



JOURNEYS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / WINTER 2017

A photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, three ponies with brown and white patches are grazing in a field covered in snow and frost. In the background, two tall, dark evergreen trees stand prominently against a cloudy sky with hints of orange and yellow light. The overall scene is serene and cold.

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JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / WINTER 2017

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ON THE COVER

Wild ponies on the A.T. in Grayson Highlands, Virginia
Photo by Mark Booth

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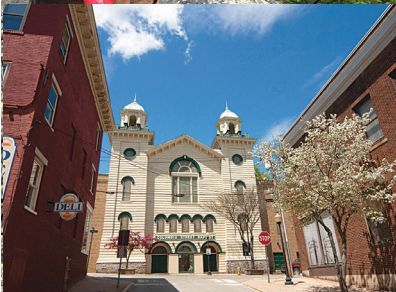
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What Does Trump Mean for the A.T.?

THE ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP AS

our next president was a surprise to most political observers. At the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), we had assumed the likelihood of a Hillary Clinton administration, and had begun to develop a plan for working with her transition team on issues important to the ATC, including our A.T. Large Landscape conservation agenda. Now that the election is behind us, we are considering how we can work with the new administration and the next Congress.

During the campaign President-elect Trump made a number of statements that are of great concern to those of us who are dedicated to the continued protection of a high-quality hiking experience on our Trail. These include his expressed intent to focus on coal, oil, and natural gas for our future energy supply; assertions that climate change is a hoax and that he would not support the Paris climate agreement; harsh criticism of the Environmental Protection Agency; and no stated interest in to preserving our public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities for future generations.

Since the election, President-elect Trump has backtracked from many of the positions he presented during the campaign, and has indicated he has an open mind moving forward. We look forward to presenting to his administration the success story of the long-term stewardship of the A.T. as a public/private partnership for sustainably managing a Trail built and maintained by volunteers in close collaboration with 70-plus federal and state agencies.

We have a great story to tell about the Appalachian Trail, especially its growing popularity for both day hikers and long-distance hikers. Our credibility is enhanced by the fact the ATC has always been completely non-partisan, and we have been able during the past several decades to work closely with leaders of

both parties in Congress and Republican and Democratic administrations. During the past four decades I have been a staff member of the Wilderness Society, National Audubon Society, World Wildlife Fund, and the National Parks Conservation Association. While these are all respected conservation groups, the ATC is the best organization I have worked with at building bi-partisan support for its agenda.

We can and we will figure out how to successfully move forward with our strategic priorities in the new and uncertain political environment we are entering. The awareness of the A.T. experience is growing year-by-year, and we have many friends in Congress and an increasing number of key partners and allies, including our 31 Trail clubs, the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and dozens of other state agencies that help us manage and protect the Trail.

I also want to be clear that we will stand up and challenge any administration that is planning to create policies or take actions that threaten the quality of the A.T. experience. For example, we are deeply concerned about the proposed route of the Mountain Valley natural gas pipeline through central Virginia between Pearisburg and Roanoke. Both the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club and the ATC have carefully studied and strongly objected to the proposed route that would be highly visible from a number of high elevation areas over a stretch of 100 miles of the Trail in the George Washington National Forest. We are recommending the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Forest Service not allow this project to move forward as currently designed.

Protecting the A.T. from these types of threats should not be a partisan issue and no administration should take actions that degrade the A.T. landscape. 🌲

Ronald J. Tipton / Executive Director - CEO



Ron with his wife
Rita Molyneux



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Patty Harding is the Maine Appalachian Trail Club's maintainer for Barren Mountain overlooking Lake Onawa in the 100 Mile Wilderness. Photo courtesy of the Maine A.T. Club

24 100 MILE WILDERNESS

As more people hike this section of the Trail, as part of a thru-hike, section hike, or seeking day and overnight trips, our very imagination of a wilderness setting is challenged.

12 / PATHE

To help protect the Trail's increasing use, Protecting the A.T. Hiking Experience initiative was created to put a positive message out to everyone who cares about the Trail.

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Two organizations work to help people climb above their fears and quiet the thoughts in their heads that say "can't" — through hikes along the woody paths and rocky ledges of the A.T.

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In an effort to prioritize how and where to focus conservation efforts along the magnificent ridges and valleys that make up the A.T., a new project puts the spotlight on 10 surrounding landscapes.

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Section hiker Galia Goodman says it was a given that her visions of the Trail would eventually become art.

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Throughout his career, Lenny Bernstein was known as a collaborator; as a Trail advocate, he was known as one to say, "You can't just sit and listen ... you have to speak up."

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In a unique endeavor, Paul Farragut spent 16 years hiking the 420 miles, or about 20 percent of the A.T., that crosses through the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

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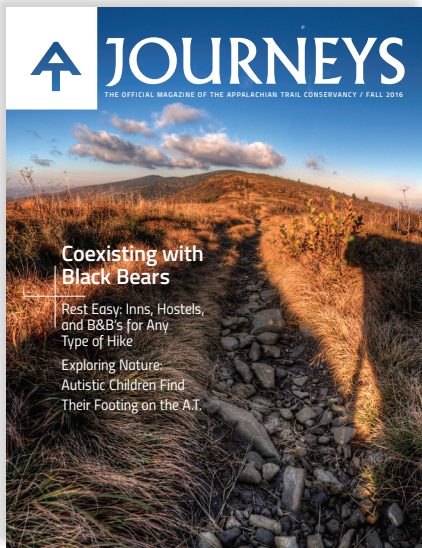
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I JUST RECEIVED MY FALL 2016 edition of *A.T. Journeys*, and am writing to protest wording on the front cover. I have a stepdaughter who works with children with autism. She is very good at what she does and is a kind and sensitive person. Long ago, she told me that I should never [use the term] “autistic children.” Instead, she says they should be called “children with autism.” I understand her point, which is that they are dealing with a condition, but it does not define who or what they are, any more than saying “American children” or “German children,” or white or black children. See the difference? I’m writing to ask you to change the language you use. Thanks! Now, I can open the magazine and enjoy it as always.

Warren Kitzmiller
MONTPELIER, VERMONT

TO THE WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy: Thank you so much for everything that you do! I was blessed to complete my A.T. journey [in 2016], and I know that it was possible due to the hard work and dedication that you show on a daily basis. You all do a terrific job and I want you to know that I am grateful for the effort that you put into creating a wonderful wilderness experience. I wish you all the best of luck, and keep up the good work.

Noah “Popeye” Markworth
PITTSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

THE TRAIL GAVE ME EVERYTHING I was looking for and more. It healed my soul and cleared my head. I will be eternally grateful for these gifts.

Kyler Star
GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND

f I woke up this morning feeling down but didn’t know why. Then I received a call from a fellow A.T. section hiker I met last year in Virginia and again this year in Pennsylvania. To hear the voice of a fellow hiker picked me back up to where my heart and soul will always be. I am truly thankful for that community called The Appalachian Trail.

Gary “G man” Hollers

f For my birthday today I checked off a bucket list item...it’s a little chilly on Springer Mountain! Here’s to a thru-hike one day...

Addie Walters

f Being amongst nature is the best remedy for most anything. Enjoy our wonderful outdoors safely; remember to leave nothing behind and respect [the natural world]. Peace and love to everyone.

Laura Gidcumb

@lint_hikes: Thru-hiking has opened more employment opportunities for me than education ever did. My last few jobs were directly tied to friends I made on the Trail; and even non-hiking employers were impressed with my dedication to completing a thru-hike.

@forestwonderwander: 20 years ago I found an ad in *Backpacker Magazine* for volunteers for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club. I knew nothing as a 19-year-old kid straight out of the burbs. It was the best experience of my life (even if my gear choices were poor). I now live to be in forests and open spaces. Volunteering on the Trail will change your life!

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@dana_kee: Thankful for the Trail maintainers and all of the others working to keep the Trail alive! Also thankful that 2017 is my year to thru-hike...cannot wait!

@vermilly: Good luck all of you 2017 hikers, you are going to have a great time!! 🍀

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



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We must now speak on behalf of a much broader constituency. We must govern our organization, and in turn fulfill our mission, within a much more complicated and challenging environment.

A **AT THE UPCOMING BOARD MEETING** scheduled for May, the Board of Directors will be approving a revision to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) bylaws. These changes are a result of more than two years of work — starting with the Governance Committee and with the generous help of a couple key volunteers. Following the initial drafts, the board discussed the changes at length at the August 2016 meeting. The resulting draft was then reviewed by our general counsel law firm. The next version went through one additional vetting at our October board meeting and it will be this final product that we will move to accept this May.

So why are we updating our bylaws? The ATC is organized under the laws of the District of Columbia. The statutes governing not-for-profit organizations such as ours have changed, resulting in us having to update our bylaws to be compliant.

One of the key requirements required us to move to annual membership business meetings. This change precipitated us looking at the current biennial membership meeting model. That effort, led by the Membership Meeting Review Task Force, has provided us with an updated model for our social, training, and Trail-focused gatherings — the plans for which have been thoroughly discussed and reviewed by maintaining clubs, Regional Partnership Committees, the Stewardship Council, and the board. You will be hearing much more about the new ATC Vista event this summer at the ATC Maine 2017 Conference and membership meeting.

Another important change is an acknowledgement that to prosper the ATC must continue to allow for greater and more diverse voices in its governance, as well as provide a focused forum for our

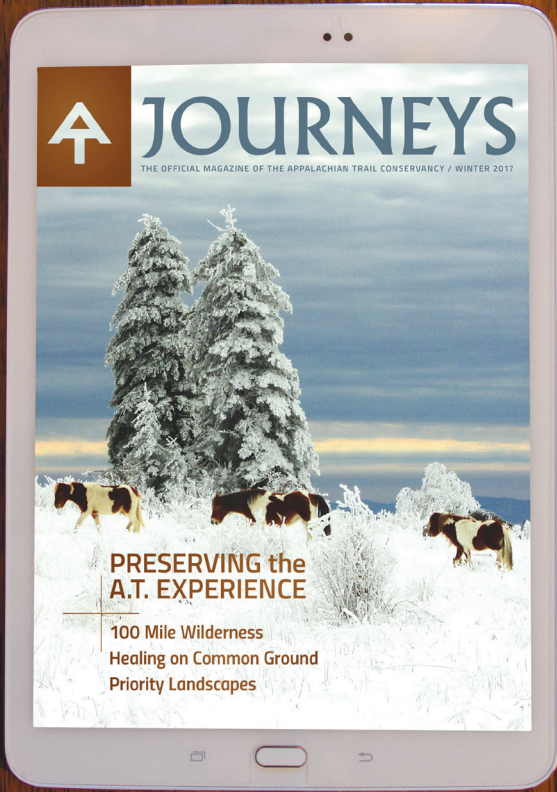
current stakeholders and partners. Currently, the business meeting allows for participation and voting only by those attending a biennial meeting; under our new model every member of the ATC will be asked to vote on the Board of Directors' slate via both paper and electronic ballot. In addition, we will be expanding the use of technology to allow more members to participate virtually in the dedicated annual business meetings.

