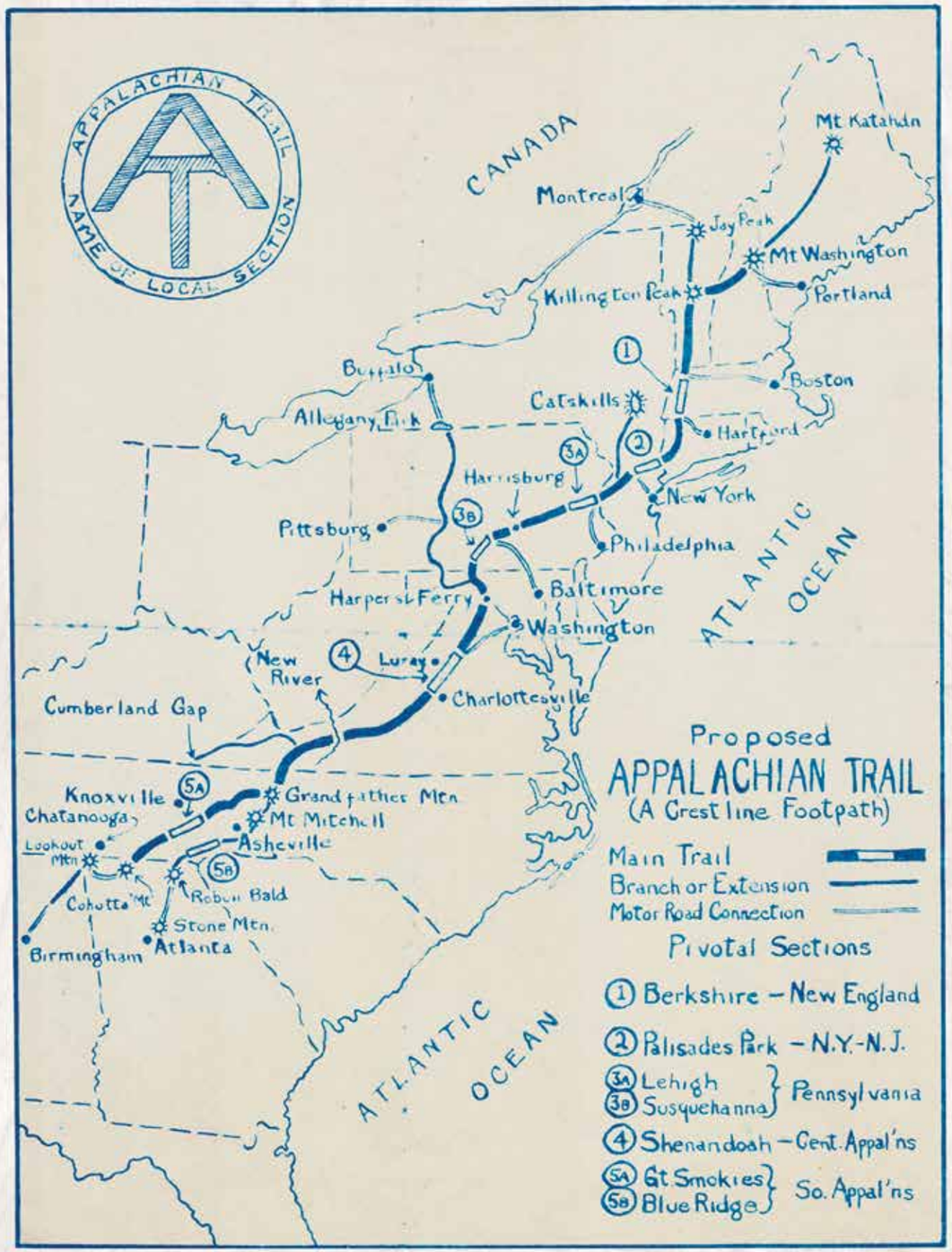
JOURNEYS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / FALL 2021

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL
1921 – 2021 AND BEYOND



Benton MacKaye's 1925 hand-drawn map of the Appalachian Trail. Courtesy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives

AND WHAT ABOUT THIS SECOND STAGE OF LIFE?

A REALM AND NOT A TRAIL MARKS THE FULL AIM OF OUR EFFORT. THE TRAIL IS BUT THE ENTRANCE TO THE FINAL THING WE SEEK — THE THING ETERNAL WHICH WE HAVE CALLED PRIMEVAL INFLUENCE — THAT OPPOSITE THING FROM "METROPOLITAN" INFLUENCE (THE PRESENT PASSING PHASE OF A HECTIC CIVILIZATION).

Benton MacKaye – June 12, 1931, message to the 5th ATC meeting in Gatlinburg, Tennessee

A TIMELINE OF THE A.T. AND THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

By Brian B. King

1900
Benton MacKaye looks south from the treetops on Stratton Mountain and wonders about a trail that runs all the way to the southern Appalachians

April 1921
Betty MacKaye commits suicide

July 1921
Benton MacKaye begins writing "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning"

World War I
1914 - 1918

October 1921
MacKaye's Appalachian Trail article is published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*

1923
First A.T.-specific sections are completed in New York by Raymond Torrey

1925
The Appalachian Trail Conference is formed as a confederation under Major William Welch

1927
MacKaye's speech to the New England Trail Conference engages Arthur Perkins to take over the ATC

1931
Myron H. Avery takes over leadership of the ATC and accelerates Trail-blazing

1935
MacKaye steps away from the ATC (until the 1960s) after disputes with Avery

Great Depression
1929 - 1939

1937
The A.T. is fully connected from Maine to Georgia

1938
Appalachian Trailway Agreement among the ATC, National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service, and states. A hurricane breaks the Trail's continuity for years

1944
First A.T. protection legislation introduced by Rep. Daniel Hoch

World War II
1939 - 1945

1948
Earl Shaffer reports first A.T. thru-hike; interest in A.T. accelerates

1951
The continuity of the A.T. is restored after hurricane damage and wartime neglect

1952
Myron H. Avery dies

1952
Mildred Norman Ryder becomes the first woman to thru-hike the A.T.

Korean War
1950 - 1953

1961
Stanley A. Murray elected ATC chair; federal protection drive renewed

1968
National Trails System Act becomes law. The ATC hires first employee

Civil Rights Act
1964

1971
Tripartite federal/ATC agreements renewed

1972
The ATC moves to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

1975
Benton MacKaye dies

Vietnam War
1955 - 1975

1976
NPS creates an A.T. park office under David A. Richie

1978
A.T. amendments to National Trails System Act become law

1978
NPS land-acquisition project begins in earnest with 913.7 (map) miles protected by federal agencies and 256.1 miles by states. 948.6 miles to go

1980
Ruth Blackburn named first woman ATC chair

1981
Comprehensive Plan for the Protection, Management, Development, and Use of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail approved

1984
NPS delegates park-management responsibilities to the ATC, beginning land-management obligations

1986
David N. Startzell appointed the ATC's executive director, beginning 25 years of centralized program growth

1987
Lori "Tenderfoot" Pierce is the first known Black thru-hiker

1989
850 miles protected since 1978, 100 miles left to acquire

1980s-1990s
The ATC, Trail clubs, and new special Trail crews move hundreds of miles of the footpath to optimal, constructed locations as the land-acquisition program progresses; the Trust for A.T. Lands saves key tracts; unprecedented bridge projects begin in Virginia and New Jersey

1990
U.S. District Court Judge Charles S. Haight, Jr., broadly interprets the 1968 National Trails System Act to allow acquisitions for Trail values, not just treadway needs

1995
Pamela Underhill begins 17 years as NPS A.T. park manager

1998
Bill Bryson publishes *A Walk in the Woods*, triggering an explosion in A.T. interest

1998
Congress appropriates $15.1 million to carry combined A.T. land acquisition through 2000, with 15 years of tract-based appropriations to follow

1990s
The ATC battles ski resorts and highway projects; facilitates nearly $200 million in annual congressional appropriations for land acquisitions (averaging $8 million per year) and major protections, such as Sterling Forest; initiates natural-resource inventories; expands Stewardship Fund with first $1 million bequest

2000
White House names the A.T. one of 16 National Millennium Trails

2005
Appalachian Trail Conference renames itself the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and restructures governance

Great Recession
2007 - 2009

2014
Last major corridor tract acquired by donated easement; 7 miles remain to be acquired, 196,225 acres protected since 1978

2015
Large landscape initiative launched

Global Coronavirus Pandemic
2020 -

2020
U.S. Supreme Court addresses management authorities for the A.T.

2021
Celebrating 100 years of MacKaye's vision

A JOURNEYS

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MISSION

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

The staff of *A.T. Journeys* welcomes editorial inquiries, suggestions, and comments. Email: **editor@appalachiantrail.org** Observations, conclusions, opinions, and product endorsements expressed in *A.T. Journeys* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of members of the board or staff of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

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Sandi Marra

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) President and CEO, Sandra "Sandi" Marra has spent most of her adult life volunteering and working on behalf of the Appalachian Trail and the ATC. She has been an A.T. volunteer for more than 35 years, is a former member and Chair of the ATC Board and former President of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC). She and her husband oversee three miles of the A.T. in northern Virginia and are co-managers of PATC's Blackburn Trail Center.

As she now leads the ATC in celebration of this hundred years past, she also is excited for the organization's future. "We are poised to build on this incredible foundation to create an even stronger and more resilient organization that can ensure the future protection of the Trail and all that surrounds it. It is time to fully realize MacKaye's vision for the landscape of the Appalachian Trail," she says.

Shalin Desai

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Vice President of Advancement, Shalin Desai, found himself transformed after his 2015 thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. The experience is best summarized by a quote from Robert Moor's book, *On Trails*: "On wild land, wild thoughts can flourish. There, we can feel all the ragged edges of what we do not know, and we make room for other living things to live differently." For him, and doubtless for many others, this quote captures why the Trail, its landscape, its community, and its experiences are worth protecting for another century.

After completing the Triple Crown of long-distance hiking in 2017, Shalin joined the ATC's staff in 2019 and now leads the Conservancy's membership, development, communications, education and outreach, and visitor services teams. Previously, he served on the ATC's Board of Directors.

Brian B. King

Brian B. King is the Publisher of books and maps for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), with which he has been involved since 1979, joining the staff as Director of Public Affairs in 1987. Until their transfer to George Mason University, he also was gatekeeper of the ATC's archives. Previously, he was a news reporter and editor for fourteen years, interrupted by two years in the Army; served as editor for a special project for the U.S. secretary of agriculture for a year; and worked for a Washington, D.C., agricultural-policy nonprofit for six years. "Each year, not unlike the ATC and the Trail itself, the stories of the footpath and the major figures associated with it have emerged from early cocoons of mythology into more solid histories and perspectives. This commemorative edition is a modest, further step forward in that direction," he says.

Jordan Bowman

Jordan Bowman is the Director of Communications for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). After spending many of his formative years hiking the Appalachian Trail in Georgia and the Southeast, Jordan fulfilled his dream of thru-hiking the Trail in 2014. That experience led him to his role at the ATC, helping both newcomers and experienced hikers discover new ways to enjoy, protect, and celebrate this one-of-a-kind Trail. "Even 100 years after Benton MacKaye first laid out his vision for the Appalachian Trail, we continue to find new ways that it benefits us and the world around us," he says. "By examining MacKaye's words through the context of a century of on-the-ground conservation work, we can see what has been accomplished – and what is still needed – to conserve and protect the A.T. forever, for all."

Wendy K. Probst

As the Editor in Chief of *A.T. Journeys*, Wendy Probst is thrilled to combine her devotion to conservation work with her lifelong love of shaping and sharing words and stories. Growing up in Maryland, Wendy warmly remembers autumn family picnics at Washington Monument State Park – but had no idea at the time how much the Appalachian Trail would one day be such a huge part of her life and professional career.

She has spent the past sixteen years with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) interlacing and presenting the extraordinary efforts and narratives behind the Trail and the ATC's work. And putting that English degree to good use. "This one-of-a-kind issue of the magazine is akin to an epic adventure in time travel. Working with a phenomenal team to create it has been the pinnacle and education of my editorial career," she says. "And it sets the stage for a bright and winding path that I can't wait to follow into the future with the ATC."

Traci Anfuso-Young

Traci Anfuso-Young is a freelance graphic designer and adjunct professor who brings 32 years of experience in publishing to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). She began her design career with Rodale Press in 1989 at *Backpacker* magazine and later became Art Director of *Mountain Bike* magazine. In 2002, she launched her own business, TLA Design Studio, and became *A.T. Journeys* Graphic Designer in 2010.

Through her decade of work with *A.T. Journeys*, she says, "I've been able to live my passion as a designer, while experiencing the thrill of adventure and the rewards of others who've traversed this Trail. This 2021 milestone and the content of this issue are ones of thoughtful opportunity. As I reflect, I've come to realize that we stand at the precipice of something grand. Through my work with the ATC, I feel connected to the optimism and healing that the Trail and nature provide."

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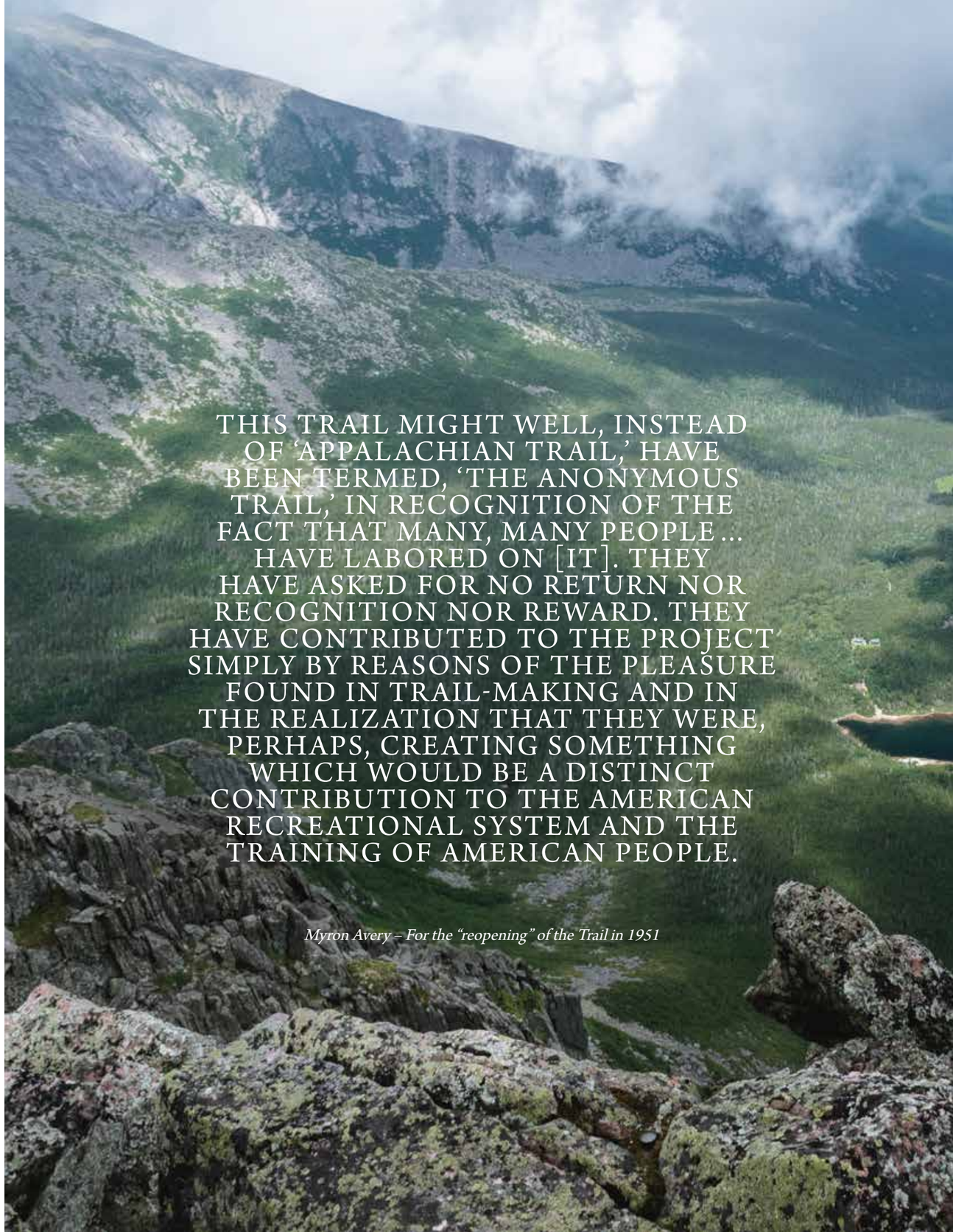
View of Great Basin and Chimney Pond near Baxter Peak, Maine
Photo by Koty Sapp



THE WORK AHEAD

WE ARE NOT DONE. ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER Benton MacKaye's publication of "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning," we are, at best, halfway to realizing the vision he set out in 1921.

This is in no way to detract from what has been accomplished in the last hundred years: A continuous footpath of 2,193 miles flanked by a protective corridor of more than 250,000 acres, home to thousands of plant and animal species, including 2,000 classified as rare, threatened, endangered, and/or sensitive. To the millions who step foot on the treadway each year, the Appalachian Trail represents both physical challenge and spiritual renewal. For the thousands who volunteer to manage and maintain it, the Trail is an accomplishment, a personal legacy, and a place to blend stewardship with camaraderie. In 100 years, we have created an iconic place, steeped in ideals and mythology but grounded in sweat and perseverance.

But, this was not the idea — or at least not the whole idea. MacKaye, while recognizing the broad appeal of a continuous trail that allowed for wilderness recreation, really had a much more ambitious, and (dare we say it!) more revolutionary, concept in mind when he penned his 1921 paper. He wanted to create a sanctuary where humans could find a way out from the stressors and challenges of "urban" life and connect with nature on an individual basis. MacKaye envisioned the footpath as the connective tissue between human and nature, allowing for a much larger and more varied sanctuary that included wilderness, community, and people.

And, therein lies the reason that we are not using this landmark anniversary to simply celebrate what we have accomplished. Instead, we are challenging ourselves and all who support and work on behalf of the Appalachian Trail to fully realize MacKaye's vision.

Quite frankly, the stakes could not be higher, and the need has never been greater. The societal concerns and environmental impacts that MacKaye addressed in his proposal, while similar, are currently amplified to a level most of us have never imagined. Pandemics, social and environmental injustice, declining economic viability in our rural communities, and global unrest have left most of us in desperate need of respite as well as recreation. Add to this the existential threat of climate change, and it is clear we are facing the once and final opportunity to protect and preserve a landscape that offers not only space for people, but refuge for flora and fauna and the possibility of resiliency and renewal of our forests and water sources.

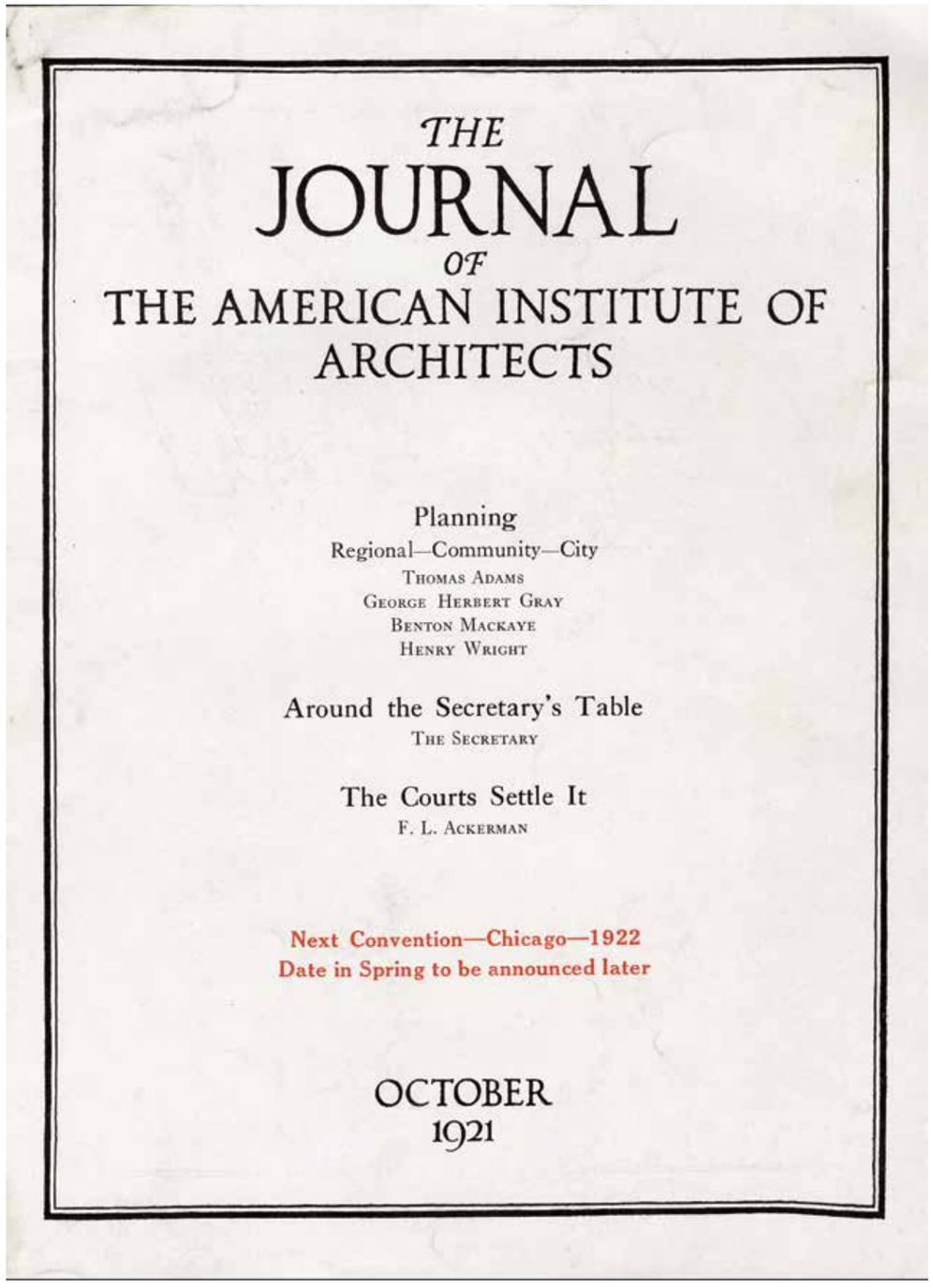
Along with the environment, people are changing as well. Again, much like in the 1920s, demographics are shifting, disparities are widening, and we are redefining how we live and work, when and where we recreate, and why we volunteer. From adjacent communities to farflung urban and suburban centers, all have a stake in this next century of work. It is our job to ensure they also have a voice.

So, yes, we are not yet done. Our needs are much greater than the current treadway and corridor. We must look beyond the current protective edge and see how we can expand the sanctuary — not to create pristine wilderness, but instead to nurture and allow for a vibrant and accessible landscape that allows for the health and well-being of human and nature. A landscape that supports flora and fauna as well as the economic needs of communities. A landscape where all who step foot on it are welcomed and safe. A landscape on which we balance our personal needs and experiences with our responsibility of stewardship.

A landscape broad enough that we all have room to breathe.

Sandra Marra / President & CEO

Myron H. Avery in the 1930s demonstrating proper double-blazing. Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives photo



The American Institute of Architects

Committee on Community Planning

A Project For An Appalachian Trail

By Benton MacKaye

Introduction

THE BIG CITIES of America seem to have been planned and developed as working places. The homes of workers are congested into the less desirable sections around the factories. Parks are generally afterthoughts and always inadequate. As the cities expand they devour the surrounding forests and farms. It is as though man had been created for industry and not industry to serve man's need. The only relief from the noise and strain of the industrial community is the quiet of unmolested nature. The Garden City would preserve something of the outdoors within reach of the urban districts. But this is tame. We need the big sweep of hills or sea as tonic for our jaded nerves—And so Mr. Benton MacKaye offers us a new theme in regional planning. It is not a plan for more efficient labor, but a plan of escape. He would as far as is practicable conserve the whole stretch of The Appalachian Mountains for recreation. Recreation in the biggest sense—the re-creation of the spirit that is being crushed by the machinery of the modern industrial city—the spirit of fellowship and cooperation.

The great Appalachian Trail is already started. The Appalachian Mountain Club, the Green Mountain Club, and other similar organizations have for years past been laying the foundation for just such a scheme as is here outlined. They have formed the New England Trail Conference, a federation of twenty-three organizations which have built and are caring for 1072 miles of trail in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut. They plan to combine with New York State organizations in a Northeastern Trail Conference. The movement has spread to the south where the Appalachian Mountain Club has started a chapter at Asheville, North Carolina. The State governments in most of the New England States, as well as New York, are caring for large tracts of forest lands. The nation is preserving portions of the White Mountains and of the Southern Appalachian. The possibilities of cooperation among State governments and private individuals is apparent in the great success of the New York-New Jersey Interstate Parkway along the Hudson River. Experiments in cooperative camps and farms are being developed by the Hudson Guild at Andover, New Jersey, and by the Peoples Educational Camp Society at Camp Tamiment, Pennsylvania. In short all the elements needed for the development of the comprehensive and imaginative project of Mr. MacKaye are already in existence; but to organize the systematic development of the vast recreational plan presented in this article will necessitate the cooperation of many minds and many talents. For the purpose of securing constructive criticism the Committee on Community Planning of the American Institute of Architects is sending out a limited number of copies of this article reprinted from the October number of the Journal of the American Institute of Architects.

To all those to whom community or regional planning means more than the opening up of new roads for the acquisition of wealth, this project of Mr. MacKaye's must appeal. It is a plan for the conservation not of things—machines and land—but of men and their love of freedom and fellowship.

Clarence S. Stein,
Chairman of the Committee on Community Planning—A. I. A.

An Appalachian Trail

A Project in Regional Planning

By BENTON MACKAYE

SOMETHING has been going on in this country during the past few strenuous years which, in the din of war and general upheaval, has been somewhat lost from the public mind. It is the slow quiet development of a special type of community—the recreation camp. It is something neither urban nor rural. It escapes the hecticness of the one, the loneliness of the other. And it escapes also the common curse of both—the high powered tension of the economic scramble. All communities face an "economic" problem, but in different ways. The camp faces it through co-operation and mutual helpfulness, the others through competition and mutual fleecing.

We civilized ones also, whether urban or rural, are potentially as helpless as canaries in a cage. The ability to cope with nature directly—unshielded by the weakening wall of civilization—is one of the admitted needs of modern times. It is the goal of the "scouting" movement. Not that we want to return to the plights of our Paleolithic ancestors. We want the strength of progress without its puniness. We want its conveniences without its fopperies. The ability to sleep and cook in the open is a good step forward. But "scouting" should not stop there. This is but a faint step from our canary bird existence. It should strike far deeper than this. We should seek the ability not only to cook food but to raise food with less aid—and less hindrance—from the complexities of commerce. And this is becoming daily of increasing practical importance. Scouting, then, has its vital connection with the problem of living.

A New Approach to the Problem of Living

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

It is no purpose of this little article to indulge in coping with any of these big questions. The nearest we come to such effrontery is to suggest more comfortable seats and more fresh air for those who have to consider them. A great professor once said that "optimism is oxygen." Are we getting all the "oxygen" we might for the big tasks before us?

"Let us wait," we are told, "till we solve this cussed labor problem. Then we'll have the leisure to do great things."

But suppose that while we wait the chance for doing them is passed?

