

The Register

A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Winter 2007

Sidehill

By Hawk Metheny and Robert Proudman

Building Volunteer Sustainability

In the volunteer-management tradition of the Appalachian Trail, last year ATC and its 30 affiliated Trail clubs engaged more than 5,000 volunteers who contributed more than 190,000 hours of their time to traditional Trail maintenance, education and outreach, and environmental monitoring programs. More than 150 volunteers have achieved 4,000-hour lifetime awards. Volunteers with more than 25 and more than 50 years of service to the Trail will be honored at ATC's 36th Biennial Meeting this summer (www.ramapo2007.org). However, even with these impressive credentials, there are signs that the system is under strain.

In 2004, a small club dissolved for lack of new members, bringing our roster to 30 clubs Trail-wide. In 2005, another club began negotiating with ATC to divest part of its section, because it felt it could no longer handle its full responsibility.

There are other signs of change, including the aging of our club members and indications of stagnation in club-member growth. Those demographic realities are happening at a key point in the history of the Appalachian Trail, when, perhaps more than ever before, given our broadening mission, we need younger people, more people, and more well-connected people. In short, we need help—an admission that arises regularly now in club and ATC meetings. Well, help may have arrived.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy has received a grant from IMPACT: A Fund for Change through Volunteerism (a program of the UPS Foundation) to increase the number and type of volunteers working in various capacities along the Trail. With this funding, ATC is in the process of hiring a new volunteer resource coordinator in 2007. That individual will work within the network of A.T. maintaining clubs, ATC crews, and our agency partners to develop a dynamic new initiative that capitalizes on changing demographics and interest in volunteer opportunities to keep our volunteer core growing. The funds also will support an initial needs assessment.

We are not the only organization experiencing change. Recent research indicates that member-based clubs throughout the country may be declining in favor of episodic, family-oriented or corporate-based volunteer outings and opportunities. Local community outreach and programs designed to match people from diverse groups and sources with volunteer opportunities attuned to their needs, schedules, and interests are the waves of the future. Web-based recruitment is essential for engaging people on-the-move.

While our traditional member-based management may no longer be quite as effective as in the past, we need its remarkable staying power for generations to come. But, we must augment our hard-working, time-tested volunteer traditions with opportunities that capitalize on the scheduling and travel constraints under which most people live today. We want to attract, “set

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the hook” (to borrow the fishermen’s phrase), and ultimately land more members and maintainers for our beloved Trail.

Clubs are already rising to the challenge, revamping their Web sites and designing brochures to attract new members, manning information booths at community events, and running dynamic work crews (see the article on the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club’s “Blue & White Crew” in the “Trail Clubs” section of The Register). The Southern Region’s new “Southern Wilderness Elite A.T. Club” (or “SWEAT” for short) holds promise for recruiting those yearning for physical challenge and an accompanying esprit de corps. In addition, ATC-sponsored and -supported crews in all the Trail’s regions are widely known for the quality of their work and the camaraderie and loyalty they inspire in their participants. We need to augment all of those efforts.

The successful completion of this year-long project will enable the A.T. Trail-maintaining clubs and crews to grow, giving our volunteer base more depth and closer connections to Trail communities, and will nurture the leaders we need to meet our obligations to care for and manage the Trail in the coming decades.

On the eve of the spring meetings of all four Regional Partnership Committees and the Stewardship Council, and the Biennial Meeting this summer, we request that you share your concerns, successes and ideas with each other and with us. We look forward to working with you.

Hawk Metheny, Stewardship Council Chair
Bob Proudman, Director of Conservation Operations

Regional Partnership Committee Meeting Schedule:

March 10—Mid-Atlantic Regional Partnership Committee, Unitarian Church, Boiling Springs, Pa.

March 16–18—Stewardship Council, Shepherdstown, W.Va.

March 30–April 1—Southern Partnership Meeting (Both Virginia and Southern RPCs meet separately and in plenary sessions); Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock, N.C.

March 31—New England Regional Partnership Committee; Lowell National Historical Site, Lowell, Mass.

July 13–20—36th Biennial Meeting, Ramapo College, Mahwah, N.J.

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News

Candidates Sought for 2007-09 Stewardship Council

ATC is seeking recommendations for membership on the Stewardship Council for the 2007-09 term, which begins following the Biennial Conference in July. Current Council members may be reappointed, however, members may not serve for more than three consecutive terms without a respite of at least one term.