Other changes include:

- Assuring the continuity of the work of the board and normalizing the board succession process by staggering the term of the directors.
- Ensuring the Executive Committee of the board is aware of all important Stewardship Council related issues by including the chair of the Stewardship Council as a de facto member of the Executive Committee.
- Clarifying the special membership position our maintaining clubs hold and continuing to allow for one vote for the club and one additional vote for each ten miles of Trail for which the club is responsible.


I participated in the initial reorganization and bylaw changes that ATC went through in 2005. The effort we are going through now is, in a sense, phase two of those changes and our move from the Board of Managers to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. We must now speak on behalf of a much broader constituency. We must govern our organization, and in turn fulfill our mission, within a much more complicated and challenging environment. The board, as always, takes its governance responsibilities very seriously and we are confident the work we have done with our bylaws will provide a strong foundation from which the organization will continue to grow and succeed. We look forward to having more of our combined voices in the process. ⬆

Sandra Marra / Chair




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a PATHE to preservation

A New Initiative Seeks to Improve the Hiker Experience and Protect the A.T.

It's no secret that interest in hiking on the Appalachian Trail is increasing quickly. In fact, 2015 and 2016 were record years for a number of thru-hiker starts. In 2016, more than 2,300 northbound thru-hikers registered their thru-hike attempt. And that number only includes a very small group of overall Trail users — excluding southbound thru-hikers, section hikers, flip-flop thru-hikers, or thru-hikers who didn't register, in addition to overnight hikers and day hikers (whose numbers are increasing more each year).

To help protect the Trail with the uptick in users, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) created the Protecting the A.T. Hiking Experience initiative (PATHE). PATHE is a Trail-wide effort to solve visitor use challenges such as resource damage and overcrowding. "PATHE originated from a culmination of observations and experiences we were having with Trail management and rising visitation on the Trail," says Hawk Metheny, the ATC's New England regional director. "It's an attempt to put a positive message out to all visitors and people who care about the Trail that they have the opportunity to help us protect the experience and natural resources that are out there."

One of the major steps of this initiative was hiring Jason Zink, the ATC's first visitor use manager. Zink's job is to understand the number of hikers on the Trail and how they use it. He uses that information to address visitor use challenges that are Trail-wide and site specific. "The PATHE initiative is a direct response to some of our visitor use challenges, like crowding and human impacts on the Trail, including biophysical and social impacts like lack of

BY JESSICA PORTER



ILLUSTRATIONS BY KATIE EBERTS



WITH SO MANY VISITORS PER YEAR, A.T. VISITOR CENTERS ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION AND OUTREACH. IT'S A CHANCE FOR HIKERS TO HAVE FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION WITH TRAIL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS, WHO CAN OFFER INSIGHT AND INSPIRATION.



solitude,” Zink says. “In the big picture, I see PATHE as an initiative to proactively address some of those concerns in a data-driven and logical way.” Though PATHE is a Trail-wide management initiative, the ATC’s southern and New England regions started regional PATHE initiatives that help provide framework and recommendations for overall PATHE projects.

PATHE DOWN SOUTH

A large majority of thru-hikers begin their trek in Georgia, which can lead to extreme overcrowding in the first few hundred miles of the Trail. In fact, thru-hiker starts on the Trail from March to April—typical months to start a thru-hike—have been increasing by about 10 percent per year since 2007. In 2016, that number jumped to a 30 percent increase. In response, the ATC worked with the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club and Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest to create the Georgia PATHE Process, which will use a number of strategies to deal with increasing use and associated resource and experience damages. The PATHE report will include recommendations for better visitor use management.

The report includes managing users by distributing them across time and space. It will recommend implementing zone-based registration systems for all overnight areas,

which would be similar to the permit process used in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and limit parking in popular parking areas. It also addresses education, and the ATC is working on an accreditation program so companies and people providing courses on hiking the A.T. can get official ATC approval.

The report also will improve resource resistance and protect opportunities for solitude. This includes creating campsite impact containment systems, which aim to keep destruction from high-use overnight areas contained only to the designated camping or shelter area. For example, Hawk Mountain Shelter is one of the first shelters a north-bound thru-hiker encounters. It’s located close to water and designed to hold 12 to 14 people. However, during peak thru-hiker season, as many as 100 people camp there on some nights. That overcrowding has damaged trees and destroyed all underbrush and grass, leaving just bare soil. In response, a new campsite was constructed half a mile south of the shelter that includes 30 tent pads, three food storage containers, a privy, and a trail to water.

The report will address modifying visitor behavior as well. This includes educating hikers before they visit the Trail. In 2016, the ATC and its partners went to local outfitters to teach courses on how to hike the Trail, as well as Leave No Trace principles. The ATC also hired a ridge runner to

monitor the Trail from Neel Gap to the Georgia state line and caretakers to educate people at Amicalola Falls State Park’s Visitor Center, Springer Mountain, Hawk Mountain Shelter, and Gooch Mountain Shelter. The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club also started a Trail ambassador program to have volunteer ridge runners to fill in for ridge runners and caretakers on their days off.

In addition, the black bear population is increasing, leading to a number of bear and hiker encounters on many parts of the Trail. The ATC is working to encourage hikers to carry bear canisters on the entire Trail, but the regional office is focusing specifically on the Trail between Springer Mountain and Damascus, Virginia. “There were a number of bear incidents throughout the south in 2016. As the bear population increases, we’re concerned that lax food storage techniques will lead to a disaster,” says Morgan Somerville, the ATC’s regional director for Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. “Bear canisters are a lot easier to deal with. They save time and keep rodents out of food. But the main benefit is breaking the cycle of bears associating food with A.T. campers.”

PATHE UP NORTH

In New England, the Appalachian Mountain Club and the White Mountain National Forest in the Whites, and Green Mountain Club and the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont have been implementing visitor use management systems for multiple years in order to manage high use sections of Trail. The ATC has supported these systems and has been highlighting them as effective programs to learn from as use continues to rise elsewhere along the A.T. In Maine, the ATC and partners are working to improve A.T. hiker management in Baxter State Park. Long distance hikers entering Baxter State Park on the A.T. are the only visitors who are not part of an already established visitor use program that sets quotas for various uses in the Park. Baxter State Park also employs management regulations unlike anywhere else on the Trail. In order to better educate and prepare long-distance hikers before they enter the park, the ATC—with the help of partner organizations like Friends of Baxter State Park, the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association, Maine Appalachian Trail Club, the Town of Monson, and a few vested businesses in Monson and Millinocket, Maine—expanded the A.T. Visitor Center in Monson, Maine, which is about 100 miles south of the park, to be open seven days a week during the hiking season. The visitor center prepares hikers for the 100 Mile Wilderness and for entering Baxter State Park.

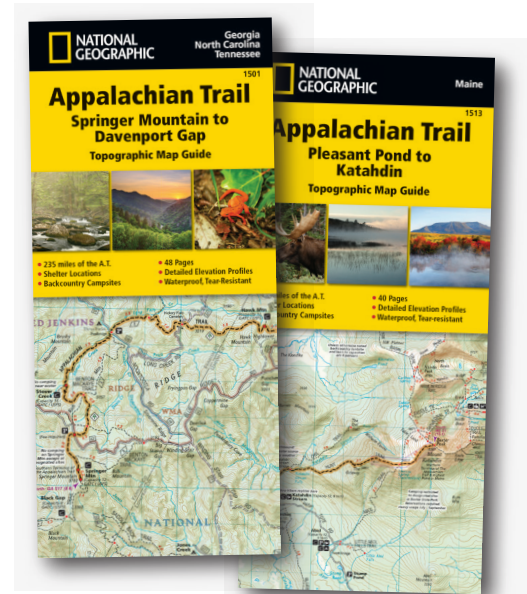
“If you look back over the past five years, use on that part of the Trail has gone up as high as 18 percent per year,” Metheny says. “In the past, it was just a few hundred hikers entering the park per year by the A.T. and it wasn’t as big of a deal. But now that it’s a couple thousand, we need to have a [process] that is equitable to bring all visitors into a registration system.” In 2016, the visitor center was open full time between June and October. Nearly 2,500 people visited, a huge number considering fewer than 700 people live in



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Monson. Of those visitors, 1,700 were hikers and 700 were interested visitors. More than 70 percent of all northbound thru-hikers stopped to register for their permits. The visitor center gives the ATC an opportunity to inform current and potential hikers about Trail ethics and Leave No Trace principles. It also offers the ATC an opportunity to educate hikers about Baxter State Park regulations, and explain why they are in place.

IMPACT OF VISITOR CENTERS

The visitor center in Monson isn't the only one along the A.T. experiencing large numbers of visitors. The ATC headquarters in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia experienced a nearly 20 percent increase in visitors in 2015, up from 22,405 to 27,868. In 2016, that number rose to 34,880.

With so many visitors per year, A.T. visitor centers are great opportunities for education and outreach. It's a chance for hikers to have face-to-face interaction with Trail employees and volunteers, who can offer insight and inspiration. "All of the people hikers and visitors meet have a real passion for the Trail, whether they are a staff member, volunteer, or intern; and many are 2,000-milers," says Laurie Potteiger, information services manager for the ATC.

The visitor centers include exhibits and other educational displays. At the ATC headquarters, there's a Leave No Trace exhibit, as well as a bear canister with small candy bars and prizes inside to educate people about how bear canisters can decrease human and bear conflicts. They also provide opportunities for staff to educate visitors about hiking etiquette and Trail safety. For example, staff members often remind people to carry enough water on their trip, protect themselves against ticks, and wear blaze orange during hunting seasons. They can let hikers know about Trail closures, campfire bans, and dry springs. All of these efforts help improve the hiking experience for all types of hikers.

The A.T. Visitor Center in Boiling Springs has also seen an increase in hikers over the past few years. In 2014, more than 8,000 people came to the visitor center. Just two years later, that number jumped to more than 10,500 (as of November 2016). To help educate these additional visitors, staff ramped up volunteer training about Leave No Trace principles, appropriate group sizes, Trail etiquette, and safety. The center also provides guided, community hikes that highlight various aspects of Trail conservation.



LAYING GROUNDWORK

Though the results of many of these efforts take time to measure, the ATC is hopeful a foundation is being placed to ensure hikers can enjoy the Trail for years to come. "Getting to the desired condition, which is our goal, will take a while; you don't flip a switch and everything is great," Sommerville says. "We don't know exactly how long it will take, but within the next few years we hope to see results." Yet some results are already apparent. Thru-hikers' start dates were more spread out in 2016, with more people starting earlier in February or later in April or May. There also has been an increase in flip-flop thru-hikers who start and end their hikes in nontraditional locations.

And, while it may seem like many of these measures target only thru-hikers, that is not the case. PATHE aims to find solutions for all kinds of A.T. hikers and visitors. "It's important to realize that thru-hikers are still a very small percentage of total A.T. users; they are less than one percent of all users in New England. But that demographic has always been an accurate barometer of use in general," Metheny says. "Like thru-hikes, all types of use are on the increase right now. But the Trail is a finite resource that we have to manage for long-term sustainable use."

USING DATA TO IMPROVE THE HIKER EXPERIENCE

PATHE initiatives — whether Trail-wide or regional — don't just rely on people's opinions on how to improve the Trail. A main goal of the initiatives is to gather accurate




THOUGH THE RESULTS OF MANY OF THESE EFFORTS TAKE TIME TO MEASURE, THE ATC IS HOPEFUL A FOUNDATION IS BEING PLACED TO ENSURE HIKERS CAN ENJOY THE TRAIL FOR YEARS TO COME.

data, and use that data to determine solutions to address increased visitor use.