It goes without saying we should work upon the labor problem. Not just the matter of "capital and labor" but the *real* labor problem—how to reduce the day's drudgery. The toil and chore of life should, as labor saving devices increase, form a diminishing proportion of the average day and year. Leisure and the higher pursuits will thereby come to form an increasing proportion of our lives.

But will leisure mean something "higher"? Here is a question indeed. The coming of leisure in itself will create its own problem. As the problem of labor "solves," that of leisure arises. There seems to be no escape from problems. We have neglected to improve the leisure which should be ours as a result of replacing stone and bronze with iron and steam. Very likely we have been cheated out of the bulk of this leisure. The efficiency of modern industry has been placed at 25 per cent of its reasonable possibilities. This may be too low or too high. But the leisure that we do succeed in getting—is this developed to an efficiency much higher?

The customary approach to the problem of living relates to work rather than play. Can we increase the efficiency of our *working* time? Can we solve the problem of labor? If so we can widen the opportunities for leisure. The new approach reverses this mental process. Can we increase the efficiency of our *spare* time? Can we develop opportunities for leisure as an aid in solving the problem of labor?

An Undeveloped Power—Our Spare Time

How much spare time have we, and how much power does it represent?

The great body of working people—the industrial workers, the farmers, and the housewives—have no allotted spare time or "vacations." The business clerk usually gets two weeks' leave, with pay, each year. The U. S. Government clerk gets thirty days. The business man is likely to give himself two weeks or a month. Farmers can get off for a week or more at a time by doubling up on one another's chores. Housewives might do likewise.

As to the industrial worker—in mine or factory—his average "vacation" is all too long. For it is "leave of absence *without* pay." According to recent official figures the average industrial worker in the United States, during normal times, is employed in industry about four fifths of the time—say 42 weeks in the year. The other ten weeks he is employed in seeking employment.

The proportionate time for true leisure of the average adult American appears, then, to be meagre indeed. But a goodly portion have (or take) about two weeks in the year. The industrial worker during the estimated ten weeks between jobs must of course go on eating and living. His savings may enable him to do this without undue worry. He could, if he felt he could spare the time from job hunting, and if suitable facilities were provided, take two weeks of his ten on a real vacation. In one way or another, therefore, the average adult in this country could

devote each year a period of about two weeks in doing the things of his own choice.

Here is enormous undeveloped power—the spare time of our population. Suppose just one percent of it were focused upon one particular job, such as increasing the facilities for the outdoor community life. This would be more than a million people, representing over two million weeks a year. It would be equivalent to 40,000 persons steadily on the job.

A Strategic Camping Base—The Appalachian Skyline

Where might this imposing force lay out its camping ground?

Camping grounds, of course, require wild lands. These in America are fortunately still available. They are in every main region of the country. They are the undeveloped or under-developed areas. Except in the Central States the wild lands now remaining are for the most part among the mountain ranges—the Sierras, the Cascades, and Rocky Mountains of the West and the Appalachian Mountains of the East.

Extensive national playgrounds have been reserved in various parts of the country for use by the people for camping and kindred purposes. Most of these are in the West where Uncle Sam's public lands were located. They are in the Yosemite, the Yellowstone, and many other National Parks—covering about six million acres in all. Splendid work has been accomplished in fitting these Parks for use. The National Forests, covering about 130 million acres—chiefly in the West—are also equipped for public recreation purposes.

A great public service has been started in these Parks and Forests in the field of outdoor life. They have been called "playgrounds of the people." This they are for the Western people—and for those in the East who can afford time and funds for an extended trip in a Pullman car. But camping grounds to be of the most use to the people should be as near as possible to the center of population. And this is in the East.

It fortunately happens that we have throughout the most densely populated portion of the United States a fairly continuous belt of under-developed lands. These are contained in the several ranges which form the Appalachian chain of mountains. Several National Forests have been purchased in this belt. These mountains, in several ways rivalling the western scenery, are within a day's ride from centers containing more than half the population of the United States. The region spans the climates of New England and the cotton belt; it contains the crops and the people of the North and of the South.

The skyline along the top of the main divides and ridges of the Appalachians would overlook a mighty part of the nation's activities. The rugged lands of this skyline would form a camping base strategic in the country's work and play.

Seen from the Skyline

Let us assume the existence of a giant standing high on the skyline along these mountain ridges, his head just scraping the floating clouds. What would he see from this skyline as he strode along its length from north to south?

Starting out ftom Mt. Washington, the highest point in the northeast, his horizon takes in one of the original happy hunting grounds of America—the "Northwoods," a country of pointed firs extending from the lakes and rivers of northern Maine to those of the Adirondacks. Stepping across the Green Mountains and the Berkshires to the Catskills he gets his first view of the crowded east—a chain of smoky bee-hive cities extending from Boston to Washington and containing a third of the population of the Appalachian drained area. Bridging the Delaware Water Gap and the Susquehanna on the picturesque Allegheny folds across Pennsylvania he notes more smoky columns—the big plants between Scranton and Pittsburgh that get out the basic stuff of modern industry—iron and coal. In relieving contrast he steps across the Potomac near Harpers Ferry and pushes through into the wooded wilderness of the Southern Appalachians where he finds preserved much of the primal aspects of the days of Daniel Boone. Here he finds, over on the Monongahela side, the black coal of bituminous and the white coal of water power. He proceeds along the great divide of the upper Ohio and sees flowing to waste, sometimes in terrifying floods, waters capable of generating untold hydro-electric energy and of bringing navigation to many a lower stream. He looks over the Natural Bridge and out across the battle fields around Appomatox. He finds himself finally in the midst of the great Carolina hardwood belt. Resting now on the top of Mt. Mitchell, highest point east of the Rockies, he counts up on his big long fingers the opportunities which yet await development along the skyline he has passed.

First he notes the opportunities for recreation. Throughout the Southern Appalachians, throughout the Northwoods, and even through the Alleghenies that wind their way among the smoky industrial towns of Pennsylvania, he recollects vast areas of secluded forests, pastoral lands, and water courses, which, with proper facilities and protection, could be made to serve as the breath of a real life for the toilers in the bee-hive cities along the Atlantic seaboard and elsewhere.

Second, he notes the possibilities for health and recuperation. The oxygen in the mountain air along the Appalachian skyline is a natural resource (and a national resource) that radiates to the heavens its enormous health-giving powers with only a fraction of a percent utilized for human rehabilitation. Here is a resource that could save thousands of lives. The sufferers from tuberculosis, anemia, and insanity go through the whole strata of human society. Most of them are helpless, even those economically well off. They occur in the cities and right in the skyline belt. For the farmers, and especially the wives of farmers, are by no means escaping the grinding-down process of our modern life.

Most sanitariums now established are perfectly useless to those afflicted with mental disease—the most terrible, usually, of any disease. Many of these sufferers could be cured. But not merely by "treatment." They need comprehensive provision made for them. They need acres not medicine. Thousands of acres of this mountain land should be devoted to them with whole communities planned and equipped for their cure.

Next after the opportunities for recreation and recuperation our giant counts off, as a third big resource, the op-

portunities in the Appalachian belt for employment on the land. This brings up a need that is becoming urgent—the redistribution of our population, which grows more and more top heavy.

The rural population of the United States, and of the Eastern States adjacent to the Appalachians, has now dipped below the urban. For the whole country it has fallen from 60 per cent of the total in 1900 to 49 per cent in 1920; for the Eastern States it has fallen, during this period, from 55 per cent to 45 per cent. Meantime the per capita area of improved farm land has dropped, in the Eastern States, from 3.35 acres to 2.43 acres. This is a shrinkage of nearly 18 percent in 20 years; in the States from Maine to Pennsylvania the shrinkage has been 40 per cent.

There are in the Appalachian belt probably 25 million acres of grazing and agricultural land awaiting development. Here is room for a whole new rural population. Here is an opportunity—if only the way can be found—for that counter migration from city to country that has so long been prayed for. But our giant in pondering on this resource is discerning enough to know that its utilization is going to depend upon some new deal in our agricultural system. This he knows if he has ever stooped down and gazed in the sunken eyes either of the Carolina "cracker" or of the Green Mountain "hayseed."

Forest land as well as agricultural might prove an opportunity for steady employment in the open. But this again depends upon a new deal. Forestry must replace timber devastation and its consequent hap-hazard employment. And this the giant knows if he has looked into the rugged face of the homeless "don't care a damn" lumberjack of the Northwoods.

Such are the outlooks—such the opportunities—seen by a discerning spirit from the Appalachian skyline.

Possibilities in the New Approach

Let's put up now to the wise and trained observer the particular question before us. What are the possibilities in the new approach to the problem of living? Would the development of the outdoor community life—as an offset and relief from the various shackles of commercial civilization—be practicable and worth while? From the experience of observations and thoughts along the sky-line here is a possible answer:

There are several possible gains from such an approach.

First there would be the "oxygen" that makes for a sensible optimism. Two weeks spent in the real open—right now, this year and next—would be a little real living for thousands of people which they would be sure of getting before they died. They would get a little fun as they went along regardless of problems being "solved." This would not damage the problems and it would help the folks.

Next there would be perspective. Life for two weeks on the mountain top would show up many things about life during the other fifty weeks down below. The latter could be viewed as a whole—away from its heat, and sweat, and irritations. There would be a chance to catch a breath, to study the dynamic forces of nature and the possibilities of shifting to them the burdens now carried on the backs of men. The reposeful study of these forces should provide a broad gauged enlightened approach to the problems of industry. Industry would come to be seen in its true perspective—as a means in life and not as an end in itself. The actual partaking of the recreative and non-industrial life—systematically by the people and not spasmodically by a few—should emphasize the distinction between it and the industrial life. It should stimulate the quest for enlarging the one and reducing the other. It should put new zest in the labor movement. Life and study of this kind should emphasize the need of going to the roots of industrial questions and of avoiding superficial thinking and rash action. The problems of the farmer, the coal miner, and the lumberjack could be studied intimately and with minimum partiality. Such an approach should bring the poise that goes with understanding.

Finally there would be new clews to constructive solutions. The organization of the cooperative camping life would tend to draw people out of the cities. Coming as visitors they would be loath to return. They would become desirous of settling down in the country—to *work* in the open as well as *play*. The various camps would require food. Why not raise food, as well as consume it, on the cooperative plan? Food and farm camps should come about as a natural sequence. Timber also is required. Permanent small scale operations could be encouraged in the various Appalachian National Forests. The government now claims this as a part of its forest policy. The camping life would stimulate forestry as well as a better agriculture. Employment in both would tend to become enlarged.

How far these tendencies would go the wisest observer of course can not tell. They would have to be worked out step by step. But the tendencies at least would be established. They would be cutting channels leading to constructive achievement in the problem of living: they would be cutting across those now leading to destructive blindness.

A Project for Development

It looks, then, as if it might be worth while to devote some energy at lest to working out a better utilization of our spare time. The spare time for one per cent of our population would be equivalent, as above reckoned, to the continuous activity of some 40,000 persons. If these people were on the skyline, and kept their eyes open, they would see the things that the giant could see. Indeed this force of 40,000 would be a giant in itself. It could walk the skyline and develop its varied opportunities. And this is the job that we propose: a project to develop the opportunities—for recreation, recuperation, and employment—in the region of the Appalachian skyline.

The project is one for a series of recreational communities throughout the Appalachian chain of mountains from New England to Georgia, these to be connected by a walking trail. Its purpose is to establish a base for a more extensive and systematic development of outdoor community life. It is a project in housing and community architecture.

No scheme is proposed in this particular article for organizing or financing this project. Organizing is a matter of detail to be carefully worked out. Financing depends upon local public interest in the various localities affected.

Features of Project

There are four chief features of the Appalachian project:

1. *The Trail*—

The beginnings of an Appalachian trail already exist. They have been established for several years—in various localities along the line. Specially good work in trail building has been accomplished by the Appalachian Mountain Club in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and by the Green Mountain Club in Vermont. The latter association has built the "Long Trail" for 210 miles through the Green Mountains—four fifths of the distance from the Massachusetts line to the Canadian. Here is a project that will logically be extended. What the Green Mountains are to Vermont the Appalachians are to eastern United States. What is suggested, therefore, is a "long trail" over the full length of the Appalachian skyline, from the highest peak in the north to the highest peak in the south—from Mt. Washington to Mt. Mitchell.

The trail should be divided into sections, each consisting preferably of the portion lying in a given State, or subdivision thereof. Each section should be in the immediate charge of a local group of people. Difficulties might arise over the use of private property—especially that amid agricultural lands on the crossovers between ranges. It might sometimes be necessary to obtain a State franchise for the use of rights of way. These matters could readily be adjusted, provided there is sufficient local public interest in the project as a whole. The various sections should be under some form of general federated control, but no suggestions regarding this form are made in this article.

Not all of the trail within a section could, of course, be built at once. It would be a matter of several years. As far as possible the work undertaken for any one season should complete some definite usable link—as up or across one peak. Once completed it should be immediately opened for local use and not wait on the completion of other portions. Each portion built should, of course, be rigorously maintained and not allowed to revert to disuse. A trail is as serviceable as its poorest link.

The trail could be made, at each stage of its construction, of immediate strategic value in preventing and fighting forest fires. Lookout stations could be located at intervals along the way. A forest fire service could be organized in each section which should tie in with the services of the Federal and State Governments. The trail would become immediately a battle line against fire.

A suggestion for the location of the trail and its main branches is shown on the accompanying map.

2. *Shelter Camps*—

These are the usual accompaniments of the trails which have been built in the White and Green Mountains. They are the trail's equipment for use. They should be located at convenient distances so as to allow a comfortable day's walk between each. They should be equipped always for sleeping and certain of them for serving meals—after the fashion of the Swiss chalets. Strict regulation is essential to provide that equipment is used and not abused. As far as possible the blazing and constructing of the trail and building of camps should be done by volunteer workers. For volunteer "work" is really "play." The spirit of cooperation, as usual in such enterprises, should be stimulated throughout. The enterprise should, of course, be conducted without profit. The trail must be well guarded—against the yegg-man, and against the profiteer.

3. *Community Camps*—

These would grow naturally out of the shelter camps and inns. Each would consist of a little community on or near the trail (perhaps on a neighboring lake) where people could live in private domiciles. Such a community might occupy a substantial area—perhaps a hundred acres or more. This should be bought and owned as a part of the project. No separate lots should be sold therefrom. Each camp should be a self-owning community and not a real estate venture. The use of the separate domiciles, like all other features of the project, should be available without profit.

These community camps should be carefully planned in advance. They should not be allowed to become too populous and thereby defeat the very purpose for which they are created. Greater numbers should be accommodated by *more* communities, not *larger* ones. There is room, without crowding, in the Appalachian region for a very large camping population. The location of these community camps would form a main part of the regional planning and architecture.

These communities would be used for various kinds of non-industrial activity. They might eventually be organized for special purposes—for recreation, for recuperation, and for study. Summer schools or seasonal field courses could be established and scientific travel courses organized and accommodated in the different communities along the trail. The community camp should become something more than a mere "playground"; it should stimulate every possible line of outdoor non-industrial endeavor.

4. *Food and Farm Camps*

These might not be organized at first. They would come as a later development. The farm camp is the natural supplement of the community camp. Here in the same spirit of cooperation and well ordered action the food and crops consumed in the outdoor living would as far as practicable be sown and harvested.

Food and farm camps could be established as special communities in adjoining valleys. Or they might be combined with the community camps by the inclusion of surrounding farm lands. Their development would provide tangible opportunity for working out by actual experiment a fundamental matter in the problem of living. It would provide one definite avenue of experiment in getting "back to the land." It would provide an opportunity for those anxious to settle down in the country; it would open up a possible source for new, and needed, employment. Communities of this type are illustrated by the Hudson Guild Farm in New Jersey.

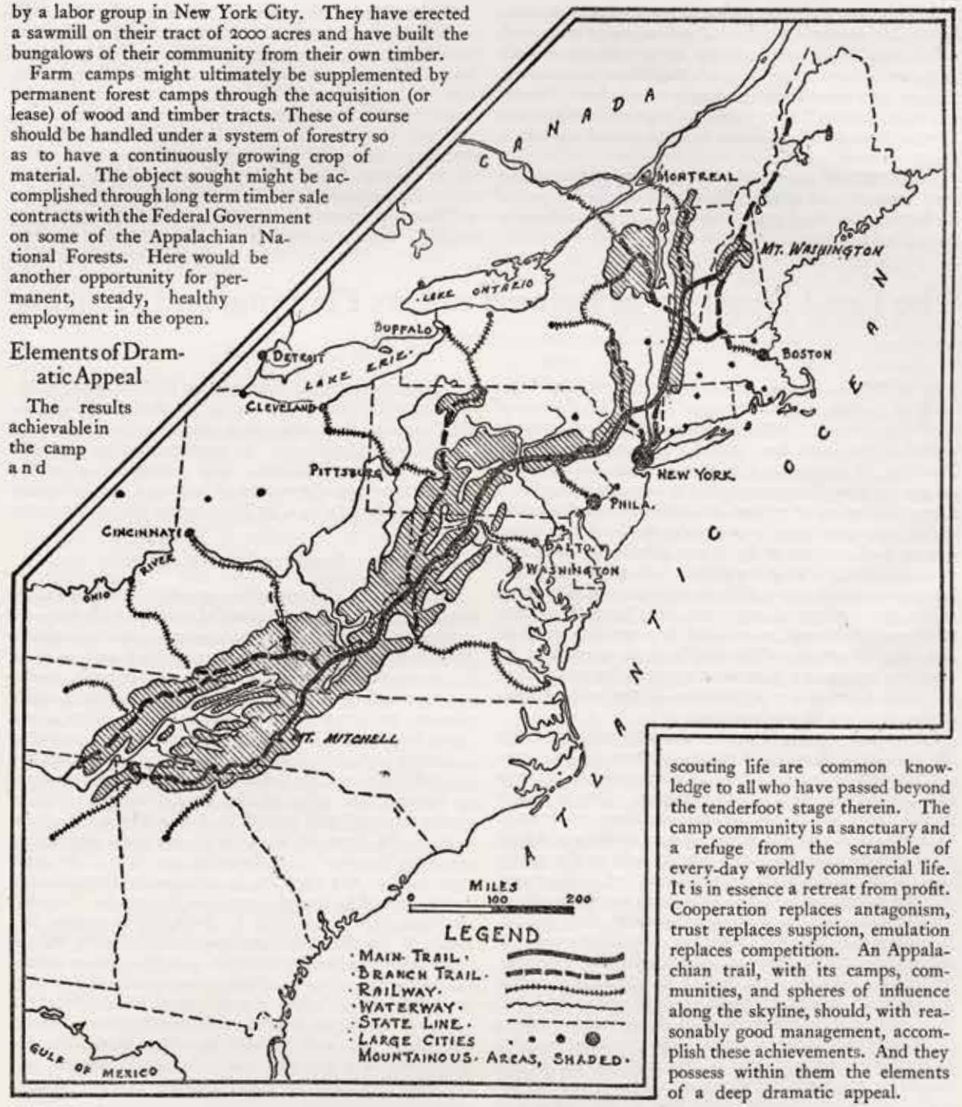
Fuelwood, logs, and lumber are other basic needs of the camps and communities along the trail. These also might be grown and forested as part of the camp activity, rather than bought in the lumber market. The nucleus of such an enterprise has already been started at Camp Tamiment, Pennsylvania, on a lake not far from the proposed route of the Appalachian trail. This camp has been established

by a labor group in New York City. They have erected a sawmill on their tract of 2000 acres and have built the bungalows of their community from their own timber.

Farm camps might ultimately be supplemented by permanent forest camps through the acquisition (or lease) of wood and timber tracts. These of course should be handled under a system of forestry so as to have a continuously growing crop of material. The object sought might be accomplished through long term timber sale contracts with the Federal Government on some of the Appalachian National Forests. Here would be another opportunity for permanent, steady, healthy employment in the open.

Elements of Dramatic Appeal

The results achievable in the camp and scouting life are common knowledge to all who have passed beyond the tenderfoot stage therein. The camp community is a sanctuary and a refuge from the scramble of every-day worldly commercial life. It is in essence a retreat from profit. Cooperation replaces antagonism, trust replaces suspicion, emulation replaces competition. An Appalachian trail, with its camps, communities, and spheres of influence along the skyline, should, with reasonably good management, accomplish these achievements. And they possess within them the elements of a deep dramatic appeal.



SUGGESTED LOCATION OF APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Main line from Mt. Washington to Mt. Mitchell. Large cities are tapped through branch lines and certain railways.
Area shown contains more than half the population of the United States and over one third the population of Canada. Cities shown comprise all metropolitan centers over 100,000, relative population being indicated by size of dot. Thirty six of these centers, including a third of the area's population, are from one to eight hours ride from the trail system.
Centers named are those of more than 400,000.

Indeed the lure of the scouting life can be made the most formidable enemy of the lure of militarism (a thing with which this country is menaced along with all others). It comes the nearest perhaps, of things thus far projected, to supplying what Professor James once called a "moral equivalent of war." It appeals to the primal instincts of a fighting heroism, of volunteer service and of work in a common cause.

These instincts are pent up forces in every human and they demand their outlet. This is the avowed object of the boy scout and girl scout movement, but it should not be limited to juveniles.

The building and protection of an Appalachian trail, with its various communities, interests, and possibilites, would form at least one outlet. Here is a job for 40,000 souls. This trail could be made to be, in a very literal sense, a battle line against fire and flood—and even against disease. Such battles—against the common enemies of man—still lack, it is true, the "punch" of man vs. man. There is but one reason—publicity. Militarism has been made colorful in a world of drab. But the care of the country side, which the scouting life instills, is vital in any real protection of "home and country." Already basic it can be made spectacular. Here is something to be dramatized.

Hudson Guild Farm – where MacKaye met in July 1921 with his friend Charles Harris Whitaker and architect Clarence Stein to discuss and refine his ideas for the eventual A.T. article reproduced here from MacKaye's personal copy. The farm, located in New Jersey, at the time was a vacation refuge for New York City settlement-house residents.
MacKaye's copy of the original article courtesy of Dartmouth College Library
Photo courtesy Hudson Farm Club

TRAILS CONNECT

By Shalin Desai

PRIMARILY, TRAILS CONNECT PEOPLE TO NATURE. But, trails also connect people to people and, at times, to our inner selves. They connect people to the concept and practice of stewardship and to the resources that require management and protection. They also connect trailside communities, and communities even farther flung, to the benefits of nature. They connect disparate landscapes into singular, green corridors. And, they create connections between our internal and external realities, bringing us out of our minds to the world outside and right back to our hearts.

Building, maintaining, and protecting trails is, at its core, meant to nurture connection.

But, in this connection there is also diversity. The diversity of experiences to be found on and off the trail. The diversity of ways people find connection to the trail and its resources, through recreation, stewardship, advocacy, and other forms of enjoyment and support. There is also diversity in the array of benefits trails can provide. And, of course, there is diversity of perspectives and identities found among the broader trail community.

The ways in which trails nurture connections can be complex and difficult to capture in its nearly infinite permutations. The best we can do is tell the stories of people who have found connection to the Appalachian Trail and its various values. These people are diverse in their perspectives and in their connections. Hikers, birdwatchers, naturalists, Trail maintainers, boundary monitors, storytellers, Appalachian Trail Conservancy staff and volunteers, A.T.-maintaining club members, advocates, Trailside community residents. The list goes on. These stories are what we consider to be part of the millions of Trail narratives that exist across our broad community. We hope you find connection to some of these stories we've included in this issue, and ultimately build your own connection to the Trail.

View from Schaghticoke Mountain, Connecticut
Photo by Michael Adamovic

MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL BEGAN ALMOST TWENTY YEARS AGO on a flight to Germany to visit my son and eventual thru-hiking partner. Bill Bryson's book, *A Walk in the Woods*, was my flight companion, a gift from a friend who recommended it as the perfect balance of humor and excellent storytelling. By the time my flight landed, I had finished the book and convinced myself that hiking the A.T. was the ultimate bucket-list adventure. I imagined the romance of hiking what is arguably the world's most iconic footpath – traversing fourteen states on foot, cataloging 2,200 miles, simplifying my life by carrying everything that I would need on my back. It was doable, I was sure, with the kind of commitment I was willing to make.

Fast forward to April 1, 2012, as mother and son arrived in Amicalola Falls State Park to begin a northbound thru-hike. By the time we made it out of Georgia, the adventure that I had imagined evaporated and was replaced by the reality of the daily grind of life as a long-distance hiker. I settled into the rhythm simply because there was no alternative. Up at 5:00 a.m., on the Trail by 6:30, logging more miles every day. The footpath I had once imagined was a mirage replaced by rocks, roots, boulder scrambles, steep climbs, and steeper descents (or so my knees told me). I saw virtually nothing but my feet and the trail beneath them. Somewhere along the way in this hiking blur I crossed paths with a deer tick who generously shared the bacterium *Borrellia burgdorferi* with me. The dreaded Lyme disease had found its next victim, and I finally succumbed to it just shy of Lee, Massachusetts – 1,550 miles done and so was I.

Since exiting the A.T. in 2012, I have regrouped several times and logged 500 more miles. Initially, the thought of not completing my mission of hiking the entire Appalachian Trail was devastating. I was angry, despondent, and full of "it's not fair" self-loathing. Over time – the great antidote for foolish thinking – I began to realize the gift that had been given to me. Slow the pace (on the Trail and in life), observe the surroundings (on the A.T. and in life), appreciate the small things, which are often the big things – on the Trail and in life.

I still envision summiting Katahdin and experiencing the euphoria of touching that sign that represents a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. But, I also kn vow that leaving the Trail in 2012 gave me a new lens to view the greater journey that, for me, has culminated in my work as a volunteer (on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's board) helping to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian Trail. Perhaps I have reached my Katahdin moment after all.

"The Ghost of Benton MacKaye"

THE A.T. IN ITS SECOND CENTURY

By Daniel Anthony Howe / Illustration by John Amoss

WHAT DOES THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL MEAN TO THE East, to the country, and to the world in the next century of its existence? The experience of the first 100 years sets us up to move toward a new vision — a truly regional ethic of conservation, economic health, stewardship of the natural world, and fellowship among the broad and diverse array of humanity surrounding the Appalachian Mountains.

Benton MacKaye's 1921 vision was a public declaration of a grand idea, an important leap of faith at that moment in history, and, most importantly, a call to action. The country was emerging from many challenges, including its involvement for the first time in a major foreign war, as well as rapid urbanization and expansion of the nation's cities in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. And, much as it is today, society was challenged by income inequality, a global pandemic in 1918, racial conflict, and a large influx of immigrants altering the ethnic and cultural landscape of the country. At the same time, the population in rural America was in decline as more sought work in cities, a trend that continues today. MacKaye, a keen student of the social impact of urbanization, looked ahead to a time when the expansion and encroachment of the built environment upon the existing natural landscape would push us all further and further from a life-sustaining connection to nature, and, in doing so, threaten the very existence of the forests and fields that so defined the wild lands in the East he experienced as a child.

He was not alone. Progressive-era reformers had been at work since before the Civil War to introduce the concept of the protection of and access to public lands — starting with Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., the original landscape architect and designer of Central Park in New York. That public lands should exist at all was then a radical idea. Olmsted saw the establishment of public lands as more than just an effort to preserve or replicate nature. He called Central Park "a democratic development of the highest significance" and "the locale of class reconciliation," by which he

meant a place where both the wealthy and the working poor of New York could have equal access and share the experience of nature across the socioeconomic gulf that was typical of the city surrounding the park. In MacKaye's time, efforts had been made to preserve lands in the public realm mostly in the West, through the preservation of the first national parks and national monuments, and the establishment of the U.S. Forest Service in 1905 and National Park Service in 1916 to manage these preserves. But in the East, even efforts to set aside forest preserves for managed silviculture were lagging.

