

**Mid Atlantic Regional Partnership Meeting Minutes  
Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company  
Bluemont, VA  
November 10-11, 2007**

Attendees:

**MARPC Delegates and Alternates:** PATC: Kerry Snow, John Hedrick; CVATC: Dallas Owens; MCM: Paul Ives, Michael O'Connor; YHC: Jim Hooper; Tom Morley; SATC: Phillip Day; BMECC: Scott Birchman; Martyann Gutierrez; AHC: Janet Goloub, Barb Wiemann; PTC: Paul Schubert; DVAMC: Dan Schwartz; Batona: Al Britton; WTC: Debra Palermo, Jane Beck; NYNJTC: Ron Rosen, Walt Daniels

**ATC Board:** Bob Almand

**ATC Staff:** Karen Lutz, Michele Miller, Caroline Dufour, Royce Gibson, Laurie Potteiger, Steve Paradis, Jeanne Mahoney, Deb Smith

**NPS:** Pam Underhill, Pete Irvine, Rita Hennessy, Kent Schwarzkopf, David Reus, Don Owen, Todd Remaley, Sue Salmons

**Other:** SATC: Jeff Buehler; PATC: Lee Sheaffer, Tom Johnson, Vern Conaway, Sandi Marra, Henry Horn, Jack Adams; MD DNR: Robb Bailey; Shenandoah National Park: Shawn Green

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Birchman called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. Everyone introduced himself or herself. Lutz welcomed everyone. Paradis listed recent ATC staff changes. Almand discussed the Stewardship Council and the need for close cooperation between the RPCs and the Council. He wants to improve communications between ATC, the SC, and the RPCs, including using the Internet tool Basecamp.

Discussion:

Britton – when something happens, it takes forever to get a response; our efforts to improve the Wind Gap parking lot have stretched over two years, between the need for permits, compliance issues, ownership issues, etc.

Marra – an AT Journeys article on the involved process of upgrading the parking lot would be instructive and informative

Snow – we could use a folder on Basecamp to communicate, update issues

Daniels – each group cannot see the other groups' sections of Basecamp so this may not be a solution

Lutz – we need a web site for sharing information among all groups

Daniels – we need a template for tackling projects, perhaps in the Local Management Plan

**Review of Minutes of the March 2007 Meeting (Attached)**

Ron Rosen moved, Jim Hooper seconded, to approve the minutes of the March 2007 meeting. Passed unanimously.

**ATC & MARO Update (Report Attached)**

Lutz briefly mentioned that the Bear Mountain project is attracting new volunteers. The Lehigh Gap remediation effort and the relocation of the trail between Lehigh and Little Gap will be a complicated effort with many players.

Discussion:

Goloub – take a look at the west side of Lehigh Cap to see remediation progress

Lutz – this area could be a site for the Mega-Transect

**ATC Membership and Fundraising**

Marra, Chair of the ATC Membership and Development Committee, stated that while ATC values the time that volunteers commit to ATC, ATC's major projects (Trail to Every Classroom, Mega-Transect, Gateway Communities in addition to treadway projects such as bridges, relocations or major restoration projects) require funding. Membership is a major source of funding and ATC needs to increase its member base. ATC has proposed exchanging membership lists with the 30 maintaining clubs. ATC is offering club members a free one-year ATC membership in the hope that these individuals will become paying members after the free year. Maintaining clubs would receive a list of ATC members in their area so that they could

offer complimentary club membership, solicit new members, or recruit new volunteers. An ATC member has offered ATC a challenge grant of \$100,000; ATC must raise \$100,000 by the end of 2007 to match the challenge.

Discussion:

Britton – my club will not exchange its member information; instead, give us a solicitation letter that we can send out to our members

Lutz – we are partners in our ATC mission and need to trust each other

Gutierrez – this is not a trust issue; our members don't want to be solicited

Gibson – SATC shared its membership list, and ATC and SATC each gained about 300 new members (free memberships); two other clubs have also participated in this initiative and a fourth club is set to exchange lists.

