



# JOURNEYS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / FALL 2018

A photograph of a mountain landscape at dusk. A large, dark evergreen tree stands on a rocky ridge in the foreground. In the background, a valley is illuminated by city lights, and the sky is a deep twilight blue.

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT

Technical Triumph on  
Bear Mountain

Geotourism

Hearts of Service:  
Veterans and the Trail



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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail — ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

# JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / FALL 2018

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Night sky overlooking the Harlem Valley (in the Hudson Valley) from the Trail at Cat Rocks — on the border between Pawling and Dover, New York. Photo by Julian Diamond

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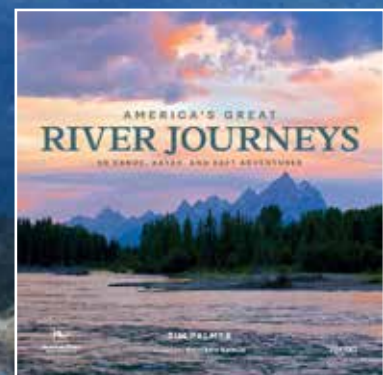
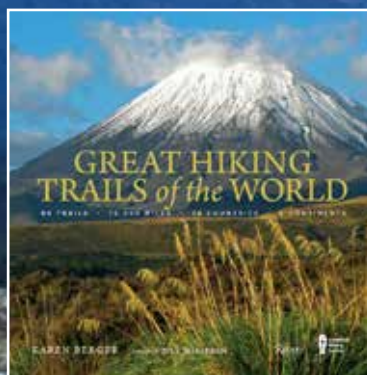
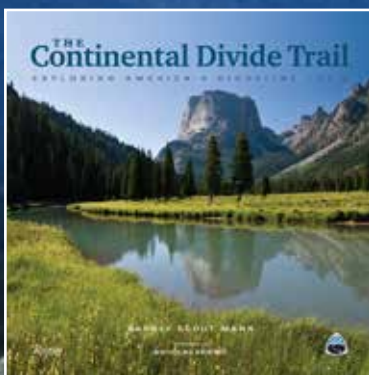
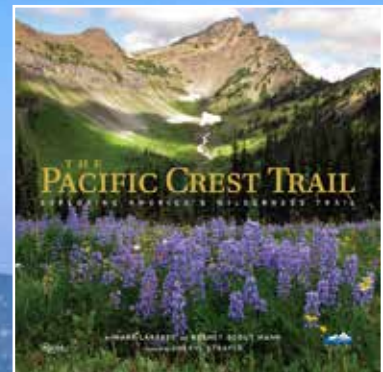
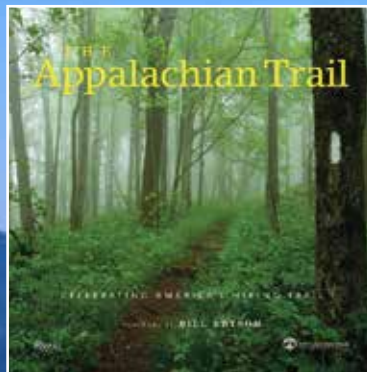
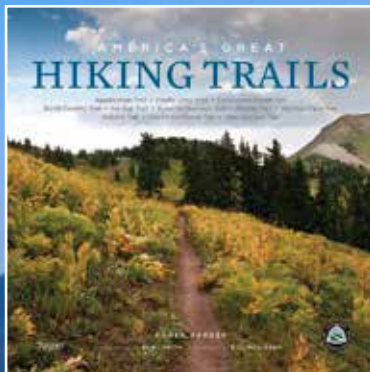
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Rizzoli celebrates  
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*RIZZOLI*  
NEW YORK

# Looking back. Looking ahead.

**FIFTY YEARS AGO, CONGRESS RECOGNIZED** the Appalachian Trail as a national treasure.

The year was 1968, the year the lava lamp and the 49¢ McDonald's Big Mac were introduced. That year, *Time* magazine honored the Apollo 8 astronauts and Virginia Slims boldly promoted cigarettes to women with the catchphrase "You've Come A Long Way,

our country seemed divided then, as it seems now.

Culturally, there was also grave concern that the increasingly ubiquitous lure of television was pulling Americans away from outdoor pursuits not so unlike current concerns about social media, online gaming, and the portable, 24/7 distraction of the smart phone.

So how was it that Congress unified behind the Appalachian Trail, pointing to its "maximum outdoor recreation potential" and its "nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities?"

Perhaps it is no surprise that the Appalachian and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails — which eventually inspired the designation of an impressive network of national trails in our country — were conceived and congressionally authorized during a time when people seemed to need places of retreat and refuge. Just as we seem to need places of solitude and beauty now.

I can't help but think that we're in a good moment of time to talk about the importance of the Appalachian Trail in the populous eastern United States, and to offer up unifying dialogue on how we can join together in enhancing our care for the last significant contiguous open space east of the Mississippi.

In this National Trails System Act anniversary issue of *A.T. Journeys*, we examine our history as we explore the future, showcasing some of the important milestones of the Appalachian Trail and providing you a peek at a forward-looking initiative called "Geotourism," which marries Trail-town tourism promotion with vibrant stewardship.

While it cannot be denied that our united and collective perspective of our past and future is vital to the protection of the remarkable Appalachian Trail, we must not overlook our enjoyment and respect for the Trail right here and now. I speak from experience. The moments I carve out on the Trail — hiking under a canopy of trees that gently filters the sunlight or standing along a ridgeline surveying the countryside below — inspire and fuel me for our important work in preserving and protecting the Trail. 🌲

Carpe diem!

**Suzanne Dixon** / President & CEO



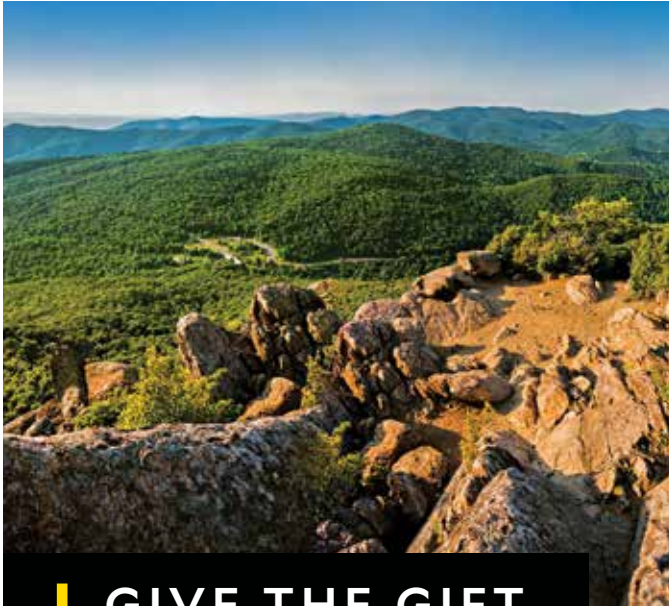
Suzanne on the  
A.T. near ATC  
headquarters in  
Harpers Ferry,  
West Virginia  
📷 Photo by  
Jordan Bowman

Baby." On TV, "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In" reigned. On the airwaves, the Beatles' song "Hey Jude" rocketed to number one.

The year was also tumultuous. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act, I've been browsing through the history of 1968 to better understand how such significant conservation-related legislation was passed during a time of such intense political disruption.

In 1968, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated within months of each other, prompting thousands of people to join civil rights demonstrations and to gather along railroad tracks to honor Kennedy's funeral train. The nightly news reported on Viet Nam War fatalities and anti-war protests; and street violence and tear gas took over the Democratic National Convention. Both political parties were split on matters of policy. By all accounts,





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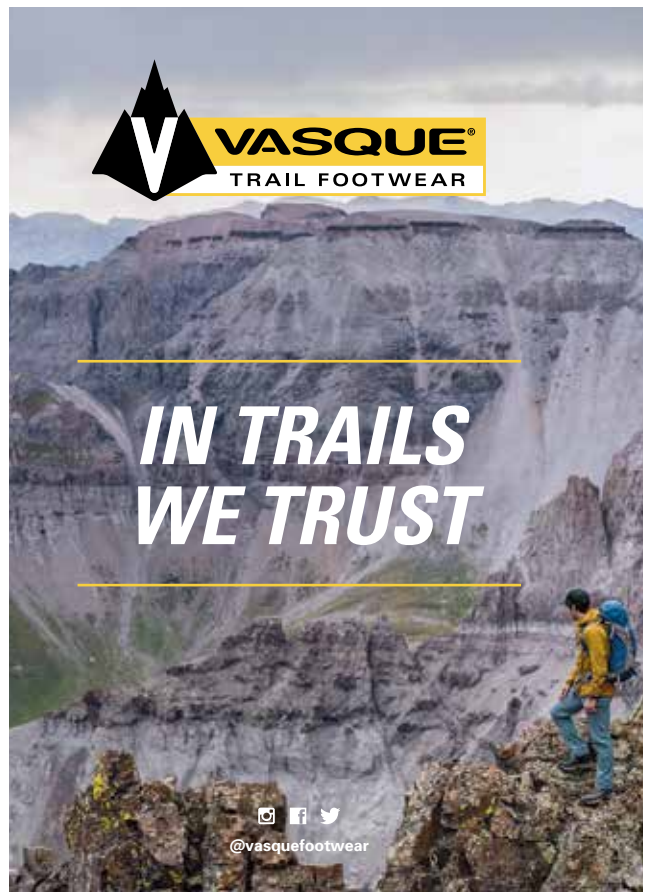
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## The Good Days Are Made.

Without trails, our good days are numbered. Trails connect people with public lands, build community, preserve diversity and reflect the best of our nation's legacy. Osprey is proud to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of The National Trails System Act together with the ATC and PCTA to ensure the good days never end.



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Volunteers with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference work on the Bear Mountain project in 2017 during an introduction to trail building workshop. Photo by Heather Darley/New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

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## TECHNICAL TRIUMPH

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Passage of the National Trails System Act, wrote Benton MacKaye, was "unrivalled by any other single feat in the development of American outdoor recreation."

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Being part of something bigger is a common theme that emerges from talking with veterans who volunteer on the A.T.

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A young section hiker takes a long hike at a pivotal point in her life — and discovers the joy of sweet simplicity.

### 55 / AS I SEE IT

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## I GREATLY ENJOYED YOUR

Summer 2018 articles focusing on women on the Trail. As a young child, I met a 16-year-old girl hiking by herself on the A.T. in Massachusetts. I talked to her for a while and remember thinking to myself that someday I wanted to hike on the A.T. for a length of time. In 1982, my now husband and I hiked for five weeks on the Trail heading south from Virginia. Throughout that period, we only passed two other women, hiking together, and quite honestly, I was so excited to see them! I also recall stopping at a firehouse advertising that long-distance hikers could take a shower at their department. When we arrived, the firemen looked at me in disbelief. They said, I was the first female hiker to take up their offer. The men were ordered out of the firehouse while I showered. Over the years, I've noticed that more and more women are hiking the Trail and it constantly brings a smile to my face.

Debra Wasserman  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

## I AM DUMBFOUNDED THAT

A.T. Journeys would run a feature story about Delaware Water Gap ("A.T. Communities"/ Summer 2018) without even the slightest mention of Presbyterian Church of the Mountain. We have provided hospitality, accommodation, counseling, medical assistance, and meals at no cost, for thru-hikers for over 40 years; and over 900 hikers this season alone.

William "Mr. Ed" Edward Kendall

### EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

Yes, "Mr. Ed," we agree. We should have mentioned the Church of the Mountain in our last article on Delaware Water Gap. Although not everyone who comes to Delaware Water Gap to explore the A.T. is a long-distance hiker eligible to stay at the church, everyone who visits the town should know about the legacy of this church and the extraordinary mission and generosity of its members. The Church of the Mountain put Delaware Water Gap on the map as a notable stop for serious long-distance hikers more than 40 years ago. The quiet hospitality and kindness freely given to Trail-worn, grubby hikers over the years has, for many, been one of the most remarkable parts of

their A.T. journey. When someone says that thru-hiking restored their faith in humanity, the treatment the hiker received from this big-hearted congregation here may well have been part of what gave them this outlook.

## READING THE TRAIL UPDATES

weekly [on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's website], I think it is time to make it mandatory for all hikers to utilize a bear canister on all parts of the A.T. to ensure the safety of everyone and avoid unnecessary bear extermination. That's it in a nutshell; a simple solution to a growing and ongoing problem, which seems to grow exponentially each year. I for one, do not wish to see electric fences while out reconnecting with nature.

Deb Kneisly  
GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA

### THE ATC'S RESPONSE:

The ATC is quite concerned about the safety of A.T. hikers and campers and keeping bears wild. We have "strongly recommended" the use of bear canisters by all A.T. campers for the last few years and their use has been slowly increasing. We believe that all A.T. campers must take full responsibility for taking every precaution to prevent bears from becoming habitu-

ated to human food. Habituation can lead to aggressive behavior on the part of bears seeking easy food sources resulting in damage to personal property, injuries to campers, and ultimately to removal or euthanization of bears. A spotless camp and properly stored food is the best way to avoid attracting bears. The U.S. Forest Service is currently considering a bear-resistant personal food storage container requirement for the A.T. in North Carolina and we have supported this proposal; and would like to see this type of requirement Trail-wide.

For more information and to see the ATC's new bear incident report form visit: [appalachiantrail.org/bears](http://appalachiantrail.org/bears)

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.



