is envisioned as a four-day event that includes hikes, workshops, excursions, and fun and will be organized by some combination of Trail clubs and local partners. The New York/New Jersey Trail Conference has agreed to take the lead on planning the 2020 Vista.

At the same time, the ATC will begin in 2018 to host an annual meeting open to all of our members. This will be a one-day event in or near a major metropolitan area and will include feature speakers, discussion of important Trail issues, and a town hall forum. The first ATC Membership meeting will be held next August in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

This is clearly a major change from the traditional Biennial. We hope and expect A.T. Vista and the ATC Membership meeting to combine the best elements of the Biennial format and offer some new and different experiences for the A.T. community.

Ronald J. Tipton / President & CEO

The Future of the Biennial

Ron with his wife Rita Molyneaux
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myATstory.org
Of Men and Mountains

THANKS FOR AN ILLUMINATING article about Percival Baxter and Myron Avery (“Of Men and Mountains,” Summer 2017). I too am a graduate of Bowdoin College, and had the pleasure of visiting Maine’s greatest mountain in the ’60s and ’70s. Bowdoin’s Outing Club had the responsibility of maintaining a section of the A.T. back in those days. The highlight of our year was always our annual October trip up to Baxter State Park, just before things closed down for the winter. Until reading this article, I had no idea that Avery was also a Bowdoin graduate. And I was not aware that Governor Baxter lived until 1969. One year later, I was living in a large “frat house” on the Bowdoin campus. Years later, I learned that it had been built by the Baxter family. Bowdoin subsequently renamed it Baxter House, and it still stands today. The Baxters were very philanthropic. Without Governor Baxter’s land donation, the A.T. would have ended much farther south.

Eric Weis Hager
New Jersey

Practical Magic
I AM FEELING CONFLICTED AFTER reading “Practical Magic” (Summer 2017). You see for the last 22 years I have been doing Trail magic for thru-hikers. I had no idea that it was frowned upon. For the first 10 years I was set up in a parking lot in a nearly waterless section of New York (the Elk Pen in Harriman State Park). I gave away soda, water, candy bars, stove fuel, fruit, and a few other goodies. Over the years, I also brought chairs and since I worked for an outdoor retailer I managed to bring donated hiker food — I was also able to give away a free pair of socks to each (hiker) that came by. And in recent years, I have recharged many a phone. Even though I left no garbage, took garbage from the (hikers), and often picked up the garbage from the area I was parked, I did concentrate a few hikers in one area. I thought the only trace I left was the happy faces of the hikers I helped. I only started doing it because on a long section hike, I received so much help, water, beer, pizza and more that I decided to give back. So I am sorry I have apparently contributed to the degradation of the A.T. experience.

Roger “Tintum” Williamson
Westfield, New Jersey

ATC’S RESPONSE: Your thoughtful generosity to hikers is remarkable. It is the cumulative effect of ever-larger, more elaborate, and frequent hiker feeds and aid stations — which sometimes include alcohol, drugs, or a particular agenda — that begins to be problematic. In Georgia, during the peak of thru-hiker season, there is a hike fee or aid station at nearly every road crossing. Other large, “Trail magic” events in the south attract hundreds and have been likened to “mini-Woodstocks.” We are still working to find the right balance between encouraging the culture of kindness and generosity that is the hallmark of Trail magic, while encouraging self-reliance and preserving the kind of experience the A.T. is designed to provide. For our latest guidance on Trail magic, visit: appalachiantrail.org/trailmagic.

Keith Wingard
Omaha, Nebraska

WHEN I DECided TO COME OFF the Trail and seek shelter from hurricane Irma, a remarkable “Trail angel” took me in. Actually, the story behind my good fortune goes back 24 years. In 1993, we hosted a pool party for some church friends of ours in Memphis. I was standing at one end of the pool grilling burgers and hot dogs when all of a sudden my wife shouted my name as only a spouse can who wants an immediate response. I turned to see what was up and there, at the bottom of our pool, was one of our guests, a two-year old! Without hesitation, I dove in and scooped him up before placing him on the side of the pool where others took care of him. He survived. Unbeknownst to me, that little guy grew up to love adventure, and in 2013 successfully thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail. Also, it turns out his parents moved from Memphis to a spot about an hour west of the A.T. and were the Trail angels who gave me shelter from the storm. Call it karma, serendipity, divine intervention, or just good luck, I am in awe of how magnificent life is, especially out here on the Trail.

Sharon Mccormick
West Milford, New Jersey

Correction: The byline to the Trail Story “When Sunday Smiled” in the Summer 2017 issue of A.T. Journeys was attributed incorrectly. The author was Andrew Davidson — we apologize for this mistake.

Keith Wingard
Omaha, Nebraska

A.T. Journeys welcomes your comments. The editors are committed to providing balanced and objective perspectives. Not all letters received can who want an immediate response.

Are funds tight? Are you between ages 18-30? NEXT GENERATION MEMBERSHIP

As a NextGen Member, you can give back to the Trail without breaking the bank. When you join the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, you can now “Pay Your Age!”

FIND OUT MORE about membership benefits — including a subscription to the digital edition of A.T. Journeys — and become a NextGen member at: appalachiantrail.org/NextGen
ONCE AGAIN, I FIND THE MOST important message I must share with you all is about change. We are changing how we will gather, with the 2017 Maine Membership Meeting being the last of one we will hold following our traditional format. We are changing the leadership of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy as we move forward with our search for a new president/CEO. The volunteers, I think, feel we are often changing the way we want them to do their jobs. We are changing (or maybe for the first time creating) rules for our hikers. Our partners, in dealing with their own changes, require us to adapt as well.

I’ve been spending some time recently refreshing myself with the history of the A.T. I’ve found many of Benton MacKaye’s statements and reasons for envisioning the Trail are possibly even more applicable to the world we live in today than the one that existed in 1921. But I also have been thinking about Myron Avery. While MacKaye spoke of the wilderness utopia, Avery went to work to build an actual trail for “tramping, camping, and outdoor recreation.” MacKaye and Avery — visionary versus realist; architect versus builder. We needed both aspects to create this treasure and I believe we still need both to take care of it now and for the future.

We need to keep working on our vision for the Trail. We must spend time exploring how we can protect our users’ experiences, protect the Trail’s wilderness and remoteness, and ensure the idea of the Trail is one that resonates with all people. But we must also tend to the practical. We must make sure our volunteers have the training and capacity to keep the treadway open and manage the Trail and its corridor. We must make sure our hikers understand and follow Leave No Trace Principals and respect the rules and regulations of all the lands the Trail traverses. We must find new ways to bring our membership and partners together to share best practices, best Trail stories, and take a hike together.

I’ve said that the Trail never changes — but changes absolutely those who walk it. For those of us who are entrusted with its care and protection, we must embrace both our visionary and our realist sides. We must hold fast to our past and work together to move into the future, adapting and changing when needed — always with what is best for the Trail in our hearts.

Sandra Marra / Chair

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Celebrate the holidays with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy!

Enjoy the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Annual Holiday Celebration with staff to learn more about the Trail and experience a keynote talk with President/CEO Ron Tipton.

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Did you — or are you planning on capturing your Trail experience with a great video?

Videos should be no longer than 5 minutes and sent via a linked/embedded format (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo) or MP4 via file sharing. Don’t forget to send those high res photos (1 MB or larger) too!