MacKaye's idea of an Appalachian Trail was a powerful one. He argued that the Trail would act as a spine and the lands surrounding it would provide connective tissue, knitting the Appalachian region to the nearest major population centers. It would also link up the work previously done regionally by numbers of hiking clubs and outdoor enthusiasts. The efforts of these clubs to make the mountain landscapes of the East accessible to urban dwellers date back into the 19th Century. A continuous Trail was a clear vision, something that was ambitious but within the realm of possibility, and it captured the imagination of thousands.

But, like Olmsted's, MacKaye's concept was broader than a footpath. He envisioned an experience, a way to live one's life as part of this landscape, a counterpoint to the gritty, frenetic reality of urban living. MacKaye proposed a series of communities be created within the Appalachian mountain "realm," linked by the Trail, building a sustainable economy through stewardship of the surrounding natural resources and by embracing the burgeoning national interest in outdoor recreation.

Inspired by this vision, five generations of Trail doers and dreamers, mostly volunteers, have taken MacKaye's big idea and made it what is now, truly the "People's Trail." Designated permanently as a unit of the National Park Service through the National Trails System Act in 1968, this simple footpath is now a reality, continuously protected through fourteen states from Springer Mountain to Katahdin. On the 100th anniversary of this grand idea, a celebration is in order.

But, when we consider our progress against MacKaye's original vision, there is much yet to do. Consider MacKaye's vision of a broader "realm," a linked landscape of sustainable communities, a protected experience of (not just a footpath through) the Appalachian highlands. Consider MacKaye's idea of a sustainable ecology of limitless views and priceless natural systems and species, particularly in this time of dramatically changing climate. And, consider that the faces of those who know of the Trail and seek it out, those who volunteer to keep it open and protected, and those who support it financially and advocate for it, are very much alike and represent only a small fraction of the broadly diverse community of Americans that surrounds the Trail. Consider all these things, and it is clear: There is much yet to do.

When Benton MacKaye proposed "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning" a century ago, oddsmakers would likely have bet against it ever becoming reality. It took a vision of a better way of living with the landscape that inspired so many to do so much to build the Trail. We live in a very different time, with new and perhaps greater challenges ahead of us. And yet this birthday compels us to do what MacKaye did — look ahead into the second century and craft a vision that will drive us forward and make the lands the Trail traverses, not only a healthy and fully protected landscape, but also "a democratic development of the highest significance" in the 21st Century, protected forever for all to enjoy.

BROADENING THE VISION: TRAIL + PEOPLE + LANDSCAPE

"Damn it, Benton, the trouble with you is you're twenty years ahead of your time," complained a friend of MacKaye after fielding an evening's worth of his ineffable forward-looking optimism. So must we be similarly ahead of our time in seeing beyond the immediate horizon to a future where the Trail becomes more than the footpath that the first century's effort made manifest. A vision for the second century of the A.T. must embrace the idea that the relationship between our humanness and the natural world around us is the reason for the Trail and the key to our survival as a culture and a species on Earth. The Trail does not exist but in the context of our perception of it, our work to build and preserve it, and our human experience of it and its surrounding landscape.

THREE KEY VALUES ABOUT THE TRAIL HELP TO FRAME OUR VISION AS WE LOOK FORWARD

The Power of Beauty

The experience of beauty, particularly the beauty of the natural world, is universal. It is the rare person who is not awed by the complexity, richness, and spectacle of the world in its natural state. Particularly, we Americans define much of our uniqueness

A Civilian Conservation Corps crew cuts a new treadway for the Appalachian Trail in Shenandoah National Park during the Great Depression. Photo from Creative Commons/Wikipedia

compared to other lands across the globe by celebrating our startlingly beautiful landscapes, from western mesas to wide rivers, stark deserts, and dark forests. First captured by the great landscape painters of the 19th Century — Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, Winslow Homer — we have throughout our national history sought this counterpoint as the world around us began to turn to hardscape, smoke, and noise. Our desire for access to natural beauty inspired the creation of the first gardens and the first public parks and is captured in window boxes as well as in wilderness, in music, and in art. In today's fractious and rapidly urbanizing world, where daily we are faced with seemingly intractable problems to surmount, access to beauty becomes an ever more acute need, bringing us together across ethnicities and ideologies and inspiring us toward the hope that we can overcome the many things that so separate us. This perspective, this relief, this healing comes not just from dramatic vistas from ridgetops but also from clear water flowing over a rocky creek bed, from a single wildflower, or from the sound of a birdcall high in a forest canopy. The corridor of forests and fields linked along the East by the Appalachian Trail is already the largest and longest continuously protected open space in the United States and provides access to this beauty for millions. In the next 100 years, our challenge is to expand the protected lands that encompass the beauty of the Appalachian region around the Trail and the flora and fauna within it, but also to offer wider access in creative ways to the healing inspiration that comes from beauty as experienced on the Appalachian Trail.

Our Line of Defense Against Climate Change

The reality of climate change is upon us, and the implications for systems that support our very lives are

View from Charlies Bunion – Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Photo by Nicollette Legac

dramatic. The next hundred years will determine just how resilient our broader ecosystem, and our own human species, are to changes that will affect us every day. Access to fresh water, clean air, and adequate food supplies for millions across the globe is threatened by changing rainfall and temperatures.

The Appalachian region is the best hope for climate mitigation in the East. The headwaters of most watersheds that provide fresh water to urban areas across the entire East begin in the high country of the Appalachians. Healthy, intact, and connected forests are a bulwark against devastating wildfires and act to slow floodwaters in times of extreme weather. Those forests also protect wildlife ecology by providing migration routes along the Appalachian chain of mountains and through preservation of natural food sources and habitats available in the varied landscapes along the Trail — balds and bogs as well as woodlands — and by the resistance to disease and exotic invasive species that results from a diverse interrelationship of many species. The Trail is the spine of this contiguous system of wild lands, forests, waterways and unique geology that provides both climate solutions and resilience against the impacts of climate change. In the next 100 years, our challenge is to use the best science and careful management to understand the complexities of this natural rampart against climate change. Through the actions of both scientists and volunteers, we must protect this unique 2,000-plus-mile climate corridor and use the Trail and its surrounding landscape as a laboratory for a sustainable response to a changing world.

An Unparalleled Recreation Resource

Within a day's drive of nearly two-thirds of the United States' population, the Appalachian Trail is a world-renowned recreation asset for millions, providing a link to and between national parks, national forests, state parks and forests, national recreation areas, and wildlife preserves from Baxter State Park in Maine to Amicalola Falls in Georgia. As the population of this region continues to grow and diversify, especially in the Sunbelt states of the Southeast, the importance of this recreational wonderland to individuals and families and to the communities surrounding the Trail will continue to expand.

Access is often a challenge. For people with few resources in terms of time, money, and transport, the Trail is still infinitely remote. And, recreation means different things to people of varied cultural backgrounds. A wilderness epiphany for one is a scary reminder of vulnerability for another. Some seek solitude while others revel in a shared experience of beauty. The twin challenges of protection of the Trail footpath and experience that we know today, along with expansion of access to the Trail by new, more urban, and more diverse populations sets up a delicate balance and demands careful management and new partnerships. MacKaye's original vision articulated the footpath as a framework for the establishment of a series of rural communities in the Appalachian region supported primarily by an expanded recreation-based economy. It is not newly built communities as MacKaye originally envisioned, but existing historical communities on and surrounding the Trail that are becoming key partners in the development of a sustainable rural economy surrounding the Trail corridor, based on access to the outdoors. In the next 100 years, our challenge will be to continue to sustainably expand access to the Trail and its experience to more and different populations of Trail users and supporters and to help make viable MacKaye's original idea of Appalachian communities that provide a sustainable economic alternative to city living. This will be accomplished by supporting the economic life of those communities and by enlisting them as partners in providing off-Trail services, partners in the management of the increasing flow of visitors, partners in providing education about the environmental value of the Appalachian region and the cultural history of its people, and partners in conservation of the lands and waters that draw recreational visitors to these mountains.

A HUNDRED-YEAR VISION, STARTING NOW

Large landscapes preserved: In its 2015 Centennial strategic plan, "A Call to Action," the National Park Service noted the need to begin to think beyond the boundaries of the parks and to engage adjacent communities, indigenous communities, ranching and farming interests, and local governments in the mission and goals of its protected lands as partners. Ecosystems, views, watersheds, and wildlife habitats respect no artificial boundary, and the park service noted that the experience within the boundaries of the park is inexorably linked to the community and landscape outside as well. The Appalachian Trail represents a very narrowly protected corridor with an extensive and often threatened boundary. The essence of the Trail experience is not only the Trail itself and the narrowly protected corridor within which it exists, but the views of farms and settled rural landscapes that are visible from its ridges, the vast woodlands, and the habitats in those forests that

A VISION FOR THE SECOND CENTURY OF THE A.T. MUST EMBRACE THE IDEA THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR HUMANNESS AND THE NATURAL WORLD AROUND US IS THE REASON FOR THE TRAIL AND THE KEY TO OUR SURVIVAL AS A CULTURE AND A SPECIES ON EARTH. THE TRAIL DOES NOT EXIST BUT IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR PERCEPTION OF IT, OUR WORK TO BUILD AND PRESERVE IT, AND OUR HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF IT AND ITS SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE.

support some of the most diverse ecosystems in the world. These extended landscapes are mostly privately owned, including agriculture, small towns, historic places that tell the important story of the culture of the Appalachian mountain region, managed woodlands and, yes, expanding suburban growth, energy infrastructure, and mining. In the second century of the A.T., many partners beyond federal and state agencies must work with state and local communities to protect those lands and landscapes beyond the Trail itself with the goal of preserving a "realm," not just a footpath. The tools of this large landscape conservation effort will involve not just traditional purchase of conservation lands and easements, but cooperation with communities and Indigenous tribes in managing land use and protecting key natural systems and spectacular views that draw visitors to support local economies.

A nation of Trail stewards: In the wake of MacKaye's idea a century ago, groups of volunteers — lawyers, mechanics, educators, clerks and laborers, men and women — in partnership with federal and state workers hacked their way across the ridgetops and through dense forest to build the original Trail. Four generations later, the Appalachian Trail remains unique — a public landscape still cared for primarily by volunteers, managed by a one-of-a kind public-private cooperative management model. As more and more of us are drawn to this Trail, we envision a time when all who come to this place embrace an ethic of respect and care for the footpath and the natural and cultural landscape that surrounds it through education and volunteerism. As we attempt to strike a balance between the desire to make the Trail more accessible to more people and the need to care for the increasingly threatened ecology of the landscape and the Trail itself, our vision is an ever-widening circle of Trail stewards who accept mutual ownership of this special resource — who volunteer their time to protect it, who advocate for its importance, who donate their own time and resources to ensure its continued existence, who come and experience the Trail and leave it better than they found it. The Appalachian Trail, although envisioned and championed by bold thinkers, was built by people like you and me. Our vision is that this remains a landscape entrusted to the people, cared for by a volunteer army of supporters and stewards, and open to a nation of visitors who understand and respect the values that the Trail represents.

A Trail that supports varying recreation experiences sustainably: In the Organic Act of 1916, the National Park Service was established to care for the new national parks and "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Today, the Park Service struggles with this now-difficult mission to preserve the unique resources of the national parks unimpaired for future generations, while still providing the opportunity for the people to enjoy them today. What once was a few fortunate travelers arriving by train to view the wonders of Yosemite or Yellowstone has become more than 237 million visits each year, by people seeking a wide variety of experience, from wilderness solitude to festival celebration. Similarly, the Appalachian Trail experiences a year-over-year increase in both long-distance hiking and day-use visitation. As more people from more places with more widely divergent backgrounds discover the Trail, and as the distance between metropolitan populations and the Appalachian region shrinks, our thinking about what "the A.T. experience" means must necessarily expand. It will no longer be sufficient to assume that the solitary long-distance backpacker represents the Trail's only desired experience. This more than 2,000-mile corridor must provide not only that opportunity but must also accommodate a new population of visitors who might seek a more guided experience, or a shorter one, or a more accessible one to allow people who are challenged physically to join the A.T. community. The implications of this are dramatic for the Trail and are not unlike the challenges faced by the National Park Service in its efforts to live up to the Organic Act. Encouraging more people to be on the Trail puts at risk the natural systems that make up what draws them here. Limiting such use flies in the face of a century-long ethic of self-sufficient woodland experience and open access. The Trail needs a new and more broad-based generation of supporters, volunteers, and advocates to ensure its existence as the signature recreational resource in the East into the future.

A bulwark against climate change: Scientists have noted that climate-resilient sites are those where nature's natural resilience is highest — places with a broad diversity of microclimates within a landscape of varying topography, hydrology, and diversity of species: the very definition of the Appalachian region of the eastern U.S. The ability of species to migrate both longitudinally (along a corridor) and vertically (up or down in elevation) allows a much greater chance of surviving such times of rapidly changing climatic conditions. And, our survival is intimately tied to this diversity of species, protection of drinking-water resources, rivers, streams, and soils that support agriculture and the forests that clean the very air we breathe. The A.T. corridor is uniquely positioned to be a demonstration site for cooperative protection of a critical climate corridor, stretching across fourteen states and countless ecosystems, with the goal of preserving a relatively stable ecology in the eastern mountains. This is the largest and longest continuous protected open space in the United States. It is our challenge to support legislation to declare the A.T. corridor as a designated climate corridor and bring resources to bear for research and mitigation efforts to protect our natural treasures for future generations.

Trailside communities that are essential partners in supporting the Trail experience: For some time, a type of economic Darwinism has driven decision-making about rural economies. In the face of competition with the big metros or with overseas industries, rural towns were expected to adapt or simply shrivel. And, for much of the past 50 years, communities in the Appalachian region have lost population and jobs as industry moved elsewhere. Yet, MacKaye in his prescient way saw the intangible benefits of small-town living, even as the metropolitan cities of the East began their earnest expansion, and proposed a utopian series of resource-based or recreation-based communities linked by a Trail. As we look toward the future, the A.T. community must support a new generation of urban dwellers who are rediscovering small "gateway" communities along the Trail, with a new appreciation of their closeness to the beauty of nature and intimate sense of small-town life. Recreation-based economies are driving new life into what has been a declining economic region. Our challenge is to continue to build community with towns and regions in the Appalachians — to establish partnerships with newly rejuvenated Trail towns to engage them as conservation partners and stewards of the outdoor recreation economy and to encourage them to be educators about Leave No Trace ethics and provide services off-Trail to new visitors and stewards in our ever-broadening circle of A.T. enthusiasts.

The story of people and place woven into the experience of the Trail: The A.T. traverses a landscape of woodlands, streams, and fields, but also a human landscape made up of successive generations of settlement in the mountains, tainted by colonization, wars, and tragedy, yet enriched by heroism, determination, and a unique mountain sense of humor. The building and abandonment of towns, the artifacts and literature left behind, and the "high, lonesome sound" of mountain life immortalized in music, dance, and art mark the journey along the A.T. In addition to the Trail's role in supporting a personal odyssey in the woods for many, it also forms a journey through time told through the stories of peoples whose lives were entwined with the mountains of the East. In the first 100 years, our attention was focused on making accessible to visitors to the Trail a personal connection

THE TRAIL NEEDS A NEW, AND MORE BROAD-BASED GENERATION OF SUPPORTERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND ADVOCATES TO ENSURE ITS EXISTENCE AS THE SIGNATURE RECREATION RESOURCE IN THE EAST INTO THE FUTURE.

to the beauty of nature. In our second century, the richness of the Appalachian story needs to be woven more tightly into the tapestry of the A.T. experience. As more people move through this landscape, opportunities to tell the broader story of the mountains need to expand through interpretation and storytelling, partnerships with tribes and communities in art and music, and education programs for young people coming to this region for the first time.

A network of connecting and parallel trails: Just as the Trail provides connective tissue to knit the landscapes of the eastern mountains into an experiential whole, connective trails like the Overmountain Victory Trail and the Long Trail link the people, stories, and landscapes of the foothills and adjacent mountain ranges and settlements to the high ridge. In MacKaye's original concept, rail, trail, and roadway connectors made the A.T. accessible to all. In the wake of the National Trails Systems Act, numerous connections have been made between the A.T. and other important trails, such as the Highlands Trail, the Bartram Trail, the Allegheny Trail, and the C&O Canal. And, as the number of visitors increases on the A.T., the importance of parallel trails expands, such as the Great Eastern Trail, the Benton MacKaye Trail, and the Foothills Trail, as well as the East Coast Greenway. Management of the critical resources of the high country along the Appalachian Trail is a multifaceted challenge in the second century. Bringing new constituencies to the Trail *via* new rail and connecting trail opportunities opens the A.T. experience up to more, and more diverse, visitors. Thinking of the A.T. as part of a network of trails, intersecting and parallel, and planning for more connections and more opportunities to experience the Appalachian region on parallel trails can help divert crowds in the most critical places along the A.T. to other opportunities. Cooperating together as a family of footpaths will help to build more partnerships and more constituencies for advocacy toward public land protection and support rural economies and protected woodland experiences in the East.

THE SECOND CENTURY BEGINS WITH A NEW CALL TO ACTION

Benton MacKaye changed my life. He did so by inspiring thousands to grasp onto his idea and make it real, and, in doing so, they created the stage set for my transformation as a person. My time on the A.T., among a community of others in the midst of their own odysseys, opened my eyes to my place in a larger world of people very different from me, a world of seemingly limitless forests that I barely knew existed, a world where we are all connected — just as the Trail itself connects ecosystems, and states, and cultures. I am a better person, leading a richer life because of the lessons I learned on the A.T. about the interrelationship of living things, my own ability to exceed what I thought were my limitations, and what is really important out there beyond all the noise. My question to you is this: Whose life will your actions, your contributions, transform? When we revisit the Appalachian Trail 100 years from now, will you be one of the thousands (maybe millions) to thank for protecting MacKaye's "realm" beyond the footpath even as urbanization surrounds it? Will you be instrumental in helping breathe life into a small Appalachian community, or perhaps be among those telling the story of our history and of the people who populated the mountains before the Trail existed? Will you help make it possible for this extraordinary Trail, its land,

The Appalachian Trail today connects with many trails, including the Long Trail in Vermont. The summit of Bromley Mountain is about the halfway point of their 106-mile coalignment. The Long Trail's pioneers were MacKaye contemporaries, who often imagined extending it all the way to the southern Appalachians. MacKaye always favored the A.T. as the backbone of a network of trails. Photo by Christopher D'Ambrosio

A.T. – Bigelow Mountain, Maine
Photo by Chris Bennett

its plants and animals, and its people to weather the anticipated, unprecedented changes in rainfall and temperature we expect over the next 100 years? And will you, through your own actions, make it possible for even one small child, who may not look like you and who may otherwise have never known any landscape except that of asphalt and chain link fence, find themselves transformed on a high ridge beneath the tall oaks, as I have been so lucky to be?

Our challenge in the second century is not as clear-cut as "build the footpath" might have been for those who mobilized in the wake of MacKaye's inspirational article. Now, we are asked to expand our scope of protection to the broader landscape beyond the Trail, to embrace the idea of rural, sustainable, recreation-based communities that he originally envisioned and to manage a climate challenge without a roadmap for doing so. But, we can, because this is the People's Trail, and, if we set our minds to it, we the people can bring this new vision to reality by working together as partners. In the 21st Century, Benton MacKaye's voice still calls us to action. It will be you — your voice, your work, your gifts — who will answer that call.

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Daniel A. Howe, like Benton MacKaye, is a planner. Dan is a Fellow in the American Society of Landscape Architects and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. He is currently Assistant Professor of the Practice in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. His thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail inspired his career choice. Dan serves the ATC and the Trail community with his largest single charitable contribution every year and volunteers as a member of the Board of Directors of the ATC and as Chair of the Stewardship Council. He is also a member of four Trail clubs in Virginia and North Carolina and wishes he had more time to join them in Trail-maintenance projects, but he's still happy to contribute his member dues toward the great work the clubs do to keep the Trail accessible for us all.

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Photo courtesy of Chris Gallaway / Horizonline Pictures

MY ROLE WITHIN THE LARGER APPALACHIAN TRAIL (A.T.) ECOSYSTEM IS A SIMPLE ONE: to be mindful. The A.T. has shown and given me so much, and, for that, I take the "Leave No Trace" principles seriously. I leave it the way it leaves me, feeling fabulous. When I step onto the Trail, I am in an environment that is full of life, and that life can be admired – yet more importantly, it should be respected.

My affection for the A.T. stems from three factors: my thru-hike expectations, the actual reality of the experience of thru-hiking, and the permanent imprint it has left on me. From the moment I started my thru-hike, I was hooked. The hold the Trail had on me magnified when I wrote my A.T. memoir, *The Unlikely Thru-Hiker.* My A.T. journey became a part of who I am: not necessarily a hiker or an outdoor enthusiast, but a person who understands the need to relate to nature and how nurturing nature is for our mind, body, and soul.

Up to that point, my thru-hike was the undertaking of my life. For that reason, it has stuck with me. No matter how many years pass, like a faded tattoo, the Trail will be a permanent fixture in my life. It has altered my way of living, my career path, and my perception of humanity. I refer to my thru-hike as the turning point of my existence that I didn't realize I needed or even wanted. I went from a city-dweller with zero hiking, camping, and mountain-climbing experience to an ambassador and storyteller of the outdoors. To say my time on the A.T. was life-changing is not an overstatement. Until my last days on this planet and beyond, I will have a special connection with the Appalachian Trail.

Newly graduated Benton in July 1900 walks a Vermont road on the backpacking trip during which, from atop Stratton Mountain, he had his clear epiphany of a trail along the Appalachian Mountains. Photo courtesy of Dartmouth College Library

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, BENTON?

Decoding MacKaye

By Brian B. King

ARMCHAIR TRAIL ADVOCATE. AVANT-GARDE CONSERVATIONIST. Conservation's inseminator. Craggy New Englander. Cultural democrat. Eccentric. Ecologist. Failure. Head in the clouds. Humanist. Incidental naturalist. Incorrigible optimist. Journalist. Mayflower descendant. Naturalist. Nestor of the Appalachian Trail. Nineteenth-Century Romantic. Political radical. Prophet. Regional planner. Sage of Shirley Center. Single-taxer. Socialist. Unemployed. Utopian Socialist. Visionary. Wilderness advocate. Woodsman. "Forester, philosopher, and dreamer."

That last description of Benton MacKaye came from Myron H. Avery and became the accepted "definition" in Appalachian Trail folklore and history for the next half-century or more, writings that set Avery apart as the "doer."

Most of those descriptions are true but individually incomplete. Some are unfair, even false. Scores of doctoral dissertations containing such descriptions — and a number of books drawn from them — have attempted to define or pigeonhole MacKaye. Most of those papers have never made it into the Appalachian Trail Conservancy archives, much less into the long-held internal portraits of the progenitor of the A.T.

At his Harvard class' 50th reunion, MacKaye noted:

"What have I been doing for the past half-century? Well, I've been titled, officially or otherwise, a forester, a regional planner, a conservationist, a geographer, and an economist; once I was anointed engineer.

"To tell you the truth, my job has been called by every name except the right one—that would be whatever you'd call the job of making our fair land more fair and habitable. One way to do this is to prevent the land from oozing away entirely: hence erosion control, flood control, and forestry.

"The other way is to equip the land for living and guard against its decline into a series of hellholes; hence, preserving the open spaces, highway reform and — in general — regional planning."

The idea that MacKaye, who publicly proposed the A.T. at age 42 and lived more than 96 years, wrote one article and otherwise sat in the shadows thinking deep thoughts is the first thing to be dispelled. In his papers at the Dartmouth College Library is a hand-written spreadsheet from about the time of that Harvard reunion,

MACKAYE PICKED UP A TIDBIT HERE AND A PHILOSOPHY THERE, WEAVING EVER-DISCOVERED NEW NOTIONS INTO A TAPESTRY HE HAD BEEN CREATING IN HIS MIND SINCE WANDERING THE HILLS AROUND SHIRLEY CENTER AT AGE NINE.

listing all his jobs (or not), employers, where he stayed, what he was paid, and reason for leaving. It is eight pages long, eight entries per page, until it stops in 1942 before he finished a Rural Electrification Administration posting in 1945 and then led for a few years the Wilderness Society he helped found.

He wrote down such titles as tutor, master at boys' camp, forest assistant, instructor, consultant, forest examiner, colonization specialist, writer, route agent, editorial writer, researcher, regional planner, forester, Emergency Conservation Work inspector, conservationist, and industrial economist.

The list does not appear to include the freelance writing that provided some occasional income to a monastic man, writing almost daily, who spent decades of his life in a Shirley Center, Massachusetts, house with no electricity, a woodstove for heat, and a pump for water, trying to also provide for his mother and sister. Then again, he also was well-known as a peripatetic house guest among his broad circle of friends and benefactors.

The notion that is the most unfair is that he merely stood aside from 1921 until Avery took charge of the A.T. project in 1930 and finished the completion of a flagged and mapped (only spottily "built") footpath in 1937. MacKaye himself in 1975 modestly described that Roaring Twenties period as "years of conferring, routing, brush-cutting, mapping, consulting with Forest and Park Services." He left out meetings at least annually at Hudson Guild Farm to brainstorm with his fellow planners.

In fact, the vast majority of the figures — volunteers and government officials — who constituted the central and local leadership associated with Avery were introduced to the A.T. project by MacKaye in the 1920s.

Biographer Larry Anderson writes of those labels and job titles:

"Snapshots of MacKaye's writing and activities at particular junctures of his lengthy career might place him comfortably in standard scholarly pigeonholes labeled conservationist, preservationist, environmentalist, forester, regionalist, planner, or ecologist. Partly by virtue of his longevity, but primarily because he was motivated more by intuition and personal experience than by a systematic philosophy or discipline, such stereotypes do not prove very useful in MacKaye's case."

Still, what was he thinking, and where did it come from? It is helpful, when reading MacKaye's article proposing an Appalachian Trail or the dozens of articles and three books he published or the scores of academic papers about him, to understand his language.

"Urban" is a lively city and could be good, if its cultural life were robust and its air clean.

"Metropolitan" is an urban settlement overtaken by industry and metastasizing into the countryside, inorganic, submerging life. MacKaye's position was that the metropolis destroyed individuals and "indigenous" character — that would be the "problem of living" of which he writes: living to work, without work/life balance. He sometimes used "industrialized cities" without specific examples or reference to any such in which he lived.

"Indigenous" is the New England village like his beloved Shirley Center, Massachusetts, the best of environs and the cultural complement to a city (not to a metropolis). He never abandoned his proposition

UNCLE BENTON

By Ky Ober

MY GREAT-UNCLE BENTON SPENT EVERY summer with us at our home in New Hampshire. When my grandfather was alive, the two brothers spent hours walking and talking together, then each retiring to his work — my grandfather to his poetry, Uncle Benton to his philosophizing, his numerous letters, and his meticulous daily diary.

Every morning at breakfast, Uncle Benton would tell of his adventures, and we all, loving them, would egg him on: "Sixty years ago today, I embarked on my first grand excursion into the wilderness…," he would say. The experience and the telling were grand and expansive, but Uncle Benton's voice was very much of the present, direct, emphatic, feet on the ground, bushwhacking through before you could reach the awe-inspiring view from the top.