[editor@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:editor@appalachiantrail.org)

Letters to the Editor


Appalachian Trail Conservancy

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 thedreamerjournals  
When the clouds clear slightly and it isn't raining for the first time in what feels like weeks, you might come across what some people call a "view." I highly recommend them.


 mandymcmenemyphotos  
Hiking day after day in the rain is hard... feet prune, clothes get musty, shoes stay wet, views are hidden... it's easy to have low spirits. However, having a "tramily"

helps. Making coffee at breaks, listening to the rainfall, having audio books, and spotting the colorful fall leaves help. It's the summary of the good and bad days that make the Trail so memorable! I just need to be reminded of that fairly often.



 jstonejamie  
Autumn in the 'Doahs. The smell of wet leaves and rocks.



 i.e.meg  
Day 136: In the spring we found fiddleheads and baby blue robin eggs. In the summer, blueberries and blackberries. Now in early autumn, a kaleidoscope of leaves and chestnuts. These forest treasures never cease to brighten my day. Now who knows how you go about eating a chestnut? I'm listening. 🌲



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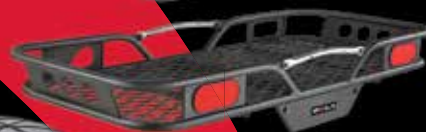
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# TECHNICAL TRIUMPH

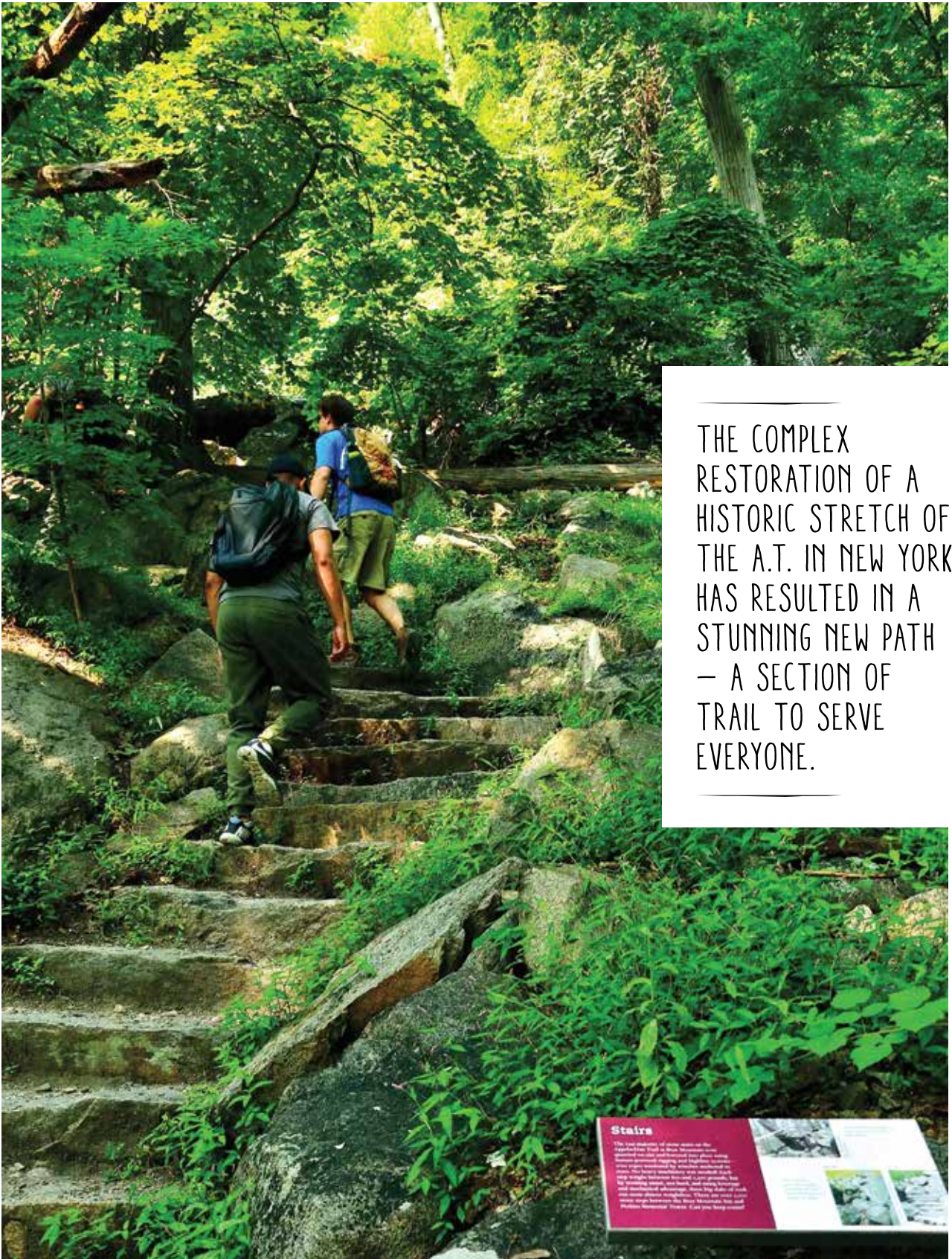
FOR NEARLY A CENTURY, LEGIONS of hikers have dug their heels into the crumbling stone and weaved between granite boulders that scatter the east face of Bear Mountain en route to its summit along the Appalachian Trail. For decades, Bear Mountain has been the gateway for urban dwellers from New York City to connect with the outdoors and the famous footpath.



*By Jack Igelman*

Above: ATC Mid-Atlantic Trail Crew volunteers Pat Yale and Neal Watson help guide a rock on a highline; Right: In 2016, the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference opened the "Trails for People" exhibit on the A.T. at the foot of Bear Mountain — the first interactive, on-trail exhibit in the U.S. dedicated to the art and science of trail building with displays that inform trail users about the A.T.'s origins at Bear Mountain State Park, how trails are built, and how volunteers are the lifeblood of our trail systems 📷 Photos by Christian Mena/New York-New Jersey Trail Conference





THE COMPLEX RESTORATION OF A HISTORIC STRETCH OF THE A.T. IN NEW YORK HAS RESULTED IN A STUNNING NEW PATH — A SECTION OF TRAIL TO SERVE EVERYONE.





Clockwise from top right: A section on the mountain's top was made accessible to people with disabilities ■ Photo by Jeremy Apgar; View from the eastern side of the Bear Mountain Bridge (which carries the A.T. across the Hudson River), looking north toward the Hudson Highlands ■ Photo by Julian Diamond; New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's Eddie Walsh (second from left) begins training on the project in 2006 ■ Photo courtesy New York-New Jersey Trail Conference



In fact, in 1923 this stretch of Trail became the first section of path blazed for the Appalachian Trail. Nearly 100 years later, a portion of the original 20 miles of footpath has received a stunning face lift and reroute — sustained by volunteer labor — that Trail leaders hope will last another century. “We are working on the birthplace of the Appalachian Trail,” says Ed Goodell, executive director of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. “That’s exciting and weighty.”

Not only is the section of Trail on Bear Mountain that cuts through two New York state parks, Harriman and Bear Mountain, meaningful to A.T. lore, but it’s among the most used — and perhaps abused — section of footpath in the entire system. In the early 2000s, when Goodell began his position, the heavily eroded section of Trail was in wretched shape. “In places it was 80 feet wide,” Goodell recalls. “We wanted to fix it. We wanted to clean it up and come up with one single trail to serve everyone. A trail to rule them all.”

In 2005, work commenced on redesigning and relocating a 3.9-mile section of Trail from the back of the Bear Mountain Inn up to the top of the Mountain and down the west side to Perkins Drive, using funds from the National Park Service. More than a decade later, the final stone step was set in September 2018 by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) mid-Atlantic regional director Karen Lutz who spearheaded the project for the organiza-

“

We realized this was more than a section of Trail, but the most popular destination in the region.

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tion in 2001. “Going into this, we realized it was going to be a major multi-year effort,” says Lutz. The result, she says, is one to behold. In all, visible are more than 1,300 granite stair steps (many quarried on the mountain), a section on the mountain’s top accessible to people with disabilities, and design elements and superior handiwork that harken back to the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression.

The result is also a technical triumph. And while it may be an opus of trail design, ingenuity, and construction, the true hallmark of the project, maintains Lutz, is the level of cooperation between the ATC, A.T. clubs, communities, government agencies, and the scores of volunteers that united to accomplish a project of this scale. “There have been plenty of opportunities to say ‘this is enough,’” said Lutz. “The most extraordinary part of the project is that we have not lowered the bar and successfully kept an extremely high standard. This is a project we can all be proud of.”

#### A PERMANENT FIX

In 2017, 2.06-million people came to Bear Mountain State Park to picnic, ride the Merry-Go-Round, visit the zoo, or fish and swim in Hessian Lake. Many of those visitors also came to hike. For good reason, the plateau at the apex of Bear Mountain has stunning views of the Hudson River and surrounding high-



lands. While the top is accessible by vehicle, many choose to navigate to the top by foot.

And less than 50 miles from New York City, there's usually a steady stream of eager walkers who typically tackle the A.T., the mountain's only official trail on the east face, to the summit.

In the early 2000s, Trail leaders began organizing to walk the mountain and address some of the ongoing maintenance issues of the section of Appalachian Trail that crosses Bear Mountain. "We had been constantly tweaking and trying to repair this or that little piece of the trail," recalls Lutz. "It just wasn't sustainable."

"In places the trail was a ditch," says Gail Neffinger, former chair of the Orange-Rockland A.T. Management Committee during much of the planning period and first years of construction. Over the decades, he says, the trail had been relocated several times, but "it was clear then that something had to be done." Weather and use had exposed the mountain's granite on the mountain's extremely steep slopes over time, crumbling into small stones that acted like ball bearings. To avoid the hazard, people would wander to the sides, creating a network of ever-widening pathways. "I can tell you this," says Goodell. "Bear Mountain was not a place you went for a nice hike." At the time, he suggested that the best solution for the A.T. was simply to circumnavigate the mountain. "That was not tolerated by anyone," laughs Goodell. Still, there wasn't an obvious route. "The real question was how do we go straight up the face and funnel all of these people on one trail. We realized this was more than a section of Trail, but the most popular destination in the region."

In 2005, Trail leaders organized a design charrette that included a range of stakeholders and design students at Rutgers University to hash out a permanent fix. Among the decisions that grew from the gathering was the intent to hire a professional trail designer — Peter Jensen — to tackle the complexity of the project and create a trail that could withstand the forces of nature, gravity, and the impact of thousands of hikers.

In the following year, Jensen, New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's Eddie Walsh, volunteers from the Trail Conference, and the ATC's Mid-Atlantic Trail resources manager Bob Sickley visited the mountain often with a tape measure and 10-foot level to mark its path. In order to keep the treadway below a certain grade, the resulting design would eventually utilize more than 1,200 rocks steps. The trail would also be no less than five feet wide. "A standard 18 to 24 inch treadway just would not work," says Sickley. "The entire design alternates back and forth between steps and stretches of flat treadway supported by crib

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**The logistics of building a trail on steep and brittle terrain that could support a hefty volume of hikers and stand-up to erosive forces was the crux. A project on this scale was beyond what had ever been attempted.**

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walls." The walls would help support sections of trail where steps weren't possible and create a durable walking surface.

Construction began in 2006 and was anticipated to last seven years. An initial \$500,000 from the National Park Service seeded the project. And while fundraising remained a hurdle throughout, the logistics of building a trail on steep and brittle terrain that could support a hefty volume of hikers and stand-up to erosive forces was the crux. "A project on this scale was beyond what had ever been attempted. The technical design of the trail was a huge stretch," says Goodell. Among the challenges was sourcing the inputs, including five-foot-wide granite steps weighing in excess of 1,000 pounds and tons of crushed stone to backfill the retaining walls.

Sickley points out that the lower part of the trail had access to an abundance of material for steps and fill that gravity had conveniently pulled to the bottom of the mountain. Trail crews would have to quarry rock onsite, split it into usable sizes, and hammer and chisel them into desired shapes, then move them into place with ropes and cables. In addition, the crews had to sledge hammer stone to manufacture their own gravel to level slopes and backfill retaining walls. "The technical stonework is pretty amazing, but you don't realize the tons of crush and fill under the trail. It's taken a lot of volunteer power," says Neal Watson of Fayetteville, Pennsylvania — a volunteer who has contributed to the project since its beginning as a member of the ATC's Mid-Atlantic Trail Crew.

Watson and his wife Pat Yale have worked a total of 25 weeks on this section of Trail since 2006. Collectively, the couples' service on portions of the A.T. add up to more than five decades and, aside from Watson's stint as a crew leader, each hour was unpaid. For a retired civil engineer, the Bear Mountain section of trail was a perfect match for Watson who could tackle the technical challenge of building a trail over a steep slope. "When I look at an old project from the 1800s and I see the stones, I now know what they had to go through to cut and move them," he says. "It's satisfying to know that several generations in the future will still see it."

Ellie Pelletier worked alongside Yale and Watson for five seasons on the Bear Mountain project. Over the last two years she's served as the field manager with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and before that, three years as an AmeriCorps service member. When she came to the project, Pelletier was a trail building novice, now she's an expert. "I grew up loving the outdoors and this job gave me the opportunity to meet other people who love the outdoors just as much as I do," she says. "What makes this section of the A.T. so unique is



that it has been completed with the help of so many tireless volunteers and volunteer days hosted by various organizations and groups.”

Lutz explains that among the original objectives of the project was to incorporate training to raise the skill level of volunteers who could be used elsewhere on the A.T. In fact, several careers, including Pelletiers’, were launched — and professional trail building operations spawned — from working on the project. Among them, the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew Inc., which formed from a group of volunteers who assembled in 2011 and created a non-profit trail construction organization in 2014. “This project really pushed boundaries,” says Ama Koenigshof who managed the project for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference from the fall of 2012 to the spring of 2017. “There were times it could have easily been said we could do this faster if we hire professionals, but every partner in the project stayed true to keeping volunteers highly involved in the construction process.”