For more information contact: editor@appalachiantrail.org

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10 A.T. Journeys is looking for short video clips of your hiking experience on the Trail to highlight in our new dynamic digital edition of the magazine.

Celebrating the holidays with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, join President/CEO Ron Tipton at the ATC Headquarters Visitor Center in Harpers Ferry, WV, for a keynote talk and holiday celebration.

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People of color don’t hike, don’t scuba dive, and we don’t care about the environment. It sounds absurd to put these ill-informed myths in writing but there they were; written on flip charts and pasted on the walls as Summit Seekers tossed out ideas and stereotypes each of us had been exposed to in our lives outdoors.

Among us were people from many walks and ethnicities, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Queer...most of us identified as “other” than what might be considered the norm on the Trail, tacitly defined by whiteness, affluence, or hetero-sexuality. Are these race, class, and gender definitions relevant to a bunch of folks who just want to get outdoors? Summit Seekers found this initial ice breaker exercise one of several ways we built a shared knowledge, experience, and sense of reality.

Before creating a community where “diversity” was the norm, it was as if we needed to first acknowledge some differences. The social realm experienced by people other than the usual suspects on the Appalachian Trail required that we overcome not only steep hills, rocky terrain, and other Trail challenges faced by all — but also the generally unsaid, or unspoken myths and expectations of us in the
part that have typically been written by others. This was our rare chance to tell our story, our own way.

The Summit Seekers project is a collaboration between Outdoor Afro, Latino Outdoors, Groundwork USA (Groundwork Richmond and D.C.), and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Funded by the National Park Foundation, two Summit Seeker pilot projects, one in the San Francisco Bay area and another in the greater D.C. area, recruited multi-generational participants from many walks to both introduce them to the Appalachian Trail and/or the outdoors, hiking, and camping such that new affinity groups and cohorts might flower and begin to thrive. Participants learned practical hiking and camping skills, and got to hone those skills in the outdoors while forging teams and new Trail friendships. I attended the D.C. area project and served as an “ambassador/mentor.” This is a three-part series of summit events: an initial launch gathering at Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, D.C., an A.T. Summit weekend in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia that included an orientation from the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park superintendent, a short walk through history in the town, an overnight stay on the A.T. at Blackburn Trail Center, and a third gathering along the Anacostia River in September. The A.T. Summit included opportunities to explore African-American and U.S. history, get exposed to some of the folklore of the A.T., and get acclimated to the Trail experience. The final day of the A.T. Summit gave participants airspace to create a unique agenda for their newly formed Trail cohorts, further opportunities for Summit Seekers to share their ideas, learn from each other, and to shed some light about diversity in outdoors settings.

One Summit Seeker and ATC Next Generation Advisory Council member, Tony Richardson explains it this way: “My experience was invaluable to my personal and professional ambitions...I gained new hiking partners, mentors, memories, and lifelong connections, but I would have to say the most important thing I gained was knowledge.”

He continues, “The opportunity to hear directly from youth — particularly youth of color — about their connection to public lands was extremely insightful. Who better to inform strategies for diversifying the environmental movement, than the very people we are trying to engage.”

Through my lens as an African-American hiker, which includes nearly 30-plus years of section hiking and helping to maintain portions of the Appalachian Trail, I cannot say that I have ever been confronted directly with what most people would regard as racism — which usually means overt race hatred or discrimination. On the contrary, mostly I have felt that my own presence on the Trail exposed at least some of the traditional Trail folklore to a genuine mystery or a quandary. Specifically, the presence of a black person doing something that many assume black people don’t do. If I felt discomfort surrounding race, which usually is around the other cheek when faced with situations that are ambiguous for us but reassuring to our white peers. It cuts behind? Is it paranoid of me to read something pejorative into this Trail behavior? For those who think that I am being paranoid or pre-judging such things I must say that an African-American in the general society, whites frequently tell me they do not see race as such and so it matters not. Yet I know from a lifetime of living as a Black person in America that people of color ignore race at our own peril. So often, for us to function in a socially appropriate way, it is incumbent for us to put whites at ease about our presence, make them feel safe, defer to their views about race, and to turn the other cheek when faced with situations that are ambiguous for us but reassuring to our white peers. It cuts both ways.

Rewind to the ATC member who assured me that he did not care what color a hiker was as long as they were willing and able to do the Trail work. It left me with the impression
So the challenge of “diverse” people on the Appalachian Trail or in many other conservation clubs that have traditionally been white is a very complex journey. I cannot imagine a successful attempt at integrating or diversifying any activity without also examining and unpacking the world view, history, and values that, in many instances, have been developed to attract white donors, volunteers, boosters, and patrons. To rethink the prevailing culture of such affinity groups, then one must also consider whom the members are intended to serve and what this view is sometimes at odds. As fellow Summit Seeker ambassador and ATC Next Generation Advisory Council member Kristin Murphy puts it, “I gained a new perspective on what it’s like to belong to anything other than a white male in the outdoors and the barriers that exist for not only getting outdoors, but feeling comfortable, safe, and welcomed in nature.”

that his acceptance of a racially diverse club was provisional. He only recognized as legitimate people of color who could meet his standards of performance. It is sort of like being on probation, the sense that we can participate in these clubs if we measure up to standards set by others. In a way, I felt like I was again being invited to walk in front of the other hikers on the Trail until such time as I proved myself. But if I take his remarks in a more generous context, maybe he was saying he was entirely open to black people in the club if their presence enhanced the mission and goals of the club? Not an unreasonable thing I suppose, but is it a test he also applies to whites? Obviously it is not for me to say, and bad I asked him to clarify if I felt he would have thought me rude or a smart alec.

Rahawa Haile is female African-American hiker who identifies as “Queer.” She recently wrote about her experiences hiking on the A.T. for an article in Outside Magazine. She reports several incidents and situations during her Trail sojourn where she did not feel safe, and even felt intimidated by whites along her journey who in turn felt challenged by or distrusted her presence. I think it is hard for whites unfamiliar with the embedded culture of disparity in society to imagine how places in the wild that seem neutral, hospitable, and benign to them, might take on an entirely different connotation for black or brown hikers. The subject came up during the Summit Seekers gathering as a side note to how our Trail experiences differ at times from that of white hikers and therefore our Trail experience as a side note to how our Trail experiences differ at times entirely different connotation for black or brown hikers.

Where does this tent pole go? It was a question I dreaded from a Summit Seeker because, quite honestly, as a seasoned hiker/camper I am supposed to know this stuff. But quite honestly I had never seen a newfangled tent like that high-tech looking one that was brand new and just out of the packing box. In the end, we figured it out together, which spared my embarrassment. The organized chaos of people learning new skills, trying out new gear, bonding and sharing hard won knowledge was a great way to get to know new Trail buddies and bridge the various gaps of race, class, gender, and generations. These differences faded into the background as we barked on a shared adventure together. Each one of the participants appeared to be enthusiastic about being there. All were deeply intelligent, thoughtful, and thoroughly committed to being on the Trail and determined to put forward their personal best. Each participant had a strong sense of personal worth and a deep awareness of their heritage of struggle as the descendants of immigrants, ethnic minorities, or historically disenfranchised people. To pretend that divisions of race, gender, religion, or class are not relevant on the Trail would be like pretending such things are no longer relevant in America. Obviously the newspaper headlines tell us otherwise. As an ambassador old enough to be a parent to many of them, I enjoyed sharing my skills and experiences, and I learned from them in turn.