The Council has 15 members and represents the skills and experience required for the highest possible level of effective management for the Appalachian Trail and its surrounding lands. A conservation mindset is expected of candidates, so that the Council will be able to take a holistic view of Trail stewardship. In addition to a dedication to Trail management and stewardship, members should be committed to ATC and its mission and goals. The Council includes a broad representation of organizations, Trail-management disciplines and geographical areas.

The Stewardship Council oversees policy development and programs related to stewardship of the Appalachian Trail and surrounding lands. It is the key body advising ATC on its overall strategic direction in conservation and serves as the principal interface between the Board of Directors and ATC's Trail-management partners. Specific areas include:

- Trail and facility design, construction, and maintenance
- Resource management and protection (land trust and land conservation activities as well as threat-identification and advocacy)
- Research and scientific management
- Community outreach, partnership and volunteer development

Members are expected to attend two weekend meetings each year and participate in work on focused task teams between meetings. Some travel expenses are reimbursable.

By April 30, please e-mail the names of potential candidates to Bob Proudman at bproudman@appalachiantrail.org, and include a brief biography of the candidate's qualifications, club or organizational affiliation, address, phone number, and email address. Anyone interested in serving on the council may self-nominate. Candidates will be reviewed for appropriate qualifications by a selection committee appointed by the chair of ATC's Board of Directors. The final slate will be forwarded to the Board for action at its meeting held during ATC's biennial conference at Ramapo in July.

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Trail Magic

ATC's Stewardship Council has appointed a working group that has developed some voluntary suggestions for those who wish to provide Trail magic to hikers. We are seeking input from clubs and agency partners, recognizing that you are the ones who most directly deal with Trail magic and any negative after-effects. We emphasize that these are just suggestions. We will consider this document a draft until we are satisfied that you have had a chance to speak your voice and provide us with your direction. Please send comments to trailmagic@appalachiantrail.org.

Background:

“Trail magic” started out as an unequivocally positive concept. The term was coined in the late 1980s to describe unexpected, spontaneous acts of kindness that seemed to occur with uncommon frequency on the Appalachian Trail. This phenomenon (often related to the offering of food) eventually became one of the hallmarks and one of the most positive aspects of the A.T. long-distance hiking experience. Thru-hikers, the most frequent recipients of Trail magic, often returned to the Trail after their hikes to “do some magic” as their way of “giving back.” Anyone who admired long-distance hikers and wanted to support them found that trail magic was relatively easy to do and very gratifying. Trail magic providers came to be known as “Trail angels.”

However, Trail magic has evolved in both scope and scale over time to include practices that can be inconsistent with Leave No Trace and the intended A.T. experience. ATC has heard an increasing number of complaints from volunteers and agency partners about large Trail feeds and unattended coolers, and, at the same time, has received calls from all quarters (including Trail angels) for guidelines on Trail magic that incorporate Leave No Trace principles. Confrontations between hikers, Trail angels and Trail managers on this issue have at times become ugly—we’d like to see these intense passions and good intentions channeled in more positive directions.

The suggestions below incorporate feedback from both hikers and Trail angels who participated in the discussion on this topic at the 2006 Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association’s gathering, or participated in discussion of an earlier draft that was posted on the popular A.T. forum, WhiteBlaze.net. A more detailed paper was discussed at the mid-Atlantic and New England Regional Partnership Committee (RPC) meetings and will be brought before the upcoming Southern and Virginia RPCs.

Suggestions for Providing Trail Magic

Help build and maintain the Trail for future hikers. In many areas there is a shortage of trail volunteers. You can enhance the A.T. experience for others in rewarding ways by caring for the Trail itself. Volunteers are always needed to maintain the Trail, its overnight sites, and corridor lands and to monitor rare plants, water quality, and air quality. Visit www.appalachiantrail.org/volunteer for more information, or check with your local club to find out where help is needed most.

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Do not leave unattended food or drink. Leaving such items in shelters, streams, or along the A.T. can harm wildlife and is considered litter, making it an eyesore and violating regulations. Especially in remote areas, signs of civilization can detract from the wilderness character of the Trail. Dispense food and drink in person, and carry out any trash or leftovers.

Locate events in developed areas with hardened surfaces. Local parks and Trail towns often present good options. Keep events small. Consider whether your event may be contributing to an overabundance of Trail feeds both locally and Trail-wide. Remember some hikers come to the Trail to get away from crowds and are seeking an opportunity for solitude and contemplation.

Restore the site and pack out trash and food. Leave the site as you found it—don't create a burden for volunteers whose time is better spent in other activities.

Don't advertise. Publicizing a “feed” in advance can lead to clumping of thru-hikers, causing overcrowded conditions at shelters and campsites. Where sites are limited, crowding can lead to competition for space. Advertising—even noncommercial—is prohibited on the A.T.