The project, says Goodell, also changed lives. In fact, the project’s legacy may be measured by far more than the impact the volunteers had on the Trail, but rather the Trail’s mark on the volunteers. For Yale, the allure was being in the outdoors and building connections with other volunteers. “The Trail may be 2,190 miles, but it’s also a really long community — you see these people over and over,” she says. “You can always begin the conversation where you left off.” The coordination of so many volunteers over a decade on such a complex project has also left its mark on the ATC and its key partners, says Goodell. “It really taught us how to do trails on this scale. The whole process made us a much higher performing organization when it comes to trail building.”

The project also strengthened relationships among trail organizations and land managers that fulfills the original intent of the cooperative



From left: The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference Conservation Corps uses the A.T. on Bear Mountain as a training ground to learn trail-building techniques. Photo by Jerrica Lavooy; Pat Yale, Karen Lutz, and AmeriCorp members set the final stone step during a celebration of the project’s completion this September. Photo by John DeSanto

“

**There will be thousands of people who will enjoy this A.T. experience. For many, this will be their introduction to the Trail.**

”

management system of the A.T. In all, a constellation of trail organizations and land managers were vital to its success, including the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, the National Park Service, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. “It was an important milestone, both for the ATC and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference in their growth and emergence on the national scene, and for drawing together shareholders that had been siloed,” says Neffinger. “This project also helped engage the general public in a relationship with the A.T. and promoted what the Trail is about and where it comes from.”

While some have criticized the trail design as deviating too far from the A.T.’s typical design model, Lutz says that the traditional design and construction wasn’t suitable given the terrain and extraordinary visitation levels. “This isn’t southwestern Virginia or western Maine; this section of Trail is different. Our goal was to build a sustainable [section of] Trail that would keep the original intent of the A.T.,” says Lutz. “I believe we’ve succeeded at that. There will be thousands of people who will enjoy this A.T. experience. For many, this will be their introduction to the Trail.”

Indeed, on any given weekend the throngs of hikers may include seasoned thru-hikers to plenty of novices from nearby urban areas — especially New York. In a sense, Lutz says, restoring the original section of the A.T. was a nod to the Trail’s philosophical roots. “What I really like about Bear Mountain is that there are probably 20 or more languages spoken on any given day,” says Goodell, who affectionately compares Bear Mountain to Times Square in NYC. “The root of the trail conference was to give people in New York and other urban areas a place to go after their labor. That was the point of the A.T. What a great way to celebrate the Trail.”





Proceeds benefit the

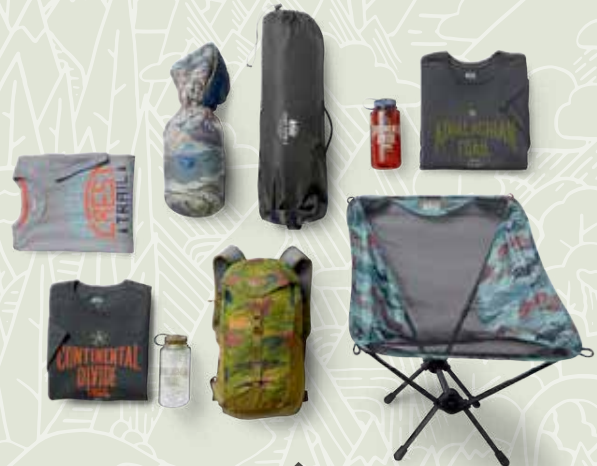
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# TRAILHEAD

★ ATC DIRT ★



APPALACHIAN  
*United*  
by the  
TRAIL

In one of 17 "United by the Appalachian Trail" exhibit photos entitled "Determination," a thru-hiker scales Katahdin to complete her epic trek in Baxter State Park, Maine. 📷 Photo by Koty Sapp





THE ATC WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE  
HONORARY HOSTS OF THE “UNITED BY  
THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL” EXHIBIT:

## D.C. EXHIBIT SHOWCASES THE A.T.’S GLORY, INSPIRATION, AND GRIT

### « PHOTO EXHIBIT

Under the coffered dome in the stately U.S. Senate Russell Rotunda, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) staged a photo-art exhibit showcasing the Trail’s scenic beauty, natural, and cultural resources — and the determination it takes to hike the entire Trail. ¶ The September exhibit — titled “United by the Appalachian Trail” — was organized and curated by the ATC to enhance public awareness of the Trail’s importance in the eastern United States. ¶ Seventeen oversized acrylic-printed photographs presented the beauty of the Trail — the allure of a misty boardwalk, a night sky reflected in a still pond, and a spectacular sunset from a wilderness ridge, among other scenes. The exhibit also presented a compelling image of a laboring hiker near the summit of Katahdin and a striking close-up of battered, beat-up, duct-taped feet. ¶ The exhibit was sponsored by Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), who secured the necessary approval to present it. Additionally, 24 U.S. Senators and 18 Members of the House of Representatives signed on as “honorary hosts” of the exhibit. The ATC expects to tour the exhibit through the A.T.’s 14 states in 2019 and 2020.

For more information visit:

[appalachiantrail.org/UnitedbytheAT](http://appalachiantrail.org/UnitedbytheAT)

### U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Louis J. Barletta (PA)  
The Honorable Donald S. Beyer, Jr. (VA) \*\*\*  
The Honorable Matthew A. Cartwright (PA)  
The Honorable Douglas A. Collins (GA)  
The Honorable Barbara J. Comstock (VA)  
The Honorable Elizabeth Esty (CT)  
The Honorable John J. Faso, Jr. (NY)  
The Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte (VA)  
The Honorable H. Morgan Griffith (VA)  
The Honorable Evan H. Jenkins (WV)  
The Honorable James P. McGovern (MA)  
The Honorable Mark R. Meadows (NC)  
The Honorable Alexander X. Mooney (WV)  
The Honorable Bruce L. Poliquin (ME)  
The Honorable David E. Price (NC)  
The Honorable D. Philip Roe (TN) \*\*\*  
The Honorable Carol Shea-Porter (NH)  
The Honorable Nicola Tsongas (MA)

### U.S. Senate

The Honorable A. Lamar Alexander, Jr. (TN)  
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal (CT)  
The Honorable Cory A. Booker (NJ)  
The Honorable Richard M. Burr (NC)\*  
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito (WV)  
The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin (MD)  
The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr. (PA)  
The Honorable Susan M. Collins (ME)  
The Honorable Robert P. Corker, Jr. (TN)  
The Honorable Margaret Hassan (NH)  
The Honorable Johnny Isakson (GA)  
The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine (VA)  
The Honorable Angus S. King, Jr. (ME)  
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy (VT)  
The Honorable Joseph Manchin III (WV)  
The Honorable Edward J. Markey (MA)  
The Honorable Robert Menendez (NJ)  
The Honorable Christopher S. Murphy (CT)  
The Honorable David A. Perdue, Jr. (GA)  
The Honorable Bernard Sanders (VT)  
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer (NY) \*\*  
The Honorable C. Jeanne Shaheen (NH)  
The Honorable Thomas R. Tillis (NC)  
The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen, Jr. (MD)  
The Honorable Mark R. Warner (VA)

\* Sponsor Senator Richard M. Burr

\*\* Democratic Leader Charles E. Schumer

\*\*\* House Caucus Co-Chairs of the

Appalachian National Scenic Trail Caucus:

Congressman Don Beyer and Congressman Phil Roe

## Land and Water Conservation Fund

# ATC ADVOCATES “DEFERRED MAINTENANCE” LEGISLATION



### HUNTING SEASON SAFETY

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

For more information and to see ATC’s “2018-2019 Hunting Season Guide by State” visit: [appalachiantrail.org/hunting](http://appalachiantrail.org/hunting)

Two important pieces of legislation before Congress are the focus of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) advocacy efforts as 2018 ends. ¶ “Legislation to **reauthorize and continue the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** is critical to protecting the Trail corridor,” says Lynn Davis, the ATC’s director of federal policy and legislation. The LWCF, which was congressionally established in 1964, uses earnings from offshore gas and leasing — no taxpayer dollars — to acquire lands important to meeting the conservation objectives of the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and other federal agencies. The fund is generally equally split between federal agencies and states for similar purposes. ¶ This year, the Appalachian Trail benefitted greatly from LWCF with the recent acquisition of 219-acres of farmland near Pawling/Dover, New York. The acquisition — identified as the number one priority in 2018 by the National Park Service — allows the A.T. to be rerouted to a more scenic area and protects nesting habitat for a sensitive species. The \$2.35 million purchase was funded mostly by LWCF with contributions from the ATC, the Trust for Public Lands, and others. ¶ Legislation to — finally — **address the nation’s staggering backlog of deferred maintenance needs in our national parks** is equally important to the care and management of the A.T. Increased visitation to national parks and inconsistent federal funding has, over several years, resulted in an estimated \$11.6 billion backlog

of necessary maintenance across the country. On the A.T., the National Park Service estimates a need for at least \$20 million to primarily address infrastructure needs. ¶ In recent years, legislative attempts to address maintenance backlog have not elicited the necessary congressional support. But this year, according to Davis, “there is promising legislation in both the House and Senate that has garnered support from Democrats and Republicans alike. The ATC is optimistic about the likelihood of addressing maintenance backlog during this Congress.”

For more information visit: [appalachiantrail.org/lwcf](http://appalachiantrail.org/lwcf)  
and [appalachiantrail.org/backlog](http://appalachiantrail.org/backlog)



# PIPELINE

/ By Laura Belleville

## MOUNTAIN VALLEY UPDATE

**Federal authorities halted work on the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) in August after an appeals court**

**ruled that federal agencies neglected to follow environmental protections.** The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) said it had no choice but to order work on the multibillion-dollar Mountain Valley Pipeline stopped after a federal appeals court ruled that two federal agencies had neglected to follow important environmental protections when they approved the project. ¶ **The court found that the U.S. Forest Service had suddenly dropped — without any explanation — its longstanding concerns that soil erosion from the pipeline would harm rivers, streams, and aquatic life. It also found that the Bureau of Land Management approved a new construction path through the Jefferson National Forest, ignoring rules that favor sticking to existing utility rights-of-way.** ¶ Projects like the MVP require a variety of approvals before being built. Developers and regulators must study various alternatives, describe a clear need for the project, and show that steps will be taken to minimize damage to the environment and reduce negative effects on valuable resources like public lands and the water supply. ¶ While FERC is generally the lead agency for interstate pipeline proposals, permits and approvals are needed from a variety of other agencies. **Groups opposing MVP, including private landowners and conservation organizations, have challenged the projects, raising issues about taking private lands through eminent domain for private business gains, significant impacts to water quality from development on steep slopes, and impacts to scenic and other natural and cultural resources along A.T. corridor lands.** ¶ Among the many MVP permits that have been challenged is one called a “401 Certification,” issued under Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act. That section was intended to give states an opportunity to protect state water resources even when the project is managed by a federal authority. If a state wanted to step in and block such a project, it could refuse certification. States also may attach additional conditions to their certifications. Or they can waive their authority altogether. ¶ Despite several citations for inadequate erosion and sedimentation over the last few months as MVP clears a pipeline corridor and trenches to lay and bury a pipeline, the Virginia Water Board Authority did not vacate MVP’s water permits in late August. Instead, the Water Board determined that Virginia agencies will buckle down on enforcement for any permit violations. ¶ In its “stop work” order in August, FERC said, “there is no reason to believe” that the federal agencies involved would not “ultimately issue” new permits that would withstand the court’s scrutiny. But until then, **FERC ordered that “construction activity along all portions of the project and in all work areas must cease immediately.”** ¶ The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has questioned the environmental review process for MVP in all its written comments. Our staff will continue to engage in a renewed environmental review process. The ATC also offered comments on FERC’s recent review of its 1999 pipeline siting process.

For more information about these comments and to stay abreast of project developments visit:  
[appalachiantrail.org/mountain-valley-pipeline](http://appalachiantrail.org/mountain-valley-pipeline)



Scenes from “Mountain Valley Pipeline: A Threat to our Trail, our Water and our Jobs”  
courtesy Horizonline Pictures. Watch the video at [appalachiantrail.org/mvp](http://appalachiantrail.org/mvp)



## FLORENCE AFTERMATH

Hurricane Florence posed a serious potential threat to the southern half of the Appalachian Trail in mid-September. Up to 15 inches of rain were forecast to reach the Appalachians, along with high winds. Soils were already saturated from recent rains in many areas, creating conditions for a variety of potential hazards, including falling trees, mudslides, and flash flooding. As a result, almost a thousand miles of the A.T. south of Harpers Ferry was either closed or under a strong advisory for hikers to stay off the Trail. Fortunately, the storm weakened to a tropical depression by the time it reached the Trail and reported damage has been minimal. In the coming months, hikers are advised to remain vigilant for overhead hazards, especially when choosing overnight sites.

For more information and all current Trail updates visit:  
[appalachiantrail.org/updates](http://appalachiantrail.org/updates)



A.T. VISTA 2020

## Save the Date!

Plans are underway for the first A.T. Vista to be held **July 31-August 3, 2020** at Ramapo College in New Jersey. This program provides an opportunity for people who cherish the Appalachian Trail to hike, attend workshops on topics of common interest, and connect with other kindred spirits. ¶ A.T. Vista 2020 will be a four-day weekend event hosted by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference with engagement and participation from local A.T. Communities and other nearby partners. The A.T. Vista is the recognized program forum for activity on and near the Appalachian Trail. This will be its inaugural event, held simultaneously with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's year-long centennial celebration.