The thru-hiker registration system is one example of this effort. It started in 2015 and encouraged thru-hikers to register their start date. The registry, which has been improved since then and is now easier to use, enables hikers to see a chart that shows how many hikers are registered to start on each day so they can plan their trip to start on a less popular day if they are concerned about crowding. In 2016, more than 2,300 northbound thru-hikers registered their hike, resulting in more spread out start dates — and fewer days with large numbers of hikers at shelters and campgrounds at the beginning of the Trail.

The southern region of the A.T. is also working on an online tool that will allow thru-hikers, section hikers, and large groups to sign up to stay at specific campsites or shelters. The tool will help them better plan their trips and avoid staying in areas that may already be full. Additionally, the region is creating a campsite registry that determines the size and shape of each campsite in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. It will give the ATC a baseline to compare the condition of each site over time. "The key to visitor use management is determining desired conditions and inventorying where you are now," Sommerville says. "If you're not at the desired condition, then you can create a planning process to get you there."

Similar tools already exist in New England. For instance, there is a program for groups to determine how many people will be at campsites in the White and Green mountains on any night. "We used to have peak dates that people picked just because they sounded nice, but many other people were doing the same thing," Metheny says. "Now, after having the registration system, that use level has evened out more. We're seeing a steady amount of visitors per night at a site, versus nights with 60 to 100 unannounced visitors (those without previous notice or arrangement and where therefore unexpected)."

The ATC also is working on software that will allow hikers to have more information about Trail and camping conditions, including features such as water access and privies at shelters. As the process continues, every step taken is done to both preserve and improve every step each hiker takes along the one-of-a-kind path called the Appalachian Trail. 



THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL: EXPERT ADVICE FACEBOOK PAGE

is a collaboration among leading information providers in the A.T. community, dedicated to bringing hikers "advice that's good for you and good for the Trail." The goal of the page is to provide up-to-date advice, tips, and information that incorporate best practices and ATC policy. A sense of levity is encouraged, where appropriate.

Although managed by ATC staff, contributors to the page also represent varied perspectives in the Trail community and include Zach Davis (owner of The Trek website, formerly Appalachian Trials) and Ryan Linn (creator of the "Guthook" app), Josh Saint, owner of the Hiker Hostel in Georgia; and experienced ridgerunners Jim Fetig and Max Mishkin are also active members. The page is the primary project of the Public Relations Subcommittee of PATHE.

Check out what's new at: facebook.com/ATExpertAdvice

The ATC wants to thank everyone who has registered their thru-hike so far and encourages prospective thru-hikers to do the same. For more information or to register your upcoming hike, visit: appalachiantrail.org/thruhikeregistration

For information about Leave No Trace practices visit: appalachiantrail.org/Int

Jessica Porter is a freelance writer and editor who thru-hiked the A.T. in 2014. To learn more about her visit: JessicaLynnePorter.com

TRAILHEAD

★ ATC DIRT ★



Coming on January 17: “Standing Tall.”
How can you stop the destruction of
an iconic Appalachian mountain, along
with the history, culture, and memories
it created? Ask Jay Leutze, who found
the answer with the help of a
14-year-old named Ashley.



myATstory



NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nominations are now open for the positions of four officers and 11 directors who would serve as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) governing body after elections by members attending this August's membership meeting at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. A slate of nominees will be selected by a committee chaired by Bob Almand of Suwanee, Georgia, former chair of the ATC. A diverse range of skills and experiences suitable for national nonprofit governance is being sought among nominees, and the ATC's members are encouraged to engage in the process. Desirable qualifications include a passion for the A.T. and commitment to its partnership network, as well as various other skills. The board, representing all of the ATC members, focuses on strategic directions for the ATC, financial stability, and operations in a broad sense. All nominations should include both the

nominee's and the nominator's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address, with a description of the person's relevant experience, skills, and attributes. Additional materials, such as a résumé, are welcome. The committee's slate will be announced in *A.T. Journeys* in April 2017.

Nominations should be sent as soon as possible to: Boardrecommendations@appalachiantrail.org or by mail to Bob Almand, Chair, Nominating Committee, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425. For more information, visit: appalachiantrail.org/Leadership

« myATstory

What truly makes the A.T. special is the community of hikers and supporters that keep the spirit of the Trail alive through their adventures, their generosity, and their stories. That is why the Appalachian Trail Conservancy is showcasing inspiring tales from unique individuals about how the A.T. has changed their lives forever. From the story of the “Trail Brothers” (Derick quit his New York City life to thru-hike the A.T. in 2012, then decided to share the Trail with his brother, a first-time backpacker); to “Trail Angels,” a group of Chicago friends and young conservationists who ventured into the Great Smoky Mountains to experience the Trail in one of the best ways possible: they rebuilt it through Trail work; to “A Trail for Danny,” which follows Steve and Kathi Cramer, who are hiking sections of the Trail to experience the comfort it brought to their son, Danny, who suffered from depression but was able to find peace during his 2011 thru-hike.

To see all the My A.T. Story videos visit: myATstory.org. And share them with your contacts and on social media. Be sure to use the hashtag [#myATstory](https://twitter.com/myATstory).

ATC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL SELECTIONS

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is calling for candidates for the 2017-2019 Stewardship Council. This special committee of the ATC board oversees policy development and programs related to stewardship of the A.T. and its surrounding lands and resources. The council takes a lead role in volunteer development and training, outreach and education, and identifying and mitigating threats to the Trail. Candidates should demonstrate skills and experience conducive to effective management of the A.T., a conservation mindset, a holistic view of Trail stewardship and a commitment to volunteer leadership. Members are expected to attend at least two two-day meetings each year and participate actively on council committees and in ATC task force and working groups, usually by e-mail or conference call.

Please send candidate recommendations by April 15 to: council@appalachiantrail.org or Stewardship Selections, PO Box 807, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425. For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/leadership



Fall Wildfires

The drought of 2016 caused a number of problems in the southern Appalachians and along the A.T. Diminishing water sources led to significant changes in the schedule and work locations of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Rocky Top crew in the Smokies; effected the plans of many A.T. hikers; and worst — resulted in tens of thousands of acres burned along the A.T. and hundreds of thousands of acres burned throughout the southeast. ¶ Although the tragic fire in Great Smoky Mountains National Park did not burn the A.T., it resulted in closure of the whole park, including the A.T. for nearly a week. Farther south, on the Nantahala National Forest, parts of the A.T. were closed for more than a month — expanding from an initial closing of the three miles south of US64 at Winding Stair Gap for the Knob Fire, to closing of 67.5 miles of the A.T. from US74 at Wesser, North Carolina to US76 at Dicks Creek Gap, near Hiawassee, Georgia. This larger closure was due to three additional fires burning along the A.T. — the Tellico Fire, the Camp Branch Fire, and the Rock Mountain Fire. ¶ The Tellico Fire, at 13,874 acres, encompassed about eight miles of the A.T. from Wesser to Tellico Gap. The Camp Branch Fire burned over and along the A.T. for about seven miles from Licklog Gap to Wayah Gap, with the fire doing significant damage to the historic Wayah Bald Tower built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Rock Mountain Fire, 24,725 acres, burned the A.T. from Mooney Gap to Deep Gap, and from Blue Ridge Gap to Plumorchard Gap in Georgia, for about 14 miles.



Rock Mountain Fire
Photo by Peter McIntosh

The total burned A.T. mileage is about 32 miles, the worst recorded for the ATC's southern region. ¶ U.S. Forest Service staff did an initial inspection of the A.T. looking for serious problems and hazards, and volunteers from the Nantahala Hiking Club are making a close inspection of A.T. facilities, which will take a number of trips. ¶ Although the fires in the south were the biggest part of the story for sure, there is also a Virginia element; 8.5 miles of the A.T. were temporarily closed due to the Mount Pleasant Fire. There was also a significant fire at McAfee Knob in Virginia. At one point, 965.5 miles of the A.T. were under a continuous fire ban from Springer Mountain to the northern boundary of Shenandoah National Park. ¶ The areas around the A.T. that were affected by fires remain very dry and there may continue to be fire related closures of the A.T. (most recently in Georgia from Neel Gap to Hogpen Gap). The last campfire ban was recently lifted within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Until the drought is over in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, the ATC recommends the use of stoves with an on/off switch, and discourages the use of alcohol stoves and hexamine or solid fuel cubes. Smoking is strongly discouraged. Hikers should be extra vigilant when entering burned areas along the A.T. Although these sections have been checked for hazards, it is important to continue to be very careful about trees or tree limbs that could fall — be sure to look above where you plan to camp to inspect for possible hazards. Even when hiking or stopping to rest, particularly when it is windy, be aware that additional trees or limbs may fall. Most Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee water sources may be dry. Also be careful when traversing burned wooden Trail structures like steps, bridges and log retaining walls. Repairs will be made as rapidly as possible.

For Trail updates visit: appalachiantrail.org/trailupdates



KEEPING THE A.T. LANDSCAPE NATIVE

As the slender and elongated seed capsules of *Alliaria petiolate* began to ripen in mid-June, the 2016 A.T. Garlic Mustard Challenge drew to a close. A whopping 7,478 pounds of garlic mustard were removed from the Trail corridor during the challenge, and Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is appreciative for every one of the 396 volunteers who helped us surpass our 2016 goal. Among the participants were 195 children and teens from schools and youth organizations across the East Coast, as well as members from 19 of the A.T. maintaining clubs. Though the Garlic Mustard Challenge had ended by early summer, other similar projects were just getting started. Clubs across the regions held work days to cut, pull, hack, and mow invasive plants of all kinds. Volunteers planted native flowers and shrubs to support endangered pollinator species, they battled exotic invaders in rare plant and animal habitats, and they attended workshops to learn about the early detection species for which they should be on high alert. As the ATC continues to move forward with its goal of proactively protecting that Appalachian Trail, it aims to scale up these habitat and ecosystem restoration efforts through greater education and engagement with partners.

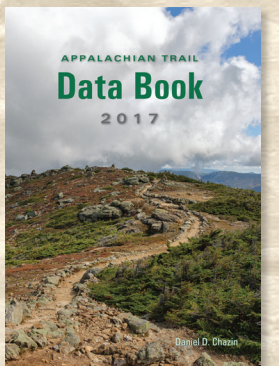
For more information about Larger Landscapes and Proactive Protection visit: appalachiantrail.org/landscapeprotection

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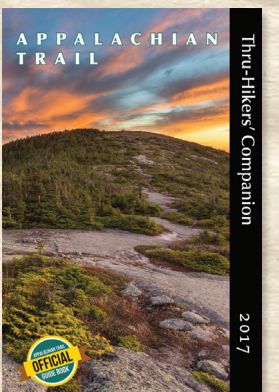
AVAILABLE
NOW!

THE NEW LENGTH OF THE A.T. IS 2,189.8 MILES...

Documented as always by the arrival of a new edition of the *Appalachian Trail Data Book*, presenting the steps between landmarks from Maine to Georgia. At the same time, a new *Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers' Companion* presents them from Georgia to Maine, along with town-services information, town maps, and all sorts of other details important to hikers.