Learn the regulations that apply to storing and preparing food. If you will be cooking or preparing food, check with the land manager to find an appropriate area and learn what food-safety or other regulations apply. Charging a fee or asking for donations may be prohibited or require a special permit.

Avoid serving alcoholic beverages. In addition to possible other legal issues, there is the potential problem of serving minors or over-serving hikers, which can create problems or put people at risk.

Be hospitable to all. While long-distance hikers with ravenous appetites are most likely to welcome Trail magic, be sure to make all Trail users and volunteers feel welcome.

RPC awards

Along with the vital face-to-face meetings of ATC staff, Trail club representatives, and agency partners that occur at ATC's regional partnership committee (RPC) meetings, each of the four RPCs selects individuals for A.T. Volunteer and A.T. Partner of the Year awards. Two of the RPCs met in October 2006 and selected the following honorees.

New England

The 2006 New England RPC Volunteer of the Year is **Elsa Sanborn**, who has served as treasurer of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) for a total of more than 20 years. MATC's finances are more complex than most volunteer organizations as the club publishes the

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guidebook to the A.T. in Maine, maintains its own seasonal Trail crew, and employs ridgerunners and caretakers. The club has maintained a balanced budget during her tenure and was able to build a substantial reserve fund. When the club took on the task of fighting the Redington Wind Farm in 2006, which required spending large sums of money and tracking hundreds of individual donations, Sanborn managed those added responsibilities as well as her usual duties, which are as vital to the success of the Club as the work of any "Maintainer" or crew member.

Western Region Trail Coordinator **Rebecca Barnes**, of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, is the NE-RPC Agency Partner of the year. Her career with the agency began in 1982 with work as a seasonal employee. She became a park supervisor in the early 1990s and has been in her current position since 1998. Barnes is responsible for oversight and management of all the trails within the state forests and parks of the Western Region, including the A.T., which passes through six state forests and one state reservation. She says that knowing that she can rely on the support and dedication of Appalachian Trail volunteers and partners allows her to focus her energies on other areas as needed.

Mid-Atlantic

The Mid-Atlantic RPC honored two volunteers and one partner at its fall meeting.

Dick Barrick of the Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club joined the organization in 1991 and was assigned a section of the A.T. to maintain. In addition to his maintenance and monitoring work on the A.T., he also worked on the Darlington and Tuscarora trails. Barrick chaired the Maintainers Committee from its inception in 1996—walking the club's 17-plus mile A.T. section several times a year and noting problems for future work parties (most of which he participated in) and replacing maintainers as needed. A three-time certified sawyer, he took care of blowdowns throughout the valley. Barrick stepped down from his club positions in 2006 for health reasons, but recently reported that he has regained some strength and has been out walking on the trails.

Volunteer-of-the-year recognition was made posthumously to long-time New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NY-NJ TC) member **Dick Redfield**, an avid hiker and hard-working contributor to the hiking community. In addition to maintaining trails, Redfield spent countless hours volunteering at the Conference's office. He was part of the trail crew that developed sections of the A.T. in Dutchess and Putnam counties and, until his death in August after a seven-year battle with leukemia, was a corridor monitor on the Graymoor section of the Trail.

Larry Wheelock, NY-NJ TC trails director, was selected as partner of the year. Wheelock is a life member of the Conference and became its first New Jersey Field Representative in 1999. In 2002, he was promoted to his current position, where he monitors and responds to Trail issues and serves as staff liaison to volunteer Trail maintainers and agency partners. He maintains continuity among the three separate A.T. management committees (having been described as "the glue holding them together") and is relied on within the Conference for his technical knowledge of Trail construction projects.

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Dealing with ATVs and Other Problems—A Ranger’s View

By NPS-ATPO Ranger Todd Remaley

Interacting with people is a routine part of trail and corridor maintenance—just like brushing, cutting blowdowns, and painting blazes. The Trail and surrounding A.T. lands are used by millions of people and bordered by thousands of private landowners. As an A.T. volunteer, you are very likely to interact casually with people—at the Trailhead, on the Trail, and on Trail lands.

Trail users and Trail neighbors may not realize they are on the Appalachian Trail or on public land. Very few of them know and understand the basics of the A.T., and almost none of them understand the Trail and its maintenance and management as well as you do. They may not realize that what they are doing is inappropriate, illegal, or wrong.

It is okay, and often advisable, for a Trail club volunteer to have the “*initial conversation*” with hikers or Trail neighbors. Sometimes that initial conversation is all that is needed to remedy a specific situation. Other times, it serves as the beginning point for efforts that will eventually correct the problem.