Join us by volunteering or offering your services. We are also seeking topics and speakers for workshops. Visit: [atvista.org](http://atvista.org) and [atvista2020.org](http://atvista2020.org) for details as the A. T. Vista program unfolds. Email inquiries can be made to: [atvistainfo@gmail.com](mailto:atvistainfo@gmail.com) and [volunteer@atvista2020.org](mailto:volunteer@atvista2020.org)

## 2018 PROUD MAN/WOMEN AWARD

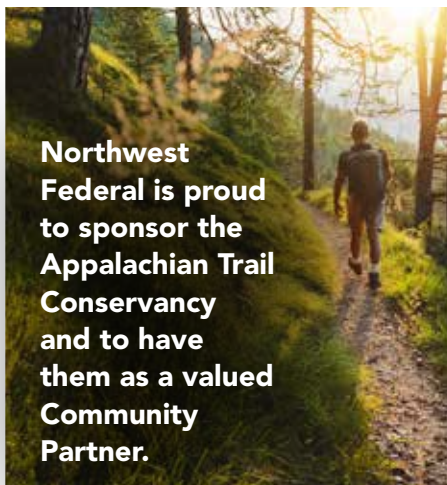


Kathryn on the section of Trail she maintains on Sinking Creek Mountain  
 Photo by Molly Hagan

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Proud Man/Woman award — the ATC's highest recognition for outstanding performance by a staff member — was established in 2015 to recognize the profound and enduring contributions of Bob Proudman who served the A.T. for 50 years in a variety of roles, including 35 years of employment with the ATC. The award criteria is based on demonstrated excellence in each of the ATC's five core values: cooperation, integrity, inclusion, dedication, and empowerment. The recipient is chosen by fellow ATC employees through a nomination and committee deliberation process. ¶ This year, **Kathryn Herndon-Powell, the ATC's education and outreach manager in the Central and Southwest Virginia Regional Office** was chosen for myriad reasons — all of which demonstrate her dedication to the ATC and its mission. "Kathryn is a sparkplug for cooperation and collaboration," says Andrew Downs, the ATC's Central and Southwest Virginia regional director. "She builds and maintains strong relationships with the clubs, agency partners, and fellow staff members through her constant cooperation and great attitude. She leads by example: her responsiveness and positive demeanor make her a pleasure to work with and inspires others to go above and beyond," affirms Marian Orlousky, the ATC's northern resource management coordinator. ¶ Kathryn's passion for the Trail is infectious. Those who work with Kathryn observe that she is always warm, welcoming, and super enthusiastic. This makes her very approachable and both a great team player and a leader. Anyone who sees her in action, whether working on a Trail relocation, teaching a Leave No Trace course, or reaching out to a new community has observed her ability to make all feel welcome and included, and that their voice is important. ¶ Like many ATC employees, Kathryn, eats, sleeps and breathes the A.T. Her dedication to volunteerism began after she thru-hiked the A.T. in 2006, when she joined a local A.T.-maintaining club and soon adopted a section of Trail to take care of, which she does to this day. She also volunteered on the ATC's Konnarock Trail Crew. In 2008, she joined the ATC as a seasonal staff member in positions with increasing responsibility. Her trail skills and education background made her a natural for the ATC's education and outreach position in the Virginia office in 2013. ¶ Though she can swing a pick mattock with the best of them, Kathryn works with a light touch and inspires a lot of laughter. She quickly puts people at ease and enables groups with varying age, experience, and backgrounds to work well together. Her teaching style is popular and effective; and she can educate without being preachy. Her goal is to provide the best experience for the spectrum of A.T. users from day visitors to thru-hikers, while engaging an ever-expanding group of volunteers to ensure the long-term protection of the A.T. In many ways, Kathryn sets a great example for the younger generation of emerging Trail stewards.

Check out the ATC's myATstory video "Contagious Love" to see some of Kathryn's work and be inspired by her deep passion for the A.T. at: [myATstory.org](http://myATstory.org)





Northwest Federal is proud to sponsor the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and to have them as a valued Community Partner.

# CELEBRATING

the 50th Anniversary of the Pacific Crest and Appalachian Trails and the National Trail System Act

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[appalachiantrail.org/NextGen](http://appalachiantrail.org/NextGen)

# WAYAH BALD TOWER

## HISTORIC RESTORATION

In November of 2016, several devastating forest fires raged across the Nantahala National Forest, closing 75 miles of the A.T. between Dicks Creek Gap, Georgia and Wesser, North Carolina — i.e. all of the Nantahala Hiking Club's (NHC) A.T. section. In some locations, the A.T. served as an upper fire line with backing fires ignited to burn away from the A.T. and limit the size of the fires and the severity of damage to the Trail. Despite the best efforts of the heroic fire fighters, who were able to protect all involved A.T. shelters, some sections of the Trail received severe damage: The Jump-Off, near Wesser, Ridgepole Mountain, and Wayah Bald. ¶ At Wayah Bald, just a few feet from the A.T. and Bartram Trail, the Wayah Bald Tower is a treasured and often visited destination by tourists and residents of Macon and surrounding counties. **The Camp Branch**

**fire started near Wayah Creek and roared up the nearly vertical mountain gaining strength as it rose over 2,500 feet in elevation to reach the Wayah Bald Tower with 150-foot flame lengths. Vegetation along the edge of the precipice was essentially vaporized, and the wooden superstructure of the 1930s era Civilian Conservation Corps-built tower was reduced to charcoal in moments.** ¶ As soon as word of the destruction of the iconic tower reached nearby Franklin, North Carolina, citizens began to plan its restoration. When Jeff Johnson, owner of Jeff Johnson Timber Frames (JJTFs) in Franklin returned soon after from a trip, his crew informed him that they wanted to donate their time to replace the superstructure of the Wayah tower. Jeff agreed, and they contacted the Nantahala National Forest (NNF) to offer their services.

Staff of the NNF were thrilled and they agreed upon a plan for the NNF to provide the timber and for JJTFs to design and build the new top of the tower, using rot-resistant bald cypress for the timbers. Over the course of nine months, JJTFs crew worked on nights and weekends to cut the frame. The Ruffed Grouse Society raised funds to buy the expensive stain needed for this special project and members of the NHC chipped in by spending 168 hours applying the stain to the timbers to exacting standards required to equal the craftsmanship of the timber framers. Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service contributed about 20 person days to the project. ¶ The result is a structure lovingly built as if it were a piece of fine furniture, with intricate joinery and each individual timber artistically rendered to a superior level of craftsmanship, and the team effort

embodying the best of the traditional A.T. public-private partnership. A view of the craftsmanship of this project is, alone, worth a trip to Wayah Bald, and the beautiful view from the tower is icing on the cake. ⬆



Clockwise from top: The tower after the fire with roof and superstructure burned off; JJTFs staff cutting the frame in their shop; Timber roof truss being set into place with a crane; The restoration completed with the tower's new roof. 📷 Photos by Morgan Sommerville and Jeff Johnson






A group of hikers is walking along a narrow, rocky trail in a dense forest. The hiker in the foreground is a Black man wearing a dark blue jacket and pants, carrying a large black backpack. Behind him, other hikers are visible, some wearing hats and carrying backpacks. The forest is lush with green trees and foliage, and the air is misty, creating a serene and adventurous atmosphere.

**my<sup>A</sup>story**

**Adventures from the People's Trail**

**SEASON 2 / STAY TOGETHER**  
**myATstory.org**





# OCTOBER/2/1968

## APPALACHIAN TRAIL / AMERICA'S FIRST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL



BY  
AMANDA  
WHELOCK



From inset: President Johnson signs the National Trails System Act in 1968 📷 Photo by Jack Rottier; The A.T. on Max Patch in North Carolina 📷 Photo by Greg "Weathercarrot" Walter



# ON NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

October 2, 1968, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail was born. Not with the nailing of a sign or the tread of a boot, as one may have imagined, but with the stroke of a pen. On a busy day of bill signing engineered to distract or, less cynically, unite the nation during a time of anti-war protests and a hotly contested presidential election, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Trails System Act into law, officially designating the Appalachian Trail as America's first National Scenic Trail.

Of course, the Appalachian Trail had existed on the ground for decades by this point. The Trail had been completed in 1937, just 12 years after the first meeting of what was then the Appalachian Trail Conference, and by 1968, almost 50 "end-to-enders" had hiked all 2,000 miles in one go or several. But its rebirth as the Appalachian National Scenic Trail — a trail codified in federal law as a resource of national significance — was a pivotal moment for those who loved the A.T. as well as for trail enthusiasts across the country. Passage of the National Trails System Act, wrote Benton MacKaye, was "unrivaled by any other single feat in the development of American outdoor recreation." October 2, 1968 marked the start of a new era for the A.T., as well as the creation of a system of trails that today traverses more miles of our countryside than the entire interstate highway system.

## THE A.T. IN ALL PARTS OF AMERICA

In February 1965, President Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress (in a written "special message") with words that ring just as true in 2018 as they did 53 years ago. "More of our people are crowding into cities and being cut off from nature...modern technology, which has



### 1931

In October 1921, regional planner Benton MacKaye went public with his proposal for "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning." With publicity from a New York newspaper columnist (who himself blazed the first specifically A.T. section of trail), he then spent years working his network of trail and government contacts from Washington to Boston.

### 1931

MacKaye and his supporters organize the Appalachian Trail Conference and present more specific plans for a hiking trail.

### 1931

Toward the end of the 1920s, retired Connecticut Judge Arthur Perkins of the Appalachian Mountain Club took over the reins of the ATC from MacKaye after years of relatively little progress beyond linking existing trails and new footpaths in New York. Perkins soon drew the attention of federal admiralty lawyer Myron H. Avery and a small band of Washingtonians who had formed the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) and started blazing the path in West Virginia and northern Virginia. Avery succeeded Perkins as head of the ATC (as well as PATC) and efforts to recruit more volunteer clubs and put the A.T. truly on the ground accelerated.



OCTOBER 2, 1968 MARKED THE START OF A NEW ERA FOR THE A.T., AS WELL AS THE CREATION OF A SYSTEM OF TRAILS THAT TODAY TRAVERSES MORE MILES OF OUR COUNTRYSIDE THAN THE ENTIRE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM.

added much to our lives, can also have a darker side... The air we breathe, our water, our soil, and wildlife are being blighted by the poisons and chemicals, which are the by-products of technology and industry.” To combat this blight, Johnson called upon Congress to undertake a new and creative conservation effort — one that didn’t stop at “a few more parks and playgrounds,” but rather involved the whole of the American public in protecting and restoring the country’s natural beauty. One focus of this effort, Johnson declared, would be a national system of trails developed for those who liked to walk, ride horseback, and bicycle. “We need to copy the great Appalachian Trail in all parts of America,” Johnson said, tasking the Secretary of the Interior with developing recommendations for how to implement such a system.

It’s easy to imagine how the National Trails System could have developed without the influence of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), Trail clubs, and their dedicated volunteer leaders. With the passage of the National Trails System Act, the A.T. became a unit of the National Park System. The federal government could have easily decided to manage the Trail like any other park service unit, relying exclusively on federal staff and resources, and in essence, saying to the volunteers that had built the A.T., “thanks for your hard work — we’ll take it from here.” Our national trails could be managed like any other federal land — no ATC or Pacific Crest Trail Association needed.

But the men and women who had created the A.T. knew how integral volunteers were to the Trail. They were integral to its construction and maintenance, of course, but more



A.T. visionary  
Benton MacKaye  
on the Trail  
Photo  
courtesy ATC



importantly, the passion of those volunteers was integral to the spirit of the Trail itself, and to Johnson’s vision (as well as Lady Bird Johnson’s, who along with her staff was an unheralded driving force behind the vision, the 1965 message, and the 1968 act) for the entire national system of trails — one that involved the American people in protecting and enjoying our beautiful places.

So, after Johnson’s address, the ATC — still, at this point, an organization completely run by volunteers — pulled together a committee to work with the government in crafting the legislation that would create a national system of trails.



1931

Myron H. Avery is elected to the first of seven consecutive terms as the ATC’s chair.

1937

In August 1937, the footpath was complete from Maine to Georgia, and Avery and National Park Service allies were well into a plan for overnight shelters along the 2,000-mile length of it, with some formal measure of federal protection on either side.

1948

In 1948, young WWII veteran Earl Shaffer became the first person to hike the entire length of the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine in one continuous journey.



This committee played a pivotal role in helping Congress understand the importance of volunteers in the A.T.'s creation and management. As such, by the time the National Trails System Act was passed three years later, language was included that gave the ATC a formal seat at the table in managing the Trail. And while this formal partnership is unique to the A.T., the success of this grassroots management structure was obvious. So obvious, in fact, that it continues to underlie the management of all of our National Scenic Trails, and many of our National Historic Trails, through public-private partnerships between land managers and organizations like the Continental Divide Trail Coalition and the Florida Trail Association. Today, in an age of consistently cash-strapped federal land management agencies and a \$12 billion maintenance backlog across our national parks, it is easy to be grateful for the foresight of the A.T.'s leaders, who fought for the inclusion of such non-federal partners in the management of these new national trails.

## THE GROWTH OF THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

When the National Trails System Act was passed, the A.T. and the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) were designated as the first two trails in the system. At the time, the PCT was still far from complete, and over 1,000 miles of the A.T. were still located on either private lands or roads. Through the act, the federal government committed to purchasing the lands necessary to form the A.T. corridor, which meant lots of work in identifying tracts and relocating trail, and it quickly became clear that the ATC could no longer operate on volunteer power alone. Within

less than a month, Lester Holmes was hired as the ATC's first paid employee — a part-time “administrative officer” — and a year later he would become its first executive director.