For 32 years, the *Data Book* (item #141-17) has been edited by New Jersey volunteer Daniel D. Chazin, drawing on updates from other volunteers in the 31 Trail-maintaining clubs and staff members at ATC.



The Companion (item #202-17), now in its 24th year, likewise draws on more than three dozen Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association volunteers, led since 2010 by Robert "Sly" Sylvester, and ATC field experts.

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or call toll-free: (888) 287.8673
(Store Hours: Mon. — Fri., 9 am — 4:30 pm Eastern)



Also available at major outdoor and book retailers, in stores and on-line.

Buy direct from the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store and ensure a maximum return to the Trail.

ATC Bylaw Amendments

After more than a year of discussion and vetting, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Board of Directors plans to vote this May on a series of changes to the organization's bylaws to conform them to September 2014 changes in the law governing nonprofit organizations in the District of Columbia, where the ATC is incorporated. ¶ The most visible required change will be moving to annual membership meetings, which have been held every two years since 1975 as part of a week-long conference. The staff has been charged with developing tools to encourage and facilitate greater membership participation at the meetings, such as electronic voting and interactive web broadcasts of meetings, and issue-oriented workshops. Only a few hundred (less than one percent) attend membership business meetings now. The first stand-alone, one-day business meeting will be in 2018. ¶ The Board itself will be required to meet three times a year, which it has been doing in recent years; although it is required now to meet only twice in even-numbered years. While the board's governance committee has been studying the necessary bylaws changes, a separate task force has been working on the structure for a new, separate conference or festival beginning in 2020, details on which will be outlined later this year. The new format for odd-numbered years has been reviewed by the ATC regional partnership committees in detail. ¶ The board accepted the task force's recommendations at its October meeting. It asked the task force to continue work this year on implementation details of a separate "ATC Vista" festival by 2020.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT BYLAW AMENDMENTS WILL:

- Focus the categories of membership on individuals and Trail-maintaining clubs, dropping corporations and "community organizations" from voting status.
- Retain clubs' unique status of having one vote at meetings for each ten miles of Trail it maintains, in addition to one minimum vote. (Club members also would have an individual vote if they are ATC members.)
- Change from three two-year terms to two three-year terms the maximum length of Board of Directors service in a given position. This August, the slate of directors will be offered with staggered terms, the aim being to have eventually no more than five positions open in any given year. That would give the board greater continuity of knowledge of the ATC's operations and progress toward strategic goals as it refines its process of recruiting new members.

The other proposed changes required by the new statute involve board committees, the ATC chair's powers, weaving the ATC conflict-of-interest policy into the bylaws, and mandatory record-keeping. All of those are designed to keep the governing authority of the ATC primarily in the hands of the full board.

A more detailed look at the changes can be found at:
appalachiantrail.org/bylawamendments



Young volunteers haul in logs for cribbing along the new A.T. route on Bear Mountain
Photo courtesy New York-New Jersey Trail Club

ATC DONOR WALL

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) new Donor Recognition Wall was dedicated in our Harpers Ferry Visitor Center on October 5, 2016 by Board of Directors chair Sandi Marra and executive director/CEO Ron Tipton. A number of our supporters were in attendance, including recent donors and members of families associated with an estate gift listed on the wall. ¶ The wall lists donors giving \$100,000 or more over a one- to two-year period as part of our Leadership Circle, as well as bequests of \$100,000. The ATC is very pleased to recognize the legacy of these generous donors, and the tremendous impact they will have on our work to protect the Appalachian Trail for present and future generations.

For more detail on recognition and other benefits associated with the ATC's Leadership Circle visit:
appalachiantrail.org/leadershipcircle

For more detail on estate and other planned gifts visit:
appalachiantrail.org/plannedgiving. Or contact Marie Uehling, associate director of development at:
304-885-0462, muehling@appalachiantrail.org

SUNBELT BAKERY AND ATC PROMOTE OUTDOOR HAPPINESS



Together with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), McKee Foods' Sunbelt Bakery is blazing new trails in the

effort to promote healthy activity and rediscovery of the great outdoors. As part of McKee Foods' OH! — the Outdoor Happiness movement, Sunbelt Bakery announced a partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and a \$20,000 grant to promote healthy family activities, Trail education, and Trail rehabilitation projects. The announcement was part of a "Taste of the Trail" event co-hosted by the partners at the ATC Visitors Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia this past November. Three A.T. products are also being promoted on Sunbelt Bakery's cereals and snack bars in 2017 — the "A.T. Sassy Scarf," a Klean Kanteen water bottle with A.T. topo printed on it, and *Best of the A.T.: Day Hikes*.

¶ As part of the Outdoor Happiness grant, McKee Foods is providing funds to continue a decade-long, 2.5 mile Trail rehabilitation project in Bear Mountain State Park, New York. The project is inarguably the most intense and most comprehensive footpath rehabilitation project in Appalachian Trail history, and it is now within one year of completion. Fewer than 1,000 feet of new Trail section remains to be constructed, along with stone steps and retaining walls. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy project is the 21st Outdoor Happiness project McKee Foods is supporting nationwide. 🌱

For more information visit:
outdoorhappinesmovement.com

SHOW YOUR LOVE



The Appalachian Trail Conservancy rely's on the generosity of donors like you to help us fulfill our mission and vision of protecting the Appalachian Trail.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE: an oversized Appalachian Trail strip map, four issues of *A.T. Journeys*, discounts at the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store and other select retailers, volunteer opportunities, and invitations to special events. Best of all, you'll help us protect an irreplaceable American treasure!

APPALACHIANTRAIL.ORG/GIFTMEMBERSHIP

PHOTO BY TRAVIS BORDLEY



100 MILE
WILDERNESS

“Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveler that does the howling.”

Henry David Thoreau ~ Maine Woods Collection

BY CLAIRE POLFUS





THE

100 Mile Wilderness, a pocket of the Maine woods between the A.T. Community of Monson and Baxter State Park, has a secure place in the imaginations of many A.T. hikers, would-be hikers, and volunteers. We imagine it as a place away from the demands of day-to-day work, family life, and the relentless stream of digital information, but also as a place close to our hearts as we seek solace in the Trail, its setting, and its opportunity. For some it is a dream trip of a lifetime, while for others it is a regular destination throughout the year. Wherever you are and however you imagine the 100 Mile Wilderness, it may seem as though the place is the constant — largely untouched perhaps. However, in reality, the place is ever-changing from its original conception to its modern existence in this era of ever-increasing popularity of the A.T.

In the late 1970s, the National Park Service and the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) were beginning the process of acquiring the corridor that would protect the A.T. treadway. They needed a way to distinguish regions of the Trail from one to the next. Steve Clark, then guidebook editor for the MATC, coined the phrase “100 Mile Wilderness” to describe the section of Trail between Monson and Abol Bridge, which at that time was likely one of the wildest sections along the entire

Trail. There were no towns or resupply points, and only a few small private logging roads that crossed the footpath. Although it was not a federally designated Wilderness Area, (the A.T. passes through 24 federal Wilderness Areas from Georgia to New Hampshire) the remoteness of the ponds, rivers and mountain tops slipped neatly into the way most Americans imagine wilderness. Despite the lack of federal designation and the immediately adjacent and widespread industrial logging operations, the name has stuck.

When Clark named the 100 Mile Wilderness, he named a section of Trail that had already existed for more than 40 years. Myron Avery enlisted Walter Greene (later the first president of the MATC), to lead the effort to scout and cut much of the section from Monson north through the Barren Chairback range in 1932. In 1933, an expedition led by Avery connected Katahdin to the route that Greene had scouted. Many others, including the Civilian Conservation Corps, enhanced the route. Avery called the Maine woods an “utter wilderness” while also recommending that hikers carry very little weight and stay at sporting camps every night. “Perhaps the outstanding feature of the 100 Mile Wilderness, not a very mountainous section, is one recognized by the original Trail blazers — the seemingly endless series of lakes and ponds that makes the region so different from much of the rest of the

Appalachian Trail,” explains MATC’s overseer of lands Dave Field, who, in 2016 retired from maintaining a section of the Trail in Maine for 50 years. Or, as Myron Avery described it in 1936, “A glimpse of the lakes which surround Katahdin — lakes so numerous as to resemble shattered fragments of a mirror.”

For the first 40 years of its existence, the vast majority of the original route passed through private timberlands owned and logged by either large, vertically integrated paper companies like Great Northern and Scott or by family estates. In the early 1940s, sections of Trail across the Barren Chairback Range were obliterated by logging and had to be relocated several times. However, by the 1970s when the 100 Mile Wilderness moniker took hold, market forces, mergers, and changing ownership marked the beginning of a large shift in the paper industry and the beginning of rapid land ownership turnover in the region.

In 1978, amendments to the National Trails System Act initiated the lengthy process of acquiring corridor lands for the permanent protection of the Appalachian Trail. Through the 1970s and 1980s, MATC relocated almost 60 miles of the A.T. in the 100 Mile Wilderness away from wet areas and logging roads and onto lands that would become permanently protected. Through the 1990s and the early 2000s, the National Park Service, with the aid of MATC, acquired more than 15,000 acres of land between Monson and Abol Bridge in a corridor around the Trail at least 1,000 feet wide. By 2004, the entirety of the Trail between Monson and the Golden Road, the road that crosses the Trail just south of Baxter State Park, was publicly protected by fee acquisition or by easement.

As the A.T. management community endeavored to protect the land immediately adjacent to the Trail, the region was experiencing an enormous shift away from the previously dominant paper economy. Paper companies began selling their lands at a rapid rate. Timber and land investment companies quickly took advantage of the opportunity to purchase major tracts of land in Maine. By the late 1990s, conservation groups began to seek more opportunities to protect large areas within Maine’s Northern Forest. Although there was some movement to create a large federal land base in this region, cultural, political, and social inclinations in Maine lent themselves more toward conservation easements and private non-profit ownership. With this model came extraordinary success.

Beginning in 2002 with the Nature Conservancy’s Debsconeag and Katahdin Forest easement projects, more than 700,000 acres of land in the greater 100 Mile Wilderness region have



Day hikers at Little Wilson Falls Photo courtesy the Maine A.T. Club

Bell Pond Photo by Kim Christine





WE IMAGINE IT AS A PLACE AWAY FROM THE DEMANDS OF DAY-TO-DAY WORK, FAMILY LIFE, AND THE RELENTLESS STREAM OF DIGITAL INFORMATION, BUT ALSO AS A PLACE CLOSE TO OUR HEARTS AS WE SEEK SOLACE IN THE TRAIL, ITS SETTING, AND ITS OPPORTUNITY.

been conserved through fee and easement by a variety of organizations. Although some of this land is protected by “forever wild” conservation easements, the vast majority is under “working forest” easements protecting the land as open space, but still keeping open the possibility of timber management. Despite increasing challenges for the wood products industry, logging continues on much of the land adjacent to the Trail corridor. The squeal of a feller buncher still mingles with loon calls and red squirrel chatter as part of the aural landscape of the Maine woods.