Uncle Benton was staunchly loyal to family and close friends, and his friends to him. Lewis Mumford, Clarence Stein, and many others stayed in touch regularly, and Benton would catch us up on their lives, so we had as examples for our own lives, the richness of enduring friendship. And to all those who were lucky enough to be in Uncle Benton's circle of warm and embraced "family," he signed off with his distinctive "Arms Out, Benton."

Summer Still Light
Chine-colle', monoprint lithograph on Japanese paper
"I hope the print captures that moment at the end of a summer day when the light is still there, but warm, glowing. All is still, warmth, peace." -Ky Ober

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Ky (Marion MacKaye) Ober grew up in New York City in the winters and at her grandfather's (Percy MacKaye's) Cornish Colony home in New Hampshire in the summers. She was deeply influenced by the rich cultural life of the city and the direct encounter with nature and creative life she experienced there with her grandfather and great-uncle Benton. She attended the Rudolf Steiner School where both her parents taught, and she later received an undergraduate degree in biology and graduate degree in Landscape Architecture, only to study art at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University and teach there as an associate faculty member for many years. Through her position on the Boston Printmakers Board, she has been able to participate in and support student and professional printmakers through national exhibitions and international printmaking exchanges and has enjoyed extensive travel and collaborative work with other artists. She lives with her husband in Arlington, Massachusetts.

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that such villages were the best of all worlds for man, forming the cambium or organic source for all human life. (MacKaye clearly considered what became New England, settled since perhaps 10,000 BCE, to be uninhabited by civilized humans prior to the Anglo-Saxon colonization of the 17th Century — more than an irony, since the Nipmuc indigenous to Shirley Center and other tribes reportedly were organized in the way he wished the world to be.)

"Primeval" is not the world as it was at creation but the forested summit seen from that village, the apex humans should seek out to elevate their vision and his own lifelong point of departure for imagining a different present through panoramic vision.

"Region" is a place not bounded by artificial, political boundaries but defined by watersheds or other physiographic features, such as the Appalachians or the Tennessee River Valley.

That vague, drab word "habitable" — much like "play" — appears constantly in his lifetime of writing, although what he means by it is elusive in essays that otherwise are full of the most active, flamboyant images fitting for the son and sibling of a theatrical family. His rhetoric, at times circumspect, also could tend toward the virile, masculine woodsman, even that of combat. Addressing this higher calling, Anderson notes that MacKaye in his *The New Exploration* (a book he considered a better description of his A.T. ideas than the article) declared the "ultimate human aspiration consists in one form or another of broadening our mental and spiritual horizon."

"Wilderness" is another slippery word, today often reflexively associated with MacKaye and even the 1921 article, where it actually appears just once — to describe the southern Appalachians. He began using it more frequently in the early 1930s, often replacing "primeval" with it, as he became associated closely with Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, and other preservationists… although he was known to mock "pompous pansy planters." He later said, oddly, that his first taste of wilderness was the fully logged over White Mountains he hiked through with college friends in 1897.

He came late to preservation, advocating in earlier years for planned, controlled development of the environment — through sustainably managed forestry, for starters — for human happiness rather than profit. In his 1965 doctoral dissertation, MacKaye editor Paul T. Bryant wrote, "He wishes to preserve for use, not to embalm. The first step in an activity that is to be in genuine harmony with the landscape… must be an effort to learn the physical, scientific facts about the development of the landscape…as an organic being always subject to a continuing process."

And "recreation"? MacKaye meant re-creation, not necessarily hiking or camping or other activities, but instead spending time studying and absorbing nature to advance one's mind and soul, seemingly his idea of "play." In MacKaye's own papers on his idea of an outdoor culture, he values applied science in geology and biology in the backcountry over aesthetics (except as it could inform art).

Still, whispering people want to know, was he really a socialist and the 1921 article a propaganda tract? Anderson and others document that he was a member of the Harvard Socialist Club, a number of his siblings and many of his friends and associates were Socialist Party members later, and his wife Betty's last public appearance was sharing a stage with party leader Norman Thomas. However, especially in the 1920s, socialism had many genres; his brothers tended toward what's termed market or utilitarian socialism. (Benton at least once referred to others' utopian writings as pipe dreams.) Historian Paul Sutter suggests his approach was more of a socially informed or progressive conservation.

More importantly, MacKaye's writings contain none of the conventional rubrics associated with that ideology. He emphasizes evolution over any form of economic or other revolution — promoting an era of balance and harmony among metropolis, village, and "primeval." Rather than state ownership of production or any form of autocracy, he advocated using private industry as a means toward man's higher ends (rather than the reverse). He always praises local, decentralized control rather than central control by government, which, as a longtime federal employee, he viewed as tending toward the bureaucratic.

In his colonization proposals (including parts of the A.T. idea), he wanted the government to own the land, build minimum roads to access it, and watch out for the caretaking resident workers' safety but otherwise to stand back benignly. This was not a new idea for MacKaye: A Labor Department article he wrote in 1919 fully developed his notions of rural colonies for returning World War I soldiers — tied to federal or state land they would only emotionally own as their inner lives improved. He sometimes worried aloud about being tied to the new Bolsheviks he once flirted with from afar.

Nonetheless, his proposals for collective community welfare would clash with the dominant cultural value placed on private landownership, property rights, traditional land settlement and resource-development practices, and individualism generally. As Anderson notes, he "lived and worked against the American grain" in many ways — antagonistic to automobiles and mountain roads, for example, when officials needed both to get people to parks and forests and trails he prized, to justify public spending on such things. In time, Sutter notes, he even challenged the New Deal for rebuilding regions he wanted to reform.

A 1948 gathering of "The Woodticks," an informal annual late-May assembly of a "hall of fame" of New England foresters and conservationists who would hike Mount Monadnock and then spend the rest of the weekend swapping stories; MacKaye is at top left. Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives photo

In developing the 1921 article, MacKaye, editor Charles Harris Whitaker, and architect Clarence Stein consciously went out of their ways to tweak out from the drafts any hints of socialism and peg it all superficially to "recreation," knowing that word had wider public appeal. (And MacKaye always played to his audiences, Anderson notes.)

The three of them met at Hudson Guild Farm. A memorandum, titled "Regional Planning and Social Readjustment," MacKaye wrote in preparation for meetings on the article is noted by Anderson:

"In a new draft of his regional planning memorandum [about the proposed article], MacKaye elaborated on the rationale for pursuing a recreational project as a first step in a broader plan for 'social readjustment.' Were they to mount a 'frontal attack' on the industrial system, involving the construction of worker-owned industrial communities, it would meet stiff opposition from 'ultraconservatives' and big business, he predicted. 'If they did not call it "visionary," they would say it was "Bolshevistic" and "dangerous." By contrast, a project containing a mountain trail and a series of recreational camps and communities would make a flank attack on the problems of social readjustment. This fact, if understood, would lose for the project the support of the ultraconservatives along the recreation group. But it would retain the support of the liberal minded and of the radicals therein. And these together would form a majority of the recreation group.' The Appalachian project … would provide an indirect route to his conception of the ideal American society — 'to live, work, and play on a nonprofit basis.'"

The A.T. and shelters were for the temporary urban visitors; the underlying idea was to redistribute population to permanent communities supporting the mountaintop camps. As Garrett D. Nelson noted in an article two years ago, "The immediate goal of constructing a long-distance hiking trail was the precondition to a broader indictment of capitalism, urbanization, and industrialization. And much as the [Clarence Stein] garden-city concept devolved into sprawling suburbs that did not challenge but rather exemplified the capitalist mainstream, so too the Appalachian Trail is now better understood as an escape from society than as an attempt to reform it."

MacKaye acknowledged privately the risk, after the article was published, that its trail portion and recreation in the usual sense alone would warp his plan and dominate appeal among supporters. He soon shifted his writings toward constantly evolving and revising the ideas that were shown to have the most appeal, the footpath and shelters. Interestingly, "recreation" is a primary value in the 1964 Wilderness

AS MACKAYE SAID IN A MESSAGE TO ATC 90 YEARS AGO THIS SUMMER, “OUR JOB IS TO MAKE AN AMERICAN SANCTUARY — FOR THE BIRDS AND THE TREES, YES, AND THROUGH THEM FOR OURSELVES: TO DO THIS IN A PARTICULAR PLACE, NAMELY IN THE GREAT CENTRAL PRIMEVAL BARRIER OF THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS.”

Act that MacKaye somewhat shepherded behind the scenes, while it does not appear at all among the values to be protected by national scenic trails under the National Trails System Act of 1968.

From childhood, just as summits were his perch, MacKaye was in awe of explorers (notably John Wesley Powell, whose Cosmos Club in old age became a winter haven). And so his ever-hungry mind explored intellectually — from the ancient Greeks to German philosophers to English poets to Thoreau (Walden is twenty miles from Shirley Center), Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Perkins Marsh, and Gifford Pinchot (his first federal boss). From William James to the newly formed Boy Scouts, to his colleagues in the Regional Planning Association that bankrolled the first decade of the A.T. project, to any “down-to-earth folks” he came across, to Sir Patrick Geddes, and to his closest associates, such as Stein and Lewis Mumford, during their late-night “pow-wows.”

From his own experiences, he sought universal truths — to be taught. “He did not acquire New England’s culture — its feeling for democracy, its transcendental view of man — intellectually and consciously,” asserts Bryant. “He absorbed these things through his pores and took them for granted, submerged in the atmosphere of his family and his town. His own intellectual development was fittingly organic.”

Not unlike the mythical giant in his article, stepping down the Appalachian chain and sampling bits of the culture as he went, MacKaye the perpetual tutor and ideas man stepped through the entire European intellectual universe available to him. He picked up a tidbit here and a philosophy there, weaving ever-discovered new notions into a tapestry he had been creating in his mind since wandering the hills around Shirley Center at age nine.

That tapestry portrays humans reaching their highest and happiest development in a planned, balanced, harmonious world of village, city, and elevated backcountry, with industry subservient — if only they would cultivate the tools and openness to find it there. His longtime collaborator Lewis Mumford, Anderson shares, once commented to a would-be publisher of Benton’s sprawling magnum opus that decoding that tapestry is not simple: “The man, the style, the thought are inseparable.”

Instead, as MacKaye said in a message to ATC 90 years ago this summer, “Our job is to make an American sanctuary — for the birds and the trees, yes, and through them for ourselves: to do this in a particular place, namely in the great central primeval barrier of the Appalachian Mountains.”

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In addition to MacKaye’s writings, this essay relies heavily on the work of Larry Anderson, Paul T. Bryant, Paul Sutter, and John Ross. Brian King is the publisher for the ATC and author of The Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America’s Hiking Trail.

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Diana Christopulos

FOR A LONG TIME, THE A.T. WAS JUST ANOTHER TRAIL THAT I HAD BACKPACKED IN SMALL sections in New York and Virginia. But, one October day in 2000, it became an obsession. My hike south from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to Keys Gap, Virginia, was full of brilliant fall color changes and views of clear blue skies that stretched out so far that I could see planes taking off from Dulles International Airport in Virginia. At one point, I stopped dead. I could feel the connection from Maine to Georgia, and I became a hostage of the A.T. dream.

I began to section-hike the entire Trail – first for a week at a time, then four weeks, and finally six weeks. My first trip to Maine left me battered and demoralized. But, I was ready the second time, and now it is my favorite state, even though I live in Virginia. I finished in October 2008 on another color-splashed day. At the end of that hike, I felt enormous peace and relaxation instead of urgency and fear of failure. Those feelings now recur within minutes every time I return to the Trail.

Today I am a citizen of the 2,200-mile linear village that is the A.T., doing whatever is needed to protect and enjoy the Trail and its surroundings while helping others do the same. Officially, I am the past president and archivist for the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC) as well as a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) President’s Leadership Circle. That can mean retrieving the RATC’s post-1932 archives from someone’s basement or attic, helping the ATC and National Park Service (NPS) create a visual inventory of A.T. views in Virginia and Maine, writing comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission about a dangerous pipeline crossing the A.T., attending Zoom meetings with the NPS, meeting hikers and hauling out trash as a volunteer ATC ridgerunner, or just pausing to eat juicy wineberries along the way. Whatever it takes.

Benton MacKaye in 1889, age 10. His late-in-life admonition to "Speak softly, but carry a big map!" clearly stemmed from a very young age. Photo courtesy of the Shirley Historical Society and the A.T. Museum

FROM TRAUMA TO DREAM

MacKaye's Troubled Path to the Appalachian Trail

By Larry Anderson

"WASHINGTON WENT DOWN LIKE A TENT. EVERYTHING dropped. That was the real beginning of normalcy right there." Benton MacKaye, years later, recalled the mood and the events in the nation's capital after the November 1918 armistice that ended World War I. By then, Washington, D.C., had been MacKaye's home and headquarters since 1911, as he worked energetically and productively for two new federal agencies, the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Labor.

During those postwar years, the course of MacKaye's life and career veered sharply and erratically. This period, from late 1918 through 1921, proved truly pivotal for his personal life and public legacy.

His personal circumstances mirrored the tumultuous political, economic, and cultural events then roiling the nation: the Spanish influenza pandemic beginning in 1918; bitter struggles between labor and industry; racial riots, some of which led to mass killings, lynchings, and the destruction of Black neighborhoods; a roller-coaster economy, punctuated by periods of high unemployment, inflation, and housing shortages; the climax of the long crusade for women's suffrage; a 1917 revolution in Russia and the rise of a new communist Soviet regime; and, in response, an American "Red Scare" in 1919-1920.

The armistice coincided with an abrupt change: Republicans that month won control of Congress for the first time in a decade. MacKaye had come of professional age during the tenure of a Republican president, Theodore Roosevelt, a conservation champion. In 1905, he began his career as a part-time forester in the newly created U.S. Forest Service under the agency's ambitious chief forester, Gifford Pinchot. The momentum of the conservation crusade began to slow after the 1908 election of Roosevelt's Republican successor, William Howard Taft, who fired Pinchot in 1910. Nonetheless, when MacKaye assumed a full-time Forest Service position as a "forest examiner" in 1911, the spirit of the Progressive era still remained alive in federal agencies, the halls of Congress, and the opinions of many Americans, including Benton himself.

He quickly came under the protective wing of influential senior officials who appreciated his unique talents and perspectives and also shared some of his political inclinations. By 1915, MacKaye had begun to cooperate on projects with the recently created Department of Labor, under Assistant Secretary Louis Post; he officially transferred to that department in 1918 with the bureaucratic space to operate as essentially a freelance investigator and policy analyst.

MacKaye's personal life and activities during these years revolved around like-minded journalists, officials, lobbyists, and activists — they dubbed themselves "Hell Raisers" — who organized and propagandized for a broad variety of social and political causes. Their circle included some of the women suffragists affiliated with the militant Congressional Union (CU) led by the charismatic Alice Paul. Benton's younger sister, Hazel, was active in the CU, which soon evolved into the National Woman's Party.

Through Hazel, Benton in 1914 first met Jessie Hardy Stubbs, a widow and former

A young Benton MacKaye (center) hiking in New Hampshire in 1897 with Harvard friends Sturgis Pray (left) and J.W. Draper after their freshman year.
Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library

nurse from Chicago, who had been recruited by Paul for her skills as an organizer and public speaker. In 1915, Benton and "Betty," as she was familiarly known, were married. Both were intensely involved in their intertwined vocations and advocacy. Their respective extensive travels and busy schedules often kept them apart.

Benton and Betty joined their Hell Raising compatriots in futile opposition to American intervention in World War I. Nonetheless, when Congress in April 1917 approved a declaration of war against Germany, Benton in his official role adapted the plans and legislation he'd been developing for "colonization" to provide opportunities and employment for returning soldiers. The core of such a program called for the development of government-sponsored agricultural and forest communities on federal lands.

The fruit of those efforts culminated in his substantial, 144-page report, *Employment and Natural Resources*, published in September 1919. Described by planning scholar Roy Lubove as "among the most mature and memorable fruits of the American conservation movement," the report, illustrated with MacKaye's stimulating maps, was a provocative work of wide range and scope. In addition to the planned farming settlements and permanent forest communities, MacKaye also described in detail ideas for a federal construction service, planned mining communities, and development of hydroelectric power and other river-development projects. The catalog of ambitious programs was ignored in the quickly changing political environment of the moment.

Publication of *Employment and Natural Resources* closed the first chapter of MacKaye's career as a full-time federal employee. Funds for his position had evaporated as of the end of June, but Post helped him secure a temporary appointment with the Postal Service.

That September also marked a change in Benton and Betty's living arrangements. They moved from their own Washington apartment to a larger rowhouse, which they shared with several of their friends and compatriots. "Hell House," as they called their new home, was something of an experiment in cooperative living, as well as a political salon and meeting place. "The usual run of 'reds,' freaks, reformers, Non-Partisan Leaguers, Chinamen, et al. continue to come to us," Benton wrote his mother, describing their lively new household.

"We are simple souls, full of busy ideas and not in a notion to fuss about the fashionables!" Betty reported to her mother-in-law from Hell House. "All of our friends are the journalist crowd who never know where the bread and butter are coming from and do not care. They are a jolly, happy group who know life and live it!" Benton looked to his friends for contacts and assistance in remaking himself as a journalist. His articles appeared in a variety of liberal and leftist magazines and newspapers.

The atmosphere at Hell House was not as carefree as Betty had portrayed it, though. Stuart Chase and another of their housemates, Aaron Kravitz, both staffers at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), were targets of a congressional investigation about their alleged socialist agenda and influence in preparing a scathing report on the price-setting practices of Chicago meatpackers. They eventually lost their FTC jobs. The specter of communist influence intensified the federal government's efforts to root out suspected "subversives."

Some of the Hell House residents, frustrated by national political trends and attracted to what they saw as the bright prospects of the new Soviet experiment, contemplated a more drastic response: volunteering their services to the Bolshevik government of Russia, not yet recognized by the United States. Benton, Betty, and another close Hell House habitué, journalist Herbert Brougham, met with Americans who had recently been to Russia, who introduced them to that government's self-proclaimed American representative, Ludwig C.A.K. Martens. By late March, they had drafted a letter and accompanying résumés, which they presented to Martens. MacKaye, Brougham, and another of their acquaintances, Charles Harris Whitaker, editor of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (JAIA), were signatories. Betty and Chase were among those who included their résumés. "Am particularly interested in the opening of new country and resources through railroad development," Benton described his proposed work in Russia, "and in the utilization of land — farming, timber, and mineral land — so as to avoid, from the start, the needless exploitation of labor which has been the history of land concessions in America." Martens, preoccupied with legal challenges that led to his eventual deportation, acknowledged but did not act on the proposal.

With no immediate prospects, Benton and Betty retreated to the MacKaye family refuge in Shirley Center, Massachusetts, in mid-June. For much of the previous decade, Benton had not spent much time in his beloved home territory, which he regarded as "always somewhat insulated from the dust storms of the Sahara of general life." The rural summer interlude provided Benton an opportunity to convene with his siblings and mother to rearrange the ownership of their two modest homes, help his neighbors with haying, and, with Betty, take stock of their prospects.

In July, a new opportunity arose for Benton and Betty to reorient their lives and for Benton to reorient his career — but in new surroundings far from Washington. Herbert Brougham, whose personal relationship with both Benton and Betty was becoming closer and more complex, had recently been hired as managing editor of the *Milwaukee Leader*, a Socialist daily. The *Leader* and its long-time editor, Victor Berger, were already embroiled in controversy. Berger had served an earlier term as the first Socialist Party member of Congress, elected in 1910. He was elected again in 1918 but denied his seat by vote of the House after his 1919 conviction (later reversed) under the Espionage Act for his antiwar statements. As Benton joined the paper, Berger was once again running for Congress.

MacKaye's personal brand of socialism, such as it was, didn't involve him in the ideological infighting that plagued and divided the movement. He preferred to work mostly on his own or with a few trusted colleagues who understood or at least trusted his sometimes-intangible methods. Now, as a writer for a newspaper closely identified with the Socialist Party, his editorials were couched in partisan and sometimes intense rhetoric. But, Berger had a reputation as "the most conservative of all Socialists." Benton was temperamentally attuned to the editor's nonviolent, incremental approach to reform, based on voting, strikes, and "cooperative enterprise." With Brougham's guidance, Benton churned out editorials on a wide range of subjects, while hewing to the *Leader's* ideological line.

From top: From left, the future Betty MacKaye (then Betty Stubbs), Ida Craft, and Rosalie Jones promoting a women's suffrage mass meeting on the roof of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, thought to be taken in 1913. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. On August 18, 1920, several members of the MacKaye family active in the National Women's Party gathered at the Shirley (Massachusetts) Meeting House for a bell-ringing to mark the passage of the 19th Amendment. Mary MacKaye, Benton's mother, is third from the right, with his sister Hazel, who worked with Alice Paul from the beginning of the movement, behind her. To Mrs. MacKaye's right is Christy MacKaye.
Courtesy of the Shirley Historical Society

Even as Benton worked long hours to find his footing as a newspaperman, his domestic circumstances remained complex and stressful. The success of the suffrage crusade represented an upheaval in the lives of the women closest to Benton — not only his wife, but also his sister Hazel and his mother, Mary. All had in some measure relied upon the National Woman's Party (NWP) as a source of their livelihood, however meager. The NWP had also provided them a tight-knit sorority of personal support, which began to dissipate after passage of the suffrage amendment.

Hazel MacKaye, a playwright like her father and another older brother, Percy, and a women's suffrage activist like her sister-in-law, Betty, is seen here with brother Benton during one of his visits with her at the Gould Farm sanitarium in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, where she lived for nine years after a nervous breakdown in 1928.
Photo courtesy of Gould Farm

In Milwaukee, Betty threw herself into the cause of global disarmament and peace. She organized a branch of the Women's Peace Society (WPS) and demonstrated how she would exercise her newly established right to vote by declaring publicly that she had joined the Socialist Party. In October, a letter arrived from Hazel describing the plight she and her mother faced: little money, little income, no place to live for the winter. Benton, Betty, and Brougham together decided to invite Hazel and Mary to join them in Milwaukee. But, within only a few weeks, the crowded household was in crisis. Betty had alienated even some of her long-time allies in suffrage and peace activism when, at a well-attended Milwaukee rally, she had called for a "bride strike" to further the peace cause.

Betty's provocative, elemental challenge crossed a line even for the Socialist, worker-owned *Leader*. Elizabeth Thomas, the paper's president, balked at running either Benton's editorial supporting his wife's proposal or Brougham's article describing the rally. Brougham promptly resigned. He and Betty were soon on a train to Chicago to promote the bride-strike campaign.

Within a few days, all five members of the unconventional household decided to return east. Betty and Brougham departed for New York City to scout for places to live and job opportunities. Benton, remaining in Milwaukee with his mother and sister, submitted his resignation from the *Leader*, effective at the end of December. "There is a new confident note about him nowadays," Hazel wrote of Benton as they departed on the eve of 1921. "He frankly admits he's found that he can write — and has a real belief in himself. That was worth coming to Milwaukee for — if for nothing else!"

Betty found the couple an apartment on West 12th Street in New York City. (Brougham now lived a block away.) She also learned of a seemingly ideal opportunity for Benton at a new nonprofit organization, the Technical Alliance, dedicated "to applying the achievements of science to social and industrial affairs." Headed by "Chief Engineer" Howard Scott, an intense and controversial figure, the group's small staff and organizing committee included some of Benton's acquaintances, such as Stuart Chase and Charles Harris Whitaker. Benton immediately set to work drafting reports. In early March, he delivered his final project to Scott, who offered no additional work.

Though Benton's prospects remained uncertain, and he was suffering from the severe intestinal symptoms that plagued him for much of his life, he immediately began, partly out of necessity, to develop some of his own proposals and ideas on his own terms. One idea in particular, which had been taking shape in his imagination since his youthful turn-of-the century hikes in the mountains of New Hampshire and Vermont, began to come into focus. "Doping out plans for Appal. trails," he noted in his pocket diary on March 15, 1921.

The tragic events of the next months would represent the major turning point of Benton MacKaye's lifetime. As he began sketching out plans for hiking trails and recreational communities along the Appalachian range, Betty had continued her efforts in support of world disarmament, now as legislative chairwoman of the WPS. She spoke at rallies and traveled to Washington for congressional hearings in support of a resolution calling for an international disarmament conference. The recently inaugurated President Harding met with the WPS delegation in early April, but he responded coolly. A disheartened Betty, according to her own correspondence, was considering retreating from the peace crusade.

In retrospect, it is clear that the Benton and Betty MacKaye were at a personal crossroads. Rotus Eastman, a friend from the years Benton spent teaching forestry at Harvard when both he and Eastman were active in the Harvard Socialist Club, asked Benton to visit him at

MACKAYE'S PERSONAL PATH TO THE COMPOSITION AND PUBLICATION OF HIS HISTORY-MAKING, LANDSCAPE-TRANSFORMING ARTICLE WAS STREWN WITH OBSTACLES, SETBACKS, AND FAMILY TRAGEDY, BUT THAT PATH LED HIM TO A NEW VOCATION, A NEW CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, AND A HOPEFUL NEW LEASE ON LIFE.

his Sutton, Quebec, farm, just over the border from Vermont. When he headed north on April 3, Benton was concerned enough about Betty's state of mind to make sure that a young friend of theirs, Kathryn Lincoln, would stay with his wife.

While Benton helped Eastman gather maple sap and began his "'larger work' on Soc. Engin'g," Betty, on April 6, shared the platform at a Philadelphia peace meeting with Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas. Her talk was titled "Can Women Stop War?" The weight of the world and her personal concerns were wearing her down. Upon her return to New York, she fell into deep depression.

On April 15, Benton received a letter from Betty and an urgent telegram from Lincoln and Brougham, describing her agitated state. He immediately caught a train back, arriving the next day. Two days later, April 18, Betty MacKaye was dead.

Melodramatic stories in New York newspapers recounted the moments and events preceding Betty's death. She, Benton, and their friend, Mable Irwin, had gone to Grand Central Station to catch a train to Irwin's home near Croton-on-Hudson, where they hoped Betty might recover. While Benton was buying tickets, Betty bolted from Irwin, reportedly exclaiming, "I'm going to kill myself" and "I'm going to end it all," as she left the station. The accounts of what happened next, without documented witnesses, were lurid and sometimes contradictory. But, the outcome was grim and unequivocal. Betty's body was recovered from the Brooklyn shore of the East River later that afternoon and identified the next morning by Irwin and Whitaker.

Benton would later recount her previous severe breakdown in early 1918, which might have involved a suicide attempt. "There was something wrong with her mind and that is all we know," he wrote to one of Betty's relatives shortly after his wife's death.

Of all MacKaye's unresolved emotions, his feelings about Herbert Brougham, unexpressed in any surviving records, may have been among the most confusing and troubling. In any event, except for a "good talk" a few weeks after Betty died, the two men apparently had little contact from that point on. Brougham, who later married Kathryn Lincoln, died twenty-five years to the day after Betty's suicide.

Physically and emotionally spent himself, Benton moved in for a time with his brother Harold's family in Yonkers. But, the direction of MacKaye's life and career at this precarious moment was set by his friend, the generous and supportive Whitaker. Editor of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* since 1913, he and Benton came to know each other during their "Hell Raiser" and "Hell House" days in Washington. They shared a New England background as well as common political interests and aims. Whitaker was familiar with some of Benton's specific ideas and his unique means of expressing himself.

Now Whitaker threw MacKaye a lifeline. He invited his distraught friend to spend some time at the modest farmstead he had recently acquired in the northwestern New Jersey township of Mount Olive. "Come on out and live there for a while and be my aide de camp," he wrote. "It is grand beyond words!"

