

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

## Sidehill

*By Hawk Metheny and Robert Proudman*

### Credible Policy

Developing policy direction on one of America's longest (and skinniest) national parks is a daunting job. The A.T. passes through 14 states, 88 counties, six national park units, eight national forests, and 60-odd state land units. The Trail's cooperative management system, consisting of the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service and state agencies, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the A.T.-maintaining clubs, overlays that jurisdictional puzzle. Then there are all of the people who use the Trail, as well as hostel keepers, "Trail angels," and many interested groups, such as the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association (ALDHA).

ATC's role is to advise the agencies that administer the A.T. and to follow their regulations. It also acts in an advisory and technical-assistance capacity to the 30 Trail clubs (each an independent body), and seeks to influence the actions of Trail users.

How does ATC wield influence? The basic ingredient for success has been to seek what is best for the Trail and then tirelessly encourage all partners to embrace that goal. Sometimes we seek to educate hikers. Sometimes we use "the bully pulpit," to borrow Teddy Roosevelt's famous phrase. Sometimes we adopt policies to formalize our position or reinforce agency direction.

How does ATC develop Trail-management policy? With extended dialog to educate ourselves and our partners and to build consensus. Draft policies are developed, discussed, refined, shared with clubs and agencies, posted on our Web site, and may be discussed and revised further in various venues including among our Regional Partnership Committees and Stewardship Council. Eventually, a policy may be presented to the Board of Directors for discussion and final action. Approved policies are disseminated to the Trail clubs and agency partners and are incorporated into local management planning.

The Stewardship Council, completing its first term since ATC's reorganization, plays a central role in policy development. With the biennial conference at Ramapo in July, where a new Council will be appointed, it's a good time to reflect on our progress and challenges. Some examples of recent policy issues taken up by the Council include:

#### Issue #1—"Trail Magic"

Last October, ATC information services coordinator Laurie Potteiger joined Council member and recreation ecologist Dr. Jeff Marion to present "Suggestions for Providing Trail Magic" to ALDHA. Hikers and those who want to encourage them by providing food, *etc.*, are individualistic, and sometimes resist regulation. A diplomatic approach won the support of ALDHA members and the guidelines were revised and endorsed by the Stewardship Council at its March meeting.

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

## Issue #2—Wind Power

ATC, NPS and the Maine A.T. Club have taken some heat from ATC members and others for opposing the proposal by Endless Energy, Inc., to build wind turbines on the Redington Pond Range in Maine. In January, a nearly unanimous vote by Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission overturned its own staff recommendation and favored denial of the permit, validating ATC's and MATC's contention that the turbines violate LURC's plan to protect mountain tops above 2,700 feet. ATC remains concerned with any development located near the Appalachian Trail.

In March, the Stewardship Council debated these matters, and immersed itself in global climate change issues and the impact of efforts to increase construction of new coal-fired power plants in Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania (see related story on National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors). In a related development, ATC's Board of Directors also considered climate change and energy issues at its May meeting.

## Issue #3—Structure Creep

Dr. Marion has taken on the trend toward building ever-larger shelters with more amenities that, while appealing to many hikers, also have negative implications. Much input was received following publication of Marion's "Structure Creep" article in the Nov/Dec06 issue of *A.T. Journeys*. The current draft policy has been revised once again.

We invite your opinions and comments at [TheRegister@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:TheRegister@appalachiantrail.org) and look forward to further dialog on these and other critical A.T. issues at Ramapo and at the fall Regional Partnership Committee meetings.

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

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## Regional Partnership Committee Meeting Schedule

October 13      Virginia Regional Partnership Committee meeting, location TBD

October 27–28    New England Regional Partnership Committee meeting, Hulbert Outdoor Center, Fairlee, Vermont

November 10–11    Mid-Atlantic Regional Partnership Committee meeting, PATC Blackburn Trail Center, Round Hill, Virginia

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

## News

### ATC Hires New Staff

#### Headquarters

Effective January 1, Steve Paradis became ATC's chief operating officer, after serving in that role in an interim capacity since last October. He previously served on the Stewardship Council and on ATC's former Board of Managers and Finance Committee. He is the corridor monitor coordinator for the Dartmouth Outing Club.

Jim Ross joined the staff in January as the assistant director of development and major gifts manager working with Royce Gibson, who became director of development in December. Ross previously served as director of development for a military academy in Virginia and as the executive director of a museum and park in Pennsylvania.