Although the Trail management community and partners in the conservation community have focused on protecting the natural setting of the Trail, the social experience of the Trail has also changed drastically since Myron Avery walked from sporting camp to sporting camp in the 1930s. In the 1980s, the relocations away from the original route that traveled along gravel and logging roads led to an arguably more primitive hiking experience. Hikers could no longer expect a warm meal and a bunk under a solid roof each night at a sporting camp and instead camped at lean-tos and campsites built by the MATC. However, the 100 Mile Wilderness was still hard to get to, far from population centers and surrounded by private timber land. Access at any point other than Monson was fairly challenging, particularly for non-locals. As the sign at each end of the Trail section points out, “This is the longest wilderness section of the entire A.T. and its difficulty should not be underestimated.”

But the allure of the 100 Mile Wilderness also cannot be underestimated or overstated; it contains rugged ridgeline hikes with roadless mountain and lake vistas, cascading waterfalls, abundant wildlife, the guarantee of a swim in clear water almost every night, and a physical challenge accompanied by the rush of accomplishment if completed. People travel from Maine, from throughout the eastern seaboard, and from all over the world to go beyond their imagination of a wilderness to find it physically manifested in their surroundings. As more people hike this section of the Trail, as part of a thru-hike, section hike, or seeking day and overnight trips, our very imagination of a wilderness setting is challenged. Each hiker, in fact, by the very act of stepping on to the Trail, challenges the ability for others to find solitude in the “wilderness.”

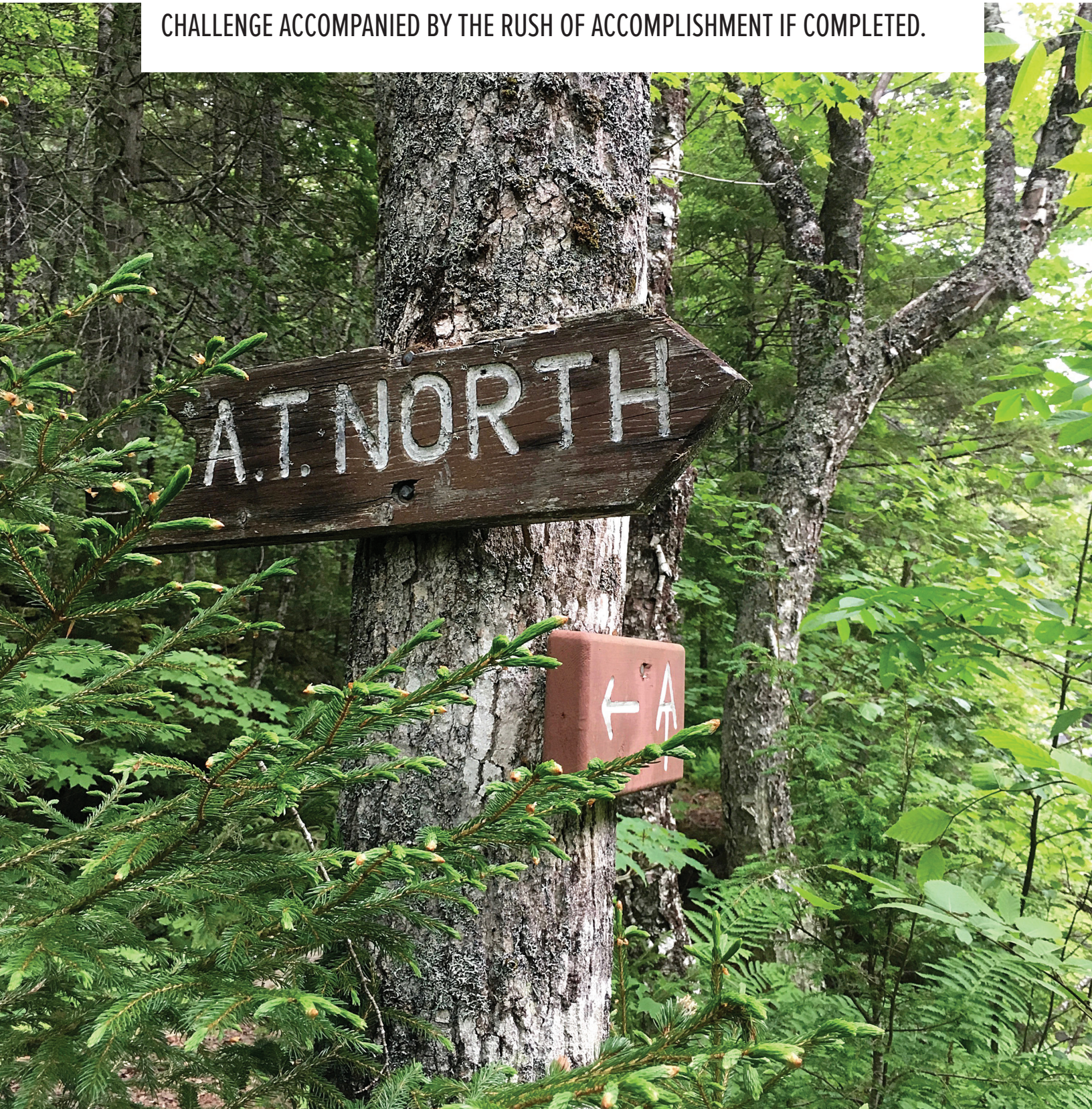
Although the number of hikers has been increasing over time, a critical point for management and visitor expectation has been reached recently. Overnight sites are where signs of increased use first appear and are often challenging to sustainably and effectively manage. In the 100



View of White Cap Mountain 📷 Photo by Claire Polfus



THE ALLURE OF THE 100 MILE WILDERNESS ALSO CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED OR OVERSTATED; IT CONTAINS RUGGED RIDGELINE HIKES WITH ROADLESS MOUNTAIN AND LAKE VISTAS, CASCADING WATERFALLS, ABUNDANT WILDLIFE, THE GUARANTEE OF A SWIM IN CLEAR WATER ALMOST EVERY NIGHT, AND A PHYSICAL CHALLENGE ACCOMPANIED BY THE RUSH OF ACCOMPLISHMENT IF COMPLETED.



Mile Wilderness, pit privies are filling at extraordinary rates — and requiring volunteers to go an extraordinary extra mile to move them or convert to composting systems. Campsites that are designed with moderately-sized shelters and one or two tent sites can see 50 or more hikers a night, including multiple organized camp or college groups. Numerous nights over capacity at campsites lead to campsite sprawl into previously vegetated areas, compacted soil, and the potential for erosion. MATC volunteers report finding more trash, food, abandoned gear, and graffiti impacting campsites than ever before. A sense of crowding has spread to areas outside of campsites as well. There were reports in 2016 of hikers standing in line at view points in the loop around Gulf Hagas, a series of waterfalls that are an extremely popular day hiking destination close to the middle of the 100 Mile Wilderness. A.T. management partners are working together to move toward solutions to these challenges. MATC is in the midst of a 20-year campaign to replace all of their privies with accessible moldering privies. They have already built seven; three of which are in the 100 Mile Wilderness. They have another two planned for next year — one at Logan Brook Lean-to on the north slope of Whitecap in the middle of the 100 Mile Wilderness. With 42 overnight sites along the A.T. in all of Maine, it will be multiple years before all of the privies can be replaced. MATC also employs a ridgerunner at Gulf Hagas to educate hikers about Leave No Trace and respectful hiking practices. “The biggest positive impact is an increased awareness of Leave No Trace and backcountry ethics on the Trail,” says Alexis “Moxie” Niedenthal, who worked as a ridgerunner in the 100 Mile Wilderness for the past two years. “Although there are still some hikers with antiquated views, many make an effort to behave in a way that will benefit (or at least not harm) the Trail. I have also noted an increase in hikers policing other hikers, which I view as at huge positive. If hikers see others doing something unethical they are increasingly likely to speak up. [They often pick up] after less considerate hikers and lead by example. To me this indicates the Leave No Trace messaging is getting out there and being absorbed slowly into hiking culture.”

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) expanded the A.T. Visitor Center in Monson in 2016 to be open seven days a week in order to better educate hikers about the region. In 2017, we hope to increase education for organized groups, day hikers, and section hikers, while continuing our efforts to provide education and services for northbound thru-hikers in the last leg of their journey. The ATC and MATC are also planning to review the campsites in the 100 Mile Wilderness to assess capacity and develop a management plan for sustained use

as well as ramp up the Maine group use management system.

However, managing increasing use is not simply complex for Trail managers. Hikers bear witness to the changes in the A.T.’s resources and experiences — and in doing so share responsibility for encouraging positive change. Much of the resource degradation at campsites and vistas in the 100 Mile Wilderness could be reduced or all but eliminated if every hiker adhered to all seven principles of Leave No Trace. Hikers can set their expectations to meet the current reality in this highly regarded section of the A.T., not to the perceived reality of their imaginations or their past experiences. Most importantly, hikers can show kindness and respect to other visitors and the land, whether or not they fit their expectation for who or what they may encounter in the “wilderness.” The whole A.T. community from the ATC to clubs to hikers, together



From left: A.T. at Big Wilson Stream; Spruce grouse on Barren Mountain
📷 Photos by Kim Christine



can work to solve the challenges that come with increased use. Membership and volunteerism can make that happen

The 100 Mile Wilderness section challenges hikers to travel across its rugged terrain. It challenges Trail managers to sustainably manage increased use in one of the A.T.’s most remote settings. But it also challenges all of us. What experience are we striving toward? What experience are we managing for? For an experience where you carry ten pounds or less and stay at a sporting camp every night as Myron Avery recommended? Or where you carry enough food for two weeks and are completely self-sufficient as Trail signs recommend? What values do we protect and where can we be flexible? What does our collective imagination of Thoreau’s Maine woods wilderness say as it howls? 🌲

MATC volunteers Dave Field, Ron Dobra, Rick Ste. Croix and Steve Clark, MATC Gulf Hagas ridgerunner Alexis “Moxie” Niedenthal, and the ATC’s New England regional director Hawk Metheny contributed to this story.

Claire Polfus is the ATC’s Maine conservation resources manager. For more information about Leave No Trace visit: appalachiantrail.org/lnt

MIND OVER MATTER

HEALING FOUND ON COMMON GROUND

Text and Photos by Cindy Ross

River House PA

You'd never know by watching Bob Hamilton hike that only two years ago, a sniper's bullet shot through his gut, fractured his pelvis in six spots, ripped through his spine, blew out all but seven inches of his lower intestines, and totally paralyzed his left leg. The young retired Marine steps over this rocky Pennsylvania stretch of the Appalachian Trail without even a limp. He is beaming happy as he hikes on this renowned trail.

After 16 surgeries, Bob spent three months in physical therapy, having his leg manually moved for one hour, three times a day. No progress was made. His leg continued to shrink and deteriorate. The ther-

apist said, "Give up. Accept your new life." but Bob was not about to. He had dreams, and one of them is coming true today as he hikes on the A.T.

Bob is out for a hike with River House PA, my non-profit for veterans, which I started two years ago. Twice a month, two long, navy blue vans arrive from the Lebanon, Pennsylvania Veteran's Hospital, with veterans who are enrolled in a rehab program. They are accompanied by their recreational therapists, Amy Cook and Ida Carvel, visionaries who believe that recreating in nature heals. Throughout the year, (about 20 times) I take the veterans hiking on the Trail, paddling on lakes, tubing down the river, and cycling on the rail trail. We make campfires, serve them home-cooked meals, and provide a safe space to experience camaraderie in the beautiful natural world.