Underhill – we understand that some clubs will not participate, so ATC will proceed with willing clubs

Marra – you as RPC representatives are ATC, so you need to communicate this to your clubs

Birchman – ATC needs get out the requested letter to those clubs who will not share membership lists, but those clubs must understand that their members will not receive a free ATC membership

### **ATPO Update (Report Attached)**

Underhill stated that ATC relies on the clubs for on-the-ground information and the clubs have to rely on ATC for advice. RPC members have a critical role in sharing information up and down the chain. The NPS ATPO exists to support ATC. There are 48 tracts of land yet to protect, involving 3.4 miles of trail (the biggest piece is at the New River in Virginia). Gypsy moth control and the loss of hemlock trees are two environmental issues facing us.

Reus discussed the five-year capital planning process (out to 2014) and club representatives were given packets to update their projects.

### **Chainsaw Safety Training and Certification (Report Attached)**

Irvine discussed the chainsaw memorandum of understanding and OSHA regulations. The purpose of sawyer certification is the safety of workers, co-workers, and hikers. We have had injuries and want to prevent accidents.

Discussion:

Underhill – liability is a concern; sawyers cannot go out alone; if they do, they will not be covered under the NPS insurance

Irvine – a two-day sawyer re-certification is the best practice since a one-day re-certification does not allow enough time to review material

Hooper – how do you justify limiting a certification to three years?

Irvine – three years is a compromise time frame

Britton – a three-year certification protects NPS

### **Shenandoah National Park**

Green reported that SNP certified 40 sawyers for PATC. We must make sure that our volunteers have communications plans, first aid kits, practice safety, and walk away from maintenance tasks when the situation warrants (he is an AT overseer himself for two miles of trail). Under Armor clothing is a good choice to help prevent tick bites and Lyme disease. Two problems facing SNP are invasive species and the high bear reproduction rate.

### **Mid-Atlantic Neighbors Brochure**

Rosen explained a NY-NJTC neighbor relations program. The club mailed or delivered letters to trail neighbors and invited them to programs to learn about the AT. One benefit was that the club picked up new local volunteers from the meetings. The club also produced a brochure and sent volunteers door to door to distribute the brochures.

Rosen moved, seconded by Wiemann, to recommend to the Stewardship Council that ATC develop a general neighbors brochure that could be tied to other programs and include local materials. Passed unanimously.

[Break for lunch]

### **Nominating Committee**

Rosen and Snow requested that all nominations for MARPC officers be submitted by January. The election will be held in March; the term is two years.

### **ATC “Trail Magic” Suggestions (Report Attached)**

Potteiger provided background material about the problem; the attempt by the Georgia AT Club to regulate “Trail Magic”; the ATC dialogue with Trail Angels, hikers, maintainers; and the comments from WhiteBlaze.net. The Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association (ALDHA) has endorsed the suggestions; the American Hiking Society has picked up on the issue. ATC has added a page on the web site about Trail Magic. The suggestions attempt to gently steer Angels into proper efforts. We need to remember that the ultimate Trail Angels are our volunteers.

Discussion:

Goloub – how do we find out who leaves unattended Trail Magic items along the trail?

Potteiger – contact me or Remaley; we can trace the items

### **ATC Geocaching Issue (Information Attached)**

Remaley reported that Sally Naser (ATC Exterior Corridor Boundary Survey Manager) estimates that there are 300 caches in the ATC Mid Atlantic region. The majority of caches are placed by individuals who place them without permission. Volunteers should not just remove a cache, since people will continue hunting for them and possibly cause more damage searching. The web site information for locating the cache must also be removed. Contact Naser (snaser@appalachiantrail.org) or Remaley (Todd\_Remaley@nps.gov) if you find a cache. Geocaching is illegal on NPS land; the US Forest Service does not have single policy, and local agencies can have diverse policies. Geocachers can be a problem if they violate private land looking for caches and the landowners assume the cachers are hikers. A new version is waypointing or virtual caches, using a rock or tree instead of a cache.

Discussion:

Reus – are we headed for an ATC policy?