To me, as a volunteer, hiker, and African-American, there is something inherently democratic about a foot trail that people can use to walk from one end of our country to the other for free and to experience some of the most amazing places and spaces that have yet to be destroyed by sprawl, privatization, and industrialization. The fact that the Trail is a labor of love, maintained by countless volunteers, I feel assures that its heritage and its future remains connected to a sense of values and stewardship that would and should thrive even more with deeper representation from a wider and more diverse pool of hikers, maintainers, and advocates. The prospect of any great conservation endeavor that relies solely on one class of people to save it, would seem doomed to failure as a question of logic. Trail users and its stewards must become more diverse to both survive and become authentic in its aims. The Summit Seekers have taken these steps down an entirely new trail, one of many steps being taken toward that vision.

Clockwise from left: Conservation Leadership Corps members Jen Lam and Riiken Gilliam; CLC holds a group in a stretch circle before teaching Leave No Trace principles on an A.T. hike near Blackburn Trail Center. Photo by Jake Judkins; Participants learn techniques for setting up camp at the first event in Anacostia. Photo by McKenzie Grant-Gordon.

The September 16 event at Anacostia Park was a lovely final gathering of the Summit Seekers that included a potluck lunch, a tour of the Anacostia Resources Education Center, and a riverboat adventure lead by the Anacostia riverkeeper. Ambassadors are challenged to close the final event with a reflection circle and discussion of next steps. Ambassadors are enthusiastic about staying in touch and seeing who’s sumptuous will seek next.

Fred Tatum is a grassroots community advocate for clean water in Maryland’s longest and deepest saltwater wetland and holds the title of Patuxent riverkeeper, an organization that he founded in 2004. He also lives and works on an active farm located near the Patapsco river that has been his family’s ancestral home for nearly a century. Prior to riverkeepung, Fred spent over 25 years working as a media producer and consultant on telecommunications assignments all over the globe. Fred now teaches an adjunct course in Environmental Law and Policy at Historic St. Mary’s College of Maryland. An accomplished blacksmith, farmer, and waterkeeper, Fred is the recipient of numerous regional and state awards for his numerous environmental works. He is among the longest serving waterkeeper in the Chesapeake region and the only African-American waterkeeper in the nation.
ATC dir

Susan Daniels devoted 28 years to the ATC before retiring this year

Emma “Grandma” Gatewood holds up a tattered shirt from her solo thru-hike in 1955. Photos courtesy Lucy Seeds and Marjorie Wood

GRANDMA GATEWOOD STORY

FilmAffects and Eden Valley Enterprises are excited to announce that their film Trail Magic, the Grandma Gatewood Story was officially nominated last spring for a Regional National Association of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) Emmy Award in the “Best Documentary, Historical” category. Directed by Peter Huston of FilmAffects, the story of Emma Gatewood’s solo thru-hike on the A.T. in 1955 at the age of 67 still resonates with hikers across the country. The film captures Emma Gatewood’s challenging life that led to her historic hike on the Trail. Her hike and the subsequent publicity spurred interest in Trail hiking across America. According to director Huston, Emma’s story propelled boomers in the late ’60s and ’70s to get out in nature and many chose to attempt the A.T. The film explores the idea of “grandma’s on the Trail” and how that changed the way we look at personal fitness and outdoor adventure. The film, which features Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) president/CEO Ron Tipton and several other ATC staff, first aired in Ohio on PBS stations WVIZ and WOUB in 2016. Since then, it has been distributed to PBS stations across the country by the National Education Television Association.

For more information visit: NETAonline.org or purchase the DVD from the Ultimate A.T. Store at: atctrailstore.org

To view a clip from the video visit: vimeo.com/97931550

THREE DECADES of Devotion to the Trail

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has a number of dedicated staff who have given a good chunk of their working lives to our organization. Every now and then, one of these remarkable staff chooses to hang up their phones and turn off the computer, wishing the rest of us farewell to enjoy retirement.

Twenty-eight years ago, when the ATC had a handful of staff, Susan Daniels joined the crew to help with the growing amount of administrative assignments. As her early supervisor noted: “Hiring Sue was one of the best decisions I made.” Many, many staff and volunteers couldn’t agree more. With Susan’s retirement from her position as conservation coordinator, the ATC will say a fond and deeply appreciative farewell to an unassuming, dedicated, prolific contributor to the success of our organization and the stewardship of the Trail.

Susan’s work grew to take on many tasks over the course of her tenure with the ATC. She became chief go-to for all staff in the conservation department and certainly for many newly hired staff who were seeking a kind soul to help point them in the right direction. The entire staff grew to rely on Sue’s deep knowledge of the organization. As many recognized, “she’s like Google for the ATC.” Ask Sue.

Others beyond staff asked Sue for assistance every day. “Sue always answered all of the questions volunteers had,” says Ned Kuhns, former president of the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club and Stewardship Council member. “She was incredibly helpful and supportive of volunteers.” Surely many agree, as Susan was presented an award at the 2017 biennial meeting for her contributions. This recognition was received with a standing ovation.

Many of us, including executive leadership, turned to Susan to edit and refine major documents and communications. Her editorial skills are sharp and her ability to navigate complex text is impressive. Her attention to detail and support of the Stewardship Council was instrumental in the development of numerous Trail management policies today. “Susan is not only a wise and valued source of institutional knowledge, she has also been instrumental in assuring that the Stewardship Council functions effectively,” says Beth Critton, current chair of the Stewardship Council. Among her many other responsibilities for the council, she has coordinated meetings, helped update the handbook, recorded notes, and assured that policies developed by the council and adopted by the board find their way onto the ATC website.

Beyond her work on behalf of the council, she has compiled and reported hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours and has been the motivating force behind both the content and editorial quality of The Register newsletter. Happy Trails, Susan — you will be missed!
ATC 2017 CONFERENCE IN MAINE

The 2017 Appalachian Trail Conservancy 41st Conference in Maine, hosted by the Maine A.T. Club this past summer was a successful, festive, and busy event. See more highlights from the event at: matc.org/assets/mainetainer-summer-2017.pdf

Hurricane Irma Damage
The massive, category five hurricane that caused widespread damage across the state of Florida in early September also significantly impacted the southern end of the A.T., hundreds of trees fell across the Trail in Georgia and the southernmost portion of North Carolina, with pockets of damage in the Smokies and north into Tennessee. Volunteers from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club and the Nantahala Hiking Club worked diligently to remove blowdowns. Their work was aided significantly by Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and U.S. Forest Service staff, particularly in the 50 or so miles of A.T. in federally designated wilderness areas, where chainsaws are prohibited and hand tools must be used. The Trail is expected to be cleared by mid-October.

“Widow-makers” and other hazards from damaged or unstable trees will remain a concern along affected sections of the A.T. beyond the 2018 northbound thru-hiking season. A.T. campers need to be extremely vigilant about inspecting overnight sites for trees and limbs around and above them that could fall — even in completely still conditions — throughout Georgia, North Carolina, and much of Tennessee.