However, as sometimes happens when working with the federal government, progress was slow. Several other trails had been recommended for study when the National Trails System Act was passed, but no one seemed in any rush to examine their potential routes, let alone add them to the system. The National Park Service was slow to act on the A.T. land acquisition powers that had been authorized by the act; in fact, by 1978, none of the of the NPS lands necessary to protect the A.T. had been acquired. Once more, it was up to volunteers to lead the way. But unlike during the decades leading up to 1968, the A.T.'s volunteer leaders now had a law they could point to when working with land managers to protect the Trail. The A.T. was no longer just any old trail, but rather, one of national significance, and by 1978, momentum was in their corner.

That March, a law commonly referred to as “the A.T. bill” was passed, which essentially forced the park service into action in protecting the A.T. corridor. Later that year, another bill would create the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, stretching over 3,000 miles from Canada to Mexico along the spine of the Rocky Mountains, as well as our first four National Historic Trails — the Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, Lewis and Clark, and Iditarod National Historic Trails. The National Trails System had begun to grow in earnest.

## THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM TODAY

Fast forward to 2018, and the National Trails System has grown to 11 National Scenic Trails and 19 National Historic Trails that together span over 52,000 miles across 49 states (sorry, Indiana). And those numbers don't even begin to include the countless National Recreation Trails, rail trails, and side trails that are also part of the National Trails System, allowing a large number of Americans to enjoy national trails within just a few miles of their homes.

The National Trails System gives Americans the opportunity to experience everything from the historic Pony Express

“WE NEED TO COPY THE GREAT APPALACHIAN TRAIL  
IN ALL PARTS OF AMERICA.”

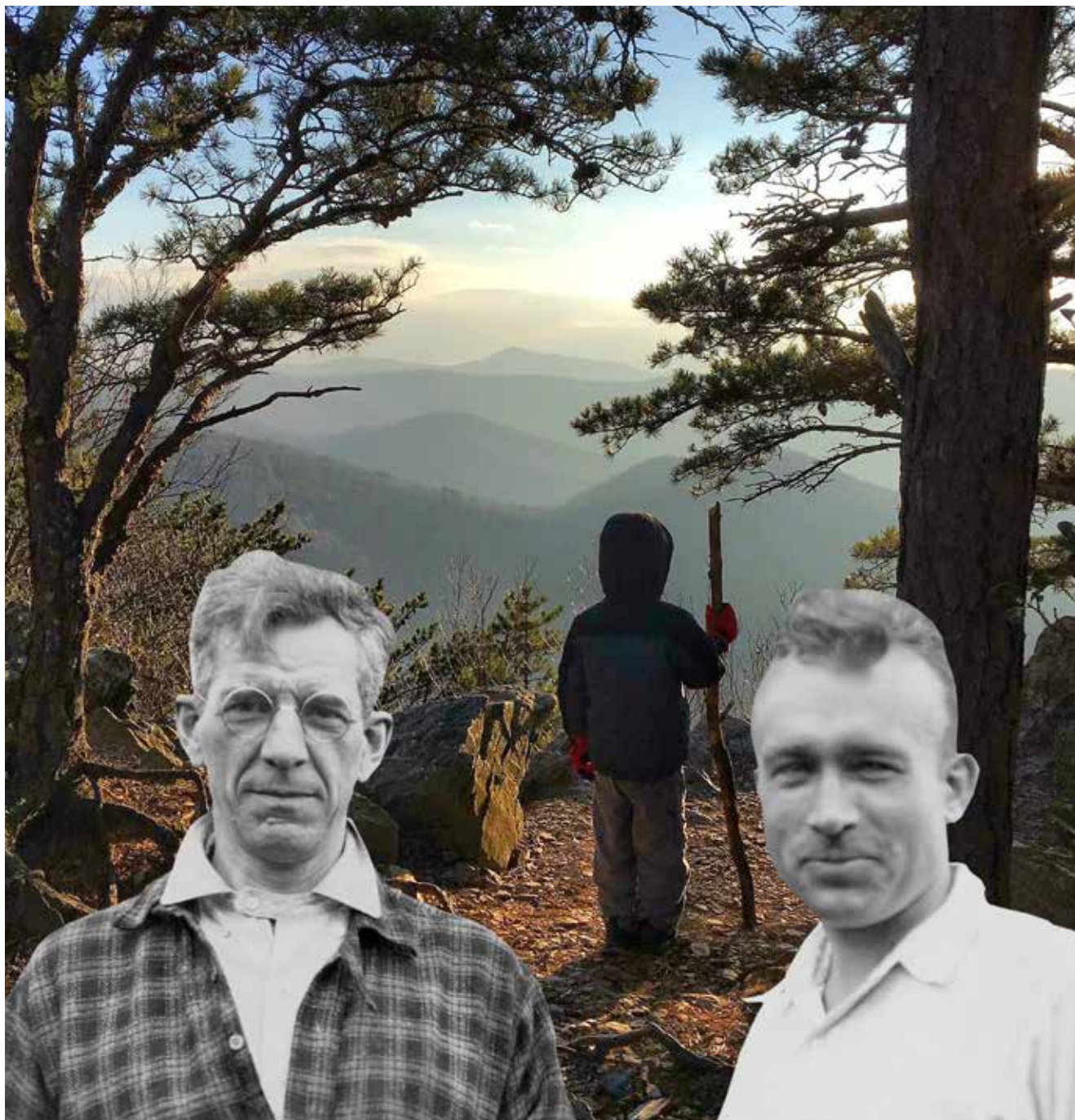
### 1968

A pair of leaders — Murray Stevens of New York and Stanley Murray of Tennessee — followed Avery in the 1950s and 1960s, convinced that only federal ownership of the land on which the footpath twisted could truly protect it for future generations of backpackers, hikers, and birds. Murray, becoming the ATC's chair in 1961, shifted that talk and planning into high gear, building the ATC from 380 members to more than 10,000 while leading a small group working on federal legislation. With little-noticed direction from the office of First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson, the legislation succeeded in 1968, and President Johnson signed into law the National Trails System Act 47 years after MacKaye's original proposal was published. The A.T. became the first national scenic trail.

### 1972

The National Trails System Act called for state and federal purchases of a corridor for the footpath. In preparation for much more closely working with state and federal agencies, the ATC hired its first (and for a while only) employee and moved out of Potomac Appalachian Trail Club headquarters in Washington, D.C., to the close-to-the-Trail town of Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.





## 1984

The National Park Service gives the ATC responsibility for managing the Trail corridor lands.

## 2005

The ATC has never had just one job as the project leader when it came to the protection, promotion, and management of the A.T. However, the accomplishment of the land-acquisition priority and the more elevated responsibilities given to it by the 1968 and 1978 acts, along with unprecedented federal and state agreements under it, called for a repositioning. Years of discussions came to fruition in July 2005 when the leadership changed the ATC's name to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. This name change reflects the priority of preservation of the Trail corridor and its natural and cultural resources, which is essential to enhancing the A.T. experience.



THE DIVERSITY OF LANDSCAPES, COMMUNITIES, AND ECOSYSTEMS SHOWCASED BY OUR NATIONAL TRAILS IS TRULY ASTOUNDING. AND, AS BEFITS A SYSTEM BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP BY VOLUNTEERS, IT IS VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE LED THE WAY IN CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT IN WAYS THAT BOTH HONOR THE PAST AND CELEBRATE THE FUTURE OF THESE TRAILS.

to Revolutionary battles, from the quaint New England countryside to 14,000-foot peaks. The diversity of landscapes, communities, and ecosystems showcased by our national trails is truly astounding. And as befits a system built from the ground up by volunteers, it is volunteers who have led the way in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act in ways that both honor the past and celebrate the future of these trails.

On the A.T., trail-maintaining clubs have hosted a variety of celebrations this year focused on improving the Trail. In North Carolina, the Carolina Mountain Club worked with the ATC, the U.S. Forest Service, REI, and local businesses to perform badly-needed restoration at Max Patch, a beautiful Southern Appalachian bald that sees extraordinary levels of day use due to its iconic views of the Smokies and an easy hike to the top. The A.T. Community of Fontana Dam worked with


the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club, Tennessee Valley Authority, and land managers to “Kill the Dam Invasives.” And in Pawling, New York, the New York-New Jersey Trail Club worked with the local A.T. Community as well as newer A.T. partners like Groundwork Hudson Valley to perform a variety of Trail improvements.

Overall, these events and many others like them have helped raise awareness for A.T. maintaining clubs and the huge job that they have in


maintaining the Trail. These events have also highlighted the value of new, diverse partnerships that will be critical to the A.T. in the decades to come as the Trail community expands and diversifies. Partners like A.T. Communities, local businesses, outdoor retailers such as REI, and other non-profits like Groundwork and the Nature Conservancy have brought new volunteers and fresh ideas to reinvigorate the A.T. as it celebrates such a milestone.

## THE A.T. OF THE FUTURE

As the saying goes, “the only constant in life is change.” Trails are no exception to this rule. Each year, the A.T. is rerouted here or there, a bridge is replaced, a hillside washed out. Each walk one takes on the A.T., or any of our national trails, is different and new. Yet during this 50th anniversary of our National Trails System, I have been reminded of Benton MacKaye’s reflections on the nature of the Trail in 1971 — 50 years after he first planted such an idea into the public consciousness. “The ultimate purpose?” said MacKaye. “There are three things: to walk; to see; to *see* what you see.”


Fifty years isn’t a trivial milestone; for many of us, it was more than a lifetime ago that the Appalachian National Scenic Trail was signed into existence at the White House. The National Trails System has grown and changed significantly since that day, and the social and political fabrics of our nation have changed too. But it is comforting to know that the purpose for such a system, the reason why millions of people visit, enjoy, and care about these trails — really hasn’t changed much at all. Perhaps the best way to celebrate such a special year is to take a walk. See. See what you see. 



Inset: A rare photo of Benton MacKaye and Myron Avery from 1931, several months after Avery was elected Chairman of the ATC; The A.T. in Shenandoah National Park  Photo by Lori Nisius

For more information about the National Trails System Act visit: [trails50.org/the-trails-act](https://trails50.org/the-trails-act)

For more information about the history of the A.T. visit: [appalachiantrail.org/history](https://appalachiantrail.org/history)

 Watch or listen to the podcast celebrating the 50th “Two Sister Trails — one Celebration” at: [appalachiantrail.org/50thPodcast](https://appalachiantrail.org/50thPodcast)



## 2014

The last major stretch of Trail is acquired and permanently protected.

## 2015

The ATC celebrates 90 years of protecting, preserving, and managing the Appalachian Trail.

## 2018

The ATC moves into the future as the “Guardians of the Appalachian Trail”: Educating millions of visitors each year as they explore the natural and cultural wonders of the Trail; ensuring the protection of the A.T.’s surrounding lands and waters — including culturally and historically significant landscapes, threatened and endangered species, and migratory routes; emphasizing recreation-driven economies; and empowering the next generation of A.T. stewards.



## hearts of service

### IT'S NOT A SECRET THAT MILITARY MEN AND WOMEN

have hearts of service. As Jeffrey Huffman, director of Military and Veteran Affairs at University of Central Missouri perfectly sums up, “Anecdotally, when you volunteer to join the military, you automatically have a service heart. You’re literally saying, ‘I’m willing to write a check up to and including my life, for my country.’”

Of course, that willingness to serve something larger than yourself comes with some costs. For example, the National Center for PTSD, part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, estimates that 30 percent of Vietnam veterans have had PTSD in their lifetime, as well as about 20 percent of those who have served in the more recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars. But organizations like VetsWork and Warrior Expeditions are helping veterans transition back into civilian life — with or without a PTSD diagnosis — and find a new way to serve and protect our country and its precious resources like the Appalachian Trail.

Nature certainly gives back more than just providing a similar sense of giving and serving that is part of veterans’ DNA. In fact, *The Atlantic* magazine recently reported that “nature-as-medical-treatment is catching on. ‘Ecotherapy’ is a burgeoning field, and some doctors even write prescriptions for time spent in parks.” The term “forest bathing” has also entered our vernacular, something practiced by the Japanese frequently for “simply being in nature, connecting with it through our senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch...by opening our senses, it bridges the gap between us and the natural world,” explains Dr. Qing Li, author of *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*.

To tap into the healing power of nature, many veterans have opted to follow in the footsteps of Earl Shaffer, a World War II vet who famously said, “I’m going to walk off the war” before becoming the first person to hike the entire Appalachian Trail. Yet, many veterans step up to do much more than just hike the Trail; they now serve their country in a new way by volunteering to maintain and protect this amazing resource. Some monitor swaths of the Trail, while others join clean-up clubs and crews up and down the Trail’s 2,190 miles. And if Mr. Huffman gets his way, there’ll



From left: UCM-Konnarock volunteers Fredy Velasquez, Jasmine Walker, and Rui Carvalho help to carry rock for stone step construction at the Big Butt to Jerry Cabin tread rehab project





BY SHAWNDRU RUSSELL

be university veterans' departments at colleges across the country replicating the success he's had in three years of signing up veteran students to serve on the Konnarock Trail Crew, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) flagship Trail Crew program that started in 1983 near Damascus, Virginia.