Identify yourself as a volunteer—most folks will assume you are a paid government employee unless you let them know that you are not—and that you are out there on your own time, just like them. If you sense hostility, back off.

Carry and use a camera on the Trail. Make it a routine piece of your trail gear. A digital camera is best, since the images are available instantly; and can be distributed and shared easily and quickly, but any camera is good.

Trust your instincts and use common sense. If something about a situation looks or feels wrong, it may well be wrong. A pickup truck with loading ramps or an ATV trailer at a trailhead or road crossing may be related to the motorcycle or ATV you saw on the Trail earlier in the day. A photo of a license plate and note about a vehicle description may pay off later. The group “hogging” a shelter may be open to casual conversation and a suggestion that others may also want to use the site (most groups are).

Consider on-site, on-the-ground solutions. Are there signs at the trailhead indicating that this is the Appalachian Trail and that it is open only to foot travel—not bicycles, horses, or motor vehicles? Is the boundary marked where that old roadbed crosses the Trail? Is that old roadbed open and “inviting” to ATVs, or is it blocked with tree limbs and rocks? Where are the ATVs coming from?—backtracking to find where vehicles are coming onto public land can be a great way to narrow the scope of the issue.

Get to know the players. Cooperation and communication are critical in dealing with misuse, unauthorized use and illegal use; just as they are in all trail maintenance and management. The players include other club members and leaders, local law-enforcement agencies, local

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community members and leaders, employees of the land-managing agency, and your regional ATC staffers.

Share what you know. Let your club leaders and agency partners know about the situation or issue. Ask for their help. Provide specific information (including pictures). Inform and involve local, state, and federal law-enforcement agencies as appropriate.

Don't get discouraged if the situation doesn't magically vanish immediately; often repeat efforts are needed. If you don't follow-up, who will?

Law Enforcement Ranger Todd Remaley joined the National Park Service-Appalachian Trail Park Office staff in the summer of 2004 in response to a need for increased law-enforcement capacity, particularly on Trail lands acquired by the NPS outside the boundaries of other national parks and forests. He is an A.T. thru-hiker and veteran NPS ranger who came to ATPO from Shenandoah National Park. He is duty-stationed at ATC's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office in Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania.

Maintainer's Tips

PATC and the Blue and White Crew

The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) (www.patc.net) was formed in 1927 to develop the Appalachian Trail in the mid-Atlantic region. Today, PATC is responsible for the upkeep and improvement of about 240 miles of the A.T. and 800 miles of other trails, more than 60 shelters and cabins, and approximately 1,000 acres of conserved lands in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

PATC has more than 6,500 members, hundreds of whom volunteer their time to the A.T. each year. In addition to trail work, PATC volunteers maintain cabins and shelters, assist in search-and-rescue operations, conduct classes in Leave No Trace outdoor ethics, organize hikes, excursions, and other group recreational events, and help in natural-resource conservation.

In PATC parlance, volunteers who have been assigned basic maintenance responsibility for a particular section of a trail are called trail "overseers." A key resource for overseers is the club's "Overseer Handbook," which is full of both administrative and practical information and is available as a 28-page pdf document at www.patc.net/volunteer/trails/overseers (scroll to the bottom of the page and select "PATC Overseer Handbook.")

Overseers are aided by and report to a "*district manager*"—a PATC volunteer leader for a particular region—who in turn is aided by and reports to the volunteer "*supervisor of trails*." In

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addition, there are 11 standing PATC volunteer crews, available to work on large projects that are beyond the capacities of single overseers.

The Blue and White Crew is one of those PATC volunteer crews, working primarily in the Central District of Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. Formed by PATC volunteers in the early 1990s, the crew schedules one-day and overnight work trips throughout the year, and also hosts training workshops. Currently the crew is rebuilding the side trail to ATC headquarters within Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

In addition to their valuable on-Trail work, the volunteers of the Blue and White Crew maintain a website at blueandwhitecrew.org/ that contains a wealth of trail-skill information, including a “*Tips From the Crew*” section (<http://blueandwhitecrew.org/resources/tips.php>) with articles on waterbar construction, painting blazes, and other practical trail skills, such as sharpening various tools.

Trail Maintenance Quiz

By Pete Irvine

The answers to these questions represent generally accepted practices as outlined in ATC’s publications, particularly *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance* and the backpack-friendly *Appalachian Trail Fieldbook*. Both are available for purchase at the Ultimate A.T. Store at www.atctrailstore.org, or 1-888-AT-STORE. If you disagree with any of the answers offered, have additional advice, or ideas for future quiz questions, please let us know at TheRegister@appalachiantrail.org.