For more information and other Trail updates visit: appalachiantrail.org/updates

Members of Congress Unite to Support the Appalachian Trail
Congressman Dan Beyer (D-VA) and Congressman Phil Roe (R-TN) co-chair the newly organized Appalachian National Scenic Trail Caucus. The bipartisan caucus is organized to unite members in the U.S. House of Representatives in working together for the sustained protection and conservation of the A.T. Both Congressmen are experienced A.T. hikers. A longtime section hiker, Congressman Beyer recently completed the A.T.’s rugged and challenging treadway through the White Mountains in New Hampshire. And Congressman Roe frequently hikes the A.T. for its beauty and as part of his physical conditioning to summit one or two 14,000-foot mountaintops each year in the western United States. Both Congressmen recognize the importance of the A.T. in providing recreational access to millions of Americans, in welcoming travelers from around the world, and in sustaining healthy economies in communities along the Trail. The caucus kicks off as the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act nears in 2018. The Act, passed by Congress in 1968, recognized the Appalachian and Pacific Crest trails for their scenic and recreational qualities, and set up the creation of additional nationally recognized scenic trails, recreation trails, and historic trails. The A.T. is unique as the longest continuous footpath in the U.S., and as an avid outdoorsman, I care deeply about preserving our natural resources so they can be enjoyed for generations to come,” says Congressman Roe. “All of the Members whose district contains a portion of the A.T. are vested in working together to protect the Trail in its entirety. You might say this is a ‘one for all and all for one’ caucus in looking out for all parts of the Trail.”

“Congressman Dan Beyer adds: “The A.T. is a demonstrable part of America’s heritage and our contemporary life. It is a symbol of achievement for those who make it their mission to hike its entire length, whether one long continuous walk or a section at a time. And it is a destination for picnics, day hikes, and camping trips.” I anticipate the caucus will be dealing with increased visitation and accompanying increased maintenance demands, along with assuming that the Trail is appropriately funded,” says Beyer.

Since 1925, people who cherish the A.T. have gathered to build the Trail, hike, and attend workshops on topics of common interest. Perhaps the greatest reward of these events is the opportunity to connect with other kindred spirits. At a “View from The Maine Woods,” the recent Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) Conference held in August 2017 in Waterville, Maine, an ATC task force presented the concept of “A.T. Vista” to attendees as the recognized program forum for activity on and near the Appalachian Trail. The task force, including representatives from A.T. Clubs, A.T. Communities, ATC staff, and ATC members, has been engaged during the last several months to develop a new model for an event that highlights the ways the Trail brings A.T. Communities, clubs, and hikers together while streamlining activities and rethinking the distribution of event planning responsibility. The change to the A.T. Vista comes as the ATC begins to schedule annual public board and membership meetings beginning in 2018 to comply with new rules for non-profits organized in the District of Columbia. A.T. Vista is envisioned as a four-day weekend event that retains celebrated activities such as hikes and workshops, while broadening the engagement in hosting and participation from local A.T. communities and other nearby partners. Organizers also anticipate planning activities that will increase attendance from younger and more diverse participants. The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference will host the first A.T. Vista during the summer of 2020 at Ramapo College in New Jersey. The event coincides with the conference’s centennial and offers the opportunity to pilot implement this new A.T. event. Looking forward, A.T. Vistas will likely occur every two years, with a rotational cycle that seeks host sites south and north of the Delaware Water Gap. The A.TC is currently establishing the 2020 Steering Committee that will plan and produce the inaugural A.T. Vista program. In the meantime, the A.T. Vista Task Force will continue to develop the program as a special feature of the Appalachian Trail experience, and obtain feedback from others interested in being involved with the event.

For more information visit: atcvista.org
Len Foote Hike Inn
“ABOVE THE GRID” PROJECT

Brighter days are ahead for the Len Foote Hike Inn, an environmentally sustainable wilderness lodge — 4.4 Trail miles from Springer Mountain, Georgia — thanks to a 53.72 KW solar photovoltaic array. The inn’s “Above the Grid” solar project supplies nearly 70 percent of the lodge’s electricity and provides a lesson in environmental sustainability for thousands of visitors. A unit of the Georgia State Parks, the Hike Inn is operated by nonprofit Len Foote Hike Inn, Inc. For 18 years, the facility, accessible for guests who hike five miles from Amicalola Falls State Park, has encouraged environmental education and wilderness recreation. The solar project was funded by a grant from All Points North Foundation (APNF) and a low-interest loan from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). Radiance Solar installed the equipment. “We are using the sun to provide power, reduce our carbon footprint, and educate guests about alternative energy,” said Hike Inn executive director Eric Graves.

“All Points North Foundation is focused on driving awareness, education, training, and hands-on application of solar power as a practical and cost efficient energy source,” said Laura Steich, executive Director of APNF. “The Hike Inn project puts the practical value of solar front and center by educating guests across the age spectrum about how they can conserve energy through sustainability practices such as solar energy.”

AMONG SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS AT THE HIKE INN ARE:

- A solar water heating system supplying the bathhouse
- Composting toilets, which save more than 200,000 gallons of water annually
- A LEED gold-level architectural design to conserve water and energy while reducing pollution
- A composting system for food waste supplemented by vermiculture (earthworms)

“Approximately 9,000 guests per year stay at the Hike Inn,” says Hike Inn Board president Richard Judy. “They enjoy our leave-no-trace, unplugged philosophy while learning about sustainable ways to save energy and conserve resources. Our direct trail connection to the Appalachian Trail makes us a popular spot for backpackers and day hikers to stop for a refreshing drink and learn a little at the same time.”

The Hike Inn’s Outside School teaches a diverse range of students and their leaders about natural history and sustainability. “Above the Grid” is one more way to inspire young people to work for a sustainable future,” said Graves.

Celebrate a completed hike of the Appalachian Trail with a miniature version of the Baxter Peak sign, handmade in Pennsylvania and designed to hold that summit photo.

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(Store Hours: Mon. — Fri., 9 am — 4:30 pm Eastern)
Follow the instructions at check-out to claim your 10% ATC member discount!

Buy direct from the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store and ensure a maximum return to the Trail.
The Future of Landscape Protection

By Jack Igelman

To Grasp the Impact of a Successful Large-Scale landscape partnership approach that helps preserve the essence of the A.T. experience — its viewshed, access to the Trail, and the vitality of communities along it — there is no better place to examine than Maine’s North Woods. “Cooperating with multiple partners to preserve large landscapes is the future of protecting the Trail experience,” says the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) president and CEO Ron Tipton. “This of course is not limited to Maine, but all the way to Georgia too.” He explains that this isn’t about protecting the footpath, which is already protected. It’s about the larger landscape. “When you’re looking at a really large area with the potential to protect thousands of acres it will almost always involve working with numerous private and public partners,” he says. “It will never be the ATC by ourselves.”

A key partner in this endeavor is the National Park Service (NPS) Appalachian National Scenic Trail office (APPA). “[Our] participation in A.T. Landscape Protection aligns seamlessly with the NPS promotion of large landscape conservation to support healthy ecosystems and cultural resources,” says APPA superintendent Wendy Janssen. “As Benton MacKaye wrote, ‘...a realm and not merely a trail mark the full aim of our efforts.’”

Walter Graff, the senior vice president of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), is someone who’s not afraid of gutsy land conservation projects himself. For example, in 2001 he helped establish the largest town-owned forest in New Hampshire that encompasses over 10,000 acres in his hometown of Randolph. While that project was a grassroots community effort, it paralleled his decades-long career at the AMC, an organization that is no stranger to major conservation projects.