"Often times, you'll talk to someone who is a college graduate, and they'll say 'college was the best days of my life,' but military-connected students don't say that... I wanted to change that for my students — whose purpose is to give them one experience in college that they'll reflect on," Huffman explains. His approach certainly made a difference in Elizabeth Crawford's life. An Air Force reservist, Crawford was one of the volunteers on Huffman's first UCM Konnarock crew in 2016. But she wasn't too keen on the idea when Huffman first approached her. "I'm not an outdoorsy kind of girl!" she exclaims. "I had never been camping in my life, let alone camping for a week in the middle of the mountains with a group of burly ex-military men. [But] I made lifelong friends. I shared some really great experiences, laughs, cries, and made some amazing memories with some wonderful people." Today, she and her "Trail buddy" — a.k.a. "the two slowest hikers up the mountain every day," Elizabeth says — have become even closer friends. "We've been there for each other through some really wonderful (and really tough) moments in each other's lives. I never would have had that friendship if it weren't for the A.T." The Trail also impacted Elizabeth's choice for graduate school, Appalachian State, and inspired her to plan her own long trek on the Trail.

Huffman's approach helps forge strong bonds between the crews, and they have a reunion campout every year and invite all the volunteers from each year to come back and reflect on their Konnarock experience. "Every person that's ever been has commented on how it's changed their life," Huffman says proudly. However, the experience is about more than just making memories and making new friends. Huffman has teamed up with fellow UCM professor Christopher Stockdale to create "a service learning in-a-box" approach. "It doesn't necessarily have to be on the Konnarock Trail Crew scale," Huffman says.

In fact, Huffman is starting up weekend trips to help with the Ozark trail so that more students can experience the benefits of what he describes as "teaching the value of service and the value of the life-changing components of serving others over time." To drive





From top: (back row from left) Konnarock Crew leader Justin Farrell with UCM volunteers Ian Powers, Galen Livingston, Jeff Huffman (UCM's director of Military and Veteran affairs), Michael Carle, (front row from left) Christopher Stockdale, Elizabeth Crawford, Kaitlyn Lowe at the Standing Indian tread rehab project in North Carolina; (front row from left) UCM volunteers Jazmine Walker, Kalya Hayden (second row) Jacob Angevine, Jeff Huffman, Ben Boyd, Josh Reynolds (Konnarock staff), (back row) Jerry Kyle (Konnarock staff), Fredy Velasquez, and Tyrone Ritter at the Big Butt to Jerry Cabin rehab project



this mission home, Huffman requires his crews to participate in a nightly reflection and complete six 90-minute sessions before the trip to educate them about the difference between service and service learning.

The other big result Huffman has noted is that the trips “help address some of the issues related to PTSD and relating to military transition into the civilian world.” As an experiment this year, Huffman invited 10 military-connected students and 10 non-military to help break

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down cultural stereotypes and said the result was “phenomenal. It was amazing to hear the traditional students talking about the military folks and their appreciation for them now. Several of the non-military students come hang out in our center now; that never happened before.” Going forward, they will continue to create a mix of crews while offering some military-only volunteer opportunities, as well.

Josh Kloehn, resource manager for the ATC, is certainly grateful for Huffman’s efforts and those of his rotating cast of student veterans that come out for a week of work each year with the Konnarock Trail Crew, or K-Rock crew. “After a few years of him bringing 10 volunteers and it being wildly successful, I had no hesitation that they’d be able to fill 20 spots with energetic, hard-working, and dedicated UCM volunteers,” Kloehn explains. He attributes part of the success with the preparation that Huffman and his colleague Chris Stockdale give to the volunteers, but points out that “for the UCM groups, it’s not just working hard out in the woods, it’s applying the hard work, living together for several days out in the woods, working closely as a team — this intense Trail crew experience echoes some of their military experience.”

Joseph Phillips, retired U.S. Army soldier and Military Attaché for arms control issues at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, agrees that his military service and volunteer work for the Maine A.T. Club share similarities. “Both are services for a worthy cause to the benefit of society as a



whole, and the quality of service rendered in both cases is largely dependent on the individual,” he says. Philips monitors a 10-mile boundary in Maine (quite the undertaking) and his interest in the A.T. started when he was young after an older cousin thru-hiked many years ago. “I’ve wanted to thru-hike since then, but life hasn’t allowed me the opportunity yet. This seemed like a way to get a little more familiar with the Trail and the communities surrounding it,” he explains.

For former helicopter pilot Patty Pender, volunteering for the past 14 years on the Konnarock Trail Crew has created many special memories: “I love the camaraderie and meeting such interesting people. The staff and crew leaders make the experience worth coming back for year after year.” Now, as a Physical Education teacher, she regularly teaches her students the importance of serving. “It broadens their knowledge of themselves and the world. It forces you to be less self-centered,” she adds. And like serving in the military, Pender says her volunteer work on the A.T. allows her to fulfill her desire to “do something for the betterment of others.”

Being part of something bigger is a common theme that emerges from talking with vets who’ve volunteered on the A.T. “Lots of folks worked hard over the decades to make the Trail so great. I respect that,” explains Travis Stanley, who volunteered with the Mount Rogers A.T. Club after his VetsWork internship ended at Mount Adams Institute. His experience led him to study parks tourism and recreation management at the University of Montana with a minor in nonprofit administration. He might even come back to southwestern Virginia post-graduation to “improve the economy with a sustainable business related to adventure tourism.” Now, he continues to give back to the environment as part of the Montana Conservation Corps.

Clearly, the A.T. has enchanted many veterans, including retired Navy Supply Corps officer Ned Kuhns who has volunteered with the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club (TATC) in Norfolk, Virginia for 27 years. “By being a member of TATC, I have gained many interesting and talented friends with whom to share outdoor recreational experiences, such as hiking, backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, cycling as well as social gatherings. Military veterans have much to offer organizations and have much to gain personally by volunteering to take on leadership positions in the ATC clubs



and regional organizations,” he advises. And after 12 years of volunteering on the Trail, Kuhns got to mark something else off his bucket list: completing his A.T. thru-hike. “Seeing all the state sections of the A.T. and wanting to ‘give something back’ just reinforced my desire to continue contributing as a volunteer with TATC,” he says.

Kuhns explains that his experience as a Navy Supply Corps officer helped during his time as president of TATC as he could “share my leadership and technical knowledge to other TATC members to hopefully make the club a better organization.” He points out that both the military and the A.T. rely on volunteers who want to protect our wonderful country and its resources, so “joining ATC after military service is a natural way to continue serving for the public good.” Lamar Powell, a member of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and U.S. Army veteran, couldn’t agree more. “There is a ‘mission



Clockwise from top: UCM volunteers Kelsey Smith, Katherine Kavouras, and Patty Pender show off their newly constructed rock steps on the Brown Fork Gap relocation project in North Carolina; Konnarock Crew sets up camp for the North Carolina/Tennessee Big Butt to Jerry Cabin tread rehab project; UCM volunteers prep for dinner at camp (from left) Kayla Hayden, Ben Boyd, and Tyrone Ritter

first' mentality in the military, and I think this is common among maintainers," he says, adding, "Belonging to a Trail crew is to belong to something far, far greater than one's own self."

The history of the Trail also keeps Powell motivated to continue volunteering into his 70s. "I know of certain sections of the A.T. that are some of the original pathway. Earl Shaffer and Dorothy Laker, Myron Avery, and Grandma Gatewood all passed over those very places. I have stood there and mused, 'I am here, this place is here because others have gone before me.' I owe a debt to hikers I have never known," he shares. But really, his continued volunteerism stems from one simple reality: "It's just fun to be on a crew. Banter is fun, so is achievement and making new friends."

Powell's pride for the Trail is evident, too. "The ATC and other organizations and agencies have invested great effort in devising techniques and practices that are now yielding a trail that is the standard for the rest of the world. This is no exaggeration. In the 22 years that I've been involved, I've had the pleasure of serving with others from 31 of our states and 14 other countries. I've served with folks from Israel, Spain, and Taiwan who were sent by their governments to learn 'trail' [maintenance] from the ATC crews," he explains. This gold standard has earned the A.T. status as one of the world's best thru-hikes with *Popular Mechanics* magazine saying earlier this year that it "may be the best long-distance hiking route in the entire world." The ATC's program director for volunteer relations Leanna Joyner explains that volunteerism is a key to the Trail's success. "I think about the altruism of both military service to the cause of something bigger and the service of those who care for the A.T. — this really big idea that happens only because people step up to make it happen and dedicate themselves to it," she says. "The sense of community that people gain from hiking on the Trail or volunteering for the common cause is equally important. There's also the sense of satisfaction of a job well done and producing something meaningful that leaves a legacy."

Sean Gobin, founder and executive director of Warrior Expeditions, adds more appreciation for the ATC as their partnership led to his organization's first trip in 2013. Gobin actually thru-hiked the A.T. immediately after completing his 12 years as a Marine and got the idea to start these outdoor expeditions for veterans during his 4.5-month trek. "The Marines didn't have a transition program in place, and we were quickly rushed through the process — really it was just a powerpoint — so I checked out of base, grabbed some gear, and drove straight to Springer Mountain. While on it, I started to realize

that it was a very powerful, therapeutic experience," Gobin says.

And although he didn't know about Shaffer before his hike, he quickly learned about him upon his return after speaking with some of Warrior Expeditions' now board members. "They wanted to be part of our programs to honor Earl," and Shaffer's story sits proudly on the nonprofit's homepage. Today, Warrior Expeditions has grown into 10 different expeditions: eight long-distance hiking experiences, a long-distance bike ride along the TransAmerica Trail, and a paddling trip down the Mississippi River.

**"I think about the altruism of both military service to the cause of something bigger and the service of those who care for the A.T. — this really big idea that happens only because people step up to make it happen and dedicate themselves to it."**

Gobin obviously struck on a growing need, and their good work earned Warrior Expeditions the CNN Hero Award in 2015, which helped increase interest in their programs. "It really got the word out to a lot of vets who need the opportunity to find peace and healing in nature," he says. Yet, the most important reward for Gobin and his team is seeing embattled veterans struggling with cynical views, depression, or thoughts of suicide, regaining their trust in humanity. "As a vet, you're witnessing the worst that humanity has to offer. You have to break that cycle, so the community support we have along the trails reinforces that people are inherently good." These veteran volunteers sure are, and we owe them continued gratitude for everything they've given for our country and for how they continue to give. 🌱

For more information or to join a Trail Crew visit:  
[appalachiantrail.org/crews](http://appalachiantrail.org/crews)

Visit the Appalachian Trail Veteran Association Facebook group, led by Jonathan Quigley, to connect with veterans across the Trail at: [facebook.com/groups/ATforVets](https://facebook.com/groups/ATforVets)





# CHEERS TO 50 YEARS

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that future generations be able to  
share the same inspiration we  
have been so fortunate to know.

*Ken Grossman - President and Founder of  
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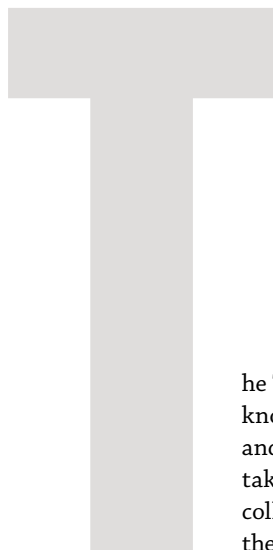
# TRAIL COMMUNITIES AS STEWARDS

BY LYNN DAVIS

## GEO.TOUR.ISM

Is best described as sustaining or enhancing “the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.”





The Towns of Dover and Pawling, New York, know they have a good thing going: travel and tourism thrive. But now the towns are taking things to the next level, working in collaboration with partners in and around the Harlem Valley — in partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) — to design and build a dynamic new “geotourism” initiative.

Already, thousands of visitors make their way from the urban pace of New York City and Philadelphia to the serenity of the bucolic countryside, the wooded foothills of the Berkshires, and the horse farms in the Hudson Valley. On weekends and holidays, Metro-North Railroad’s Harlem Line transports New York City residents directly to the Appalachian Trail in just over two hours. It is the only rail stop located directly on the Trail, and the “station” — as local community leaders call it — is complete with posted hiking information for visitors. The area promotes a mix of outdoor recreation, arts, and culture.

In Pawling, visitors connect with guides at the Anglers Den to fly fish the “Ten Mile River” and gear up at Pawling Cycle and Sport to ride the backcountry roads of the Harlem Valley. Or enjoy a farm-to-table menu at McKinney and Doyle after scouting the local book store and art galleries. In Dover Plains, travelers walk along a maple-shaded path to the “Dover Stone church,” a cavern with angular shapes like cathedral windows carved by a 30-foot waterfall, spend hours at the beloved Lucky Orphans Horse Rescue, and drop by the fifth-generation

Brookby Farm and Dairy for raw milk and fresh cheese. In Millerton, hikers and cyclists enjoy a restored rail trail — and visitors cozy up at the Harney & Sons tea room to sample exotic blends. After a long day, the intensity of stars wows night sky lovers.

“Dover and Pawling, and their sister townships have grown in popularity and have been sustained by tourists — by people searching for something different from city life,”

says Stancy DuHamel, an ardent advocate for the area. “But that’s not enough — not for the long-term. It’s not enough to attract travelers to the area to build and bolster tourism revenues,” continues DuHamel. “We want to make certain that we’re not giving up our soul to appeal to visitors, and that we’re giving people who travel to Harlem Valley opportunities to connect with our special places.”

## ECOTOURISM & GEOTOURISM

Ecotourism is often defined as low-impact travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas with a focus on natural resources, conservation, and sustainability. Geotourism is best described as sustaining or enhancing “the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.” Both are nuanced descriptions, according to James Dion. Geotourism embraces all the principles and adds a driving element — maintaining the integrity of a community. “It’s not about changing the place to meet the interests of developers and outside visitors,” says Dion. “It is how to optimally and authentically represent our community.”