Remaley – yes

Reus – what will a policy do for us?; do we need more guidance than the North Country Trail policy, which is basically to ask permission and don’t destroy anything?

### **Maryland DNR**

Bailey reported on problems at the Pogo Campground and he would like to have Jeff Marion come in to give advice. Maryland had two ridgerunners this year; one was mostly stationed at Annapolis Rocks. This problem area is recovering but not enough; more green plastic fencing will be installed to protect areas. Gypsy moths have hit the state hard. The Weverton parking area will become a state DOT Park and Ride lot with 24-30 spots. The AT will be moved slightly so that hikers will not see the lot; there will be minimal lighting and a kiosk. Completion date is next fall. A lack of funding could close the South Mountain Recreation area; as a result DNR patrolling of the trail and shelters would cease.

### **Access Board Rulemaking and Implications**

Irvine reported that facilities on federal land must be accessible. There is a question about whether the regulations will require accessible trails between facilities. ATC has submitted comments on the proposed regulations.

Paradis explained that the Federal Register contained 26 questions related to the proposed regulations.

Dave Startzell addressed those questions that were applicable to the AT – issues such as signage, tread surface, picnic tables and fire rings, shelters, and privies.

Discussion:

Snow – is the Access Board deviating from the Forest Service regulations?

Britton – who will pay for making facilities accessible? volunteers?

Irvine – you can’t use funding or the cost of labor as a criteria unless it is nationally significant; shelters are simple to refit, privies are not

Goloub – what is the next step?

Underhill – the Access Board will issue regulations after considering the comments submitted

Reus – you don’t have to retrofit existing facilities, just new or remodeled ones

### **Guidance for Locating and Designing AT Shelters and Formal Campsites (Document Attached)**

Wiemann presented the history of the guidelines, which were discussed in many forums, including AT Journeys, the clubs, RPCs, and a workshop at the 2007 Biennial Meeting. The Stewardship Council endorsed pages 1-8 of the guidelines; the checklist page is being revised. Clubs planning shelter and campsite projects must consider the items in the guidelines.

Discussion:

Britton – are these guidelines mandatory?

Lutz – you will not get project approval unless you follow the guidance of this document

Horn – these guidelines are not practical for volunteers

### **Exotic Invasive Plant**

Schwarzkopf discussed non-native plants. Salmons presented a power point illustrating invasive plants.

### **A.T. Volunteer Clearinghouse (Report Attached)**

Mahoney reported on the AT volunteer clearinghouse, designed to connect volunteers to the clubs and clubs to volunteers. It will be available through the web site. The software used will be flexible and customizable to store information about the volunteers, their availability, certifications, projects they worked on, etc.

### **Recap of Land Protection Efforts in Mid-Atlantic (Report Attached)**

Dufour discussed corridor protection at Loudon Heights and White Rocks. The Kittatiny Coalition is prioritizing land areas that need protection. ATC owned or eased lands need to be monitored; there are 1400 miles of boundaries and currently only about 200 miles are monitored each year.

### **Local Management Planning Guide**

Dufour explained that the LMP helps each local club do its job. The LMP is a compendium of policies (NPS, ATC), background information, and examples of club policies, but we need to simplify it. Federal policies can change so quickly. We would like to have the guide be web based and updated more often.

What can we cut out?

Discussion:

Britton – put changes in policy, etc., in red so they stand out; a club should not have to include items that are not applicable to them

[Break for Dinner; reconvene at Blackburn Trail Center]

### **National Register of Historic Places Eligibility (Report Attached)**

Owen discussed the National Register and the pros and cons of having the AT listed on the registry.

### **Voices of the Trail**

Smith presented the background of this Pennsylvania oral history project and a power point featuring some of the participants.

### **Rocky Run CCC Shelter Restoration Project**

Adams presented a power point that included historical information about the shelter and the pictures of the restoration work on the shelter.

[Break for evening]

Birchman reconvened the meeting Nov. 11 at 8:55 AM at Fire Company

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**Other:** PATC: Vern Conaway; MD DNR: Robb Bailey

### **Mega-Transect (Report Attached)**

Miller presented a power point put together by Don Owen.