“When we created a town forest we did it as volunteers. That got me thinking, can the AMC do this somewhere else?” Graff said. While his contemplation would represent a new frontier in the AMC’s conservation playbook, it coincided with one of the largest land ownership changes in the northeastern U.S. in nearly a century. An upheaval in the timber industry preceded the transfer of ownership of hundreds of thousands of acres of commercial timberland throughout the state of Maine in the late 1990s. Soon, the AMC as well as other conservation advocates and organizations swept in to protect some of Maine’s most special and remote places. For example, in 2003, the AMC purchased the first of several sprawling tracts that formed the nucleus of the AMC’s Maine Woods Initiative (MWI) — a project that combines outdoor recreation, resource protection, sustainable forestry, and community partnerships in Maine’s 100-Mile Wilderness region. In all, the MWI encompasses a contiguous stretch of over 70,000 acres of permanently conserved land. The thriving venture is one of several large-scale landscape projects that has placed in permanent protection thousands of acres of some of New England’s most remote and remarkable terrain that is adjacent to or encompasses the Appalachian Trail.

The success of the MWI is an example of an ambitious approach to land protection that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and many of its conservation partners...
What she observed was that large timber companies were selling millions of acres of forest land in Maine's Northwoods, a vast landscape of timberlands, lakes, and rivers that cover nearly half of the state. Much of it was privately owned and managed for industrial timber harvesting and the forest product industry had, for two centuries, produced everything from fine furniture to clothespins and paper.

While conservation organizations had been eyeing protection possibilities in Maine for decades, much of the forest land was owned by a dozen or so large paper companies. Tilberg explains that it made sense for paper companies to own their own forest land to access a reliable supply of timber and water power. But global competition in the paper and timber industry tightened profits, triggering pressures from forest products companies, and recreation interests was to stabilize and to prevent fragmentation. As land sells you have the potential to create more inholdings which works against forest management and you can potentially lose the 'quality' of such a vast landscape," says Tilberg.

While the timber land sell off of 98-99 was unexpected, the Maine conservation community wasn’t entirely unprepared. For years, land protection advocates had spent time connecting with locals in the remote forest gateway communities of working forests. "There were public meetings, listening sessions to talk about what people cared about," recalls Tilberg. "In these communities people depended on working landscapes, but didn’t want to see land developed either, or to lose that sense of remoteness. What we learned was that [many goals overlapped]."

Tilberg turned out that the revelation of building stronger ties with communities would serve them well as forest land in Maine was put up for grabs. While, overall, the conservation organizations were facing an opportunity of a lifetime, plenty of Mainers weren’t entirely comfortable with a change in the status quo of land ownership that once reigned.

From the concerns of communities throughout Maine, the potential of being locked out of land they’ve accessed for generations to earn a living, hunt or fish, or snowmobile as a part of a community was a concern. Among the core values of the project was to recognize that the woods product industry is a backbone of the local economy. "It’s not our goal to replace timber harvesting with wilderness recreation, but rather to integrate the two."

### "WE ALL CHAMPION THE SAME THING: MAINTAINING A SENSE OF PLACE, CLEAN WATER, BEAUTIFUL VIEWS, REMOTENESS — THOSE VALUES ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE NEAR THE TRAIL AS THEY ARE TO A THRU-HIKER."

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**Shaffer explains that the partnerships between the ATC and other organizations such as the Appalachian Trail Service, the Trust for Public Land, the AMC, and many local land trusts and organizations managed by volunteers take many forms.** He points out that as conservation projects expand beyond the Trail corridor, they will likely become vastly more complex and will depend on a division of labor supplied by a diverse range of partners. "Our partners bring to the table a wide range of capacity and expertise. Our role with AMC has been more to help promote and celebrate the huge successes of their Maine Woods Initiative and to make the connection that this important work in Maine contributes to the entire A.T. landscape," Shaffer explains. "But our work with partners such as AMC also goes well beyond specific projects areas like the MWI. We work closely on issues important to the entire A.T. landscape such as conservation funding initiatives, federal and state legislative issues, and active threats such asappropriately planned pipelines or communications facilities."

Other partners in Maine also had huge successes that contributed to protecting the A.T. Landscape. In 1998, Karin Tilberg, now the interim executive director of the Forest Society of Maine, was working for the Northern Forest Alliance when there was a rather abrupt transformation in land ownership throughout the state. "We saw in two years, millions of acres sold in Maine," recalls Tilberg. "We couldn’t get our heads around it. It was so dramatic."

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**ATC’s**

Tipton says that among the ATC’s closest partnership is with the Trust for Public Land (TPL). Over the years, the TPL has assisted or led projects that have direct benefits to the A.T., including assisting the AMC with their first MWI purchase in 2003. Among their current projects is the protection of 2,500 acres around Bald Mountain Pond (BMP), an undeveloped lake that’s prized for its natural beauty, a century-old forest stand, and its population of rare landlocked Arctic char. The protection will also secure an important buffer to the Trail and will protect the view of the pond from Bald Mountain Shelter. “You really don’t want to see the lights of houses and smell gas grills. The BMP project helps maintain the sense of being in the big woods, which is what’s so special about Maine,” said TPL senior project manager, J.T. Horn.

Horn said that anchoring the TPL’s work along the A.T. corridor is a way to link people with the best of Maine’s North Woods, but it’s not the only reason for the partnership with the ATC. “Just from a mission alignment, working with the ATC is a really good fit. Our mission is conserving land for people. One of the best places people can experience the grandeur and remoteness of the North Woods is along the Trail, so anchoring our land conservation work along one of the iconic destinations in the North Woods makes sense,” explains Horn. On the other hand, he says that there’s a less flashy, but just as vital reason for partnering with the ATC. “At a practical level, the ATC is really helpful at creating the case for public funding for conservation. We also know that there will be an impressive cadre of volunteers to steward the land after we buy it.”

But at the core of a successful landscape-level conservation project in the A.T. corridor is helping support and bolster the communities that lie within it. Putting the environmental benefits aside, protecting the landscape may be an enticing draw to future visitors to Maine and a viable option for bolstering the vitality of communities that are looking for other ways to diversify their economic base and generate income from a working landscape. “The breadth and scope of the MWI and other projects are extraordinary, but in the eastern U.S. unique to Maine. So as we go beyond the scope of the footpath and corridor, we’re looking at a combination of other strategies — conservation easements or land swaps, for example — that don’t involve buying thousands of acres,” says Tipton.

And while the scale of conservation in the North Woods may not be possible to replicate in other regions of the Appalachians, if the success in Maine serves as a guide, then engaging communities and building meaningful partnerships, will most likely remain the cornerstone of the ATC’s future conservation strategy for a long time to come.

For more information about the A.T. Landscape Partnership visit: appalachiantrail.org/Landscape

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By Karen Lutz and Laurie Goodrich

As intrepid southbound thru-hikers make their way down the Appalachian Mountain chain this fall, few may be aware that their efforts are joined — and dwarfed — by a medium-size hawk weighing less than a pound. Dr. Laurie Goodrich at Pennsylvania’s Hawk Mountain Sanctuary has launched a multi-year research project that has yielded fascinating data about this species that depends on the very same large landscape that Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and our conservation partners are diligently working to protect.

Dr. Goodrich and her colleagues have pioneered research on the raptor’s spring and fall migration using tiny satellite telemetry units fitted to the birds with small unobtrusive micro-sized backpacks to collect data on the migratory habits and destinations of the broad-winged hawks. Their work has been supported by numerous sponsors including the Kittatinny Coalition, which is co-led by the ATC and Audubon Pennsylvania. And, the Pennsylvania Game Commission through the State Wildlife Grants Program.