By June, Benton was spending time at Whitaker's retreat, helping his friend with the many chores needed to make the place livable. He also plunged into an intense writing binge. A 60-page "Memo. on Regional Planning" essentially recapitulated ideas he had developed in his *Employment and Natural Resources* report, but with the sharper edge and rhetoric reflecting his brief stint as an editorial writer. He was using the term "regional planning" for the first time to describe his approach and what he now saw as his vocation. His vision of regional planning encompassed an alternative to the capitalist industrial system. "Given time," he optimisti-

cally wrote, "the cooperative principle will replace the competitive one."

MacKaye's memo included three specific regional planning projects "with a view to securing (his) tangible employment for the regional planning in the form of a series of articles in popular magazine style."

One project piqued the interest of Whitaker, an experienced editor, and encouraged him to take the consequential step of introducing MacKaye and his ideas to a wider circle of influential acquaintances. Benton's proposed "Survey and Plan for an Outdoor Recreation System through the Appalachian Region" was intentionally conceived as a backdoor approach to regional planning and social reform. "In view of ... the fact that outdoor recreation makes instant appeal to all classes of humans," he wrote, "it is suggested that the most popular approach to a comprehension of regional planning might be made by presenting some big bold conception in public recreational life."

Most importantly, he described clearly and for the first time the central, connecting element of the "Outdoor Recreation System" he visualized. He proposed "the building of a 'long trail' over the full length of the Appalachian skyline — from the highest peak in the north to the highest peak in the south — from Mt. Washington to Mt. Mitchell." Upon reading this memorandum on June 28, and talking it over with MacKaye, Whitaker that day wrote to another friend and colleague, Clarence Stein, about MacKaye's work. An urbane, progressive New York City architect, Stein headed the Committee on Community Planning of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Whitaker recognized that MacKaye's embryonic ideas suggested a novel type of community — entirely different from anything yet conceived by urban-oriented architectural thinkers like himself and Stein.

On July 10, MacKaye accompanied Whitaker to meet Stein for the first time at the Hudson Guild Farm, on Lake Hopatcong, only a few miles from Mount Olive. Stein had designed some of the buildings at the farm, which was maintained as a retreat by New York's Hudson Guild Settlement House. This meeting, when Whitaker offered to publish an article concerning the Appalachian recreation plan in the *Journal* and Stein agreed to promote it through his AIA Committee, launched the Appalachian Trail.

During the next month, MacKaye adapted his memo into an article somewhat closer to the "popular magazine style" he had suggested. The *JAIA*, of course, was a professional journal, not a popular magazine. Nonetheless, in bringing order to Benton's sprawling drafts, Whitaker excised words like "socialism" and "social engineering" from the published article. In that article, the forty-two-year-old author revealed an entirely original — and what has proved to be an exceptionally successful — approach to grassroots activism, conservation, and community building.

Clarence Stein, left, and Benton MacKaye in 1964 in the garden of Washington, D.C.'s Cosmos Club, founded by explorer John Wesley Powell, a hero of MacKaye from the time he was twelve. Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives photo

Benton MacKaye's personal path to the composition and publication of his history-making, landscape-transforming article was strewn with obstacles, setbacks, and family tragedy, but that path led him to a new vocation, a new circle of friends and colleagues, and a hopeful new lease on life.

MacKaye never remarried. Indeed, except among his family members and oldest friends, he rarely if ever mentioned or wrote of his marriage to Betty during the rest of his long life. Not until 1981, when the archivist who catalogued MacKaye's voluminous papers revealed that fact in a Dartmouth College Library Bulletin article, did Betty's name and relationship to Benton become generally known.

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Larry Anderson is the author of Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail *(Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), from which portions of this article are adapted. He also published a book of related essays,* Peculiar Work: Writing about Benton MacKaye, Conservation, Community.

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I AM ONE OF MANY VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN PRESERVING THE very simple aim of being able to walk from one side of this country to the next without intruding on somebody's private turf and, in the process, seeing some of the best landscapes this country has to offer. Parts of it are possibly still very much like what early visitors – Daniel Boone, Johnny Appleseed, or even Harriet Tubman – saw and experienced. To me, that's such a simple and basic thing that people take for granted as space around us is plundered, gobbled, and built on. This fundamental vision – walking in the footsteps of our landed heritage – is a powerful connection that literally resonates in my soul.

My relationship to the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) these days is that of a walking tourist and aficionado of open-space walkabouts. I'm a journeyman and rambling man who likes the intimacy of seeing the world at ground level – one step at a time. I see the Trail as a resource whose protection is vitally important. The A.T. is, in my view, a public-trust resource that needs to be preserved intentionally or else will disappear and people will lose their sense of connectivity to nature in the process. We could readily lose the sense that this country is something that can be experienced with your feet as well as with your heart, mind, and spirit.

I am fascinated by the A.T. and, like the river I protect in my day job as a riverkeeper, every bend in the river or every bend in the Trail offers something precious and unique that is intriguing and never quite the same twice. The Trail gives up its treasures in ways that affect each of us very personally and very individually. I have found that I not only admire and appreciate seeing the world one step at a time, but I also enjoy the people on the Trail whose perspective is generally fixated on the next ridgeline and seeing what's over the next hill, switchback, or mountain range. It's an amazing and very personal thing – and it's "free," or at least it's not something that has been turned into a commercial commodity. That is no small thing.

A two-photo composite. Left: Benton MacKaye reads while sitting on Eagle Rock near Jacksboro, Tennessee; Right: Myron Avery points to the horizon from Shenandoah National Park in 1938. Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives photos

FROM BENTON TO MYRON

The Dreamer, the Driver

by David B. Field

CHAPTER TWELVE OF BENTON MACKAYE'S 1928 BOOK, *The New Exploration*, is entitled, "Controlling the Metropolitan Invasion." He viewed uncontrolled expansion of development from urban centers along motorways — analogous to a flow of water from an improperly controlled reservoir — as a threat to the countryside. He envisioned a series of "open areas" along the Appalachian mountain range as a "dam across the metropolitan flood." Motorways could still pass through, but the preserved open areas would thwart development along those routes. He felt that the developing Appalachian Trail (A.T. or Trail) "marked the main open way across the metropolitan deluge issuing from the ports of the Atlantic seaboard." It would "form the base…for controlling the metropolitan invasion."

In a March 15, 1936, lecture about the A.T., Myron H. Avery stated, "A project of such magnitude, as this 2,043-mile trail, might seem to have been the result of many suggestions. It can, however, be traced very directly to one man — Benton MacKaye of Shirley Center, Massachusetts. Forester, philosopher and dreamer, MacKaye from his wanderings in the New England forests had conceived the plan of a trail which, for all practical purposes, should be endless. MacKaye also regarded the Trail as the backbone of a primeval environment, a sort of retreat or refuge from a civilization which was becoming too rapidly mechanized and developing into a machine existence."

At that time, Avery, a founder of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), had been chairman of the Appalachian Trail Conference for five years and just become the first "2,000-Miler," having measured all the footpath as he blazed it, persuaded others to form clubs and do the same, and then checked on them.

What did it take to translate MacKaye's dream into reality? MacKaye was a woodsman, but Avery criticized him for focusing on the philosophy of the Trail project while seldom doing what needed to be done to bring it to fruition. Avery saw the need, not only for lobbying and building support from public agencies and private trail organizations, but also for the hard physical work of designing and scouting, marking, clearing, and then ensuring the existence and perpetuation of the volunteer groups that would maintain the Trail. Referring to Avery in a 1935 letter to MacKaye, H.C. "Andy" Anderson, a PATC cofounder and MacKaye ally who tried unsuccessfully to bring Avery and MacKaye together, wrote, "You are a dreamer and a philosopher, inclined to be fanatical, while he is a practical man, getting things done."

MacKaye promoted the "wilderness" aspect of his dream, to the extent that he was willing to see the Trail footpath broken in places where that standard could not be achieved. Avery held to the goal of an unbroken, continuous footpath, even through surroundings that clearly bore the mark of human intrusion. The two clashed over the

creation of the Skyline Drive in Virginia and its impacts on the Trail — MacKaye adamant that ridgecrest roads would destroy the "footpath of the wilderness" and Avery equally adamant that putting a complete Trail on the ground was the primary need, whatever compromises might be needed.

In his eloquent new book, *From Dream to Reality: History of the Appalachian Trail*, the late Tom Johnson notes, "The South was Avery's territory." Much of the route followed by the A.T. in the North (except for Maine) was already well-developed, but "south of the Delaware Water Gap, Avery was, alone, the undisputed leader." Although not always the original scout, he walked every foot in the South and made routing decisions himself. After founding the PATC, "Trail scouting and marking trips began immediately that winter of 1927-1928." With little experience in trail technique, Avery, Frank Schairer, and Andy Anderson learned as they went along how to lay out a trail from Harpers Ferry to Linden (45 miles).

Avery began a solo hike from Rockfish Gap in Virginia on June 9, 1930, carrying a heavy pack and pushing his measuring wheel. "On the evening of the third day, he walked into Camp Kewanzee on Apple Orchard Mountain, having walked and measured seventy trail miles in three days." "In 1931, Avery travelled almost constantly." Just before the Gatlinburg conference, he hiked the entire proposed route from Oglethorpe to Gatlinburg.

"Avery and [Paul] Fink worked together, long distance, to plan the trail route in the Smokies and, to a lesser extent, in the Nantahala, Pisgah, and Unaka forests," Johnson wrote. Fink, an original member of the ATC board, was a pioneer backpacker of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina and early backer of a Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Johnson notes that, in 1930, Avery observed that much of the Trail was located on private land "with the permission of the owners" — "an exaggeration because, in most cases, trail enthusiasts chose not to inform the owners." Avery knew this but "felt it prudent to avoid the issue at the time." He regarded formal, deeded permission to cross the many private landownerships crossed by the Trail as too time-consuming,

Myron Avery (left), Walter Greene (in hat), Shailer Philbrick (back), and Frank Schairer ride the waves and dry laundry en route to the next section to flag in 1933, after installing the first Appalachian Trail sign atop Katahdin's summit.
Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives photo

THE LEGACY CREATED BY MACKAYE AND AVERY COMBINED A VISION OF A WAY TO RETREAT FROM EXCESSES OF CIVILIZATION TO A PRAGMATIC GOAL OF COMPLETING AN UNPRECEDENTED RECREATIONAL ASSET THAT ACHIEVES THAT VISION, IN PART.

opting for "handshake agreements" in most cases.

Ever the pragmatist, Avery wrote countless letters to persons who could provide him advice on routing the Trail. In Maine and some other areas, he followed four criteria: (1.) Minimize the need for cutting new trail, due to lack of volunteers and scarcity of funds for hired work. (2.) Include paths that were likely to be kept maintained for reasons other than the A.T. (3.) Involve public agency personnel in trail marking to give the Trail quasigovernment status. (4.) Locate near public accommodations.

Even the single route was not sacred. In 1935, Avery wrote to Maine's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Director James Sewall: "So, under the circumstances, I concluded that the most desirable procedure here — although we are reluctant to do it as a general matter — would be to have 2 alternative routes — both white-blazed." Dealing with vandalism, he wrote, "It is inevitable that people should take the Trail markers as souvenirs. It simply means we have to keep replacing them. Sometimes I think it would be a good idea to put a supply at some place that is frequented on the Trail and tell people to help themselves and not have to go to the trouble of pulling them off the trees."

Yet, in 1945, he had second thoughts about "easy" routing: "If I were locating the Trail again, I think I would keep clear of all such roads [old tote-roads], although they offer the temptation of an easy route." "I never saw an old road grow shut the way that has in the past three years. Bushes in the road, on the side, and everywhere…To make it worse, the road is badly gullied and washed."

Avery differed strongly with some who believed that sections of the A.T. could not be created until a local organization or organizations could be created to build and take care of it. Avery's approach was that the Trail should first be marked on the ground and only then should its perpetuation be assured by the creation of new clubs or recruitment of existing clubs. The "Driver" focused, first and foremost, on placing the Trail on the ground.

The legacy created by MacKaye and Avery combined a vision of a way to retreat from excesses of civilization to a pragmatic goal of completing an unprecedented recreational asset that achieves that vision, in part.

In a reverse of the original logic, MacKaye's open-areas "dam" against the flood of civilization has become a corridor of land designed to protect the environment of the Appalachian Trail itself. The future of the Trail and the corridor will depend on sustaining the "soul of the Trail," the volunteers who maintain and protect it, and the relationship between those volunteers and the agencies that make the Trail one of the most significant cooperative recreational projects in the history of the United States.

GOING FORWARD

I used to ask my forestry students to imagine standing 100 years in the past and trying to predict the way things were in the present. I then asked them to look ahead 100 years and try to imagine what the world and their professional interests would be like then. There is a spruce tree behind our house that I used to decorate with lights at Christmas, without using a ladder. After 44 years, the tree is now 60 feet tall.

One thing that my students could count on was that trees would grow. But, could the trees survive climate change? Would human values for them change? Would the technologies for managing them change? Only 60 years ago, my generation of foresters saw no sign that computers, GPS, machinery, and changes in demands (such as substitution of electronic news for newspapers and magazines) would appear. When I began working on the Trail, lightweight chainsaws were unheard of. When corridor monitoring first became a regular volunteer chore,

the idea of an "app" on a hand-held smartphone (to say nothing of the smartphone itself) that could show you exactly where you stood, in relation to a survey monument, would have seemed fantasy.

What do we need to think about for the future of the Trail? Let's consider four issues:

Use: Will the future bring levels of use that the Trail cannot sustain? Social carrying capacity is often reached before physical carrying capacity. Will rationing be needed? Can rationing be done? We spend a great deal of time working on and "hardening" the Trail footpath to better withstand its physical use. Just what the tread should be is a more complex question than it used to be. Would it make a difference if the tread were "hardened" over most of its length, so long as the lands over which, and the fields and forests through which, it passes remain primitive? How much change can be tolerated before the effects are unacceptable? How much deterioration of the tread can be tolerated before the impacts are unacceptable? The trick will be finding the best balance between inadequate care and complete taming.

Volunteer Support: The United States faces an unimaginable level of public debt and a seemingly bipartisan unwillingness to pay for it. Over the years, I've preached that the surest guarantor of the future of the Appalachian Trail is the dedication of volunteer Trail workers — a source of productive energy and ideas that is independent of public budget fluctuations.

At the same time, the playing field has changed a great deal since the (only comparatively) simple days when Myron Avery cajoled individuals and clubs into agreeing to take care of keeping sections of the Trail clear. A well-meaning bureaucratic sense of responsibility for the welfare of Trail volunteers is leading to rules and requirements that may stifle both initiative and enthusiasm for Trail work. In all the years that I've been involved with the A.T., the one constant focus of volunteer distaste, if not hatred, has been paperwork. Individuals who will contribute a week of physical labor under the harshest conditions quail at the thought of having to summarize that effort in a one-page report. One of the great challenges of volunteer cultivation is the increase in paperwork that seems to be an inevitable part of the Trail's increasing prominence.

Myron Avery at camp in northern Virginia in 1927 during his first forays into blazing an Appalachian Trail. Photo from an Avery family album, courtesy of David B. Field

Walter Greene (left), and Myron Avery during one of their scouting and building trips in Maine. In 1933, Greene single-handedly built the Trail over Chairback, Columbus, Third, Fourth, and Barren mountains, considered by many the most rugged chain traversed by the A.T. in Maine. An article in the Appalachian Trailway News *stated, "The fact that Walter Greene was 61 when he performed this herculean feat makes the project one of the great accomplishments in the annals of trail-blazing." Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives photo*

Technology: Benton MacKaye has often been quoted as urging hikers to not simply observe what meets the eye along the Appalachian Trail but to really see what is there. "Seeing," to this conservation pioneer, meant savoring, perceiving, understanding, appreciating, learning. This kind of Trail experience tends to vary inversely with the speed at which a hiker passes from one landmark to another. What is lost to the hiker fixated on the sounds coming from his or her ear buds?

As he worried about controlling the physical "metropolitan invasion," Benton MacKaye did not envision, could not have envisioned, the invasion of personal space and minds by electronic devices. Dependence on "instant communication" increasingly leads hikers to take chances on the assumption of "instant rescue." What has the Trail experience become when those who are social-media-addicted experience anxiety when the electronic signal is not available? Will the next 100 years find a miraculous discovery that provides an electronic-free "corridor" along the Trail? I don't see how, but I can envision a hiker ethic that encourages minimal use of such communication. Perhaps another geomagnetic storm (Google "Carrington Event") will be needed to provide some realism and humility in this electronic realm.

The Trail's Purpose: For those who will build, manage, and protect the future of the A.T., it will be important to continually remind ourselves of what the Trail is for, what it is supposed to be. "The Appalachian Trail is a way, continuous from Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia, for travel on foot through the wild, scenic, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. It is a means of sojourning among these lands such that the visitors may experience them by their own unaided efforts." (Appalachian Trail Management Principles.)

In 1997, the ATC Board of Managers defined "the Appalachian Trail experience" in terms of opportunities for Trail users to interact personally with the natural and cultural elements of the Trail and the corridor. During the next 100 years, volunteers will continue to wrestle with the challenges of maintaining this experience while keeping that delicate balance between wild and safe, natural and usable, solitude and companionship, the personal Trail and the social Trail.

What is the Appalachian Trail supposed to be? "Visions of earthly beauty, the joy of contemplation in lonely grandeur and the sense of physical well-being and mental relaxation which grow out of exertion are the lot of those who follow this shining path through its somber setting," wrote Myron Avery in January 1937. Three-and-a half years earlier, Maine pioneer Walter Greene wrote simply, "I tell you, Myron, it's magnificent."

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David B. Field, chair of the Appalachian Trail Conference from 1995 to 2001 and a member of the board in various capacities from 1979 to 2005, has been a Trail maintainer and overseer since the 1950s, when he was a teen-ager. A retired University of Maine professor of forest resources (and one-time department chair), Dr. Field was president of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club from 1977 to 1987 and helped lead a nearly total redesign of the A.T. corridor in that state. He currently serves as club manager of lands. An avid transcriber of Avery correspondence and photographs, he is the author of Along Maine's Appalachian Trail *(2011) and an unpublished history of the Trail in Maine.*

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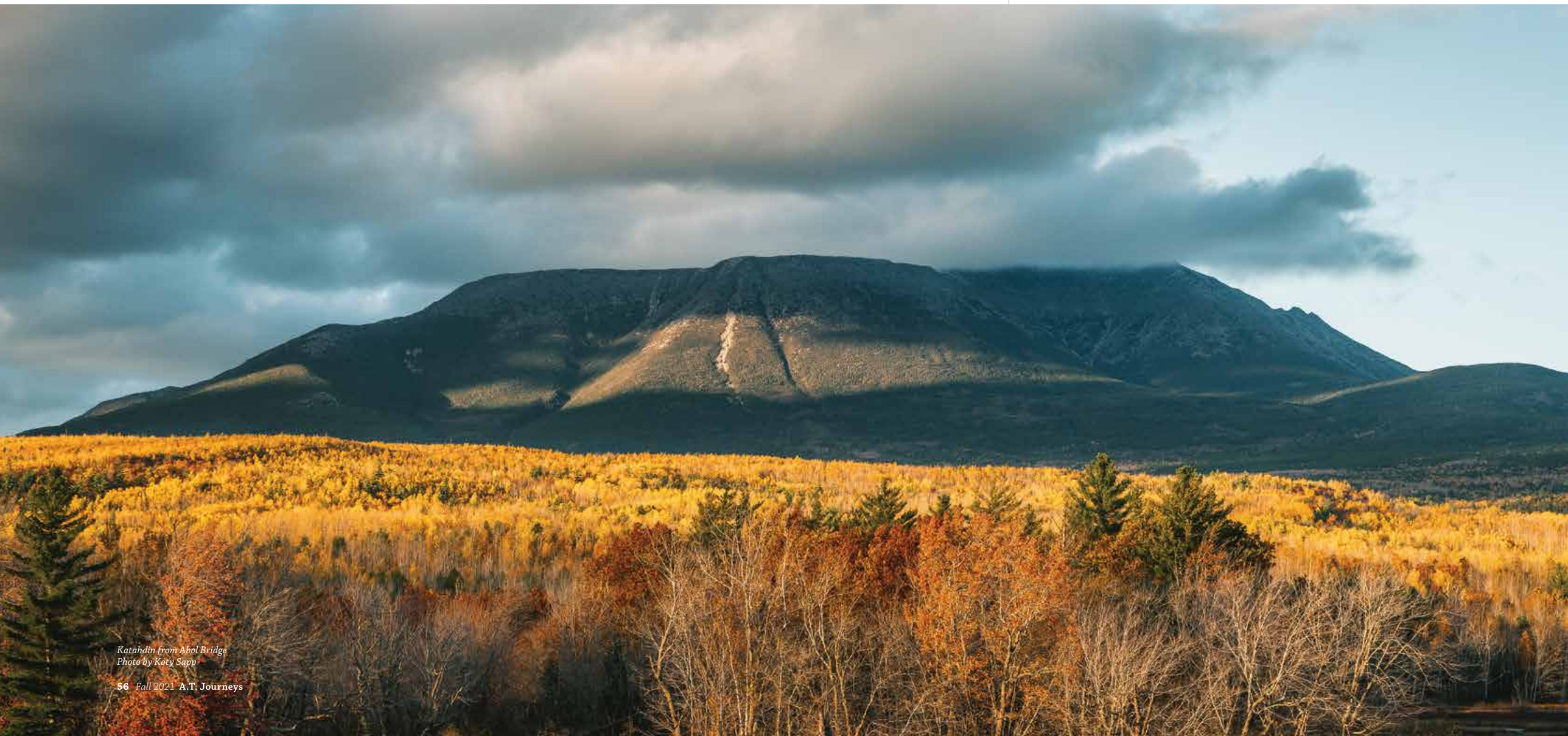
STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

The Emerging Realization of MacKaye's Vision

By James N. Levitt

VISIONARY LEADERS HAVE A RARE AND REMARKABLE TALENT: the ability to "bring people together around a common goal and provide …a focal point for developing strategies to achieve a better future," as organizational consultants Ron Ashkenas and Brook Manville put it.

Benton MacKaye, in his October 1921 article imagining the Appalachian Trail, was able to articulate the "simple, bold, inspirational vision" Ashkenas and Manville advocate — a giant, precedent-setting plan that has motivated a strong and enduring community to achieve a common goal for what is now a century.



Katahdin from Abol Bridge
Photo by Koty Sapp

In realizing a key element of MacKaye's vision, our community has, in the past 100 years, established what is literally an indelible mark on the landscape and the map of North America and what is figuratively a landmark in conservation history. The footpath that connects Maine to Georgia across the spine of the Appalachians is a global treasure.

Our work together realizing MacKaye's vision, however, is not yet done. Indeed, our initiative during the second century of effort to secure MacKaye's vision is just beginning. The large landscape that surrounds the Trail, that establishes the "realm" of which MacKaye dreamed, has yet to be fully protected. Folks, roll up your sleeves!

ENGAGING WITH GIANTS

In his teen-aged years and as an undergraduate, graduate student, and forestry instructor at Harvard, MacKaye had the chance to consider the ideas of and walk in paths trod by giants. Born in 1879 into a family of creatives that was often in motion along the eastern seaboard from Connecticut and New York to Washington, D.C., and back to Massachusetts, he had an extraordinary perch from which he could absorb the rapid social change of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Consider these examples:

A month after his twelfth birthday in 1891, young MacKaye attended a lecture at the National Museum in Washington given by Major John Wesley Powell, the legendary Colorado River explorer. Throughout his life, MacKaye expressed great admiration for this "bearded smiling one-fisted rockwhacker;" as a "man of action and of thought," as noted by his biographer Larry Anderson; a reformer who was passionate about geology, anthropology, and the future of American democracy.

At a low emotional point in his young life, following the death of his mercurial father and a severe stomach ailment, MacKaye in 1894 turned to Thoreau's Walden for reflection and solace. During college, he and his brother followed Thoreau's path into Quebec and along the Saint Lawrence, marveling at the Northern Lights and the magnificent edge of the continent, Anderson reports. Fittingly, Thoreau's observation that "in wildness is the preservation of the world" became a rallying cry for the wilderness movement that MacKaye helped to found and the establishment of The Wilderness Society that emerged from that movement.

During MacKaye's years as a Harvard undergraduate, from 1896 to 1900, he was exposed to philosophies of two of the great conservation pioneers of the day: John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. Muir was awarded an honorary degree from Harvard at the end of MacKaye's freshman year; Pinchot, who was launching Yale's forestry program, and who was closely allied with Teddy Roosevelt, lectured at Harvard in 1900 on the benefits of a career in the emerging field of forestry. Anderson documents that MacKaye's career in forestry that followed was strongly influenced both by Pinchot's utilitarianism and Muir's crusades for wilderness preservation.

Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, the eminent Harvard geologist, who Anderson says was "a personal acquaintance and professional colleague of John Wesley Powell and forester Gifford Pinchot," inspired MacKaye as professor and mentor during his undergraduate career. Richard Fisher, an instructor under Shaler's direction, was similarly a key figure in MacKaye's ongoing education. It was Fisher who was chosen to help start Harvard's graduate program in forestry and who later served as the founding director of the Harvard Forest in Petersham, not far from MacKaye's hometown of Shirley, Massachusetts. As the very first graduate, and later as a forestry instructor at Harvard, MacKaye sharpened his vision and political perspectives by absorbing the lectures and sometimes offering sharply divergent viewpoints from those two nationally significant academics.

MacKaye's appreciation for the inspiration he was offered by his fellow students, professors, and early role models lasted throughout his long and productive career. Revisiting Harvard in 1960 for the sixtieth reunion of his undergraduate Class of 1900, he gave a short speech to his octogenarian classmates. He described how, in reviewing his observations on "geotechnics" — his studies of "how to keep [the] planet habitable, or make it more habitable" — he was able to go "to college again, at least in imagination." He found the experience "not wholly a dream" as he reengaged with his coursework with Shaler and others, remembered hearing and later meeting Pinchot, and was able to find new inspiration from the 1960s project of his classmates to strive "for a fresh start toward a world of peace and habitability."

SEEING THE LANDSCAPE FROM A GIANT'S POINT OF VIEW

For the first two decades of the 20th Century, MacKaye sharpened his wit as a tutor, a forestry instructor, an early employee of the United States Forest Service, and a roving political activist. Following several years of political and personal struggle and trauma during World War I and its after-

Left to right, top to bottom: MacKaye during his Washington, D.C. days. H.C. "Andy" Anderson (right), a Potomac A.T. Club founder, tried to serve as a mediator between MacKaye (left) and Myron Avery in the mid-1930s when tensions between them rose over the siting and aims of the Trail project. MacKaye with Warner Hall of the Georgia A.T. Club, the model for the iconic bronze plaques along the Trail in its southernmost state. Just months after MacKaye's A.T. article was published, Raymond Torrey published a column in the New York Evening Post after meeting with MacKaye during his intense 1920s networking travels for the project. Soon, Torrey, as leader of what became the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference, directed building of the first A.T.-specific sections in Harriman–Bear Mountain state parks.
Photos and clipping from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives

math, MacKaye emerged to find his own muse. Having observed and interacted with a series of intellectual and policy giants of his day, he evokes, in his most celebrated essay, a giant of his own.