1. What is the difference between a drainage dip and a waterbar?
 - a) No difference—both terms refer to trail drainage channels and are used interchangeably.
 - b) A drainage dip is a drainage structure with an earthen mound running diagonally across the trail treadway. A waterbar is a rock or log structure that diverts water off the treadway at an angle.
 - c) A drainage dip is an addle-brained person who constructs a waterbar.

2. What is the weakest part of sidehill treadway?
 - a) Inside edge, closest to the cut bank.
 - b) Outside edge, furthest from the cut bank.
 - c) Middle of the treadway.

3. What’s the best way to dispose of accumulated soil and debris when cleaning trail drainage channels?
 - a) Pull all soil and organic debris up onto the treadway and pack it on the footpath below the drainage channel.

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- b) Clear and spread to the downslope area below and away from the treadway, taking care not to clog or dam the lowest edge of the outwash ditch.
 - c) Pull all soil and organic debris up onto the treadway and spread it on the footpath above the drainage channel.
4. When and how often should you clean trail drainage structures—waterbars, drainage dips, and ditches?
- a) At least twice each year, in the winter and summer.
 - b) At least annually, after autumn leaf fall.
 - c) At least twice each year, in the spring and fall.
 - d) On every worktrip.
5. What is “outsloping”?
- a) The outsourcing of trail maintenance work to offshore companies.
 - b) The name of a style of roof on backcountry sanitation facilities.
 - c) Slope of the sidehill trail treadway towards its outside edge.

Answers:

1. b) While many people use the terms “drainage dip” and “waterbar” interchangeably, technically they refer to different drainage structures. Drainage dips are built into the trail tread—a shallow, 12-inch-wide trench across the tread at a 45 percent angle. The excavated soil is packed 6–8 inches high in the treadway along the lower side of the trench. A waterbar is similar, but includes a rock or log structure on the lower side of the trench in addition to the excavated soil. Drainage dips work well on gentle slopes. On slopes above 8 percent, water and foot traffic soon wear down dips and waterbars should be used.

2. b) In both “partial bench” and “full bench” sections of sidehill trail, the weakest point of the treadway is the outside edge. It is subject to settling and sloughing-off. Regular brushing of vegetation on the cut bank (uphill) side of the treadway and good trail drainage encourage hikers to walk in the middle of the treadway.

3. a) Soil and other natural debris cleaned from trail drainage channels should be spread and packed on the footpath below the channel. The extra material, even soaked leaves and muck, helps to build up the treadway and bulk up the berm that diverts water off of the trail.

4. c) Unchecked water can rut soils in just a few hours. We recommend cleaning all trail drainage channels at least twice a year—in the spring and fall. Spring cleaning readies the footway for summer rains, including gully-washing thunderstorms. Fall cleaning (after leaves have dropped) limits footpath erosion during spring runoff and snowmelt. Don’t be bashful about restoring the dip or waterbar to its original profile, and pay particular attention to the outwash ditch beyond the edge of the treadway.

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5. c) Sidehill trail tread should never be perfectly flat. A gentle outslope allows water to run off across the trail in sheets, rather than traveling down the trail and causing erosion. Recommended outslope is 5 percent—about one-inch in elevation across an 18-inch-wide trail tread. A proper outslope is nearly imperceptible to hikers – if you can feel it in your ankles, or easily see it, it is probably too much.

Trail Clubs

NEPA Compliance for A.T. Clubs

By Don Owen, Environmental Protection Specialist, NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office

So, you would like to relocate a badly eroded section of the Appalachian Trail and someone in the Trail club tells you the news: You have to comply with NEPA. Don't worry. NEPA compliance isn't as bad as you might think.

What is NEPA? Quite simply, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is a law that requires federal agencies to make sure that:

- The impacts of a proposed action on federal lands are known prior to undertaking the action, so that someone does not inadvertently destroy an important natural or cultural resource; and
- The public has an opportunity to review and comment about a project before it takes place.

To determine whether a proposed Appalachian Trail project requires NEPA compliance (and, by definition, compliance with the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other environmental laws), answer the following questions:

- 1) Is the project on National Park Service or USDA Forest Service lands?
- 2) Does it involve surface disturbance?
- 3) If so, is the surface disturbance in an area that hasn't been disturbed before?

If the answer to any of the first three questions is “no,” you probably don't need to worry about NEPA. (However, a state agency may have a similar process that needs to be followed, so check with ATC regional staff and your state agency partner.)