Paradis stated that ATC hopes to use the Mega-Transect to fund major programs (drawing in \$8½ million over 5 years, which is equal to the NPS funding over the same period). Board of Directors member Destry Jarvis put together a Case Statement package.

Lutz stated that ATC is not ready to launch the whole plan.

Miller said that the November 2006 Mega-Transect meeting received press coverage and the public response was great

### **Walk In The Woods Movie**

Paradis said that director Chris Columbus was interested in a Redford-Newman film. When Newman retired, they began a search for a Newman replacement. At this time, the film is “up in the air”. Redford is still interested. What is in it for ATC? ATC is hoping for an opening event with the stars promoting ATC or a DVD extra feature.

### **NIETC Corridors and Their Potential Impact to the A.T. (Report Attached)**

Miller presented a power point. The concern is the increase in the number of lines, pollution, and the visual impact from these enormous powerline towers and corridors. ATC would have to decide if we would become involved in a lawsuit against reconsidering the designation of a corridor. To cross the AT corridor, ATC/NPS policies require that there be an over-riding public need and no other alternative; one crossing only; a study of resource impacts; co-alignment of lines; mitigation of impacts to the trail and trail experience, Personal safety of hikers under the lines is also a consideration.

### **Education and Outreach**

Schubert feels that ATC should be attempting, along with other groups, to develop a major consciousness about conservation and engage the public in a number of areas where the public has a comfort zone (healthy lifestyle, walking). We can tap into the public appreciation of urban parks. Each county has an individual conservation plan. ATC needs an overarching approach, more than TTEC or Gateways communities.

### **Stewardship Council**

Daniels discussed the mission and organization of the Stewardship Council, the four standing committees of the council and their charges, and the difference between ATC policies (adopted by the Board as the way to deal with a situation) versus guidelines (a codification of items to consider when dealing with a situation).

Wiemann discussed the Advocacy Flow Chart (Attachment) and the roles, responsibilities, and importance of the individual clubs and the RPCs in the ATC decision making process.

Daniels discussed the issues being tackled by the Land and Resources and Energy Standing Committees, including the Board adopted Policy on Wind-Energy Facilities.

Wiemann discussed the work of the Trail and Volunteer Development/Community Outreach Committees, and issues that the RPC will see in the future.

### **Safety Issues**

Paradis used the photographs from the Rocky Run Shelter presentation to look at safety in the field.

Volunteers need to use a job hazard analysis on projects. In the past, we have not always consciously practiced safe work habits and we have been lucky in avoiding injury. This provoked a discussion of good safety practices.

Discussion:

Gutierrez – this reminds us of the need for education and training

Irvine – we should hold tailgate safety talks; should we have a safety article in the Register?

Hooper – put actual case studies in the Register

Schwartz – training videos are available from the U.S Forest Service Research and Development Center in Missoula MT; can ATC provide info about them?

**Future Meeting Dates**

March 8, 2008 – Boiling Springs

Sep. 20/21, 2008 – PA/NJ (Mohican, Glen Gray, PEEC, Gray Towers, and Kirkrigde were suggested as possible locations)

March 7, 2009 – Boiling Springs

Oct. 24/25, 2009 – MD/WV/VA

**RPC Structure and Function**

Lutz - should we adopt a committee structure?

Britton – we should be a committee of a whole

Day – I liked the presentations

Owens – ad-hoc groups don't work

Britton – we need geographic cohesion on a committee if we have committees

Daniels – we should have standing committees with missions matching the Stewardship Council's committees

Schwartz – small groups must meet between RPC meetings to be effective and productive

Hedrick – how are other RPCs organized?

Paradis – New England has a land trust committee only; VA and South have no structured committees

Day – if we have committees, we should pick one issue to start with

Daniels – PATC, BMECC, and NYNJ have not acted on the issue of extra alternates their clubs

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara L. Wiemann  
RPC Secretary

Approved March 8, 2008