The essay, of course, is MacKaye's October 1921 article, published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, titled "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning." In the heart of the essay, MacKaye asks his readers to imagine the ability to scan the skyline from a great height:

"Let us assume the existence of a giant standing high on the skyline along these mountain ridges, his head just scraping the floating clouds. What would he see from this skyline as he strode along its length from north to south?"

The giant proceeds to inventory key stopping points along the Appalachian ridge, from "the 'Northwoods,' a country of pointed firs extending from the lakes and rivers of northern Maine to those of the Adirondacks" all the way to the Southern Appalachians, where our gigantic man sees Thomas Jefferson's beloved "Natural Bridge and out across the battlefields around Appomattox. He finds himself finally in the midst of the great Carolina hardwood belt." A sketch map included in the essay shows a proposed branch trail leading into the mountains of northern Georgia.

The giant comes to rest "on the top of Mount Mitchell, highest point east of the Rockies," where he "counts up on his big, long fingers the opportunities which yet await development along the skyline he has passed." These include, in short: first, "opportunities for recreation"; second, "possibilities for health and recuperation"; and third, "opportunities in the Appalachian belt for employment on the land."

Having addressed the what and why of the Appalachian Trail concept, MacKaye asks his readers from the "skyline perspective" to consider the so-what question. What might become the longer-term impacts, on a broader social level, of building such a trail? The potential answers he offers are almost lyrical.

"First, there would be the 'oxygen' that makes for a sensible optimism. Two weeks spent in the real open — right now, this year and next — would be a little real living for thousands of people which the would be sure of getting before they died. They would get a little fun as they went along regardless of problems being 'solved.' This would not damage the problems and it would help the folk…next there would be perspective. Life for two weeks on the mountain top would show up many things about life during the other fifty weeks down below…. There would be a chance to catch a breath, to study the dynamic forces of nature and the possibilities of shifting to them the burdens now carried on the backs of men…."

"Finally, there would be new clews to constructive solutions. The organization of cooperative camping life would tend to draw people out of the cities. Coming as visitors they would be loath to return. They would become desirous of settling down in the country — to work in the open as well as play…."

With this carefully crafted essay, MacKaye offered an extraordinarily attractive set of prospects on both practical and metaphysical levels and garnered a wave of remarkably positive responses. Clarence Stein, chairman of the Committee on Community Planning at the American Institute of Architects, wrote in the introduction to a widely circulated reprint of the article: "This project…is a plan for the conservation not of things — machines and land — but of men and their love of freedom and fellowship." No less an eminence than Gifford Pinchot, soon to be elected governor of Pennsylvania, wrote to MacKaye, according to Anderson, "I have just been over your admirable statement about an Appalachian Trail for recreation, for health and recuperation, and for employment on the land…. Your giant certainly sees the truth." And, by April 6, 1922, Raymond Torrey wrote a column in the *New York Evening Post* under the headline, "A Great Trail from Maine to Georgia." He reported that "some mighty big things are coming out of this trail movement in the next few years if its development grows at the pace it now shows." Indeed, mighty big things have, over the last century, come out of MacKaye's historic idea.

A COLOSSAL ACHIEVEMENT

In the space of a single, concise essay, MacKaye has outlined the scope, scale, and rationale for a big, achievable project — a "landmark conservation innovation." The term "landmark conservation innovation" used here refers to a globally important initiative characterized by five distinct attributes: novelty and creativity in conception, strategic significance, measurable effectiveness, replicability, and the ability to endure.

In addition, the A.T. is a model "large landscape initiative" in that it has been realized and continues to grow due to a multitude of partnerships that are cross-parcel (involves multiple properties and landowners), cross-sectoral (involves multiple sectors, including the public, private, nonprofit, academic, and Indigenous sectors and communities), and

A.T. Sunrise on Jane Bald near Carvers Gap – North Carolina/ Tennessee
Photo by Malcolm MacGregor

OUR WORK TOGETHER REALIZING MACKAYE'S VISION, HOWEVER, IS NOT YET DONE. INDEED, OUR INITIATIVE DURING THE SECOND CENTURY OF EFFORT TO SECURE MACKAYE'S VISION IS JUST BEGINNING. THE LARGE LANDSCAPE THAT SURROUNDS THE TRAIL, THAT ESTABLISHES THE "REALM" OF WHICH MACKAYE DREAMED, HAS YET TO BE FULLY PROTECTED.

cross-jurisdictional (involves multiple local, district, state, and even national entities, each of which has its own laws and regulations). In the case of the Appalachian Trail, those partnerships have evolved into enduring alliances among individuals and organizations.

Consider the ways in which MacKaye's concept has, over the past century, successfully met the criteria as a landmark conservation initiative. The concept of a continental-scale recreational trail that would link together a great many of pieces of land. Some existing trails on land owned and managed by public agencies and nonprofit organizations and some on lands held by private citizens was novel and creative in its conception. MacKaye was in 1921 thinking of conservation on a scale and scope that had not been imagined, at least in North America. The idea, further articulated by MacKaye in 1933, that the Appalachian Trail represents not only a footpath but a realm stretching across a mosaic of ownerships, sectors, and jurisdictions was, similarly, an out-of-the-box idea.

Without doubt, the Appalachian Trail has proven to be strategically significant, shaping the way that conservationists think about and plan new initiatives in the United States. To name just two sets of examples, MacKaye's ideation became formative in the establishment of the wilderness movement in the late 1920s, the establishment by him and seven others of The Wilderness Society in 1935, as well as the Wilderness Act of 1964. Similarly, it has set the stage for the more recent emphasis on large landscape conservation, from the 2004 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation held during the George W. Bush administration to the Obama administration's push for the America's Great Outdoors Initiative.

THE A.T.'S MEASURABLE EFFECTIVENESS CAN BE GAUGED IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT WAYS. CONSIDER THESE FOUR:

Spatial: Completed in 1937, the Appalachian Trail now measures 2,193 miles in length. It is, according to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the longest hiking-only footpath in the world. The ATC, the lead civic-sector partner working to educate the public, protect and maintain the Trail, and work toward its long-term, large-scale growth, today helps to protect more than 250,000 acres (about 105,000 hectares) of footpath, watershed. and landscape along the A.T.

Organizational: Key partners who work to create, maintain, sustain, and grow the Appalachian Trail include the Appalachian Trail Conservancy; the National Park Service; the U.S. Forest Service; dozens of state agencies; 31 local Trail-maintaining clubs; collaborating land trusts, advocacy, and other nonprofit organizations; and a wide array of communities that the A.T. passes through or nearby. The ATC is largely funded by its members and supporters located throughout all 50 states and in more than 15 countries.

Recreational, Cultural, and Spiritual Value: The first individual to walk 2,000 miles or more along the A.T. was Myron Avery, head of the Appalachian Trail Conference, by 1936. More than eighty years later, in 2018, more than 4,000 individuals attempted the "thru-hike," most of them heading north from Springer Mountain, Georgia, toward Maine's Katahdin. Less than thirty percent of them completed the entire trek. In addition, an estimated three million visitors or more made day trips or shorter backpacking visits to the A.T.

In addition to actual use, the A.T. and its sib-

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE MY LIFE WITHOUT DIRT UNDER MY FEET, OR MY HANDS frantically scrambling to mix the perfect colors of paint to capture the setting sun over the mountains. As an outdoor painter, avid hiker, and trail runner (and trail meander-er), exploring our natural lands has become an integral part of my personality. Because of this, my role within the larger Appalachian Trail ecosystem is one of a very enthusiastic contributor and cheerleader. Whether it's working to build stone stairs or brushing back foliage as a volunteer on one of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Trail crews, or as an artist striving to share the beauty of the Trail with those who have yet to discover it, the metaphorical trailhead where I begin all my A.T. journeys is a place of profound love and deep support for this incredible Trail.

My very first steps onto a trail and into the outdoor world were those I took on the A.T., first climbing to the summit of Bear Mountain in New York, and then running along the ridgelines in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The A.T. is quite literally where I found my place in the outdoors – and found a more fully complete version of myself. For this, I will always be an unwavering champion of this precious Trail.

For me, the A.T. holds the potential of deep discovery in nature, in one's self, and within an amazing community of hikers and Trail enthusiasts. It represents an infinite range of sights, experiences, and emotions that create a space for everyone to take their own first steps in their own unique ways.

lings, the Continental Divide Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail, have considerable cultural significance in modern books and movies. Two recent indicators of the cultural significance of such journeys are the successes of the film versions of Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*, which grossed more than $37 million in worldwide box office sales, and of Cheryl Strayed's *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Coast Trail*, which grossed more than $52 million in worldwide box office sales, according to thenumbers.com.

THE SPIRITUAL VALUE OF THE TRAIL TO ITS USERS AND ADMIRERS, WHILE IMMENSE, IS IMMEASURABLE

The concept and practice of creating and maintaining the Appalachian Trail has been repeatedly proven to be transferable. It has been replicated along the Continental Divide Trail, which runs 3,150 miles from our border with Canada to Mexico along the Rockies, and the Pacific Crest Trail, which stretches 2,653 miles from Canada to Mexico along the Coastal Range. Additional long-distance trails have been built or are being considered from the route of the Iron Curtain that once crossed Germany to the Great Wall of China to Chilean Patagonia and beyond.

The Appalachian Trail has demonstrated an ability to endure. As a concept, it has been alive for 100 years, and, as an evolving reality on the ground, nearly that long. But, it has not yet achieved maturity as a realm or as a large landscape corridor along its length. That is the work that lies ahead.

A NEW SET OF CHALLENGES AND A NEW CHANCE TO STAND ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

In 1675, Sir Isaac Newton, borrowing from a medieval text, wrote, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." Even in 1921, MacKaye, figuratively standing on the shoulders of the likes of John Wesley Powell and Gifford Pinchot, was explicit that he saw a future in which the Appalachian Trail could be a buffer against the risks inherent in modern society. "This Trail," he wrote, "could be made to be, in a very literal sense, a battle line against fire and flood, and even disease…against the common enemies of man." MacKaye went further to elaborate his vision for a buffer from encroaching civilization a dozen years later, when he told a 1933 ATC conference: "A realm and not merely a trail marks the full aim of our efforts."

Those of us alive today also strive to see a bit further. We have the benefit of an additional century of human history, as well as the knowledge that something as grand as the Appalachian Trail can, in fact, be built and beloved around the world. However, when we figuratively stand on MacKaye's shoulders, we can also see two clearly visible trends that are profoundly troubling — the advent of global warming and the ongoing, massive loss of biodiversity. Both of these threats are existential, with the potential to change the nature of life on Earth from tropical rainforests at the equator to the icefields in the far north and south.

Facing these challenges, we appreciate that Benton MacKaye left us with a potent tool with which we can address these threats. The Appalachian Trail itself can be expanded along its entire length to serve as a large-landscape conservation area — a Wild East corridor, if you will — that can both sequester carbon to mitigate climate change and offer a durable sanctuary for a great many species now living in eastern North America.

As Abigail Weinberg, director of conservation research at the Open Space Institute, explains: "The amazing thing about the Appalachian Trail is that it's the only way to get through the eastern [U.S.] landscape with any consistency and long-range connectivity." In addition, the lands now protected along the Trail, and the adjacent lands that could be protected in coming years, are judged by ecosystem scientists such as Weinberg and Mark Anderson at The Nature Conservancy to have a high degree of "resiliency" — that is, "the capacity of a site to maintain its biological diversity, productivity, and ecological function, even as the climate changes." In short, if we are able to protect a wide swath of land around the A.T. footpath, we can not only add to the scenic and recreational value of the Trail, but we also can make the Trail an invaluable tool to serve as a carbon sink and a sanctuary of last resort for myriad species.

The task will be far from easy. This much has been determined by the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership, which has been meeting for six years to figure out when, where, and how a newly enlarged corridor can be established as part of the greater Appalachian Trail mosaic. The good news is that we have, at the current moment, a president and a secretary of the interior who have spoken up in favor of the highly ambitious 30-by-30 goal (protecting thirty percent of the nation's, and the globe's, land and water surface by the year 2030). This is a goal that will be considered for adoption in late 2021 in Kunming, China, by the delegates from 196 parties (nations and

I CONSIDER MYSELF AN AMBASSADOR FOR THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL AND THE Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Having hiked most of the Trail and having served as an ATC Board member for many years, I think I have a good perspective on how the ecosystem works. I'm not sure most users of the Trail understand the complexities of the relationships with the Trail clubs, the federal agencies, state parks, *etc.* It took me several years of board service to understand this myself. When other hikers complain to me about something related to the A.T., I try to educate them about those relationships.

My relationship to the A.T. – apart from the ATC – is defined by the physical challenge it presents. I have hiked a portion of the Trail every year since 2008. When I started hiking the A.T., my only goal was to prove to myself that I still had retained some of my athletic ability from my younger days. That desire still exists and is the primary reason I continue to work on completion of the Trail.

I would define my past relationship with the A.T. as one of fascination. This started in 1975 when I read James Hare's two-volume *Hiking the Appalachian Trail*. I couldn't believe that there was a path in the woods that would take me from Georgia to Maine. Today, I would say that the A.T. is a place where I feel safe and empowered to hike by myself; where I constantly discover the good in people; and where I can slow down enough to appreciate the beauty of the Trail and its surroundings. In terms of the future, I believe the ATC and its partners will need to further address overuse issues. Protecting the adjacent landscape and enlisting more volunteer maintainers will become increasingly important to protect this amazing resource.

The "green tunnel" of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia
Photo by Thomas Spiltoir

territories) and two observing parties who will be gathering for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Progress toward that goal will be closely monitored by the World Database on Protected Areas, a joint project of the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Union for the Protection of Nature.

My guess is that the delegates will be heartened when they hear the remarkable story of Benton MacKaye and his giant dream coming true, now celebrating its 100th birthday. I imagine that MacKaye would be highly gratified, wherever he now resides, when he perceives that substantial new acreage is being added to the global total of protected lands, thanks to the efforts of the Appalachian Trail community. And, I am quite confident that our great-great grandchildren will raise a glass in honor of the efforts we will now undertake to guard the vibrancy of life on Earth, as they celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Appalachian Trail idea a century from now.

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Jim Levitt is a cofounder and director of the International Land Conservation Network (ILCN) at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He also serves as a fellow at the Harvard Forest, Harvard University, and a senior fellow at the Highstead Foundation. A graduate of Yale College and the Yale School of Management, Levitt has edited four books, penned numerous articles, and offered presentations on innovation in the field of conservation, both historic and present-day, in venues as diverse as Boston, Brussels, and Beijing.

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Photo by Jack Sorokin

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE A.T. IS BOTH PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL, AND THE lines are frequently blurred. The A.T. is a footpath that connects many of my beloved places in the southern Appalachians, often serving as the vantage point or the backdrop as I interact with the landscape. I also appreciate that this vast, protected landscape is often the viewshed I see when fishing, hiking, and mushroom hunting on adjacent lands.

I often pose this rhetorical question when making natural-resource presentations: "What is the value of a national scenic trail that traverses a compromised and degraded landscape?"

I consider the A.T. the backbone of conservation in the East. The establishment of the A.T. and subsequent relocations has led to the protection of tens of thousands of acres of public land, including such iconic places as the Roan Massif and Max Patch. These protected lands provide cover and forage for pollinators and neotropical migrant songbirds, critical corridors for the movement of wildlife, and opportunities for recreation and reflection for millions of people.

I find solace in the protection of these lands and the connectivity they provide when contemplating development patterns and societal challenges, and I find comfort that it is a place where people can simply go and take a walk in the forest, for quite a long distance if they care to.

Through my natural-resources management work for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), I have the honor of returning to my project sites many times in a year and many times over the years. I am fortunate to get to know these areas with such intimacy that I feel a connection to individual trees, rocks, and plant populations and can detect the subtleties of forest succession.

When species, habitats, and ecosystems decline or disappear from the A.T. landscape, I believe the intrinsic values of the Trail are at stake. Habitat loss is the leading cause of species extinctions, and habitat loss can even occur on "protected" land. This can be attributed to issues like the spread of nonnative, invasive species or past management practices, such as poorly planned timber harvests and misguided fire suppression. Work we undertake at the ATC aims to restore those compromised areas and protect the incredible biodiversity present along the Trail.

"Delicate Links" by Nika Meyers Watercolor, ink, and colored pencil on paper — features two vital landscapes connected by the Appalachian corridor: The magical light sifting through the trees in the southern Appalachian Mountains and a forest of grasses in Connecticut.

RESILIENT BY NATURE

The A.T. landscape is home to abundant natural resources worth protecting

By Kim O'Connell / Illustration by Nika Meyers

IT IS A BURNISHED-GOLD MORNING IN LATE SEPTEMBER, AND FALL HAS begun to arrive in Shenandoah National Park. Orange and yellow leaves pepper the green foliage, catching the light like sequins. Although it still feels warm in the sun, a light, cool breeze brings the first hint of the autumnal weather to come. The year is rounding a corner, moving into a new season. Soon, thousands of migrating broad-winged hawks and other raptors will be seen overhead as they make their way south for the winter. Tall grasses in the meadows will turn rust-colored, and leaves will fall gently to the earth.

This morning, I am standing at the Pinnacle Picnic Area, my starting point for a 7.2-mile hike on the Appalachian Trail toward Marys Rock, a 3,500-foot summit in the park's central district. The A.T. runs for 105 miles through Shenandoah, the northern terminus of which is just 163 miles south of the Trail's halfway point in Pennsylvania. I will intersect with the Trail only briefly on this particular hike, but the white blazes remind me of the interconnectedness of the A.T.—stretching from Maine to Georgia and from past to present to future.

A century ago, Benton MacKaye envisioned the A.T. not just as a recreation destination for hikers and campers, but as a way to conserve the abundant natural resources of the Appalachian Mountains. In laying out his vision for the Trail, he talked of the ridges and trees, the rivers and lakes, even the fresh mountain air. He believed that the mountains, stitched together by the Trail, would lift the psyche of a people increasingly disconnected from nature, and that it would form a natural barrier against other perceived threats to humankind.

Today, the A.T. still abounds with natural resources, and, as the longest uninterrupted vegetated corridor in the East, the Trail corridor still forms a natural protection against some of the most pressing environmental threats to water and air quality and especially climate change. Already, the warming planet has shifted the seasonal cycles in the Appalachians — spring is starting sooner, fall is starting later — causing cascading impacts on forest and ecosystem health and native plant and animal species.

From left: Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey. Photo by Raymond Salani III; A broad-winged hawk flies above the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary along the Trail corridor in Pennsylvania. Photo by Bill Moses

On my way toward Marys Rock, the sounds of cars on Skyline Drive fade, and I get a sense of the quiet power of these ridgelines and the resilience of these forests. I hear the breeze fluttering the vermilion leaves over my head and notice the crunch of my footfalls. Hiking north on the A.T., I follow switchbacks near the Jewell Hollow Overlook. Soon, the Trail narrows; tall, dense stands of twisty mountain laurel push in from either side. I think of the black bears whose populations have grown in these mountains, and I make noise, banging my hiking staff against the rocks that dot the A.T. Occasionally, I pass boulders as large as dinosaurs, and I imagine what turns of fate, tectonics, and erosion and trail-planning allowed such things to be here. Although I am hiking solo, I don't feel alone. The Appalachian Trail reminds us that we are not the only species on this planet and that the natural resources we encounter do not exist solely for our own enjoyment.

Eventually, the Trail comes to a clearing where I take a water break at the Byrd's Nest #3 shelter. All around me are the sentinels of the oak-hickory forest that dominates this section of the Appalachians. Where this landscape was once deforested in the early 20th Century, maples, birch, ash, and poplar trees now grow in abundance, protected by the A.T. corridor. As the largest forested region east of the Mississippi River, the Appalachians are essential for carbon sequestration, one of the most important tools to resist the effects of climate change. Trees absorb and sequester carbon for the length of their lifespans but also release it back into the atmosphere when they die, a process that happens slowly when trees perish naturally but is vastly accelerated when they are clear cut and removed for construction or some other purpose. According to recent research published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, forests worldwide absorb twice as much carbon as they emit. And, the International Union for Conservation of Nature notes that one-third of all the carbon dioxide released from burning fossil fuels is absorbed by forests every year. This is why clear-cutting and development are accelerating climate change and why maintaining intact forests is so essential.

These forests also have value in terms of climate resiliency, allowing species the space to shift their traditional ranges in response to our warming planet and more extreme weather patterns. According to a 2017 report in *Science*, as high as 85 percent of all species could already be shifting their tradi-

THERE IS SOMETHING ANCIENT AND BEAUTIFUL ABOUT THE PULL TOWARDS THE WARMTH OF THE SUN, AND BACK TO THE NESTING GROUNDS, THAT IS REPRESENTED BY THESE YEARLY CYCLES OF FLIGHT. THE TRAIL ALLOWS US TO MIMIC THOSE ANCIENT, INSTINCTIVE ACTS OURSELVES, TO LEARN FROM THE BIRDS ABOUT THE VALUE OF MOVEMENT AND CHANGE, AND ALSO OF RETURNING HOME.

tional ranges. When that is coupled with the loss of farmland and open space — the American Farmland Trust estimates that about 11 million acres of U.S. farmland were paved, fragmented, or converted to other uses between 2001 and 2016 — the Appalachian Trail corridor provides essential landscape connectivity for species to adapt to a changing climate and have a shot at survival.

Although development pressures are increasing on its borders, the A.T. corridor remains remarkably biodiverse — and may protect more rare, threatened, and endangered species than any other unit of the national park system. Biodiverse ecosystems are productive, nurturing ecosystems — with clean water, soil stability, and healthy wildlife that support people and creatures "downstream" in all sorts of ways. The landscapes of the A.T. support nine federally listed and 360 state-listed species of rare plants and animals, and more than 80 globally rare species.

Although I see gray squirrels frequently on my A.T. hike, for example, I know that another squirrel species — the Carolina northern flying squirrel — is a rare sight along the Trail. Federally listed as endangered, this cinnamon-colored rodent is a subspecies of northern flying squirrel that lives in the highest elevations of the southern Appalachians, itself one of only three flying squirrel species found in the United States. Numerous rare plant species, too, are protected along the length of the A.T., such as the endangered Roan Mountain bluet, known by its reddish-purple four-petaled blooms, and the Peter's Mountain mallow, which grows in an isolated population in only one spot in southwest Virginia called the Narrows, accessible from the A.T.

Despite the protections afforded by the Trail corridor, those and countless other native species are increasingly threatened by an influx of invasive species. A recent study found that more than half of all national parks, including the A.T., are struggling with invasive animals, such as rats, pythons, and feral hogs. The sap-sucking hemlock woolly adelgid, for one, has caused serious damage and tree mortality along the A.T. in Shenandoah National Park and throughout the Appalachians, affecting more than 90 percent of the eastern hemlock's range, according to some estimates. Ecological shifts caused by climate change often make it easier for nonnatives to take hold, and invasive plants often grow in monocultures that throw ecosystems out of balance. Throughout the Trail, hardy, widespread populations of invasive Chinese silvergrass and Japanese stiltgrass, in just two examples, have been crowding out native plants.

Threatened native plant species are of particular concern to the many bird species along the A.T. that depend on them. One of the most powerful aspects of the A.T. is its use as an avian flyway — a long green runway that provides a protected space for raptors and other birds to make their way south and north in their annual migrations. There is something ancient and beautiful about the pull towards the warmth of the sun, and back to the nesting grounds, that is represented by these yearly cycles of flight. The Trail allows us to mimic those ancient, instinctive acts ourselves, to learn from the birds about the value of movement and change, and also of returning home. As I head northward on this September day, I witness several broad-wing hawks catching thermal currents as they head southward. Other avian species that

Neville Harris

GROWING UP, I WOULD VISIT MY GRANDMOTHER, TILLIE WOOD, EACH SUMMER, who with my grandfather, Roy Wood, found the land and log cabin that is now Woods Hole Hostel in Pearisburg, Virginia. Then, at 21, I lived for two months at Woods Hole, without my grandmother. My grandfather had passed away, and she carried their tradition of running a hostel for two months each year forward for 22 years. I fell in love with the experience. I planted a seed in my mind that I wanted to live here one day. In the spring of 2009, when I was 30, I moved here to continue my grandparents' legacy and cultivate my own deep love for nature.

At first, I did not see the impact the larger A.T. community was having on me. I just enjoyed sitting on the porch and talking with hikers. It took moving here, living here, struggling here, and being persistent about staying here for me to realize the impact. I found the hiker community exceptionally trustworthy. A desire grew in me to help people in a way I never wanted to help them before. And, there are some things I have witnessed about this community that I haven't witnessed anywhere else. I've watched hikers be grateful for shelter, grateful for food, and grateful for running water. Witnessing these simple needs and pleasures being fulfilled is a truly wonderful experience.

Here at the hostel, we recycle, compost, grow an organic garden, buy vegetables from local farmers, buy organic as often as possible, and think – and hopefully act – with conservation and sustainability in mind. My hope is that this inspires others in the Trail community.

Today, Woods Hole has developed into a complex working body. The old days of relaxing on the porch are gone. There are things I love, things I want back, and things I am willing to let go of in order to improve life here. The Appalachian Trail reminds people of the basic things in life that are more important than big houses and fancy cars. It is this experience that I hope can be shared with future generations.

AS THE POET WALT WHITMAN FAMOUSLY WROTE, "I AM LARGE, I CONTAIN MULTITUDES." SO DOES THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL: IT IS, AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN, A PLACE OF RECREATION AND CONTEMPLATION, A WAY TO GET OUTSIDE ONESELF, AND ALSO A WAY BACK IN.

View from Marys Rock in Shenandoah National Park
Photo by Chris D'Ambrosio

depend on the Appalachians include Cooper's hawks, red-tailed hawks, bald eagles, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, and northern harriers, as well as invertebrate insects like the Monarch butterfly

And yet, in recent decades, the loss of bird habitat and the reduction in bird populations have reached alarming levels, putting even more pressure on the spine of the Appalachians to remain a healthy and uninterrupted natural corridor for birds to use for shelter, food, and mating. Recent studies have estimated that North America has nearly three billion fewer birds today than it did 40 years ago. The tiny cerulean warbler, with only an eight-inch wingspan, has become a particular symbol of the over-all vulnerability of birds, with a U.S. population that has declined by more than 70 percent since 1970. The species has suffered habitat loss from mining, development, and deforestation on both ends of its cyclic journey — the treetops of the Appalachians and the wintering grounds in South America. The wood thrush, whose song inspired Henry David Thoreau to say, "wherever [someone] hears it, it is a new world and a free country," has seen similarly alarming declines due to forest fragmentation and acidic rain. Even the colorful American kestrel, still considered one of the most common falcons in North America, has seen its population numbers decline by about half in the last 50 years.

As I start the slow climb toward Marys Rock, I can hear birds chirping in the trees, zipping from branch to branch in flashes of blue and brown and yellow. I think about how much the birds depend on us, but also how we depend on them, not just for enjoyment and delight while we hike, but to keep these ecosystems in balance. They eat insects and transfer seeds and pollen, they scavenge and keep pests at bay, they help to recycle nutrients. They are, as the author Terry Tempest Williams once wrote, "mediators between heaven and Earth."

Finally, I reach a spur trail off the A.T. and begin my final ascent up to Marys Rock, one of the most storied and scenic views along the Appalachian Trail. Here I sit on a rocky outcropping that affords me a truly panoramic view of my surroundings. Blue-green ridges extend in all directions, and the sun-baked rock is warm beneath my legs. I think about the panoramic story of the Appalachian Trail, too, how it is much more than a footpath, but an essential conservation corridor for the myriad natural resources it supports.