If the answer to each of the first three questions is “yes,” then you need to check with someone from ATC or a representative from your agency partner, who should be able to give you a fairly quick answer.

If the project is simple and the impacts are expected to be minimal, your agency partner will probably do one of two things: a “categorical exclusion,” or an “environmental assessment.”

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If the answer to each of the first three questions is “yes,” but the impacts appear to be negligible and the project is on the agency’s list of categorical exclusions, the agency should be able to do a “categorical exclusion.” (Each agency has a list of “categorical exclusions,” which include actions that, by virtue of their nature and scope, the agency has already determined will not have an effect on the environment.)

If the answer to each of the first three questions is “yes” but the impacts of the project are unknown, or the project is not on the agency’s list of categorical exclusions, your agency partner may need to do an Environmental Assessment to determine whether or not the action “has the potential to affect the human environment.”

Typically, your agency partner will need the following items to determine what level of environmental compliance (none, categorical exclusion, or environmental assessment) is needed for a project:

- 1) A good one- or two-paragraph description of the project.
- 2) A map (preferably a segment map).
- 3) A summary of expected impacts, and any information that you already know about cultural and natural resources at the site like wetlands, rare plants, historic resources, and so on (a list is fine).
- 4) The date that you want to get started.

The categorical exclusion process normally takes about 30 days. An environmental assessment can take as little as 45 to 60 days; however, field reviews to determine if there are any impacts to cultural or natural resources can only be done during certain seasons, so you may have to wait for the snow to disappear and the plants to come up.

A little advance planning and early contact with ATC and agency staff can go a long way toward smoothing the process.

Working with the Police

By Paul Schubert, Philadelphia Trail Club

Nearly all sections of the Appalachian Trail suffer from varying degrees of mischief from local users—trash, dumping, destruction of property, and so on. If it is minor, we simply clean it up and move on. However, when trash or destructive behavior is more major, then more serious measures need to be taken. One that can bear good results is establishing good relations with your local or state police.

Three years ago, the Philadelphia Trail Club, assisted by Ranger Bob Gray of the NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office and Karen Lutz, ATC’s mid-Atlantic regional director, contacted the Lehigh Township Police for help with a deteriorating situation that included both destructiveness and major trash problems in one of our parking lots. Bob, Karen, and I met with

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the chief of police in May 2004 and found him to be highly sympathetic to our cause. (I later learned that the chief and most of his officers are devoted outdoorsmen and view looking out for the Trail as part of their service to the community.)

Since then, the department has come through for the Trail in big and small ways when we have needed them. We decided to show our gratitude with a letter of appreciation and arranged a presentation, inviting the local news media to record it.

Using a daypack, an A.T. hat and patches as props, I sketched the origins of hiking on the East Coast—how walkers and hikers came out from the cities by riding the railroads to get their recreation and exercise in nearby rural areas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the formation of the first hiking clubs, Benton Mackaye's 1921 essay, "An Appalachian Trail: A Regional Planning Project," and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's building of the first section of the Trail at New York's Bear Mountain in 1923. I went on to say that the Trail was completed in 1937 and established as a national scenic trail by Congress in 1968 with the National Trails System Act, and emphasized that the Trail has succeeded and continues to thrive because of the thousands of men and women who have given their dedication, passion and endless hours of their lives to its success.

While the Trail originally passed through a largely rural landscape, today it is surrounded by a much more urban environment. ATC has responded to these changed circumstances by reaching out to local towns and communities, bringing a message of mutual benefit and understanding. That, of course, was the basic reason we were there on behalf of our own club and ATC—to honor the Lehigh Township Police Department for its notable service to our club and to the Trail.

I thanked the chief and his officers and presented our letter with the hope that we can work together for years into the future. The chief emphatically stated his desire to work with us as well.

More recently, representatives of the Allentown Hiking Club, the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Philadelphia Trail Club met with Pennsylvania State Police from the Bethlehem barracks. Todd Remaley of the National Park Service accompanied us and led the meeting. The Allentown club will now maintain this contact.

Paul Schubert has been a member of the Philadelphia Trail Club since 1976 and has been involved with the club's A.T. effort for nine years, seven as Trails Co-Chair.

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Monitoring Updates

A.T. Expands Environmental Monitoring Efforts Partnership Forms for A.T. Mega-Transect

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its major federal partners have decided to enlarge several ongoing land-management programs into a long-term collaborative project to comprehensively monitor changes in the mountain and valley environments through which the famed footpath meanders.

For more information: www.appalachiantrail.org/megatransect

Why an Appalachian Trail Mega-Transect?