Before we left for today's hike, I did a little show and tell with books and magazines, explaining how my husband, Todd Gladfelter, and I got started. I told them of our lifetime of hiking, raising two children close to nature, and writing about it for much of my adult life, (six published books). With our skills, substantial knowledge of how beneficial spending time in nature can be, a wonderful property on Red Mountain, as well as the surrounding wild public lands, what better group of people to share all this with than struggling veterans.



From left: Veterans and recreational therapists during a hike to Eckville Shelter; A group with HIKE for Mental Health is invigorated during a hike on Lehigh Gap



"CLIMBING THE EXCITING AND CHALLENGING LEHIGH GAP WAS NOT A MAKE-OR-BREAK HIKE BUT IT DID DELIVER A PRETTY POSITIVE PUNCH IN THE SELF-CONFIDENCE AREA."



For this week's outing we would walk a section of Trail, following the white blazes to Hawk Mountain Road, then head down to the Eckville Shelter, the rustic hostel that Todd and I ran under the Volunteers in National Parks Program from 1988 to 1990. Our friend, Mick Charowsky, lives there and has been running the shelter ever since, under the management of the local Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club. With any luck, there will be a long-distance hiker there and the vets can hear their story.

I hike along, chatting with the vets as they tell me how great it feels to be in the woods. One of them said that he had not been out for two years — wanting to stay safe, indoors, and away from people and potentially challenging situations. Until this afternoon. He wrestled with coming, not coming, coming, and finally pushed out of his comfort zone and committed. Also in the group is one-legged rockstar veteran Wayne, who is hiking on crutches. Up and down the mountain he moves himself along, inspiring us all.

At the Eckville Shelter, we show the vets the bunks and the register, where Bob is thrilled to find an entry of a fellow Marine, Steve Clendenning, who thru-hiked in 2013. A long-distance section hiker cooks up a pot of rice at the picnic table and the guys quiz him about his life on the Trail. Mick shares some stories of running a hostel and how many hikers he serves in a year.

On our hike back, I fall in line with Bob and hear his story of how he learned to walk again. "I took two lengths of rope and tied them to the ankle of my paralyzed leg. For nine months, all day long, I pulled it back and forth," he explains. "I had nothing better to do then to convince my leg to start to move again. I figured the therapist had the right idea; she just didn't do it long enough." Bob's arms got beastly strong from pulling his leg. He got caught up on watching movies. "I would stare at my leg and try to activate my thigh muscle to move, try to make it happen. And then it did, just a little bit. Then I knew I could walk again."

His wife bought children's Wii Fit videos and they exercised together, practicing balance. He fell a lot. But now, two years later, Bob is hiking up and down the Blue Mountain, stepping over rocks like it's second nature. I look at him and say, "You are a miracle. I would have never known." Bob says, "It taught me not to believe it when someone tells you that you can't do something. It taught me never to give up."

I hear more stories like this around the campfire as the vets take turns sharing what they are grateful for, what the hike meant to them, where they are in their lives now. When it is Bob's turn, he shares, "Hiking on the A.T. has been one of my lifelong dreams. When I got shot, I felt like I it had been stolen from me. I've been afraid to go out for a hike because I wasn't sure I'd be able to get back. This is the first



From left: Bob Hamilton and Will Wendling hike their cares away during a Riverside PA trek to Eckville Shelter; Vicky Shupe, Tom Kennedy, Conner and Brandon Parenteau, and others with HIKE for Mental Health traverse the rocks at Lehigh Gap



time I am hiking since before I got shot and it feels really good. I could have been in a wheelchair for the rest of my life, but I'm here and I am so grateful. I wonder now, maybe I could hike the whole Trail."

There was so much gratitude that poured from their hearts — gratitude for being alive, gratitude for coming to a place of light after so much darkness, gratitude for a second chance, gratitude for the woods and nature and the walk as some had never been in a forest before nor on a hike and many not since boyhood, and gratitude to their recreational therapists for believing in this type of nature-based therapy. They spoke of their renewed desire to climb out of their dark hole that many have found themselves in and make healthier choices. I saw tears silently trickle down some of the veteran's cheeks as they poured out their hearts and thanked Todd and I for providing them with this opportunity.

By the time we are finished our outing, these veterans are members of our family and are invited back after they leave

the hospital program. It is a big deal to be here because many of them have trust issues. The fact that we create these outdoor adventures for them, cook delicious meals, open up our home and property, give them this opportunity to find peace and beauty, is pretty important to them. Everyone says their good-byes with a warm hug and a full heart and the hope that our paths will cross again soon.

HIKE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The hiker clings to the exposed rock precipice like Spider Woman. Vicky Shupe employs not just three points of contact but drapes her body around the boulders to feel safe and grounded. Stretches of the climb out of the Lehigh Gap on this portion of the A.T. in Pennsylvania are akin to the White Mountains or Katahdin's Knife Edge. The wind whips around pretty ferociously up there as you search for hand holds and try to stay on the planet and not become airborne. Behind Vicky, Brandon Parenteau helps to find her a solid foothold. The Lehigh Gap is a good venue for a HIKE for Mental Health (HFMH) day hike. It is a good hike for anyone who wants to stretch themselves, leave their cares behind, and feel alive.

Vicky has never done anything like this before. Her 12-year-old son has autism and she recently discovered how happy and stable he feels while he is hiking. She wants more hiking experience so she has joined HIKE for Mental Health.

Brandon's nine-year-old son, Conner, leaps over the rocks like a gazelle. He joins Wendy Summa, the organizer of this hike, who grabs him for a quick hug as he flies by. It feels like a big extended family out here, very welcoming and safe. Climbing above your fears and quieting the voices in your head that say "can't" is one result of HFMH hikes. They are good for anyone.

HIKE for Mental Health began five years ago when destiny brought three souls to a Holiday Inn in New Jersey for the summer. During weekend hikes on the A.T., Tom Kennedy, Nancy Kozaneki, and Leo Walker found common ground, literally. "Hiking keeps us grounded in a too-busy world," says Leo. "We wanted to share that with others and also make an impact on a larger scale." They decided to get folks out hiking, teach them Trail etiquette, raise money for mental health treatment, and erase the stigma surrounding mental illness. HIKE for Mental Health was born.

Amazing things happen on a HFMH hike — people open up. As they walk, they share their stories with each other. "I've never told anyone this," is a common remark, HFMH vice president Tom Kennedy tells me, who often feels like a priest on a HFMH hike. People have said

things like, "I feel like I am in a cocoon on these hikes. I feel so safe here." It is hard to find someone whose life has not been touched by mental illness. One in four people struggle with it personally, let alone know a family member or friend who does.

The hikes are not "therapy sessions" but rather celebrations, providing a fun, safe environment where people can engage in conversations around mental health if they so



desire, or simply enjoy hiking and being in nature with good people. "Inevitably though, over the course of a six-hour hike," Tom explains, "conversation comes around to mental health because for once, people can say what they haven't been able to say, and that is very freeing and healing for them."

Tom tells me of the organization's popular hike on New York's Bear Mountain, which concludes in town for an Oktoberfest celebration. This year, an 82-year old woman joined in for her first ever hike. She is personally interested in HFMH because her son was incarcerated involving mental illness. Climbing steep Bear Mountain with all its stone steps is an accomplishment for anyone, let alone an 82-year-old novice.

HIKE for Mental Health has three components. Long-distance hikes, day hikes, and a Veteran's Day Walk. For long-distance hikes, people register on the HFMH website to share their hike with family and friends. They talk about their mission, raising awareness about mental illness, and personally achieving health and happiness. Folks donate and know that 100 percent of the money goes toward the organization's mission.

Continued on page 54



LANDSCAPES

of the Appalachian Trail

BY DENNIS SHAFFER

THE A.T. AND ITS

surrounding protected corridor are embedded within some of the Appalachian Mountain's richest and most diverse features. Opportunities abound to protect, enhance, and promote the ecological, scenic, cultural and recreational values of the A.T. countryside. One of the most important challenges of the A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative — launched in 2015 by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the National Park Service — is prioritizing how and where to focus conservation efforts along the magnificent ridges and valleys that make up the A.T. experience that so many visitors and residents alike have come to know and cherish. Identifying the priority landscapes of the A.T. was high on the agenda of the second Annual A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative Conference held this past fall at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Land conservation leaders from federal and state agencies and nonprofit conservation



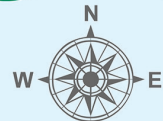
The Roan Highlands in North Carolina and Tennessee are one of 10 areas officially designated as an A.T. Priority Landscape
📷 Photo by Jerry Greer



PRIORITY LANDSCAPES of the APPALACHIAN NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

LEGEND

- Appalachian Trail
- Priority Landscape
- A.T. Large Landscape
- Urban Area



0 100 200 Miles

Map produced December 2016
for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy
www.appalachiantrail.org
by Mitchell Geography.
www.mitchellgeography.net

Data Sources:

Appalachian Trail Conservancy, USGS Small Scale Map Data,
Natural Earth, Mitchell Geography.

organizations met for two days to build on the enthusiasm and achievements resulting from the first year of the initiative. In addition to the work targeting priority landscapes, the coalition of conservation partners attending the conference focused on refining a vision and mission for the initiative, developing and implementing a communication strategy, creating opportunities to work with the new presidential administration, and building strategies to attract new financial resources to enhance on-the-ground conservation work throughout the A. T. landscape.

Work to develop a list of priority landscapes began with discussions about an initial set of high-level landscape conservation criteria. Reaching an ambitious vision for the A.T. landscape requires a long-term conservation agenda. The criteria set out what the initiative's coalition of partners aspire to achieve over the long term — protecting and enhancing our relationship with the A.T. and all that it encompasses. The criteria are organized around eight broad categories that encompass landscape-level land conservation: viewsheds, forestlands, farms, natural resources, recreation and public access, historic and cultural sites, and human health. Other criteria influence conservation decision making such as: vulnerability and threats, opportunities to build connectivity with existing conservation lands, landowner interest, partnership potential, and financial support.

Utilizing large-scale maps, workgroups, and guided discussions, meeting participants identified a list of 10 Priority Landscapes of the A.T. This initial prioritization work will continue to be refined as more partners engage in the A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative. Evaluation of existing and improving access to data about ecological and cultural resources and climate-change science will also improve efforts to prioritize landscapes along the A.T.

The 10 Priority Landscape Areas are:

- 100-Mile Wilderness of Maine
- Maine's High Peaks
- Lyme/Hanover Area of New Hampshire
- New-York-Connecticut Line to Bear Mountain-Harriman State Park, New York
- Landscapes along the New York/New Jersey State Lines
- Kittatinny Ridge, Pennsylvania
- South Mountain, Pennsylvania
- Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to Snickers Gap, Virginia
- Catawba Valley/Triple Crown, Virginia
- Roan Highlands, North Carolina and Tennessee

The Appalachian Trail and communities along the Trail have benefitted from a long and successful history of land conservation efforts. In addition to the 30-plus year campaign to secure a permanently protected corridor for the A.T. footpath, many local and regional conservation projects have resulted in critical viewshed protection and prevented incompatible land development and fragmenta-

tion in areas along the Trail. The A.T. experience continues to be enriched by these conservation achievements. While the 10 Priority Landscapes of the A.T. have been identified and mapped, ATC and its coalition of conservation partners will continue to support, promote and celebrate all land conservation efforts within the A.T. landscape.