Among these other important partners who help to protect the raptors’ migratory path (and the Trail corridor) near Hawk Mountain is the William Penn Foundation, which has been a strong funding partner with the ATC since 2015 when it was awarded a grant to build constituency for protecting sections of the A.T. in eastern Pennsylvania that are within the Delaware River Basin.

Two of the fitted birds, Rosalie and Ridgena, were sponsored by the Kittatinny Coalition and have proven themselves to be interesting characters. Rosalie was named after Rosalie Edge, a “fearless environmentalist” and the founder of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in the 1930s. Ridgena was named after the Kittatinny Ridge, which the A.T. follows from New Jersey to southern Pennsylvania. They both nested on this ridge — Rosalie nested near where the A.T. lands adjoin Hawk Mountain.

The researchers have meticulously tracked the birds as they flew parallel to the Trail along the Appalachian Range, then west to Texas, and again south through Mexico and on to their wintering grounds in South America, traveling through Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Columbia, Ecuador, finally resting in the forests of Peru — almost reaching the border of Bolivia.

Rosalie left her nest on Kittatinny Ridge and flew south on August 23, 2015 and arrived at her wintering grounds in Peru on October 17 in a remarkably quick 56 days. Apparently, there she opted for the now popular ultralight packing option and cleverly managed to jettison her rather costly transmitter before taking flight back to Pennsylvania. Despite concern that Ridgena had met some unfortunate circumstance, Dr. Goodrich and her researchers positively identified her by the colored bands that they had affixed above her talons when she returned in April 2016. In the last three years, Ridgena has returned each year to nest near where she was banded on Kittatinny Ridge, while each winter she leaves again, we presume, for Colombia, following the Appalachians on her way.

Rosalie's southbound fall migration for 2016 (where she left her nest along the A.T. in central Pennsylvania) covered 5,446 miles and is equivalent to an A.T. hiker traveling from Springer Mountain to Katahdin, flip flopping back to Springer, then flipping north again to Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania. But unlike the bipedal hikers, Rosalie covered the distance in only 157 days. She rested for a month in Parque Nacional Bahuaja Sonene in Peru. Then, this charismatic raptor left Peru on February 4, 2017 and returned to build her nest less than a half mile from her 2016 nest alongside the A.T. where, like in 2016, she and her mate fledged two young. Following a northbound route similar to her route south, Rosalie followed the Trail that carries the famed footpath from northern Georgia. She covered 5,418 miles in a mere 83 days, arriving on April 25. Unlike her hiking companions, researchers found no evidence that ramen noodles or peanut M&Ms sustained Rosalie’s effort.

Left: A broad-winged hawk in flight. Photo by Vic Berardi;
Above: Rosalie is captured at Hawk Mountain so that she can be fitted with a transmitter.

Left: A broad-winged hawk in flight. Photo by Vic Berardi; Above: Rosalie is captured at Hawk Mountain so that she can be fitted with a transmitter.
These hawks depend heavily on the A.T. landscape during their migration to and from their wintering grounds in South America.

Coniferous forests common along the A.T., typically choosing large mature trees to build their nests. While they migrate, the hawks rest at night for short periods along the forested slopes and often forage and feed in forest and forest edges beyond the toe of the slope. Consistent with the ATC’s strategic goal of Proactive Protection, conserving forested slopes, preventing forest fragmentation, and preserving productive farmland not only enhances the A.T. experience, but it is critically important for the long-term success of these birds and other long-distance migrants using this corridor.

For the past several years Rosalie, Ridgema, and their mates have nested close to the A.T. where it passes near the popular Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (an excellent place to visit and learn more about broad-wings and other birds of prey often observed along the A.T.) They’ve chosen large chestnut oaks, white oaks, tulip poplar, and Eastern hemlocks, ranging in diameter from a respectable 42-inch Hemlock to an impressive 67-inch white oak. These trees are relatively common in the mid-Atlantic along the protected corridor of the A.T.

Broad-wings are unique in their migratory habits in that they form large clusters called “kettles.” At times, there can be hundreds and occasionally thousands of birds in a single kettle. These birds are among the first to begin migrating south for the winter, departing soon after their young have gained the ability to fly and hunt. Broad-wings begin heading south as early as late July and most have left the A.T. landscape by the end of September. Enthusiasts hoping to catch a glimpse of a kettle should find a ridgetop vista along the A.T. on a clear day with a cold front coming from a prevailing northwest wind. Aim your binoculars high in the sky and enjoy the show.
visiting communities. The new Appalachian Trail Center in Damascus, discovery, a vehicle for conservation, a connecting thread for many hikers who venture out: a walk in the woods, a lab for the center plays a key role in Damascus as the center-point for our downtown — a gravitational core,’ noted Gavin Blevins, town manager of Damascus and senior planner for the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. “It will build upon long-standing partnerships with the ATC, U.S. Forest Service, and many other regional entities and partners who have either shown support already or with whom we are currently and continuing to work.”

Collaboration is a fundamental part of any successful project and the ATC has integrated this best practice for decades with its legions of volunteer stewards. In another grade of partners, Damascus is among the 40 official ATC Trail Communities. The program, launched in 2005, recognizes communities that promote and protect the A.T.

“The Trail Center is an exciting partnership with Damascus, one of our first A.T. Communities. The center is located literally right across the street from the actual Trail as it passes through town,” says Rob Hutchinson who is on the Board for ATC and chair of the Facilities Task Force, which meant working closely with staff on getting the project off the ground. Hutchinson was the primary liaison with the board in the approval process. “We will have the ability to introduce new hikers to the Trail and an opportunity to offer programs and education to experienced hikers,” says Hutchinson. “Damascus has a lot of outdoor-oriented tourism, such as Trail Days, the Virginia Creeper Trail, and visitors to the Grayson Highlands. And it is not too far off of Interstate 81, which makes it an easy stop for casual tourists as well. We’re anticipating a huge success for both the Town of Damascus and for ATC.”

Colin Beasley, an ATC Board member also played a role in getting the center to come to fruition by doing some economic analysis to understand the financial impact of the endeavor and assisted in drafting terms of the lease as well as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which was designed to outline the strategic partnership between the ATC and the Town of Damascus. But Beasley praises Hutchinson for what he says was most of the hard work. “Rob provided a clear-headed approach to evaluating the Damascus opportunity and a steady hand through all of the discussions, both internally and externally, with all of the stakeholders and individuals who were helpful along the way,” says Beasley.

Damascus also hosts the largest annual gathering of Appalachian Trail hikers — Trail Days. The multi-day festival in May attracts about 20,000 hikers and other visitors to Damascus. Hiker workshops and seminars, live music and entertainment, and concerts highlighting local and regional talents create a festival atmosphere and contribute to the event’s growing popularity. The 32nd Appalachian Trail Days Festival is already slated for May 18 through 20, 2018.

Blevins and others are aiming for the center’s groundbreaking ceremony that same weekend. Completion will be another spark in a comprehensive economic revitalization associated with cultural heritage and destination tourism across the 19 counties of Southwest Virginia.

Chris Cannon, executive director for Friends of Southwest Virginia, the operational arm of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, calls the new facility a game-changer. “By itself, the center would do incredible things by attracting new visitors and building the profile of our trails,” he says. “But the complementary development on both the community and regional level will create many more opportunities for growth.”