Dion has worked on geotourism initiatives around the world as an executive of the National Geographic Society. In the U.S., Dion launched more than two-dozen geotourism campaigns including the well-established Crown of the Continent initiative along the U.S. and Canadian border near Glacier National Park, which many consider a premier model for linking conservation and community development. In the Greater Yellowstone region, another western geotourism example Dion points to, is how Driggs, Idaho distinguished itself from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Both towns are in the shadow of the Grand Tetons — Jackson Hole is east of the Teton range and Driggs is on the western slopes.

Driggs, which now claims the first-ever geotourism visitor center, assessed the town’s assets and juxtaposed its old-time drug store and soda fountain with new health food stores and outdoor gear shops, developed seasonal travel itineraries, and examined how visitors interact with the town. “They didn’t try to create Jackson Hole-like amenities. They did what was true to them and now they’re reaping great benefits,” Dion says. Dion endorses the ATC’s commitment to enhance community identities and build stewardship. “The Appalachian Trail is a perfect place for geotourism,” Dion says. “Each community has a unique character that offers all sorts of identity-building possibilities. And the Trail, collectively, is important as a natural and cultural resource.”

## A.T. COMMUNITIES & GEOTOURISM

Last June, the ATC announced four ground-breaking geotourism pilot programs, beginning in 2018 and extending through 2019. In addition to selecting the Pawling and Dover area in New York, the other selected areas include communities near Delaware Water Gap in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, West Virginia. The geotourism initiative supports a successful ATC Community program.

In 2010, the ATC established its first official A.T. Community with the over-arching goal of building partnerships with Trail towns. Partnerships raise awareness of the Trail as an asset to residents, support planning and initiatives for growing



View from the A.T.  
over the Harlem  
Valley Photo by  
Julian Diamond

# “... Speaking up on behalf of open space is important now and will be increasingly essential to preserving the Appalachian Trail.”

outdoor recreation economies, and build connections and dialogue with land managers and community leaders. To date, 47 communities have completed an application process and rigorous review. Designation requires the creation of an advisory committee, A.T.-related events, and volunteer projects; and a commitment to consider the Trail in community land-use plans, ordinances, and guidelines.

“In 2006, we started a pilot program in two communities to gauge interest and needs and discovered that each community has unique opportunities and challenges,” says the ATC’s director of education and outreach Julie Judkins. “The application and designation process allows communities to

“Outdoor REC Act,” which recognizes the outdoor recreation economy as part of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product, directing the Department of Commerce to assess and certify the outdoor industry’s contributions to the national economy.

Dixon frequently refers to the “win-win” of working with Trail Communities and says that the added geotourism initiative is an important tool for community-driven engagement. She anticipates that each pilot community will address what works and what can be improved. “We expect new concepts and new ways of getting the ‘locals’ excited about hospitality,” she says.

Each pilot program examines how the Appalachian Trail and the town relate to each other, and outlines prevalent



build a diverse group of leaders to assess possibilities, needs, and establish a dialogue with Trail management partners.” Many A.T. Communities identify a need to increase hiker services and awareness of access to trailheads and recreation. This year, the ATC organized three regional summits for A.T. Community representatives to share their successes in attracting visitors to their respective Trail towns and their impact on building awareness and stewardship regarding the Trail and other nearby natural resources.

“Trail towns, whether they are big or small, are key to the sustainable future of the Appalachian Trail,” says the ATC’s president and CEO Suzanne Dixon. The ATC’s ramped-up community initiative coincides with increasing attention on the economic importance of the outdoor industry economy. Outdoor recreation generates \$887 billion in consumer spending each year and 7.6 million jobs throughout the United States, according to a recent report released by the Outdoor Industry Association.

Two years ago, Congress unanimously passed the bipartisan



On weekends and holidays, Metro-North Railroad’s Harlem Line transports New York City residents directly to the Appalachian Trail and is the only rail stop located directly on the Trail.

perceptions, both positive and negative. Already, research has documented low awareness of recreational options among visitors and local residents alike. Research also has uncovered gaps in visitor and transportation services and skepticism in the Trail town’s overall potential. “We anticipate that baseline data will provide a roadmap for improvement and a gauge of success,” says Dixon. She adds that there are additional benefits. “Nationwide, retirees and entrepreneurs are relocating near national parks, national forests, and wildlife refuges. People move to the places where their backyard is feder-

ally protected. And people stay in places where they feel connected. When communities recognize the value of public lands in their backyards, they are building the foundation of stewardship,” Dixon says. “The A.T. is increasingly in need of advocates and strong stewards, particularly as the population in the eastern United States grows. Speaking up on behalf of open space is important now and will be increasingly essential to preserving the Appalachian Trail.” ▲



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LITTLE STONY MAN CLIFFS PHOTO BY CHRIS D'AMBROSIO

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# ADVENTURE *blooms*

APPALACHIAN TRAIL COMMUNITIES™ / *Roan Mountain, Tennessee*



Heading northeast on Roan Mountain from Carver's Gap, the A.T. passes over a number of spectacular views including the Round, Jane and Grassy Ridge balds

## **THERE ARE FEW PLACES THAT RIVAL THE BEAUTY OF ROAN MOUNTAIN, TENNESSEE.**

Likewise, there are fewer places that have the same level of dedication this official A.T. Community has for serving its visitors and stewarding its land. Located in southeastern Carter County, the town shares a name with the mountain that the A.T. crosses, just south of town. At 6,285 feet, Roan is the highest point in Tennessee outside of Clingmans Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains. This section of the A.T. is home to the Roan High Knob Shelter, which sits at a higher elevation than any other on the Trail.

Just down the road from the Trail, Roan Mountain State Park, which offers 2,000 acres of wildlife and wildflowers, is the gateway to the Roan Highlands. The park has 12 miles of hiking trails ranging from beginner to expert, offers educational programs, maintains areas to fish and swim in the Doe River, and keeps their cabins, RV sites and tent sites full for months. Spring brings wildflowers and trout fishing while summer means rhododendrons in bloom and swimming at the pool. The bright colors of autumn provide a lovely backdrop for the park's special events, hiking, and a visit to Jarrett's Orchard and the Miller Farmstead. In winter, Roan Mountain transforms into a spectacular ice and snowscape and provides opportunities for cross-country skiing.

With great adventures comes an empty stomach, and the variety of restaurants in Roan Mountain will not disappoint. In recent years, new restaurants like Puerto Nuevo have opened. There's also Smoky Mountain Bakers, Bob's Dairyland, and Highlander Barbecue. And



**BY ALLYSUN SOLOMON**

*We are the Guardians of the Appalachian Trail*





there is a great pub in town called The Station at 19E.

Roan Mountain also offers a variety of accommodations for travelers. There's the campground with RV sites at the state park as well as hostels and bed and breakfast establishments for people with a more domestic preference. Roan Mountain Bed and Breakfast and Mountain Harbour Bed and Breakfast and Hiker Hostel are two veteran accommodations with long-standing reputations among hikers. Every option for accommodation feels like home and most are expanding to cater to the needs of those who enjoy hiking the Appalachian Trail. A newcomer to the accommodation scene is Doe River's Hiker Rest.

But you don't need to like hiking to enjoy all that this area has to offer. Fish, sail, kayak, and white-water raft; or just relax and enjoy the surroundings and welcoming vibe of what is often referred to as "Tennessee's Mountain Playground."



### What to See and Do in and around Roan Mountain

- Rest and relax at Mountain Harbour Bed and Breakfast, which also offers hostel beds, tenting, and even a unique and cozy treehouse (complete with queen size bed) that makes for a perfect romantic getaway.
- The Doe River Hiker Rest is a nine-bunk hiker hostel with a small working farm on site that provides farm fresh



Clockwise from top: The South Holston River is internationally known for trout fishing; Carver's Gap links Tennessee and North Carolina along the A.T.; the Nolichucky River is perfect for kayaking and rafting; Tannery Knobs Park in Johnson City covers 40 acres of mountain trails and amazing views; Wilbur Lake is surrounded by the Cherokee National Forest and is flanked by the Appalachian Mountains

eggs for breakfast, bikes for rent, and has a well-equipped kitchen.

■ Grab an ice-cold brew at The Station at 19E — Roan Mountain's only craft beer pub, which also accompanies a hostel. The hostel is owned by Doe River Hiker Rest and because it is located off the trailhead, this stop is a mixing point for the local community and travelers.

■ Stay at the Roan Mountain Bed and Breakfast. This cozy bed and breakfast is hosted by Steve and Ann Campbell, both of whom are retired from the local school system and love to share their knowledge of the area to create a memorable vacation.

■ Fish, camp, stay at a cabin, swim, and relax at Roan Mountain State Park. The park hosts several seasonal events including a summer concert series.

■ Enjoy a tasty meal and reminisce at Bob's Dairyland, one of the oldest restaurants in Carter County. It was opened in 1956 and is frequently visited by travelers who remember the establishment from their childhood.

■ Treat yourself to something savory at Smoky Mountain Bakers, which offers more than just fresh bread. Locals rave about the brick oven pizza and breakfast specials, all cooked up by award-winning bakers Tim and Crystal Decker.

■ Take in the lofty beauty of the Roan Highlands section of the Appalachian Trail that passes through Carver's Gap, the Roan Balds, and the largest stand of Catawba Rhododendron in the world — with an elevation that reaches above 6,000 feet. ⬆

For more information visit:

[appalachiantrail.org/roanmountain](http://appalachiantrail.org/roanmountain)

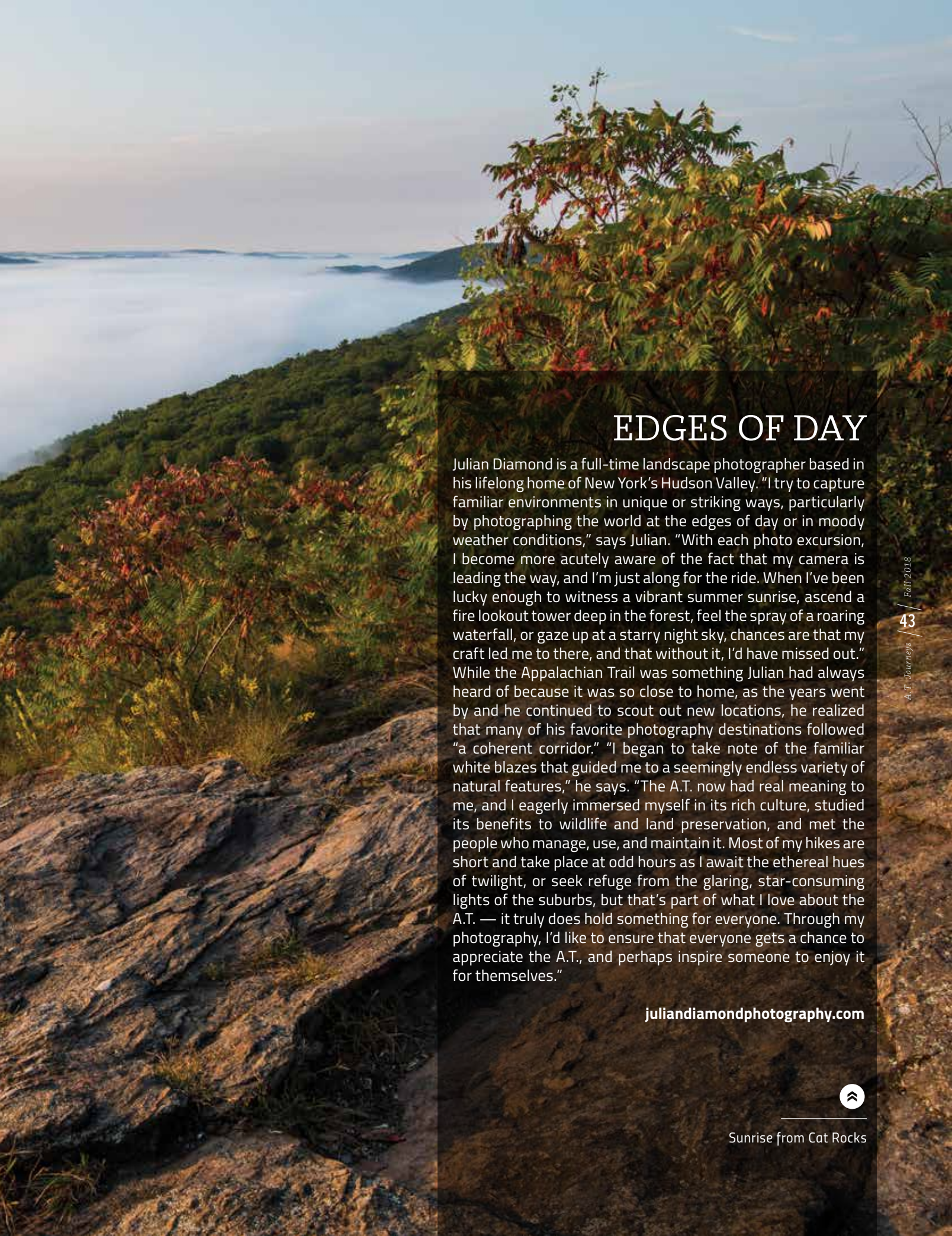


All photos courtesy  
Northeast Tennessee  
Tourism Association









## EDGES OF DAY

Julian Diamond is a full-time landscape photographer based in his lifelong home of New York's Hudson Valley. "I try to capture familiar environments in unique or striking ways, particularly by photographing the world at the edges of day or in moody weather conditions," says Julian. "With each photo excursion, I become more acutely aware of the fact that my camera is leading the way, and I'm just along for the ride. When I've been lucky enough to witness a vibrant summer sunrise, ascend a fire lookout tower deep in the forest, feel the spray of a roaring waterfall, or gaze up at a starry night sky, chances are that my craft led me to there, and that without it, I'd have missed out." While the Appalachian Trail was something Julian had always heard of because it was so close to home, as the years went by and he continued to scout out new locations, he realized that many of his favorite photography destinations followed "a coherent corridor." "I began to take note of the familiar white blazes that guided me to a seemingly endless variety of natural features," he says. "The A.T. now had real meaning to me, and I eagerly immersed myself in its rich culture, studied its benefits to wildlife and land preservation, and met the people who manage, use, and maintain it. Most of my hikes are short and take place at odd hours as I await the ethereal hues of twilight, or seek refuge from the glaring, star-consuming lights of the suburbs, but that's part of what I love about the A.T. — it truly does hold something for everyone. Through my photography, I'd like to ensure that everyone gets a chance to appreciate the A.T., and perhaps inspire someone to enjoy it for themselves."