A great example of a priority landscape and an area with a long history of land conservation success stories is the Roan Highlands of North Carolina and Tennessee. Jay Leutze, chair of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, participated in the second Annual A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative Conference. Jay spoke about his organization's work in the Roan Highlands and described one the projects his organization recently secured. "The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy has worked for decades to protect critical lands on Hump Mountain immediately adjacent to the A.T.," said Leutze. "This property has been our top priority to preserve the natural setting and views of one of the most magnificent southern balds." In the early 2000s, Jay successfully stopped the destruction of Belview Mountain, an iconic Appalachian mountain, from a local mining company that was violating North Carolina's mining law. This incredible story is now being told through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's myATstory campaign (myATstory.org — available January 17).

Advancing conservation within the 10 Priority Landscapes of the A.T. will require long-term commitment and coordination among a broad and diverse coalition of conservation partners. Conference participants expressed strong support for continuing the annual gathering of conservation leaders from up and down the A.T. A number of next steps for coalition development and further refining the 10 Priority Landscapes of the A.T. were outlined by the attendees. These next steps will build on laying the foundation for effective communications among the coalition partners, increasing organizational capacity, and accelerating work within the priority landscapes. The A.T. and the landscapes through which it passes are benefiting from the outstanding conservation work of many organizations and individuals. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and National Park Service continue to be excited and grateful for the tremendous enthusiasm and momentum that our partners are bringing to the A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative and our work to protect the gems of this national treasure. 📍

Dennis Shaffer is the ATC's director of landscape conservation. For more information visit:

appalachiantrail.org/landscapeprotection

Watch Jay Leutze's myATstory, "Standing Tall" at: myATstory.org



Coral Tree Fungus near
Mount Rogers



INSPIRED IMAGERY

"In the spring of 2014, after years of ignoring a dream I'd had since college, I finally set foot on a trail I last walked on more than 35 years earlier," says Galia Goodman. "By beginning at Springer, I signaled my own determination to section hike the entire Trail. I would be taking longer than the people I started out with, but I was no less committed."

As an artist for most of her adult life, Galia says it was a given that her visions of the Trail (as seen through her eyes, the lens of her camera, and interpreted through her own experiences) would eventually become art. Each piece is a collage: cut and torn paper, along with both water color and acrylic paints. "I am now almost halfway in miles and entering year four of the adventure," says Galia. "These images are pieces created over the last two years." She is currently working on several more pieces and will eventually mount both a real-time exhibit and an online show that will include journal entries from the sections she has hiked. It is her hope to highlight the environmental issues that face the A.T. and the surrounding landscapes. "Leave No Trace has always been [important to] me: I think of it as walking lightly on the earth," she says. In the meantime, she is committed to supporting her local community and the wider world in ways that are thoughtful, inclusive, and diverse. Galia lives with her spouse, Meredith, and their beloved dog Izzy in her hometown of Durham, North Carolina.

galiagoodman.com



Snow in the Smokies





Sunrise over Siler Bald



Roan Highlands Sunset



Passionate Candor

By Jennifer Pharr Davis

AS A DEVOTED TRAIL MAINTAINER,

Lenny Bernstein worked hard to make sure that the stretch of Appalachian Trail north of Devil's Fork Gap — his stretch — was always cleared and pruned, ready to welcome the next thru-hiker who set out from Georgia or a family from nearby Erwin, Tennessee who were out on a day hike. But, if you happened to pass Lenny while he was clearing his section after a late winter ice storm or perhaps a heavy fall rain produced by a hurricane, you would never guess that this tireless maintainer was also part of a group of authors who received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Lenny was one in a group of authors who wrote the Synthesis Report for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (I.P.C.C.) that was recognized by the panel when it awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore and the I.P.C.C. While Lenny and his fellow authors did not

technically win the Nobel Peace Prize themselves, it was considered a shared prize among himself and his fellow co-authors. And along with those authors and a team of other engineers and scientists, he played an instrumental part in bringing international attention to the detrimental effects of climate change.

Being a part of an effective team meant more to Lenny than being recognized as an individual. When he graduated from Purdue University in 1969 with a PhD in Chemical Engineering, Lenny became part of the research group at Exxon and worked for 20 years to help study the effects of gasoline on air pollution. In 1989, he joined the team at Mobil and soon became the company expert on climate change.

Throughout his career, Lenny was known as a collaborator. He was always willing to contribute and receive feedback. He knew that a strong team would always perform better and accomplish more than a strong individual. Perhaps that is why he was such an active member, volunteer, and donor within the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). And he loved to hike.

Lenny was a relentless hiker. It took him just over 20 years to complete the entire Appalachian Trail in sections with his wife, Danny. He was a dedicated trip leader for his local Trail club, the Carolina Mountain Club. And, he enjoyed taking his granddaughters for day hikes. But his devotion to hiking did not end at the trailhead.

Lenny served two terms as president of the Carolina Mountain Club and he helped strengthen the club's relationship with the ATC. In 2013, he spearheaded the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Biennial Conference in Cullowhee, an event that included attendees from up and down the East Coast and across the United States. It was a huge task and a huge success.

As part of the ATC's Stewardship Committee, Lenny worked tirelessly to protect the Trail from immediate threats like gas pipelines and more insidious, long-term threats like climate change.

He played a major role in developing the concept of A.T. Landscape conservation and served as a member of the ATC's board of directors. In the words of the ATC's executive director Ron Tipton, "Lenny was always willing to raise important and controversial issues and speak candidly and passionately."

Several years ago, when I was asked to serve on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's board of directors, I reached out to Lenny to seek his counsel and get his advice. A few days later we met at City Bakery off of Charlotte Street in Asheville, North Carolina. (Lenny always liked to go to places with really good, crusty bread.) There we sat, buttering our bread, talking about the Trail and the ATC. And I shared with

Lenny knew that a strong team would always perform better and accomplish more than a strong individual.

Lenny my strategy for serving on the board. I told him that, at first, I planned to just listen ... to just sit back and observe the meetings, so that I could learn from others and get a handle on this whole board thing. But as soon as those words left my mouth, Lenny started shaking his head from side to side. "No," he said. "No. You can't just sit and listen. If you want to help the Trail, then you have to speak up."

As a proponent for hiking trails and conservation, Lenny walked the walk and he talked the talk. There are a lot of people who like to hike. But I don't know many people who have given more back to the Trail than Lenny Bernstein.

With his recent passing in September, we have lost one of the strongest voices that the Trail has ever known. And, if you hike along the Appalachian Trail north of Devil's Fork Gap, near the border of North Carolina and Tennessee, you can still feel Lenny — in the sound of boots stepping over a water bar and in the laughter of day hikers enjoying a picnic on a felled log beside the Trail. And if you hike up there alone on a crisp fall day and pause to look out at the relatively undisturbed landscape, the same viewshed that Lenny worked so hard to protect from pipelines, development, and climate change — and the same environment that still needs to be protected — then you might just hear Lenny's voice whispering in the wind to "speak up." 🌲

Jennifer Pharr Davis has been a member of the ATC's Board of Directors since 2015. She lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

Lenny takes a break during an A.T. section hike in North Carolina in 2015. Photo by Danny Bernstein

LENNY BERNSTEIN



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Connection and Flow

By Paul Farragut

MANY PEOPLE LACK THE TIME, energy or interest to thru-hike the entire A.T. As a senior citizen, my challenge was thinking about the physical stamina required for a 2,189-mile trip over five or six months across 14 states. I quickly dismissed the idea as impractical and too physically challenging, but still wished I had attempted the hike at an earlier age.

Many retired individuals like me are potentially interested in a more modest goal such as hiking a portion of the Trail



From left: Paul on a hike between Spy Rock and the Tye River in the “Priest Wilderness Area” in central Virginia; Paul’s son Pete takes in the view of the Susquehanna River during an A.T. hike with him in Reed Township, Pennsylvania

either as a one-time experience or over time. The advantages of hiking in good weather, close to home, often with a day pack, and modest mileage goals can create a much less challenging but, nonetheless, enjoyable experience. It can also reduce peak demand on the Trail during the busiest times of the year when thru-hikers typically begin their trek north.

I chose to concentrate on hiking the 420 miles, or about 20 percent of the A.T., that crosses through the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Over the years, the jaunt took me through parts of Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia. This more modest goal also encouraged me to explore in more depth the history, scenery, geology and cultural resources of this portion of the Trail.

I began my first hike in Maryland in January 2001 and hiked from Pen Mar to Raven Rock Hollow, a distance of 5.7 miles, with my two sons. My next hike started at the Susquehanna River near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The southern boundary is near the James River crossing, the last major stream that crosses the A.T. and flows to the Chesapeake. While this mid-Atlantic stretch of the Trail is less physically challenging than areas to the north or to the south, it does reward the hiker with historical sites, interesting Trail towns, and scenery along with enough ups and downs to create some challenges for the average hiker. It also crosses other significant A.T. watersheds close to urban areas including the major rivers of the Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware, Susquehanna, and Savannah. As such, these areas offer a hiking experience

somewhat near major East Coast population centers — one of the positive locational attributes noted by regional planner, Benton MacKaye.

As a youngster, my favorite memory of recreating with my very busy father was occasionally going fishing, crabbing and clamming with him at a tidal pond in New England. In a similar manner, my special memories of recreating with my children, family, and friends has been hiking near the Chesapeake Bay watershed of the A.T. and recording each hike in a diary. I’ve done this over the last 15 years. I think creating that special connection between place, family, and friends can be one of the most satisfying events in life. And planning an A.T. hike, completing a section, and reminiscing later provides a threefold enjoyable experience.

My first job as a land planner was working for a regional planning organization in Baltimore and one of my efforts was discussing problems and opportunities related to the Chesapeake Bay. As such I studied a portion of the bay watershed and that may be the reason I thought of hiking this portion of the Trail. The hike would provide me with deeper understanding and up close experience of the enormity of this drainage area. For example, while crossing the Susquehanna River near Duncannon, Pennsylvania, I was reminded of the approximately 400-mile length of this river and its source near the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. In the spring of a wet year, this river provides almost half of the water in the upper Chesapeake Bay as it flows through New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. This drainage area is the largest of any river east of the Mississippi.

Benton MacKaye first proposed the A.T. in an article he wrote in the *American Institute of Architects Journal* in 1921. With similar vocational interests, I found an interesting connection to my work and once had the fortunate experience of leading an effort to relocate a short section of the Trail from South Mountain to the C&O Canal while working at the Maryland Department of Transportation. We were also able to eliminate a dangerous at-grade crossing of US Route 340 and create a grade-separated Trail under the road working with the Maryland State Highway Administration. I

Creating that special connection between place, family, and friends can be one of the most satisfying events in life.



thought about Myron Avery, the person most responsible in implementing the Trail, and the challenges he faced, as I was at work on this project.

Among the highlights of my hike was talking to thru-hikers about their experiences. Many discussed hardships such as hiking in ice and snow in March or days of unrelenting rain. Some had physical issues resulting from falls, others seemed down, but most were happy and excited about what they had accomplished to date. A few had traveled all the way from Europe to enjoy a trail that some believe is the longest continuous hiking-only trail in the world.