Legend has it that Marys Rock was named after a local woman named Mary Savage who lived in a nearby mountain hollow. Another tale claims that a young girl named Mary Thornton climbed this mountain and returned home clutching a bear cub under her arm. As I sit at the summit, drinking in the 270-degree vista before me, a patchwork of rocks and ridges and trees and farmland, I think of the mythical Mary as a patron saint of this stretch of the A.T. I think of how the Trail has had so many patron saints over its nearly 100-year history, and how the mountains themselves have been peopled and cared for by Indigenous peoples for one-hundred times longer than that.

In his vision for the Trail, MacKaye described how the cities were paving over ever bigger swaths of land and cutting off ever larger numbers of people from the wildness of nature. The challenge of the 21st Century is to not only to protect this essential forest corridor, but to encourage a broader, more diverse range of people to experience the A.T. for themselves. And not just to experience it, but to appreciate it, understand it, and advocate for it. Ensuring widespread access to the Trail's natural resources is not just good for conservation, it's essential for social justice.

As the poet Walt Whitman famously wrote, "I am large, I contain multitudes." So does the Appalachian Trail: It is, as it has always been for thru-hikers, section-hikers, and day hikers — as it is for me on the way to Marys Rock — a place of recreation and contemplation, a way to get outside oneself, and also a way back in. But, it is also habitat, refuge, flyway, tree tunnel, a long, green rampart against the global threat of climate change. Benton MacKaye was not a poet, not in a traditional sense, but through words and acts, he celebrated the potential of the A.T. and its multitudes. In our words and actions, we can do the same.

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Kim O'Connell is a writer based in Arlington, Virginia, just a two-hour drive from her favorite trailheads in the Blue Ridge Mountains. In addition to publishing work in a range of national and regional publications, Kim has been an artist in residence at Shenandoah and Acadia national parks and teaches science writing for Johns Hopkins University.

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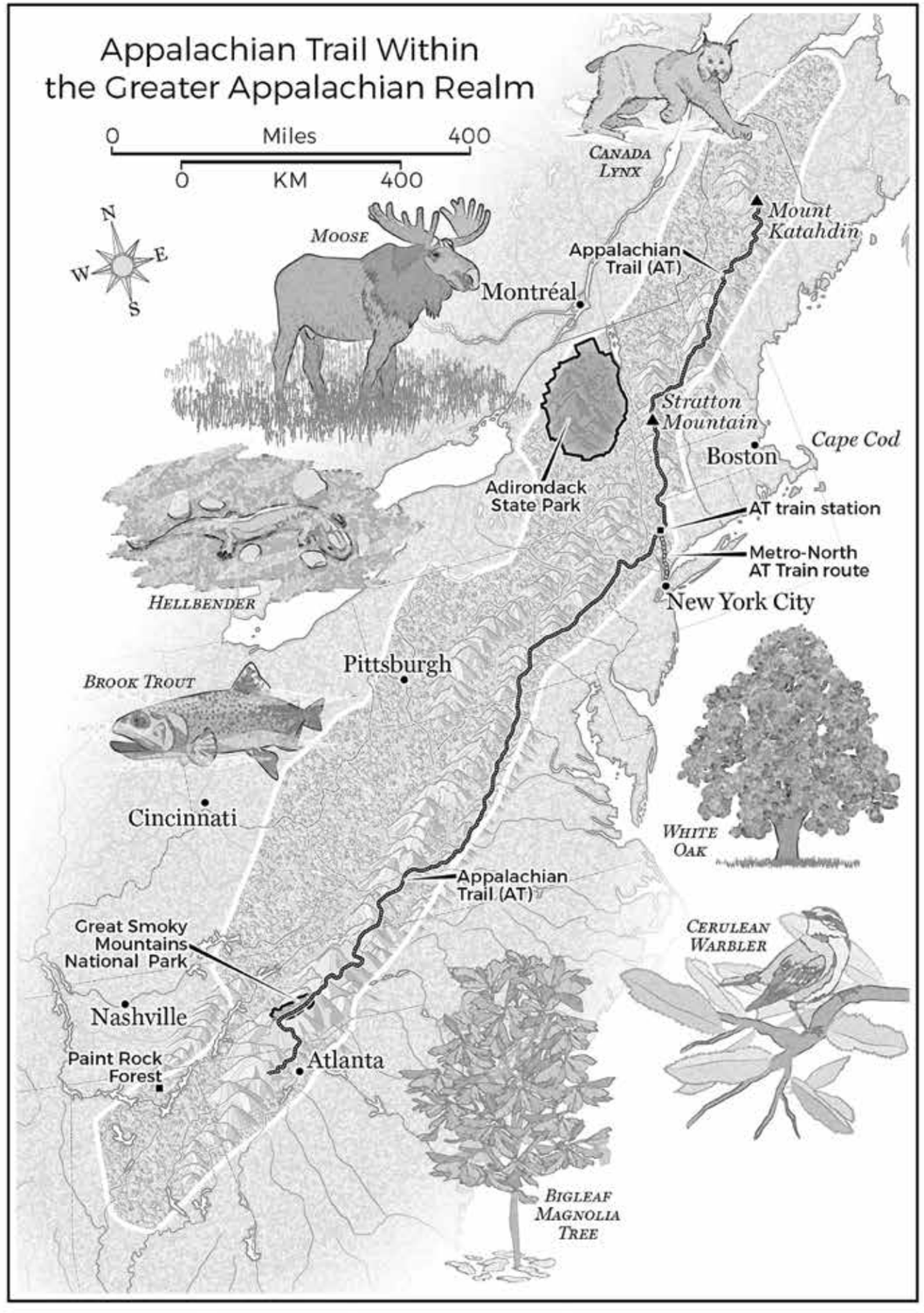


This map from Tony Hiss' book, Rescuing the Planet, *illustrates his conception of the "realm" Benton MacKaye pronounced as his goal for the A.T. project.*

A PLANETARY FEELING

By Tony Hiss / Appalachian Realm Map by David Lindroth

ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF MY MIND WHEN THINKING ABOUT protecting 50 percent of Earth's land by 2050 is Benton MacKaye — someone whose thoughts roamed far and wide as he looked around and who then reshaped the world. He had just graduated from college when, in the summer of 1900, he and a friend bushwhacked their way up Stratton Mountain, the highest peak in southern Vermont. (The story can be found in Larry Anderson's biography, *Benton MacKaye*.) There were no trails to follow, and, at the summit, they shinnied up tall, swaying trees to get a better view. For MacKaye, this was an aha! moment whose echoes can still be heard.

Twenty years later, while gaining a reputation as a kind of philosopher-forester, it led him to propose building the Appalachian Trail along the ridgeline of eastern mountains from Maine to Georgia. It became the most famous trail on the planet, the hiker's Mount Everest.

Now, more than a century later, MacKaye's aha! moment inspired Wild East, an initiative to protect what's called the wide-open wildness surrounding the Trail, an area the builders of the A.T. ignored but that MacKaye championed as a realm. For the Wild Easters, it's a landscape just as important as all the national parks in the West, and it can ignite a generation of Half Earth efforts.

At eighty-five, MacKaye could still instantly recall that July morning of swinging from the treetops. This is from a letter he wrote in 1964 to be read aloud at an Appalachian Trail Conservancy meeting:

It was a clear day, with a brisk breeze blowing. North and south sharp peaks etched the horizon. I felt as if atop the world, with a sort of "planetary feeling." I seemed to perceive peaks far southward, hidden by old Earth's curvature.

Would a footpath someday reach them from where I was then perched?

It wasn't the first time MacKaye, who grew up in a small Massachusetts town, felt the land itself changing him. Several years earlier, during an August hike to the top of Mount Tremont in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, he watched the sun rise after a night of thunderstorms — "rain coming down like 'pitchforks.'" He could see Maine in one direction, and, in another, "away in the distance," he wrote to a friend, "I could make out the hills of old Massachusetts. I felt then how much I resembled in size one of the hairs on the eye tooth of a flea." And, in his diary: "The grandest sight I ever saw was now before me, nothing but a sea of mountains and clouds."

In 1948, Earl Shaffer, who was a radio operator in the South Pacific during World War II, became the A.T.'s first thru-hiker. Since then, more than twenty thousand people have walked the Trail end to end, and about four hundred have completed the Triple Crown of Hiking — anyone who's thru-hiked the A.T., the Continental Divide Trail (which MacKaye helped inspire in the 1960s), and the Pacific Crest Trail, the subject of *Wild*, Cheryl Strayed's memoir about a hike that helped ease her grief over the loss of her mother.

Shaffer, carrying his Army rucksack but with no tent or stove, headed north in April — "walking with spring." He reached Katahdin in Maine 124 days later. He hiked, he said, to "walk the war out of my system." He later thru-hiked the other way and, at seventy-nine, repeated his original south-to-north journey. The Trail, said his niece at a ceremony inducting him and MacKaye as charter members of the A.T. Museum Hall of Fame, "was a flame that started in the late forties and never died."

"A damn fool scheme, Mac," said the director of a summer camp where MacKaye had been a counselor, about the idea of a wilderness trail. On the other hand, MacKaye's close friend for half a century, Lewis Mumford, the urban historian who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and an honorary British knighthood, had a profound reaction when reading about it in 1921. "I well remember the shock of astonishment and pleasure that came over me," he wrote.

I had a chance to meet with Mumford's widow, Sophia, editor of many of Mumford's thirty-eight books, when she was ninety-three. She said MacKaye had a vivid presence of his own: "He was very crotchety. While working on an idea, he was sunk deep in it and talked about practically nothing else. He came to visit us when we lived in Queens, in Sunnyside, and said he once found his way to our house by watching the stars out the taxi window. He would read you a manuscript. And not just his own manuscript. He had a philosopher brother, and he would read that one, too. He was very thin and very craggy, and rough-hewn. He wore a woodsman's plaid shirts and always a red bandanna. He talked like an old Yankee farmer, full of 'ain'ts,' which was an affectation, because he was Harvard-bred. He was also so lovable, affectionate, and kind and very sweet with young people — we were younger then and considered him very old." Then Sophie, as she was called, added, "You simply felt good with him."

I asked her about MacKaye's influence on conservation. Sophie thought about this a moment, and said, "He was very, very close to the soil, but there was nothing of either the homesteader or the gardener in him, nothing that drew him to raise things, or scrabble in the soil. Yet, in his own way, he was a gardener — of a much, much larger landscape."

MacKaye's eye was always trained on this much, much larger landscape. In his 1921 essay introducing the idea of the Trail, he asks readers to see the world with new eyes, awakening a kind of overview effect by imagining "a giant standing high on the skyline along these mountain ridges, his head just scraping the floating clouds." Striding south through "wooded wilderness" and millions of acres of farms, the giant can see beyond the mountains to "a chain of smoky bee-hive cities" along the East Coast and to steel plants in the Midwest.

Finally the giant takes a rest in North Carolina, on Mount Mitchell, the highest point east of the Mississippi, where "he counts up on his big long fingers the opportunities" inherent in these mountains to help the people on either side by giving them "a chance to catch a breath." This is something that awaits them in the "real open — right now, this year and next." The task ahead, MacKaye says, will be "cutting channels leading to constructive achievement in the problem of living."

"Some mighty big things are coming out of this trail movement in the next few years if its development grows at the pace it now shows," said a piece in the *New York Evening Post* several months after the essay appeared. Over the next few years, MacKaye's "little article," as he called it, pulled hundreds and later thousands of people up into the hills to build sections of the Trail in their free time, an eager outpouring of effort as unexpected as the idea for the Trail itself. "A great professor once said that 'optimism is oxygen,'" MacKaye wrote in his little article.

By 1937, the entire Appalachian Trail — two thousand miles at the time — was complete, a channel through the wooded wilderness created by volunteers, though helped out here and there by young

IN KEEPING THIS WILDNESS INTACT AND NEARBY, THE TRAIL-MAKERS ARE ALSO USHERING US INTO A PRESENCE OLDER THAN MOUNTAINTOPS OR CONTINENTS. IT'S OUR MARVELOUS PRIVILEGE TO BE PARTICIPANTS IN AND GUARDIANS OF AN ANCIENT COMMUNITY BILLIONS OF YEARS OLD, THE CONTINUOUSNESS OF LIFE ITSELF.

workers from the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps, who got paid a dollar a day. Lewis Mumford said the A.T. was "achieving by purely voluntary cooperation and love what the empire of the Incas had done in the Andes by compulsory organization."

It's still the case — optimism and oxygen remain undiminished.

In 1930, Myron Avery, a Maine lawyer, took on the job of completing the Appalachian Trail, and his leadership of the volunteer groups is probably why it got finished so quickly. Quoting Harold Allen, an A.T. planner and volunteer, Avery said that the Trail "beckons not merely north and south but upward to the body, mind and soul of man." Even so, Avery wasn't interested in MacKaye's realm; he was pragmatic and concerned only about the Trail. "Our main problem," he told organizers, "is to actually create it. Then we may discuss how to use it." It's been said of Avery, nicknamed Emperor Myronides I, that he left two trails from Maine to Georgia, one of badly bruised egos, and the other the A.T. For years, MacKaye withdrew from all work on the Trail, and his larger landscape remained neglected.

The Appalachians — MacKaye's realm — are among the oldest mountains on Earth. They were first formed 470 million years ago, and then, 299 million years ago, in a culminating event of mountain-building, two supercontinents collided to form Pangaea, the most recent single world continent. This pushed up a wide mountain chain with ranges, plateaus, folds, and ridges. For millions of years, its tallest peaks were as high as the Himalayas.

When European settlers arrived, the idea of the Appalachians as a single place began to fracture. "The circumstances surrounding the naming of Appalachia," wrote historian David Walls, "are as hazy as a mid-summer's day in the Blue Ridge."

In 1873, Will Wallace Harney, an Indianan who moved to Florida and spent much of his life writing booster pieces persuading northerners to move to Orlando, wrote a short story about Appalachia, "A Strange Land and a Peculiar People." As David Walls notes, this was the first installment of decades of "local color" magazine stories and essays written for readers on the East Coast and in the Midwest by a succession of writers about the Appalachians and the people there, particularly those in southern Appalachia, which inescapably comes across as a place of "otherness."

For MacKaye, the champion of the Appalachian realm, it was a place of strength and sanity, and the people most at risk of becoming stunted and benighted were the city dwellers on either side of it, the same people who now might never get to see it. Actually everyone would soon be at risk because, MacKaye wrote in his impassioned book, *The New Exploration*, a crisis was approaching. The realm itself might disappear or be disfigured beyond recognition.

With the coming of highways and electric power lines, cities and suburbs were explosively spreading outward like an incoming army, imposing a new kind of wilderness on the landscape — a "jungle of industrialism," a "creeping labyrinth," an "iron cobwebbing," a "standardized excrescence." Appalachia was seeing the approach of forces "far more terrible than any storms encountered within uncharted seas." Yet the realm might still be rescued. Appalachia, MacKaye said, "is electric with a high potential — for human happiness or human misery."

The New Exploration, which reads like a charter for the landscape, was published in 1928, seven years after the Appalachian Trail essay. It has been in and out of print ever since [most recently by ATC]. Mumford considered it a classic, writing a preface in the

1960s: "*The New Exploration* is a book that deserves a place on the same shelf that holds Henry Thoreau's Walden and George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature*; and like [*Walden*], it has had to wait a whole generation to acquire the readers that would appreciate it."

Mumford makes the point that MacKaye is speaking older truths to address the problems of his time, and, it turns out, of ours as well. "In Benton MacKaye," Mumford went on,

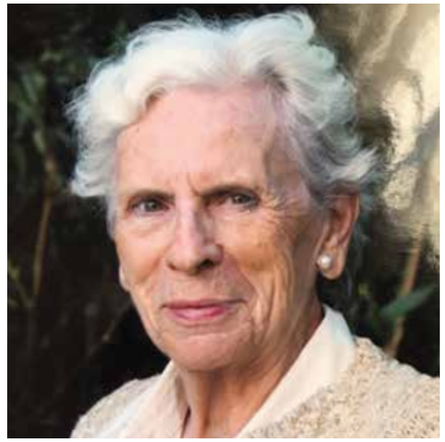
"The voice of an older America, a voice with echoes not only of Thoreau, but of Davy Crockett, Audubon, and Mark Twain, addresses itself to the problem of how to use the natural and cultural resources we have at hand today without defacing the landscape, polluting the atmosphere, disrupting the complex associations of animal and plant species upon which all higher life depends, and thus in the end destroying the possibilities for further human development. That voice was needed in 1928; and because it was not listened to, it is needed even more today."

To be a new explorer, then, is what's required to move forward. MacKaye's vision is a charge to think big, see more widely, take it all in. "The new explorer of this 'volcanic' country of America," wrote MacKaye, "must first of all be fit for all-round action: He must combine the engineer, the artist, and the military general. It is not for him to 'make the country,' but it is for him to know the country and the trenchant flows that are taking place upon it." MacKaye's motto: "Speak softly, but carry a big map!"

Like many planners of his time, MacKaye saw humans as the beneficiaries: "The primary object of the Appalachian project is human," he wrote in a 1922 essay. "The human biped comes first." At the same time, *The New Exploration* offers a fresh calculation of what gets lost in people when landscapes disappear and what is gained when landscapes are kept intact. While earlier writers emphasized the importance of a pure wilderness above all, MacKaye saw three types of landscapes, which he called "elemental environments," all interconnected — the primeval (wild landscapes, "the environment of life's sources"); the rural (farms and villages); and the urban (cities).

Once people had ongoing access to all three elemental environments, a new awareness kicked in, something enduring and indelible. In his math: 1 + 1 + 1 = 4. This was, MacKaye wrote in *The New Exploration*, "not so much an affecting of the countryside as of ourselves who are to live in it."

He called it "a higher estate in human development" and "the gradually awakening common mind"



Ann Satterthwaite has advocated for nearly a half-century for expansions of the protected lands around the Appalachian Trail footpath.
Family photo from Ann Satterthwaite

that would let people live as "a unit of humanity" with the next generations. This was the planetary feeling he'd had on the summit of Stratton Mountain in the summer of 1900 at the age of twenty-one, the feeling that pulled him ever forward from that day on.

Ann Satterthwaite, a Washington, D.C.–based environmental planner, has been thinking about the future of Benton MacKaye's Appalachian realm at least since 1974, when she wrote "An Appalachian Greenway: Purposes, Prospects and Programs." This was a proposal to fulfill MacKaye's "wild dream," as she put it, of protecting 28 million acres of countryside. MacKaye was still alive, although at ninety-four too frail for a visit. Satterthwaite remembers he was very excited and enthusiastic when they spoke on the phone. "It comes to me as a delightful surprise," he wrote to her about her report, saying that from the very first moment he began thinking about the Trail, he considered a greenway "as needful to the protection of the primeval environment" as the Trail itself. "I have many times tried to make this point but not too successfully. But your brochure makes the point in no uncertain terms."

So they never met — but to people in the Wild East initiative, dedicated to protecting sweeping vistas and landscapes beyond the Trail, Satterthwaite is the continuity, the direct line to MacKaye's original vision, and her report is no longer an obscure, mimeographed document.

The Pawling Boardwalk over the Great Swamp – A.T. – Pawling, New York
Photo by Julian Diamond

"The Great Swamp is a twenty-mile-long wetland, and its 6,000 acres are a source of drinking water for a million people and a home for otter, beaver, mink, bobcats, and around 180 species of birds. A.T. volunteers have created the best way to see the Great Swamp, a long, gently meandering boardwalk that crosses the swamp and seems to float above it."
- Tony Hiss

A.T. Metro North Train stop, New York
Photo by Julian Diamond

In the 1970s, officially the A.T. was a congressionally designated national scenic trail, but 40 percent of it ran through private land, and 10 percent was still routed along roads, streets, and sidewalks. Even in the woods, people were putting up summer homes practically next door, turning parts of the Trail into, as Satterthwaite described it, "a narrow path winding through second-home developments, with background noises of chain saws and barking dogs."

Satterthwaite had a novel suggestion. In the center of the greenway, there would be a wilderness-type zone. It would be publicly owned and kept in a "primeval state." Beyond, on either side, would be countryside zones extending up to ten miles. These would be privately owned, and, in those zones, she wrote, "Life and activities will proceed as usual." As long as the greenway is respected, she made a point of insisting.

Essentially, the A.T. would be a national park wrapped up in an AONB [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty]. Satterthwaite's AONB idea went nowhere at the time, but her report and 1978 congressional direction stirred the federal government to start buying off-road land for the Trail, along with a permanent wild zone about a thousand feet wide.

Looking back, Satterthwaite's only regret is not pushing for an even bigger countryside zone, maybe thirty or forty miles wide. "I shouldn't have given up so easily," Satterthwaite went on. "There was a lot of support among people I spoke to, but the highest priority for the hikers was protecting the Trail itself." This time around, she's more direct, and those who gather annually as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership, are used to hearing her tell them to do more — even when they talk about thinking a century ahead or protecting a million acres.

Satterthwaite eloquently told me, "The Appalachians, historically a great divide, are the potential Central Park of the East, two thousand miles long and one hundred miles wide, which puts them on a par with the big landscapes of the West. Like Central Park, they have a lot of people on either side — in 'beehive cities,' as MacKaye called them. The Appalachians are the backyard of a line of eastern cities, but also the front yard of a line of midwestern cities, like Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. I didn't get into environmental issues back then, the fact that, because of global warming, plants and animals will be making their way north through the Appalachians. But in MacKayean terms, there's also an abiding planetary need for the mountains to reach deep into the lives of city people. Already we have to think bolder than the Wild East — bigger is always better — and include the Tamed East, the cities flanking it. Now we're talking about pretty much all the land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ohio River, a huge enough place. From sea to shining river."

So far, Manhattan is the one place where the Appalachians reach deep into city life, getting as far as Grand Central Terminal in the heart of Midtown. It's the only direct mass-transit link with the A.T., the kind of connection Ann Satterthwaite calls a "green finger." Every weekend and on holidays, two morning trains leave Grand Central and, just about two hours and sixty-six miles later, the trains stop at a short wooden platform made of two-by-six planks that's just long enough for a single door on a Metro-North commuter train to open up and let hikers off.

The Appalachian Trail Station, a couple miles north of the town of Pawling, New York, also has a bench and a bulletin board, both painted hunter green, and there's a low railing, no roof, and a trash can. As soon as you get off the train, crossing the single line of track just south of the station, the Trail is right there.

Even after the A.T. wild zone was secured, there used to be worries that the section of the Trail near New York City would seem hopelessly suburbanized, serving only as a bridge or connector on the way to wilder landscapes north and south. But an eighteenth-century sense of wildness still clings to the area, and it feels immensely far away from twenty-first-century city life.

HIKING ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL HAS BEEN A RESTORATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR ME. As a kid growing up in New York City, I had no idea that the Trail was just a few stops away on the Metro North train. Now, as an adult, I've hiked nearly all the Trail – from Fontana Dam in North Carolina to Katahdin in Maine.

Each time I've hiked, I've reflected on how much the A.T. inverts everyday life – where the objectives are often unclear and complicated. In my daily life, my mind is constantly filled with decision-making about which paths to take and thoughts about whether the paths I've already taken were the right ones. On the Trail, the opposite is true. While life on the A.T. is physically challenging, I know where I'm going and how far I need to go to get there. So, while hiking on the A.T. can be difficult at times, I always come back from my trips feeling renewed and capable of tackling complex problems life presents.

As a hiker, I've also been able to reflect on the impact of a changing climate on the A.T. I've witnessed heightened temperatures during the summer, the drying-up of certain water sources, and changes in the habitats of countless plant and animal species along the treadway. Through my recent research and work with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, I've also come to appreciate how important the Trail could be to addressing climate change – both by working against it by storing vast amounts of greenhouse gases in its forests, and by adapting to it by allowing animal and plant species to migrate along the Trail corridor as the climate warms and habitats become untenable. Over its next hundred years, I'm confident, the Trail will continue to serve as a place of restoration and refuge for all that use it – people, plants, and animals alike.

The Dover Oak – along the Trail in Pawling, New York – is approximately 300 years old and is the largest oak on the A.T.
Photo by Angela DeRosato

That is a legacy of the Oblong, territory argued over by colonial New York and colonial Connecticut — a strip of land two miles wide and sixty miles long that stayed unsettled and unowned until Quakers arrived in the 1730s.

Paralleling the Oblong is the Great Swamp, another stronghold of wildness, this one 25,000 years old. It's a twenty-mile-long wetland, and its 6,000 (mostly hidden) acres are a source of drinking water for a million people and a home for otter, beaver, mink, bobcats, and around 180 species of birds. A rare, recently discovered leopard frog species is found in the swamp, and it's not unusual for some five thousand ducks to show up at a pond in the middle of it on a single evening.

Seventy-five A.T. volunteers have created the best way to see the Great Swamp, a long, gently meandering boardwalk that crosses the swamp and seems to float above it. Past the swamp, the trail heads up a forested hill. Down the other side is the Dover Oak, 114 feet tall, the largest oak on the A.T. A white oak like the Waverly Oaks near Boston, the Dover Oak has a twisted trunk that's even more massive, and, 'though at three hundred years old, it's younger, it represents a living link to the old Oblong wildness.

For me, the A.T. train stop is about as good as a trip to the International Space Station, although clearly that's not the kind of comment you'd expect to find on a ridership satisfaction survey. But I'd call it a Half Earth induction portal or biosphere reentry point. A century ago, Benton MacKaye laid claim on our behalf to the vastness of the eastern landscape, and, since then, four generations of hikers have built and maintained the Trail from peak to peak that he could already see in his mind.

In keeping this wildness intact and nearby, the trail-makers are also ushering us into a presence older than mountaintops or continents. It's our marvelous privilege to be participants in and guardians of an ancient community billions of years old, the continuousness of life itself.

Beyond the Dover Oak, the A.T. climbs another hill to Cat Rocks, a vista point with a panoramic view of the Oblong. It's a preview of what Wild East wants to accomplish. Within this view is the Boniello tract, 219 acres of woods where for years a developer wanted to build fifty homes — until a fund-raising campaign made it part of the Appalachian countryside. The grand view from Cat Rocks showcases this permanently protected piece of MacKaye's realm.

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Tony Hiss is the author of fifteen books, including this year's Rescuing the Planet, *from which this essay is excerpted. As a staff writer at* The New Yorker *for more than thirty years, he wrote a series of classic pieces on MacKaye and the A.T. thirty years ago that were the first modern explanations of their importance to conservation nationally. He was born in Washington, D.C., and now lives in New York City.*

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Photo by Janet "Fancy Free" Abbott

IN 1987, I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF WALKING THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL FROM GEORGIA to Maine. It was only the beginning of my A.T. journey. Just a few months later, the opportunity came for me to work for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the organization most responsible for my long-distance adventure. Abandoning plans for my master's degree in Russian literature, I accepted a job as orders clerk and moved to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, in March 1988. I couldn't wait to start learning what happened behind the scenes at the ATC headquarters to make the magic of the A.T. experience possible.

After the ATC's longtime employee, the legendary and beloved Jean Cashin – known to legions of hikers as "Trail mom" – retired in 1996, I was hired as information services manager. It was a joy and privilege to have the responsibility of seeing that those who walked through the doors of the ATC's Harpers Ferry Visitor Center were made to feel welcome and to provide information about the A.T. Every day I met inspiring people for whom visiting the ATC was a pilgrimage of sorts, whether they drove or walked a thousand miles.

There is a certain thrilling look of hope and anticipation in the eyes of those with an A.T. dream, whether it's to see their first white blaze or walk the entire Trail. Greeting and assisting them felt like a sacred honor.