Friends of Southwest Virginia, along with a multitude of citizen groups, localities, and nonprofits has served as a coordinating organization for Appalachian Spring, a five-year initiative to expand economic opportunity through outdoor recreation. The organization has done similar regional work through development of the Crooked Road, ‘Round the Mountains, Southwest Virginia’s Artisan Network, and their newest partnership with Damascus, one of our first A.T. Communities. The center will support visitor information, exhibits, details about neighboring trails and assets, and training seminars for volunteer stewards. In another grade of partnership, Damascus, one of our first A.T. Communities.

By Catherine Van Noy

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL’S ROLES ARE AS DIVERSE AS THE many hikers who venture out: a walk in the woods, a lab for discovery, a vehicle for conservation, a connecting thread for communities. The new Appalachian Trail Center in Damascus, Virginia, will likewise meet many needs.

The approximately 2,500-square-foot building slated for completion in 2019 is a collaborative project with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the Town of Damascus, and the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation. The project represents a significant investment in an ongoing effort to expand economic opportunities through outdoor recreation across Southwest Virginia.

A native Ohioan entering her 20th year in Virginia, Catherine Van Noy runs a strategic communications firm located near Blacksburg. She wrote a biweekly column for the Roanoke Times from 2003 until July of this year.

For more information about Damascus and Trail Days visit visitdamascus.org.

Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation myswva.org

ATC Trail Communities appalachiantrail.org/atccommunities

VISITOR CENTER COMING TO TRAIL TOWN USA

The center will support visitor information, exhibits, details about neighboring trails and assets, and training seminars for a range of groups including volunteers who help maintain the A.T. Programming and design will commence this fall. The facility, when completed, is also likely to assist the work of known recreational and conservation partners in the region along with adding new collaborators to the mix.

“This Center will be in a gateway community to the Mount Rogers high country, one of the most popular hiking destinations in Virginia,” says Laura Belleville, vice president of Conservation and Trail Management Programs for the ATC. Damascus, often referred to as “Trail Town, USA,” was a natural fit for various reasons. Proximity to the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, over 200,000 acres of national forest bisected by hiking and horse trails and scenic byways, is one. In addition, the Virginia Creeper Trail, the Trans-American Bicycle Trail, the Iron Mountain Trail, the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail, the Crooked Road, Virginia’s Musical Heritage Trail, and Virginia’s Birding and Wildlife Trail all pass through or connect to Damascus.

“By Catherine Van Noy”

The Appalachian Trail runs through Damascus — which is surrounded by many other outdoor recreational trails and spaces. Photo by Stephen Outten; Below: Visitors gather for Trail Days and participate in the annual hiker parade. Photos by Don Hemarontdo
LEVERAGE in partnership

by Leanna Joyner & Brenna Irwer

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IS AS AMERICAN as Scouting or apple pie. These iconic fixtures in the United States, Scouting and the A.T., have a long overlapping history, where many young people gain their first introduction to the outdoors — where the beauty, challenge, and rewards are found in the exercise, strengthened friendships, and scenery of the endeavor.

The Trail has often served as the destination for Boy Scouts within a day’s drive, with ambitions of ticking off a 50-mile backpack, to hike to a scenic spot they heard about, or to be among the volunteers who have the audacity to build and maintain this long-distance Trail. “It’s a different level of satisfaction being able to give back as adult leaders,” says Wright who explains that their interest in exposing the current scouts of Troop 304 to volunteering on the A.T. began with the wildfires that swept across the southeast in the fall of 2016. “As scouts walked down the Conservation Trail on the wooded shores of Goodrich Lake at the Jamboree, where the ATC exhibited alongside the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, they stopped by booths to engage in hands-on activities where they explored topics such as soil and water conservation, trails, and forestry. Participants came by the ATC exhibit to learn about stewardship and recreation on the Appalachian Trail. Scouts from across the country and abroad answered trivia questions about the A.T. and discovered how many volunteers and volunteerism — whether you’re picking up litter, staining a shelter, or putting in a step. He adds, as a parting thought, that hikers can leave more about the intersection of the A.T. and Scouting at appalachiantrail.org/scouting

For more information about A.T. CAMP visit atcamp.org

To that end, the A.T. captured the imagination of two Eagle Scouts, Randy Wright and Charlie Timberlake, who set out in 2011 to hike following their respective college graduations. Meeting at age six through Scouts and the A.T., we now see both young people to be involved in conservation and outdoor activities, working together as a natural partnership.

Assistant troop master Wright with Troop 304, echoes Winchester’s enthusiasm. “The A.T. is one of the coolest things we have in America, and there is a lot of untapped enthusiasm for people who can get exposed to it and get involved,” says Wright.

“And you don’t need to be a major-league athlete to do it,” adds Timberlake. He says hiking it is applicable for all ages, just like volunteerism — whether you’re picking up litter, staining a shelter, or putting in a step. He adds, as a parting thought, that hikers can pass on their enthusiasm for the outdoors to the next generation through Scouting organizations, so that future generations have positive experiences outside and on the A.T.
CULTURE IMMERSION

Alex Perkins is a travel and adventure enthusiast based in Nashville, Tennessee. “A few years back, a friend of mine invited me to join her on a camping trip in Red River Gorge, Kentucky. This led me to a healthy passion for backpacking, and I have really enjoyed learning the culture,” he explains. “I am lucky to live very close to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which contains 900 miles of wonderful, winding trails through the Tennessee and North Carolina mountains. If you are visiting the park, the 70-mile strip of the Appalachian Trail is particularly interesting because of the various types of hikers you will surely encounter.”

On his most recent backpacking trip in the Smokies, Alex traveled 30 miles, sticking primarily to the Trail, where he wanted to document the hikers and their culture. “I wanted to hear their stories, and immerse myself in their lifestyle,” he says. During his hike, Alex met thru, section, and day-hikers and found that there is a wonderful camaraderie present among all of the hikers he came across. “It is as though they share a common understanding between themselves that they are each out here because they choose to be,” he says. “They share a mutual affinity for being outdoors and getting away from the stresses of everyday life. Friendships seem to flourish on the Trail — an element that I find extremely compelling in this Backpacking community.”

Alex hopes to get back on the Trail someday soon so he can continue to document some of the people, places, and things that inspire him the most.

alexperkinsshoots.com

Watch Alex talk about hiking, photography, and the sense of peace and camaraderie he found on the Trail at: alexperkinsshoots.com/backpacking
Cosby Knob Shelter; Below from left: Thru-hikers Patawon and Rocket; Alex (self-portrait); Day-hiker Jerry (from China); Section hiker Brandon
From left: Section hikers Adriana, Josh, and Nelson at Kephart Shelter.
Scott Zimmerman enjoyed a childhood filled with the joys of summer camp in the mountains of North Carolina where he paddled, fished, sailed, camped, and hiked the long days away. He loved being outside with friends and recalls the fun they had “before the internet.” He was an ambitious young man, an accomplished undergraduate, and law student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Ultimately, he became a successful corporate litigator for almost 20 years in North Carolina. Scott was on a path that seemed to be a good one.