I enjoyed visiting the various historical sites and towns the Trail passes through or close to. Occasionally I would stop at an old inn or restaurant in town for a cold drink and a snack. Patrons were often curious about the Trail and my hike. Once, an older diner provided me with a lift back to my car and reminisced about his hike as a youth along that portion of the Trail. Traveling over a portion of the C&O canal along the Potomac River that George Washington may have walked and surveyed, strolling through Harpers Ferry where Thomas Jefferson, Robert E. Lee, John Brown, and Meriwether Lewis had been before was exciting. Visiting 18th

and 19th century towns along or near the Trail reminded me of our early history.

The Trail’s varied geology — from hard granite to soft limestone — was fascinating along with the color and characteristics of rocks underfoot. Seeing spring awoken in light shades of green and spectacular fall foliage was a special treat, as was the view of emerald green farmland in a valley while perched on a mountaintop overlook. Hiking in the spring through areas where mountain laurel was in full bloom and seeing beautiful rhododendron and healthy hemlock groves was inspiring. Sighting an occasional hawk or eagle was interesting but seeing black bears in Shenandoah National Park was thrilling. Crossing beautiful, small streams after a rainstorm was sometimes challenging and seeing bubbling springs and crossing rivers was just fun.

This past December, at age 75, I completed my hike’s missing gaps of 29.5 miles between the Susquehanna and James Rivers (the “bookends” of the Chesapeake Bay watershed) with a four-day trek in central Virginia. My section hikes had spanned through 16 years. Perhaps my Trail name should be “slow as molasses.”

Getting strenuous exercise and feeling that “mountain high” after each section of the hike was important for my physical and mental wellbeing. Seeing the incredible work that A.T. clubs and other volunteers have accomplished over the years to maintain the Trail was always impressive. While I traveled, I appreciated all the individuals who have or are working to improve and protect the Trail along with the public/private partnerships that created and sustain it. I, like so many others, find the A.T. a permanent and incredible resource in a world full of uncertainty and change. 🌱



HAPPY NEW YEAR AND THANK YOU to everyone who helped us achieve our fundraising goal in 2016!

We had a very busy 2016 and your generosity enabled the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to accomplish so much for the A.T. As we move into 2017, we are excited about the new membership benefits we will be announcing soon.

We have long recognized major gifts in this magazine and now, as you read earlier, we have a place in our Harpers Ferry Visitor Center to recognize both legacy gifts and transformational gifts from living donors. Our visitor center has become increasingly popular and now the general public is aware of the need for gifts beyond membership.

As our executive director/CEO Ron Tipton stated in his column, the coming years of the new administration will

require more resources from the public to sustain the Trail, fend off threats, and protect the A.T. experience. I know we can depend on you and our growing membership to help with your time, energy, and donations.

In 2017 we hope to hear more of your A.T. Story. 🏔️

Happy Trails,

Royce W. Gibson
Senior Director of Membership & Development

P.S. Recently we have lost two long-time, dedicated, volunteers and leadership donors. I wish the families of Lenny Bernstein and Bruce Cunningham peace and comfort as they grieve their loss.



From left to right: Donna, and George Lawson, Steve Corman, Ron Tipton, and Sandi Marra at the dedication ceremony for the Donor Recognition Wall at ATC Headquarters this past October.

Learn more about ways the ATC is increasing recognition for our supporters on page 22 (ATC Donor Wall)

📷 PHOTO BY STACEY MARSHALL

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A.T. Journeys is the official magazine of the A.T. and the membership magazine of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy — a national not-for-profit corporation with more than 43,000 members from all 50 U.S. states and more than 15 other countries. Our readers are adventurous, eco-friendly outdoor enthusiasts who understand the value in the protection and maintenance of the Trail and its surrounding communities.

Advertising revenues directly support the publication and production of the magazine and help meet the ATC's objectives.

PHOTO BY TRAVIS BORDLEY

Continued from page 35

MIND OVER MATTER

Those not interested in a long-distance hike can get out for a day hike. HFMH day hikes are held all over the country. Board member Diana Pease recruits and coaches volunteer hike coordinators on how to plan, promote, and host a safe and fun hike. Hikers solicit donations in the same manner as the long-distance hikers, although registering and attending a day hike is always free and participants are not required to raise money.

The Veteran's Day Walk takes place each year in Pearl and, Texas. For this official town event, HFMH partners with the city, the local VFW, and a non-profit counseling agency. Last year's event raised more than \$10,000.

HFMH has raised more than \$200,000 in just five years. Eighty percent goes to the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation in New York. They have a strong track record of supporting cutting edge research. The other 20 percent goes to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Pacific Crest Trail Association, each of which oversee the two most popular national scenic trails and the destinations for many of the HFMH hikers.

Tom Kennedy walked his talk this past year and thru-hiked the 1,100-mile National Scenic Florida Trail for HFMH. He experienced first-hand how beneficial long distance hiking can be for your well-being and mental health. "That hike changed my life in so many ways. It ignited a passion in me for mental health issues," he says.

While medications enable many with mental illness to live a normal life, other people find long-distance hiking and frequent hiking to be their best medicine. Leo and Tom have heard from some that their long hike literally saved their life. One such long-distance HFMH hiker went out to heal from depression, an eating disorder, and sexual assault. "I shifted my mindset and learned self-love, an appreciation of nature, began to live positively, and focused on the things that I could control," they said.

Today on the A.T., climbing the exciting and challenging Lehigh Gap was not a make-or-break hike but it did deliver a pretty positive punch in the self-confidence area. Vicky said it felt really good afterwards to accomplish what she did. Brandon said that HFMH has been the very best thing in his life, next to having his children, and he is so grateful that he found the organization. Brandon drove all the way from Connecticut to join in on today's hike. "Hiking clears my mind of all my troubles, and I like to bring my kids out here for a good cause. Giving back, that is something you are never too young to learn." 🌱

For more information visit:
hikeformentalhealth.org
riverhousepa.wordpress.com

PUBLIC NOTICES

HIKING PARTNERS

Experienced **long-distance hiker seeking hiking partner(s)** male or female to trek the Colorado Trail starting July 2017. Contact Flagman at: (828) 349-4629/tomfuller@joimail.com/P.O. Box 444, Franklin, NC 28744

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Summer 2017 **Caretakers Needed** for Blackburn Trail. Owned and operated by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, the Blackburn Trail Center is located on the A.T. 12 miles south of Harpers Ferry. Blackburn is a premier stop for A.T. thru-hikers and day hikers alike. The caretaker's duties will include: maintaining the Trail Center, Hiker's Hostel, and campground. Should have experience in offering comfort and company to weary A.T. hikers. Flexibility and ability to get along with wide variety of people a must! Prefer couple with knowledge of the A.T. and hikers' needs. Very modest stipend offered along with a fabulous summer experience. Dates runs from April 1 through October 31. If interested, send a letter of application, resume' and professional/personal references to: Chris Brunton, P.O. Box 169 Harpers Ferry WV 25425 or trailbossbtc@msn.com. If you have questions call Chris at: (703) 967-2226.

The **Appalachian Trail Lodge and Cafe in Millinocket, Maine is seeking a couple (or two friends who can live together in a shared space) to work seasonally from May 15 - October 15.** Hiking experience preferred; restaurant experience a big plus. Do you enjoy the hiking community? Would you like to experience being part of the hiker service world where every day is about helping hikers meet their needs so they

can have a successful hike? Would you like to live in Maine near Katahdin and the 100 Mile Wilderness? Then this is the job for you. Benefits include room and partial board (furnished one-bedroom apartment) and salary. Learn more about the A.T. Lodge and Cafe at: appalachiantrailodge.com. Contact us at: pj6150@gmail.com.

Third Annual Flip Flop Festival, Harpers Ferry, WV Saturday, April 22-23. Celebrate Earth Day weekend at scenic and historic Harpers Ferry! Music, guided day-hikes, childrens' activities, and hiking workshops will be offered as we celebrate flip-flop thru-hikes than begin in the middle of the Trail. Visit appalachiantrail.org/events for more information.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is recruiting for several **internship positions for the summer of 2017** including: Market Research, Public Relations, Social Media, Visitor Services, Development Database, Development Events, and Lands Steward. An internship at the ATC is an excellent way to gain a hands-on, work-learn experience. For more information and to apply visit: appalachiantrail.org/careers. 📧

Public Notices may be edited for clarity and length.



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 Public Notices
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WHEN THIS 66-YEAR-OLD SET OUT

to walk the Appalachian Trail I had done considerable research, discovery, and training to be appropriately prepared to meet the challenge it would present. Although I initially strove to achieve an aggressive flip-flop completion, it ended up that an injury to my ankle made me modify my approach to ultimately completing a piece, 343.1 miles, over two sustained hikes totaling five weeks.

The interesting result of this modification allowed me to lessen the need to complete certain mileage goals within certain calendar days and instead appreciate the Trail in a more introspective way and observe and appreciate the humanity that flowed through it.

On paper the A.T. is a cobbled national pathway of 2,189 miles through 14 states, which provides challenging climbs, descents, and walks along the mountain ranges of the East Coast. Although the path is marked with the two-by-six-inch "white blazes" it requires forethought to shelter, food, and water and anticipating all the weather that Mother Nature provides. Additionally, there is the need to maintain ones well being physically and mentally as you traverse this path encountering the possibility of injury from the hike or from the animal and plant life that call the Trail home. This is the clinical view of the Trail.

In truth, the Trail acts more like a Gulf Stream. The current is strong, warm, and can carry many species

"As I See It" is a column from guest contributors representing the full range of ATC partners, members, and volunteers. To submit a column (700 words or less) for consideration:



journeys@appalachiantrail.org
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 Appalachian Trail Conservancy
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long distances to a predetermined destination. The hiker species have many classes — thru, flip-flop, slack, section, day, recreational — but all are streaming their humanity together along the Trail. They share many life events, but most commonly, they test themselves with a desired goal to achieve self-fulfillment while coming to terms with the events in their life that brought them there.

Encounters along the Trail last a few minutes as one passes another and then slowly disappears off the winding path ahead of you. But in those moments, exchanges of goodwill, encouragement, and acknowledgement of the common journey is shared. The meetings at the end of the day as one recoups their strength and prepares for the next day's trek are different. Here, over meals or a fire, each shares a snippet of one individual life that lingers with you and often emotionally touches all the others. The diversity of our humanity representing all walks of life and from all parts of our country and often the world are found in this flow of energy called the Trail.

A.T. hikers are a fluid family who



Gary on the Trail in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

keep an eye out for each other and network up and down the Trail; and keep tabs, often using the unique Trail names adopted for the journey. The longer you stay in the stream of names that are moving along with you, a familial overtone takes shape.

A lot has been written about the Appalachian Trail, the uniqueness, the difficulty, the length. But as I reflect on my short passage within its borders I walk away with this thought: the humanity and strength of character that is displayed throughout the Trail by hikers, maintainers, Trail "angels," and the public, reinforces how great and special we can be as humans if we only allow ourselves the opportunity to do so. Our society on the whole would benefit by taking a hike on the Appalachian Trail." 🌱

Gary "Go2" Oliver
 LIVES IN SEA BRIGHT, NEW JERSEY



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