

# Information, Please

By Karen Lutz

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**CVATMA installed the Cadillac of information boards with 10- x 10-inch oak and a hand-carved "Welcome to the A.T." at ATC's mid-Atlantic regional office in Boiling Springs, Pa. (photo by Karen Lutz)**



**Detail of CVATMA's board (photo by Karen Lutz)**

Several of the mid-Atlantic region's clubs recently took advantage of a National Park Service (NPS) challenge cost-share opportunity to provide information to Trail users by installing bulletin boards at important Trailheads. To be eligible for the funds, individual clubs had to demonstrate a willingness to match the \$14,000 in cash provided by NPS with labor for the installations and a long-term commitment to maintain the boards. Six mid-Atlantic clubs—the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Mountain Club of Maryland, Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Management Association, York Hiking Club, Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club, and Wilmington Trail Club—accepted the challenge.

A handbook of designs and plans for a wide variety of board styles was developed by ATC. The styles ranged from prefabricated-aluminum cases to elaborate timber-frame structures complete with hand-carved trim. Three basic designs for the bulletin boards—"vandal-resistant," "economic," and "long-lasting"—were used by the Trail clubs.

Each club selected the style that best met its particular need and the particular characteristics of its Trailhead site. Some of the criteria used in making these decisions included whether there was a history of vandalism at the particular parking area, the amount of Trail use, and skill of the volunteer labor force available for the installation.

Both York Hiking Club (YHC) and Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club (SATC) selected vandal-resistant boards. These aluminum extrusion cases, similar to those found in public parks and roadside rest areas, were purchased by ATC and installed on aluminum uprights with drive rivets. ATC also arranged for the cases to be fitted with the Best Lock

system used on A.T. throughout the mid-Atlantic and other regions. Ron Gray and other volunteers from YHC used their single information board to help define the exact location for hikers to cross very active Conrail railroad tracks after leaving the Clarks Ferry bridge north of Duncannon, Pa. Placement of the board was a condition of the acquisition of this particular right-of-way from Conrail. YHC volunteers spent 24 hours on the project.

Jeff Buehler and SATC's crew installed double cases at the club's Trailhead on Pa. 225. Although this is a very popular Trailhead, it is not visible from the highway and has a history of minor law enforcement problems. SATC had a bit more work digging the holes for the double board on its rocky ridgetop site and spent 75 hours on its project.



**The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club's "economic" board at Va. 7 (photo by Bob Butt)**



**Trail user peruses SATC's Trailhead information board to familiarize herself with local hiking conditions and regulations (photo: Karen Lutz)**

The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), Mountain Club of Maryland (MCM), and Wilmington Trail Club (WTC) each selected a custom variation of the economic design. A PATC crew, led by member Lester Hoyle, installed its first board at the Rt. 7 Trail crossing. (The club plans to install a similar one at the Rt. 725 parking area near Linden, Va., which was constructed a few years ago.) Interestingly, PATC corridor management committee chair Bob Butt suggests that these boards not be locked or secured in any serious way. He contends that the club has experienced less vandalism and theft if information notices are just tacked onto the plywood backboard. The club contributed 50 hours of labor. MCM installed a board at its Trailhead parking area on Pa. 850. This was part of a multiyear project, where the club constructed the board at a Trailhead parking area built in 1994. MCM volunteers spent 102 hours on construction. WTC, ATC's newest maintaining club, installed a bulletin board near Pa. 191. Ned Sohl and a crew from Wilmington spent 82 hours on its board. The materials and some contracted millwork and joinery cost \$1,255.

The Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Management Association (CVATMA), led by Donna Williams, installed one information board at ATC's mid-Atlantic regional office and have begun a second at the mid-Atlantic Trail crew quarters, the Scott Farm. These long-lasting boards are truly works of art, suitable for highly visible locales that receive heavy traffic and can be closely monitored. Materials included 14-foot-long, white oak, 10- by 10-inch uprights and cedar shakes for the roof. One hundred seventy-nine hours of volunteer labor were devoted to one board. Donna Williams, a professional timber-framer and thru-hiker who served as CVATMA's ridgerunner last summer, was the key to this successful project. She volunteered 75 hours for each sign, crafting all the mortis-and-tenon joinery and hand-carving the words "Welcome to the Appalachian Trail" on the bottom brace. She also added some decorative flair to the harsh oak uprights with hand-carved lamb's tongues and chamfered edges.

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Although it is clear that different-style information boards are appropriate for different situations and field conditions, they all serve the same basic function. They are used as a means of disseminating information about the local club and information relevant to a particular Trail section, such as overnight-use polices and other special regulations. They also can serve to share information about the whole A.T. and ATC. Last season, they also were used for posting emergency information about specific incidents. They provide a good means of reminding visitors to treat their water, limit group size, and Leave No Trace. Consolidating these messages at Trailhead information boards such as these effectively gets the message to Trail users without littering the backcountry with a proliferation of signs posted throughout the forest.

ATC is in the process of publishing a small handbook for A.T. maintainers, called "How to Design a Trailhead Bulletin Board," and can provide design plans (some of which have now been field-tested and are newly revised) to other maintaining clubs interested in installing a bulletin board at their trailheads. Interested club leaders should contact ATC.

Type	Built by	Cost	Hours of labor
Vandal-resistant	YHC	\$810 for single upright panel	24 hours
Vandal-resistant	SATC	\$1,200 for double case	75 hours
Economic	PATC	\$954	50 hours
Economic	MCM	\$695	102 hours
Economic	WTC	\$1,255*	82 hours
Long-lasting	CVATMA	\$1,000	179 hours

\*includes some millwork and joinery

- Karen Lutz is ATC's Mid-Atlantic regional representative.



Wilmington Trail Club's customized board in Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (photo by Karen Lutz)



York Hiking Club selected the "vandal-resistant" board, located here as a condition of a NPS right-of-way agreement with Conrail (photo by Karen Lutz)



The Mountain Club of Maryland customizes the "economic" design at Pa. 850 between Cove and Blue Mountains (photo by Karen Lutz)