Remarks of Pamela Underhill, Park Manager of the Appalachian Trail, at the Appalachian Trail Mega-Transect Symposium, November 9, 2006

Benton MacKaye, the founder of the Appalachian Trail, was a true visionary. “With pollution and over-population spawning a sprawling urban desert,” he wrote near the end of his life, “I am encouraged by the knowledge that there are millions of Americans who care about the wilderness and the mountains, who go forth for strength to Mother Earth, who defend her domain and secrets. I am proud to have played a role in the birth of the Appalachian Trail. And I am proud of the generations who have made my dream come true.”

I think he would be proud of where we stand today. I believe Benton would also intuitively understand the concept of an Appalachian Trail Mega-Transect and its potential to move mountains.

Most people today think of the Appalachian Trail as a simple footpath. This simple footpath is 2,175 miles long and roughly 18 inches wide, and it follows, more or less, the spine of the Appalachian Mountains. It is a quiet, remote footpath in the wilderness where people go to get away from it all, and it provides people with an opportunity to experience mountains, vistas, trees, meadows, rocks, water, and yes, a few other people.

To many, however, the Trail is much more than that. For the volunteers and staff of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the 30 Appalachian Trail clubs who manage and maintain the Trail, and for those of us who are lucky enough to have government jobs working with them, the A.T. is 2,175 miles long and about a thousand feet wide. It is an extraordinary unit of the National Park System, and it is managed through an absolutely remarkable Cooperative Management System that prizes volunteer contributions and leadership above all else. And these

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dedicated volunteers and staff succeed, day after day, in providing an extraordinary recreational resource to the American public.

But think for a minute: Where would this Trail be without the environment that it passes through?

In 2000, a group of deep-thinking descendants of Benton MacKaye and Myron Avery got together in New Hampshire for a two-day long summit to do just that: To examine the Appalachian Trail from a fresh perspective, and to look at its potential as a place to monitor the health of the environment. A short time later, another group in the Southern Appalachians conducted a similar exercise.

What they learned, and what we've been thinking about ever since, is that the Appalachian Trail has tremendous potential to serve as a place to monitor the health of the Appalachian Mountains. After all, it is an unbroken thread of entirely public land, spread out on a long traverse along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains, on a north-south axis across the entire eastern seaboard of the United States. And every foot of it is open to the public, and a footpath exists along its entire length.

This thread of public land also holds one of the greatest assemblages of temperate zone species in the world. It crosses the summits of most of the highest mountains in the Appalachian Mountains; it traverses the headwaters of many of the major rivers and streams in the eastern United States; it stands downwind of many of the major air-polluting sources and upwind of many of the most densely populated areas in the eastern United States.

It has a culture of cooperation and partnership, and it is known to millions as one of the last great places in America.

It is also threatened on many fronts, by air pollution, water pollution, invasive species, off-road vehicles, infrastructure development, climate change, and yes, even the people who love the Appalachian Trail so much that they are out on the Trail in ever-larger numbers.

If we can establish the Appalachian Trail mega-transect, we can use it for a multitude of purposes – to make better land-use decisions, to promote public understanding of the wealth of natural resources that are present along the Trail, to provide an early warning system for resources at risk, to reduce the costs of management, and hopefully, most important of all, to educate and inform millions of Americans about the health of their own environment and about what is happening in their own back yard.

The Appalachian Trail is, on a geographical and socio-political scale, perfectly suited for this goal. We have invited you here today to build on the successes of our predecessors and to help us explore the Appalachian Trail's potential to serve as an environmental mega-transect.

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Along the Trail

Always a Step Ahead

Thirty-five general meetings of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (formerly Conference) have been held since the first meeting that established ATC in 1925. For more than 30 years, these meetings have been held biennially in locations ranging from Maine to Georgia.

The 2007 membership meeting and conference will be held July 13–20, at Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey—the theme is "Always a Step Ahead." As you hike the Appalachian Trail, there is always a step ahead of you; take that step and there is still another one. But, always being a step ahead also means being in the vanguard. ATC has always been at the forefront of hiking-trail management. Under the partnership agreement with the National Park Service and delegation agreements with the 30 maintaining clubs, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the foot path and helping to manage the country's premier hiking trail. A radical idea when introduced, that model is now accepted and used with other national scenic trails. As a Rockland County, New York, legislator said in 1987, "The Appalachian Trail works the way the rest of the world ought to."

Trail-related workshops, family events, and entertainment and hikes are planned for the conference, as well as the general business meeting during which ATC officers are elected. Information can be found at www.ramapo2007.org and will be in the March/April issue of *AT Journeys*. Registration will be available online for the first time beginning in March.