At some point along the way, however, Scott took a detour onto a dangerous trail. It wasn’t marked with the white blaze of the A.T.’s adventure, nor was it blazed blue, leading to root and camp. It was a trail of addiction and alcoholism. Ten years ago, Scott hit his bottom and asked for help. With the help of others, he stepped off that darkly-blazed trail onto a life-long path of recovery. A huge part of his recovery is nature in general and the white-blazed A.T. in particular.

These days, Scott is the director of a vocational and residential rehabilitative program for adults with severe and persistent mental illness. He and his dog Bleu spend most of their spare time in a yurt on a wildflower farm along the Haw River in Chatham County, North Carolina. Almost every day they hike the trail Scott and his sons built along the bank of the Haw. While Scott dreams of thru-hiking the A.T. and has been “chipping away” at sections of it, he also frequently hikes on and supports the Mountains to Sea Trail in North Carolina.

Among the things Scott credits for his recovery are time on the Trail as a hiker and as a SWEAT (Smoky Mountains Wilderness Elite A.T.) Crew member — and sharing his rekindled love for the outdoors with his family. “I am very grateful for everyone who has helped to make the A.T. what it is today,” he says. “To be only a few hours away from it is very comforting. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is outstanding. It is staffed and supported by volunteers who are passionate and extremely competent,” he says. “This combination ensures achieving — day after day — its mission to preserve and manage the Trail.”

We know that the Trail can change lives and we are grateful that it helped Scott find his way back to health, family, and the power of nature. We are also grateful that Scott shares his expertise by serving on the ATC’s Land Transaction Review Committee and gives generously as a monthly donor. “I want to ensure that the Trail is there for others,” he says. “As vast and open, non-judgmental, inclusive, unbiased and, above all, magical, as it has been for me.”

For more information on making monthly donations visit: donate.appalachiantrail.org

Video submitted by Tim Bloemendaal
YOU-TUBE.COM/WATCH?v=4E4UMJ_EIK
Music:
- Radical Face: Mountains
- M83: Outro
Growing Up A.T.

Living close to the Trail ensures a lifetime of short treks and big memories

By Dave Kirkwood

I find myself on the Appalachian Trail, it is the realization that no matter where I am on the A.T., it always feels as familiar to me as the stretch five minutes from my house. For us, the Appalachian Trail is part of who we are, our lives are changed by what we do and how we treat others. It has always been there, at least in my lifetime, and it will always be there. It has always been an important part of my life, and it will always lead me home. Rarely a month goes by that I haven’t set foot on some small portion of the 2,190-mile Trail. No matter where I find myself on the A.T., it always feels as familiar to me as the stretch five minutes from my house.

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Tiffiny Lawrence • Vice President of Membership & Development

**“OPPORTUNITY MAKERS,” ALTHOUGH not a commonly used term, are those individuals who see opportunities for positive change and grab the brass ring to make things happen. At the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) we are so fortunate to have “Opportunity Makers” all around us. They are those individuals who donate their time, talent, and treasure to make our organization run smoothly all while protecting and maintaining the almost 2,200 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Our thousands of members, donors, and volunteers embody this mission as they come together to do something much bigger than any individual.

So, as head into the autumn and early winter months, I ask you to consider what kind of Opportunity Maker are you, or will you become? This premise is much more than wealth, or titles, or lots of contacts—although we appreciate those things too. Creating opportunity is our capacity to connect around each other’s better side to bring forward our charitable efforts. As I recently stepped into a new role as the ATC’s vice president of Membership and Development, I hope to foster further those behaviors that so many of you already do — to reimagine our fundraising so we take on new initiatives including our charitable efforts. As I recently stepped into a new role as the ATC’s vice president of Membership and Development, I hope to foster further those behaviors that so many of you already do — to reimagine our fundraising so we take on new initiatives including our charitable efforts.

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Join our Leadership Circle! For more information, contact: Marie Uehling at 304.885.0462 or muehling@appalachiantrail.org

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Found: Military watch at Bobblits Gap shelter in Virginia in September. Contact: (828) 883-9278 to identify.

For Sale: AT Cafe in Millinocket, Maine. Successful restaurant located in the Trail town closest to the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. Millinocket is the gateway to Baxter State Park and Katahdin, starring its 2016 A.T. thru-Nike. It’s now available on Amazon. See its “Author Steve Johnson” Facebook page for photos, interviews, and more details. ▲ Public Notices may be edited for clarity and length. For more information, contact chucklissonnelette@gmail.com.

Black Bear Resort, Hampton, Tennessee for sale – 410 of a mile off MM 478.5 – 2 Burns houses, cabins, and cottages – 23 acres in mountains $599,000. Contact: (423) 725-5988; blackbearresorttn.com or reserve@blackbearresort.com.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

DURING THE 15 YEARS AFTER MY WIFE, Stacey’s, and best friend Stacey was first diagnosed with cancer, we never asked about the prognosis. We focused only on the diagnosis, our treatment options, and additional steps to improve overall health. As a result, when we had the rare chance to move to where we wished four years after Stacey’s breast cancer had first spread to her liver and lungs, (Stage four) we had no idea that based on the numbers, her survival at that moment was already unlikely. Bounded by the averages, we may have never seized the opportunity to find a simpler and more active life.

It started innocently enough, with the Google search: “Where should I move?” followed by an anonymous survey that narrowed the choice to 25 towns. We already knew the region where we hoped to settle and after visiting about half-dozen towns on the list found only one of interest. That town was Abingdon, Virginia.

While this was happening, Stacey had two people from entirely different lives interested in her. And while we had no idea that based on the numbers, her survival at that moment was already unlikely. Bounded by the averages, we may have never seized the opportunity to find a simpler and more active life.

Three apartments for rental income/housing the restaurant includes other noted publications. Building The opportunities for outdoor recreation are abundant in this spectacular outdoor recreational area. Featured in Backpacker and Downeast magazines including included. Work 6 months and travel the new Appalachian Conservancy (ATC), heard about the A.T. club, our diet, and Stacey’s unfailing optimism, attitude all played a major role in extending our time together for many years beyond what was thought possible, and in time I may find more solace in this. With her close to my heart and in honor of her memory, I will remain active in life and with the club, and will continue to monitor our section from Elk Garden to Thomas Knob shelter. While thinking about Stacey, one of our good friends was reminded of a quote that I think says it best: “The Devil whispered ‘You can’t withstand the storm.’ The warrior replied, ‘I’m not sick, I just have cancer.’ That was vintage Stacey. Her personality was bubbly, she had an infectious laugh and a smile that spread to all around her. Until the last year or so, we continued going out on club work trips together and monitoring our own section in addition to hiking, kayaking, tending to a large garden, volunteering with several local organizations. Stacey passed away on June 19th of this year, just two days before our 25th anniversary. A memorial for her will be established at the new Trail Center to be built in Damascus, Virginia in 2018.

It’s never been more clear to me that our move and active lifestyle, much of it involving the Trail and the club, our diet, and Stacey’s unfailing optimistic attitude all played a major role in extending our time together for many years beyond what was thought possible, and in time I may find more solace in this. With her close to my heart and in honor of her memory, I will remain active in life and with the club, and will continue to monitor our section from Elk Garden to Thomas Knob shelter. While thinking about Stacey, one of our good friends was reminded of a quote that I think says it best: “The Devil whispered ‘You can’t withstand the storm.’ The warrior replied, ‘I’m not sick, I just have cancer.’ That was vintage Stacey. Her personality was bubbly, she had an infectious laugh and a smile that spread to all around her. 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