This June, I retired to spend more time with my husband, a former ATC colleague. Now I have more time to devote to our A.T. volunteer work that begin in 1995 when we adopted a 1.2-mile Trail section on the Virginia/West Virginia border. Later, the scope of our volunteer responsibilities grew when we adopted several miles of the A.T. corridor boundary to monitor.

I left the ATC with one goal unmet: finishing an entire hike of the A.T. while an ATC employee. On my vacations, I was able to hike more than 2,100 miles in the span of 33 years. Each hike renewed my love for life, the A.T., and the ATC. I have just 56 exciting miles left to complete the A.T. a second time. The next chapter of my life is unwritten, but the A.T. will be woven into its pages.

From left: Flagstaff Lake along the A.T. in Maine; Bald Eagle – just north of the A.T. near Umbagog Wildlife Refuge in New Hampshire

THE PEOPLE OF THE PEOPLE'S TRAIL

Text and photos by Derrick Z. Jackson

I AM THE VERY ACCIDENTAL BLACK NATURE LOVER. I was a typical urban boy in Milwaukee and a rabid sports fan in the 1960s. The most significant eagles to me played football in Philadelphia. The first cardinal I ever paid attention to was Bob Gibson throwing fastballs for St. Louis. My first confirmed sighting of an oriole was Frank Robinson blasting home runs for Baltimore. Bears and lions were fauna native to Chicago and Detroit and invasive species in Green Bay.

A dismal failure at actual sports, I did the next-best thing. I became a sportswriter and photographer. In college, I covered high school sports for the *Milwaukee Journal*. I shot for the Associated Press at Green Bay Packers games and the 1974 National Basketball Association (NBA) finals between the Milwaukee Bucks and the Boston Celtics. By 1979, at the age of 23, I was covering the New York Knicks and the NBA finals for *Newsday*.

That was my idea of climbing a summit, clueless of other ranges to scale.

That same year, I met a Black woman named Michelle Holmes. She was a medical student at Harvard University. In our first fall of dating, she said, "Let's go see the foliage."

I responded, "What's foliage?"

A stunned Michelle said, "You know, foliage…foliage? You're kidding. You don't know what foliage is?"

Suddenly, I flashed back to the drives in the fall from Milwaukee to Green

Bay for Packers games, with farm fields rimmed by yellow, orange, and red trees. "Oh, do you mean the changing of the leaves?" Michelle nodded affirmatively and then moved on to proclaiming that we would go see the leaves on a four-day holiday weekend.

Puzzled by the notion that this would take up a whole weekend, I asked:

"How long can you look at a red leaf?"

That weekend, Michelle chose a mountain to climb. She chose no slouch. It was Mt. Tecumseh, listed as one of the White Mountain's 4,000 footers (there is an ongoing debate as to whether it is just 3,995 feet). As we ascended, a fog so dense enveloped the mountain that my attempt to shout died inches from my lips. At the summit, Michelle despaired that I would never go hiking again because our view was the equivalent of being shrouded under a white bedsheet.

Then, hot and sweaty, I saw beads of dew glistening from a pine tree. I shook the tree to give myself a shower. The cooling effect, combined with the seductive scent of the pine, sent me into an ecstasy that shocked me. "This feels and smells sooooo good!" I told her.

At that moment, I was hooked on nature. Over the next decade, *all* our vacations, eventually with two little boys, involved camping in the outdoors. We camped in national parks from Acadia to Death Valley, from the Virgin Islands to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, and from the Everglades to Kings Canyon/Sequoia and Yosemite. We camped in national forests from New Hampshire to New Mexico. In 1988, we quit our old jobs at the same time and drove from Boston to Alaska, car-camping for six weeks among glaciers, eagles, moose, otters, bears, and puffins and dazzled by fields of lupines and vistas of towering peaks across from spits.

Soon after I took up my new job as a metro columnist at the *Boston Globe*, I was asked to give a talk at predominantly Black Roxbury Community College. In the question-and-answer period after my set speech, a young Black man asked me about my hobbies.

"Birdwatching," I responded.

That started a giggle that rolled like a tsunami into rollicking laughter in a room of 200 people. I asked the young man, "Why do you think everyone is laughing?" He said, "You know."

I knew where he was going, but I played dumb and said, "No, I don't know, so tell me."

He said, "You know what I mean."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "You know, birdwatching … that's a White thing."

A fresh wave of laughter swept through the room. After it subsided, I said:

"I figured that's what you'd say. Here's what I think." I rattled off the names of Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and all the world of marchers and protestors who agitated for civil rights, then said:

"They didn't talk about it this way, but I look at what they were fighting for, and I don't think it was just about voting rights, lunch counters, bus seats, and school desegregation. In an unspoken way, I think they also risked their lives and shed blood for our right to enjoy and take ownership of this *whole nation*. For me, that means my right to enjoy national parks, to care about the birds, and to feel my presence is equal to anyone else's."

More than 30 years later, ownership, stewardship, and my assertion that birdwatching, the outdoors, and the environment is *everyone's* thing has become urgent to the point of emergency. On the more pleasant and personal side, Michelle's love of the outdoors led her to section-hike the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) over thirteen years, finishing in 2019. I probably did about 700 miles of the Trail supporting her, including glorious traverses of the Smokies and much of the White Mountains.

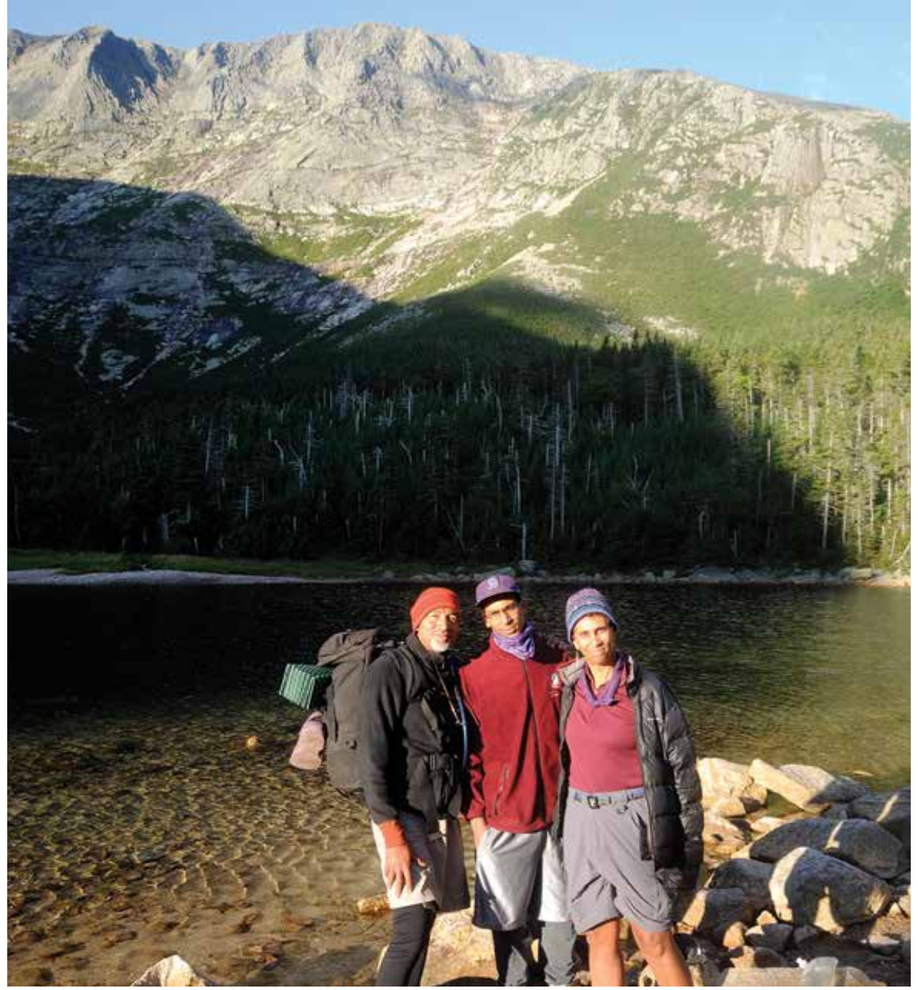
Michelle's getting me to love nature led me to become the coauthor and photographer of two books on the restoration of Atlantic puffins to islands off the coast of Maine, where they had been hunted into local extinction for nearly a century. For two decades, we together have escorted a diverse set of urban Scouts into the wilds, from canoe camping in Maine to ten nights of backpacking at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. Our troop's commitment to diversity led to one of our girls being in the 2021 inaugural class of female Eagle Scouts.

On the less pleasant side, climate change now bears down on us with unbearable temperatures, rising seas, and devastating storms. Black and Latinx families are disproportionately suffering from the impacts in heat islands in redlined neighborhoods and displacement by hurricanes such as Katrina in New Orleans and Harvey in Houston. That is on top of the decades of systemic environmental injustice of Black and Brown families living in injurious, disproportionate, asthmatic proximity to refining and burning of fossil fuels in industry and transportation. The chronic illnesses due to that proximity are considered a major factor in why the COVID-19 Black and Brown death rate remains double that of White victims.

Belying the laughter of that Roxbury Community College audience over my birdwatching, people of color have for several years now actually felt more strongly than White people that climate change must be dealt with immediately. A 2015 *New York Times* poll found that 79 percent of Latinx respondents considered climate change to be an important problem, compared to 63 percent of White respondents. By a two to one margin, Latinx respondents considered climate change a global problem worthy of U.S. aid to low-income countries for climate mitigation.

In 2020 *New York Times* election battleground state polls, 84 percent of Black respondents nationally said they worry about their community being harmed by climate change, compared to 55 percent of White respondents. In Florida, two of three Black respondents and three of four Latinx respondents worry about their lives being impacted by rising seas. In Arizona, three of four Latinx respondents worry about being impacted by rising temperatures. Only half of White respondents worry about climate impacts in Florida and Arizona.

This racial divide in climate change concern is critically germane to those who envision an outdoors recreation scene where Black and Brown people backpack along trails such as the A.T. in proportion to their share of the nation's population. According to the very latest analysis by the Brookings Institution, the White population in the U.S., once close to 90 percent for the first half of the 20th century, will likely slip under 60 percent in the 2020 census. That means that four of every ten hikers over all and every other hiker under the age of 25 should be of color to mirror the demographics of this country.



Derrick Z. Jackson with his son, Tano Holmes, and wife, Michelle Holmes, at Chimney Pond in Baxter State Park, Maine

AT SOME POINT, ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MUST STOP BEING DISTINCT.

As an outdoor enthusiast, bird author, and journalist, I straddle a knife's edge between the enjoyment and conservation of natural beauty and the ugliness of environmental injustice and the very public racial turmoil that has engulfed many old-line environmental organizations as staff people of color demand much more than token inclusiveness from White executives. I'm appreciative of the increasing number of books and essays by Black people chronicling their individual journeys into nature and digging for a more truthful history of the Black experience in outdoor spaces, which includes helping to build and protect national parks, only to endure segregated facilities during Jim Crow.

As someone who — again inspired by Michelle's vision — ritually camped with Black friends on Memorial Day weekend from our mid-20s to our mid-40s, I smile when I read of new hiking groups, outdoor collaboratives, and environmental journalist networks led by people of color. I wrote in celebration over the 2020 presidential election and the Georgia Senate runoffs for how environmental justice voters showed up big, so big that President Biden's cabinet has an unprecedented number of officials with a track record of fighting against unjust pollution and poisoning of communities of color.

Of course, all this represents just the beginning of a new day. How bright that day becomes will significantly depend on how the predominately White environmental and conservation world responds to all of this. Last year, amid the upheaval over police brutality that ignited sweeping reexaminations of systemic racism, legacy environmental groups claimed to understand they had a role in the reckoning.

Websites are full of acknowledgement that the land we all hike on was stolen from Indigenous peoples. Several organizations offered confessionals on the past racist beliefs of founders and decades of White supremacy culture that alienated potential talent of color. Many groups have made environmental justice part of their portfolio and forging partnerships with communities to assist in their fights against pollution and systemically poor infrastructure.

It has finally dawned on environmental leaders, at least rhetorically, that a movement symbolized so long by melting ice and polar bears must meld into a more holistic vision. It is hard to invite people to put on some hiking boots to meditate on the carpets of trillium and tunnels of rhododendron along the A.T. in the South or marvel at scarlet tanagers zipping through the canopy or ravens soaring around the barren peaks of the New Hampshire White Mountains if they can't

Michelle Holmes traversing the Bigelow Mountains on the A.T. in Maine

open their windows in the city during a heat wave because of blowing industrial soot. At some point, environmentalism and environmental justice must stop being two separate words.

The polls say people of color in the U.S. understand that more clearly than White residents. The former are ready to get cracking on getting rid of pollution and being full players and leaders in the green economy, while the latter remains hesitant. In a survey last fall commissioned by West Harlem Environmental Action (WEACT) and the Environmental Defense Fund, 60 percent of Black adults say they are very concerned about air pollution in their community, compared to only 32 percent of White adults. Black and Latinx respondents score higher than White respondents on saying "Clean energy jobs are for people like me."

The reality is that old-line environmental groups face an unspoken challenge equal to any effort to create safe spaces for people of color in the outdoors or in their offices.

They must work toward unity *among White people* about the urgency of climate change, its interplay with environmental injustice, long-term threats to our economy, and the unavoidable need to part with tax dollars both domestically and abroad for clean-ups and clean energy. The hardest part will be to convince White people of their collective systemic privileges to delay, avoid, or recover from the worst impacts of a boiling planet.

The advantages are endless. In hot places, it could be the affordability of air conditioning and living in naturally cooler areas because of tree canopies and parks. In coastal areas, it could be sturdier homes, car ownership to evacuate to higher ground, or quicker access to federal emergency funds if homes are damaged or destroyed after floods and hurricanes. Just about everywhere, it is the relative lack of living with — and choking on — fossil soot. Groundbreaking studies have shown that, while White people account for most of the pollution in consumer activity, Black and Latinx communities disproportionately breathe it in.

Environmental groups must get White people to account for these advantages in an equitable climate strategy on the daily home-front to have any long-term credibility on inviting people of color into the outdoors on the weekend. As of now, White people collectively refuse to account for them. A 2019 Pew survey found that, while 68 percent of Black respondents thought White people benefit "a great deal" from advantages Black people don't have, only 23 percent of White respondents said they benefit a great deal from their advantages. A 2020 *NBC News/ Wall Street Journal* poll found that only 23 percent of White respondents said they receive "too many special advantages."

White denial of advantage cannot be soft-pedaled by environmental leaders after the surge of White supremacy during and after the two terms of Barack Obama, the nation's first Black president. The last decade has seen the tragedies in Charlottesville, Virginia, Charleston, South Carolina, the police and vigilante murders of Black people, and the insurrection of January 6, 2021. They cannot be soft-pedaled as forces are on a relentless march to roll back or stymie environmental protections that would degrade daily life and the outdoors for *all* of us. Denial of advantage is its own fatal disadvantage. Take COVID-19. Black and Brown people remain twice as likely to die from infections, yet 350,000 White people have died. Try to find the advantage there.

In imagining equality in the United States, Martin Luther King, Jr., invoked the imagery of the outdoors in his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech. He said:

"Let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

"But not only that, let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring."

Now that we are reimagining the outdoors for all, on every mountainside, we must come to grips that this quest is no longer just about my wife getting me to look at a red leaf or old-line environmental groups hiring "outreach" staff to get people of color out into pristine wilderness.

Environmentalism also must ring down from the mountains to ring out soot in our cities, fight for clean water, and protect people from the rising seas. If we can replace environmental injustice with a true commitment toward pristine environs where people live every day, I can guarantee that a whole lot of people will feel a lot more welcome to climb an actual summit and shake down some dew from a tree.

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Derrick Z. Jackson is the 2021 Scripps Howard winner for Excellence in Opinion Writing and the 2021 winner from the National Society of Newspaper Columnists for both Social Justice and Sports commentary. His book, The Puffin Plan, *which he cowrote and photographed with Project Puffin founder Steve Kress, won the 2021 Benjamin Franklin Award for Teen Nonfiction from the Independent Book Publishers Association. Jackson is a Pulitzer finalist and 10-time winner of awards from the National Association of Black Journalists.*

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GETTING TO WORK

By Laura Belleville

"THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IS CONCEIVED as the backbone of a super reservation and primeval recreation ground..., its ultimate purpose being to extend acquaintance with the scenery and serve as a guide to the understanding of nature." (Benton MacKaye, 1921)

I don't think that any of us is born a conservationist, at least not with fully formed ideas about ecosystems or a land ethic. That understanding comes after experiencing the outdoors, making sense of it, and finding the language to describe what we saw. For some, that language sounds like science, and, for others, it's a painted picture or photograph or a hiker journal. But, it is innately human to go out into nature to discover, to find ourselves and all the world has to offer. And, at times, to hit the reset button. Benton understood this, for sure. He banked on those understandings to protect the Appalachian landscape.

Our collective connections to the natural world through outdoor recreation experiences become part of our shared values and aspirations. This shared inspiration motivated the hundreds of volunteers between 1925 and 1937 to connect the ends of the world's first multistate long-distance hiking trail. It's what continued to activate the corps of volunteers, staff, and agencies for the decades that followed.

I often imagine what it would have been like to sit around the table in 1925 as part of the team that mapped out how to make a 2,193- mile trail a reality. The vision. The commitment. The energy. With that box checked, it's time to build on this success to ensure that we conserve the places that make the Trail experience one that, as MacKaye envisioned, "a better, wider place in which to live a better, wider life."

We don't have a table big enough to host the number of people that we need now and in the future to implement fully Benton's vision. As a community of Trail enthusiasts and conservationists envisioning the next century, we need to continue to come together, not only in spirit but tangibly in collective action. Let's make a promise, together, that we will:

Reflect: Enjoy the view and ask — what will the hiker a decade, five decades, or more than ten decades from now see? Embrace all that makes our lives better from that inspiring view. Take nothing for granted.

Learn: Consider how vital Appalachian forests are in mitigating climate change and ensuring resiliency. Learn more about how you can help protect forests.

Act: Do one small thing, or many, every year to make the A.T. and the surrounding landscape better — work on a Trail section; weigh-in on conservation policy issues; give generously to land trusts, to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and to conservation causes; invite new friends to our community — someone who never had the opportunity to connect to the myriad benefits of nature.

I am certain that the A.T. will be a better place 100 years from now with all our efforts. It will continue to be a People's Trail, a legacy of civic engagement, and a lasting conservation corridor that offers millions of people incomparable experiences and long-lasting, treasured memories.

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Inspired by the Trail's opportunity to connect people to nature and natural beauty, Laura Belleville joined the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in 2005, and now serves as Vice President for Conservation and Trail Management. Summers as a crew leader for a youth work crew in Harriman State Park, working on the A.T. and connecting teens to the land, sealed her passion for conservation work. Her career includes projects in the Amazon, the Everglades and the Florida Keys, Lake Erie, and the Appalachian Forests in Ohio.

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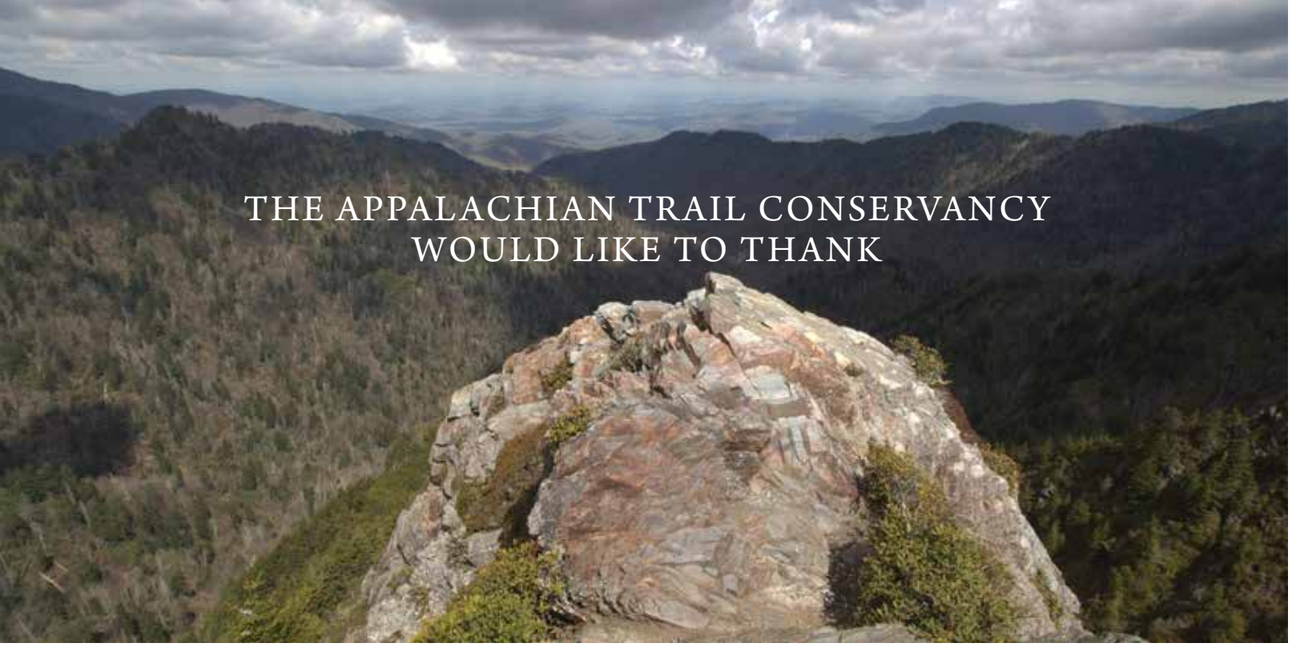
Max Patch, North Carolina. Watercolor by Rebecca Harnish



THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY WOULD LIKE TO THANK

Charlies Bunion, Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Photo by Erin Miller

The Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy would not exist without the visitors, volunteers, advocates, partners, and supporters who make it all possible. The adage is true: It takes a community. In the case of the A.T. and the ATC, it's a community of millions. While we are grateful to everyone, we want to thank those who, day-in and day-out, keep the Trail a wonderful reality today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

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AMC - Western Massachusetts Chapter
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Appalachian Mountain Club
Batona Hiking Club
Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club
Carolina Mountain Club
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Smoky Mountains Hiking Club
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Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club
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All dedicated ATC staff members, past and present
The hard work and dedication of our volunteers, who are the soul of the Trail – they always have been and always will be; the spirit of stewardship each volunteer embodies breathed life into Benton MacKaye's dream
Our members and our donors – without their support, the vision of a Trail forever and for all is simply not possible
All A.T. Communities, from Maine to Georgia
The A.T. Landscape Partnership and Climate Advisory Group
The A.T.'s Regional Partnership Committees
The Appalachian Trail Education Advisory Council
All of ATC's partners who play a critical role in managing, protecting, and advocating for the Appalachian Trail
The artists, writers, photographers, and others who have made this issue possible
The Appalachian Trail Museum Society
All those who have visited the Appalachian Trail and found there a relationship with nature. And the dreamers who, one day, may experience the majesty of the Trail
All those who reside in our collective history, whose passion and work have given us a legacy to steward into the next century
All those who do not yet have a relationship to the Appalachian Trail but who, one day, will step foot on it and experience, like so many of us have, a transformation. We look forward to welcoming you into our ever-growing and ever-changing community

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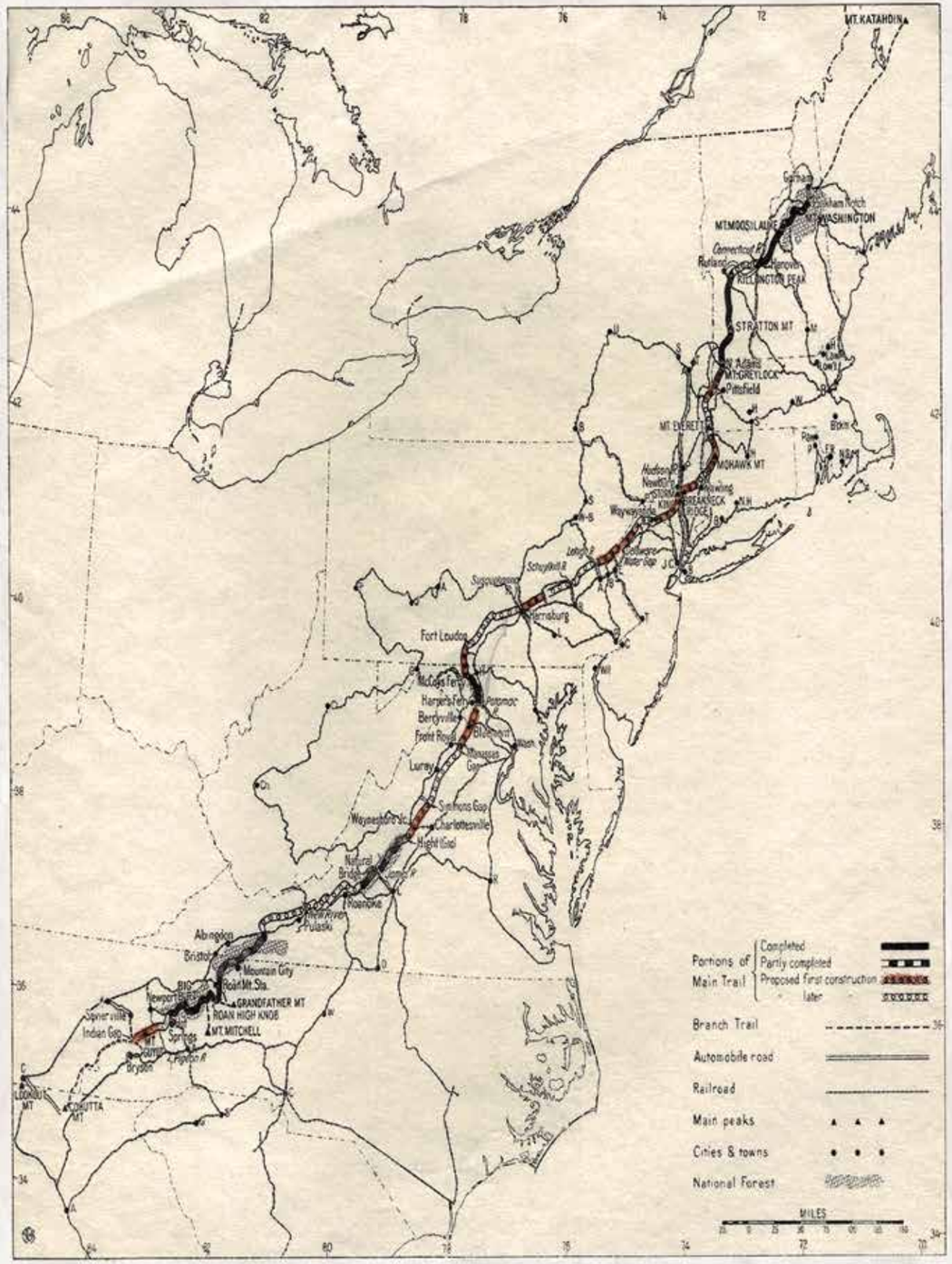
These books are available for a limited time at the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store
atctrailstore.org/history

“WE BUILD FOR OURSELVES, ON THE FRONTIER, A BETTER, WIDER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE A BETTER, WIDER LIFE.”

Benton MacKaye – The New York Times*, 1923*



A map of the proposed trail by Benton MacKaye, believed to date to 1922. Courtesy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Archives

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