25 and 50 Year A.T. Volunteers Sought

The Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO) of the National Park Service is again seeking the names of volunteers who have worked on the Appalachian Trail for more than twenty-five or fifty years. Since 2001, ATC's primary federal partner has recognized long-time A.T. volunteers by presenting 217 Silver Service Awards (for twenty-five years) and 18 Golden Service Awards (for fifty years) at ATC's biennial meetings. Most of the 30 local A.T. clubs are represented on that list, as well as ATC crew and office volunteers.

ATPO wants to hear from either the Trail Clubs or the individual volunteers themselves. Years of "active volunteer service" include all time and effort contributed by an individual for the benefit of the Appalachian Trail, regardless of the location—not just on NPS-acquired lands. Types of volunteer service include (but are not limited to) maintenance (Trail, boundary, overnight sites), management (local management plans, resource monitoring, Trail assessments),

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administration (accounting, newsletters), and public service (leading hikes, ridgerunning, outreach).

This year's recognition will be at the biennial conference in July. Names may be submitted in writing or via e-mail by April 6, 2007. For more information or to obtain forms, please contact either Rita Hennessy (Rita_Hennessy@nps.gov) or Pete Irvine (pirvine@fs.fed.us) at the A.T. Park Office, National Park Service, P.O. Box 50, Harpers Ferry, WV, 25425, 304-535-6278.

Ice Storm Clean-Up

An ice storm that hit Shenandoah National Park on Thanksgiving Day left the Appalachian Trail and many side trails and roads throughout the park impassable. Thanks to Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (www.patc.net) volunteers, all of the A.T. and many side trails in the park were cleared of blowdowns and debris by New Year's Day, even as the southern 40 miles of Skyline Drive through the park remained closed to traffic. Shawn Green, park trails coordinator, thanked the volunteers for their trail-clearing efforts and congratulated them on their excellent safety record during the clean-up.

N.C. Appalachian Trail Plates Grow in Popularity

The North Carolina Appalachian Trail license-plate program (www.appalachiantrail.org/nclicenseplate) has been a great success, with at least 3,000 A.T. tags in use. \$20 from each A.T. tag sold goes to ATC for its work in North Carolina. \$4,000 in grants from those funds have been awarded to A.T. clubs: \$230 will go to the Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club (www.tehcc.org) to rehabilitate a sleeping platform at Overmountain Shelter, and \$3,770 to the Nantahala Hiking Club (www.maconcommunity.org/nhc) to develop a workshop curriculum for elementary-school teachers that uses the Appalachian Trail as an interdisciplinary learning resource.

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Side Trails

New England Wilderness Bill Signed Into Law 42,000 Acres Near the A.T. Designated as Wilderness

On December 1, 2006, President Bush signed into law a bill designating as wilderness nearly 42,000 acres near the Appalachian Trail in the Green Mountain National Forest. (www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/green_mountain/index.htm) Almost 17,000 acres will protect Glastenbury Mountain in southern Vermont and the rest expands three existing wilderness areas. An additional 34,500 acres in the White Mountain National Forest (http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/) in New Hampshire also received wilderness designation. Inclusion in the wilderness system provides the highest level of protection of national forest lands from other uses of the resources. Traditional A.T. management practices (except the use of power tools) were explicitly allowed under the measure.

For more detailed information: www.appalachiantrail.org/wilderness

AHS Hosts Hiking Festival

The Great Southeastern Hiking Festival, put on by the American Hiking Society (AHS) and hosted by the Carolina Mountain Club (www.carolinamtnclub.org), Nantahala Hiking Club (www.maconcommunity.org/nhc), North Carolina Bartram Trail Society, Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail, and the Montreat Trail Club will be held at the Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina. Hundreds of hiking enthusiasts are expected to attend a weekend of hiking, educational events and entertainment May 3–6. Information is available from AHS. (www.americanhiking.org/alliance/sai/festival.html)

Alpine Stewardship Gathering

The Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering will be held June 8–9 in Acadia National Park and will include a workshop on Cadillac Mountain, the highest point on the east coast of the U.S., with an estimated 500,000 visits annually. Attendees will visit the mountain and work in teams to develop and present management recommendations to park staff. Alpine researchers, managers, planners, volunteer stewards, and individuals with an active desire to learn more about the alpine areas of the Northeast and how to manage them are invited. The Gathering is sponsored by Acadia Partners for Science and Learning and the Guy Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund. For more information contact: charlie_jacobi@nps.gov