[juliandiamondphotography.com](http://juliandiamondphotography.com)



Sunrise from Cat Rocks









Early sunrise, Lake Tiorati







Dusk — looking at the Trail  
from Canopus Lake



## PETER AND SALLY PARSONSON

# A Beautiful Balance

By Beth Griffin

### IN 1998, FULLY SIX YEARS BEFORE

Peter Parsonson retired from his position as professor of engineering at Georgia Tech, he sent a letter to the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC) to inquire about becoming involved on the Trail with the club. The letter Peter received in response, and which Peter has never forgotten, told of the depths of pleasure Trail maintainers derive from their work. The letter writer spoke of the *esprit de corps* when working as part of a crew on bigger projects, as well as the satisfaction of looking after one's own, "Trail section," often alone.

For the next six years, Peter dreamed of working on the Trail while he wound down his teaching responsibilities. Finally, in 2004, the dream was fulfilled, and Peter, with two others, took on responsibility for the south face of Blood Mountain, including the installation and maintenance of the privy there. In 2010,

when his wife Sally retired, they took on the maintenance of the north face of Blood Mountain, which is heavily used by day hikers.

While they share a love for the Trail and surrounding lands, they bring very different perspectives to the work. Sally, a lover of poetry and literature with a Ph.D. in English, has made it her business to know the tree, plant, and bird species found in North Georgia and has shared her knowledge by giving talks about local wildlife to area groups. Peter's approach is rooted in his training as an engineer. He likes to move rocks around, devise better ways of doing things, and cherishes his antique cross-cut saw and the "old-timey" forestry methods employed in wilderness areas.

The couple are world travelers and hikers — and have trekked in many countries including China, England, Spain, and Venezuela. Peter grew up in Massachusetts and hiked in the mountains of New England as a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He spent his early career in South America where he continued exploring. Sally was born in the flatlands near Memphis, Tennessee but spent summers with family in Colorado where she got the "nature bug."

Rooted in their deep commitment to the Trail through volunteerism, the Parsonsons are also generous financial supporters of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). They are particularly focused on encouraging new volunteers and introducing newcomers to nature by supporting the ATC's education and outreach efforts such as: Teacher Summits — training hundreds of teachers, Trail-wide, to use the A.T. as a place-based learning center; the ATC's partnership with Georgia Mountains Children Forest Network; and the ATC's Trail crews. Their energy, combined talents, beautifully balanced perspectives, and immense generosity are a true gift to the Appalachian Trail. 🌱



Peter and Sally (with Peter's cross-cut saw) on the section of Trail they maintain on Blood Mountain



## BEAR CANISTERS AND BLACK BEAR AWARENESS

Due to an increasing number of serious human/bear interactions at many locations along the A.T., the Appalachian Trail Conservancy continues to strongly recommend use of a bear canister by anyone staying overnight on the A.T.

[appalachiantrail.org/bears](http://appalachiantrail.org/bears)



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Photo by Steven Yocom  
**APPALACHIAN TRAIL**  
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# Pivotal Path

Contemplation on big life transitions  
and sweet simplicity

By Niki DiGaetano



**THREE MILES INTO AN 80-MILE HIKE** through Massachusetts, I lost my map. Dumbfounded, I sat on a gravel road in the middle of a field, taking a break after those mighty three miles I'd walked past my starting point at Shay's Rebellion. Tired already, there was no way I was going to go back to search for the map. For a few long minutes, anxiety threatened to swamp me like a tide; I didn't have the names of the shelters where I was stopping written anywhere but on the map, nor I did I have a way to measure mileage or the elevation profile. I did have a guidebook, which at least contained some of the aforementioned information. Berating myself, I stood and continued walking, resigned to my mapless fate. Surely this was a practical joke: me, ever goal-oriented, always wanting to know what was coming next,

being forced to continue without any indication of what lay ahead.

Like many things recently, walking onto the Trail seemed surreal. I'd just graduated college, signed on for a full-time job, and completed a cross-country road trip, all in the span of a month. Now I proposed to walk 80 miles on the Appalachian Trail, hoping a week-long stroll would help me refocus and think. But I underestimated the difficulty and should have known better. After all, what part of the Appalachian Trail is in any way, "an easy stroll?" Many such portions *do* exist of course, but not for 80 consecutive miles through the Berkshire Mountains.

After the map incident, the next few miles were through deceptively easy, flat fields, where I came across a miracle: a hiker approached and asked if I'd lost a map. After returning it, he asked my Trail



From top: The perfect stop for lunch overlooking the Cheshire Reservoir; Sunny fields and a gradual climb made for an easy start to the hike up Mount Greylock

name. On impulse, I committed to the name I'd been toying with for several days: "80." Originally, this hike was to be a hundred miles, but I'd shortened it due to spending the previous week in upstate New York, supporting a friend through a death in the family. I've always been goal-driven, so giving up the hundred was a big deal. I picked 80 to remind myself of the twenty miles I'd cut off, that sometimes, priorities can shift, and that's okay.



Through the duration of my hike, I went through the typical aches and pains of my body adjusting to the demanding physical toll I was asking of it. I could have saved myself even more pain by using hiking poles, but I didn't pick those up until my fifth day, when my knees were screaming. I also went through something in the first few days that surprised me: I missed my family and friends with a fierce longing; something I'd also underestimated. This was eased somewhat by the hikers I met along the way, people I camped with, and who swapped stories, advice, and good laughs over meals and campfires. The kindness, company, and conversation with these authentic people rejuvenated my body and spirit each night at camp. Whenever I would share a meal with fellow hikers, it felt like being a part of something bigger than myself, something gentler and slower than the rest of society, which seems to move at a hundred miles an hour. I wondered if perhaps there was more truth to the phrase, "happiness is only real when shared," after all. Perhaps it wasn't an all-encompassing maxim — time alone is still good and

tion and sadness in equal measure. While I did still feel an extreme drive and determination that propelled me up the rest of Greylock, the determination wasn't stressful. I lapsed into "hiker's pace" when I was able to, but cursed the north face of Greylock and its three unrelenting miles of steep downhill switchbacks. Before I reached the Vermont border, I climbed the steepest stretch of terrain I'd



Niki at the top of Mount Greylock just before her decent down the other side of the mountain



I was elated to have reached the border, to have reached my goal, to be going to a warm hotel that night, to come at last to the end of so many things, arriving at the beginning of many others.

necessary — but it was something monumental that I took with me.

On my second-to-last night on the Trail, three-quarters of the way up Mount Greylock, I contemplated making tomorrow my last day. If I did, it would mean a nineteen-mile day, but it would save me from rising early the following morning and hiking an additional three hours to catch a bus to Williamstown in time for my father's birthday dinner. Early the next morning, something in me said "go." I knew with certainty that I wanted to complete my hike a day early. I thought it would be momentous, that I'd approach the border with mixed emotions — elation

encountered on the Trail, and the most challenging, despite not even being a half mile. When the sign for Vermont and the Long Trail appeared, it felt surreal. I touched it, read the words welcoming hikers to the Long Trail, and plopped onto a rock for a celebratory bag of peanut M&Ms. I floated on an adrenaline rush back to the side trail, Pine Cobble, that I would take back to Williamstown. I was elated to have reached the border, to have reached my goal, to be going to a warm hotel that night, to come at last to the end of so many things, arriving at the beginning of many others.

When I reached the road, I looked up

the closest lodging, the Maple Inn Motel, and was relieved to hear they had a room, despite the mile and a half walk into town. All told, I did 19-and-a-half miles my final day. Not a big deal to thru-hikers by any means, but a big deal and a milestone to me. If I was this ecstatic, I wondered what my fellow hikers would experience when they summited Katahdin. I wondered what it would be like to have done the whole Appalachian Trail, to experience all that I had in seven short days over the period of six months. I had already been given so much: the gift of the Trail community, the enhanced joy of genuine interaction, and the slowed-down pace of covering ground at two miles per hour. Even though my body was beaten up — mostly due to my own stupidity — my mind was refreshed. Plus, my "Trail legs" and my hard-won endurance are still with me. It was only seven days and 80 miles, but it was enough time on the Trail to solidify my understanding of the profundity of things that are so easy to take for granted: people who love you, time, and of course, warm meals and the comforts of home. 🌲

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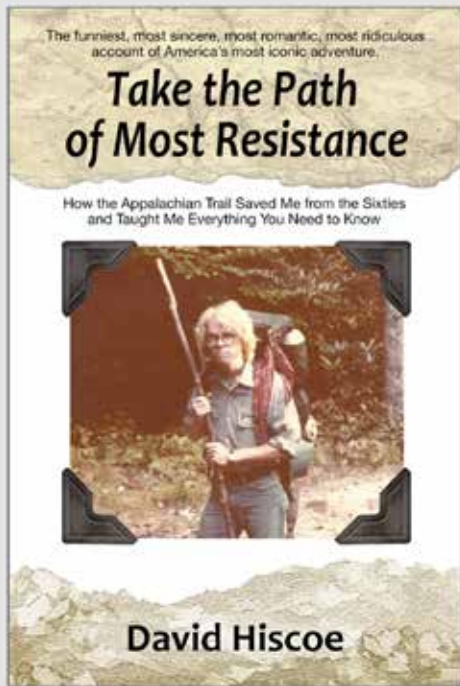
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**THE BIT OF APPALACHIAN TRAIL** history that was made in 1948 was the appearance of the first “thru-hiker,” Earl V. Shaffer of York Springs, Pennsylvania, who reported completing the entire 2,050 miles in an uninterrupted backpacking trip beginning April 4 and ending August 5. Shaffer had lost his closest friend while they were in combat in the Pacific Theater and was “walking off the army” by “walking with spring” — the title of his book about it — along the Appalachian Trail he had read about in a magazine.

While he was halfway to Maine, the already legendary Myron H. Avery was presiding over the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s first post-war, regrouping meeting, at Fontana Dam in North Carolina — part of which was devoted to a discussion on how unlikely a thru-hike would be. The chairman was particularly disturbed that Shaffer had no official guidebooks and maps. Shaffer, “The Crazy One,” as he called himself, said



Earl Shaffer on Katahdin at the completion of his thru-hike in 1948

he wrote for but never received the maps, so instead used oil-company maps and whatever he could pick up at parks and forests along the way.

Shaffer’s account is still accepted as the first reported thru-hike; the ATC neither investigates nor endorses such reports.

After he reported his feat to the ATC, Shaffer underwent at least one “charming... grilling,” as he would later put it, primarily by editor Jean Stephenson — place questions, people questions, photographic evidence, Trail-condition questions. After that, she and, through her, Avery would accept the report. Stephenson did note two “off track” sections, which Shaffer acknowledged and blamed on poor signage or unmarked relocations during that recovery period.

Shaffer hiked the Trail again in 1965, from the other direction, and once more as a 50th-anniversary trek in 1998 at age 79 — complaining bitterly all the way about route changes from roads up to mountaintops away from towns.

He was named president of the York Hiking Club after his first hike and, once he had satisfied Avery and Stephenson, was appointed ATC corresponding secretary, providing advice to would-be hikers of all kinds and taking a burden off Washington-based volunteers.

Although he had stayed away from Trail functions after a dispute with NPS land-acquisition workers in the 1980s, he resumed his involvement in the mid-1990s with standing-room-only shows of his slides (accompanied by his poems and songs) until a final, extended illness hospitalized him in 2001. He died in May 2002. He would have been 100 this fall.

Shaffer’s hike drew at least two lines across the story of the Appalachian Trail. Although then, as now, more than 99.9 percent of the users of the Trail are day-hikers and groups of two or four for a weekend or week — or club members out for an overnight — the notion was forever gone that a single backpacker could not walk that whole distance in a continuous hike.

The second break in pattern reflected that human recreational achievement. Shaffer garnered publicity throughout the country’s major news outlets and then a full-length article in *National Geographic* about him and the Trail. From then on, local and national publicity about the Trail shifted markedly from the achievements of the “recreational maintainer” to those of recreational thru-hikers, although their numbers would not be significant for another quarter-century.

The year after his iconic hike, he wrote in the *Appalachian Trailway News*:

“Now the one thing about the whole trek that caused the most comment — my traveling alone.... For my part, I preferred it so. Before the war, there were two of us who trailed together, and we had our dreams, as many others have had, of hiking the Appalachian Trail some day. But, Iwo Jima was the end of life’s trail for him, leaving me to travel alone. From him, I learned most of my woodcraft and my abiding love of all outdoors. Walter Winemiller was a pardner such as one may have only once in life, and no incentive could have been stronger to carry me over the long high Trail than remembering we always wanted to hike it together.” 🍄

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This article was first posted on the ATC’s official blog, “A.T. Footpath.”

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CROSSING THE BALDS AT ROAN MOUNTAIN — LATE FALL PHOTO BY SERJE ROBIDOUX