Jeanne Mahoney began working in March in the new position of volunteer resources coordinator. She came to ATC from a community volunteer center in Maryland, where she worked to find and connect potential volunteers with local nonprofit organizations. Her familiarity with ATC goes back to childhood—her mother was a Trail maintainer for the NY-NJ Trail Conference. Currently, Mahoney is conducting a Trail-wide needs-assessment and will be evaluating tools for volunteer-management, training resources, and strategies for attracting new types of volunteers. (Information on ATC's volunteer initiative can be found at: [www.appalachiantrail.org/volunteermanagement](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/volunteermanagement).)

In April, Amy McCormick became ATC's corporate relations coordinator. She has a diverse background in fundraising, nonprofit board relations, marketing, teaching and human resources. She also has a masters degree in communications from West Virginia University.

#### Regional Offices

ATC's Southern Regional Office welcomed new Associate Regional Representative Andrew Downs in January. He will manage the regions' seasonal Trail crews, ridgerunners and volunteer-training programs, among other responsibilities. Before coming to ATC, Downs (a 2002 A.T. thru-hiker) worked on a conservation plan for the Haw River in North Carolina, as a backcountry naturalist for AMC, and as an archeologist.

Adam Brown joined ATC's New England staff as trail resource manager in April to represent ATC in Southern New England and to oversee many of ATC's field programs in the region. He came to ATC from the Appalachian Mountain Club, where he worked primarily as a caretaker for shelters and huts in the White Mountains, most recently as winter caretaker at Carter Notch Hut. Brown is based at ATC's newly renovated Kellogg Conservation

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

Center in South Egremont, Massachusetts, which opens in mid-May. The office mailing address is P.O. Box 264, South Egremont, MA 01258.

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## **How many volunteers does it take to manage the Appalachian Trail?**

Last year, 5,265 volunteers reported working 190,017 hours in behalf of the Trail. That information was collected from the 30 Trail-maintaining clubs, A.T. Trail crews, and volunteers at ATC headquarters and regional offices and was included in ATC's annual volunteer report to the National Park Service. Most of those hours were for field work, meetings devoted to Trail management, and travel to and from work sites.

However, managing the Trail and running the maintaining clubs takes a significant amount of work that is not being reported. We want to go beyond traditional fieldwork and A.T. management to include all of the volunteer work that benefits the Trail, its maintaining clubs, and ATC.

We also want to make sure we count every volunteer. However, we don't want to count them more than once, even if they perform multiple tasks for their club. Why is this important? First, to give credit where credit is due—if one maintainer goes on ten separate work trips, we don't want to credit ten people. An accurate count also allows us to analyze trends, improve recruitment and retention of volunteers, and helps us compete for a significant amount of NPS funding from its national "Volunteer in the Parks" program.

Examples of volunteer activities benefiting the Trail that *should* be reported:

- All time spent traveling to and from field sites
- Trail construction and maintenance
- Shelter, privy, bridge construction and maintenance
- Corridor boundary monitoring and maintenance
- Monitoring threatened and endangered species and managing invasive plants
- A.T. management: Work on local management plans, Trail assessments, advisory committee meetings
- Club administration: Attending council and board meetings, accounting/bookkeeping, database management, answering telephones and office work, working at home on club business
- Communications: Producing newsletters and Web sites, responding to inquiries, correspondence
- Training/workshops: Organizing or attending chainsaw certification and other Trail-related workshops, including maintainer and monitor training
- Public service: Planning and leading hikes and other recreational activities, ridgerunning, community outreach, attending hearings and meetings, researching deeds, talking to the public or press

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

Examples of activities that should *not* be reported:

- Participating in recreational hikes
- Social events such as dinners and picnics
- Activities not related to the Appalachian Trail or its side trails

Clubs whose volunteers also work on other trails and non-A.T. lands should only report to ATC time spent in behalf of the Appalachian Trail. (Those clubs may keep track of actual hours or simply estimate a proportion of total volunteer time that is spent on A.T. management in meetings, web and newsletter development, office administration, *etc.*, and submit those figures.)

We will be contacting clubs to find out who best to obtain this information from and will be revising our VIP/VIF reporting forms. If you have any questions or comments, please drop us a note at [TheRegister@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:TheRegister@appalachiantrail.org).

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## Honoring Partners

At a joint meeting at Blowing Rock, N.C., in March, ATC's two southern regional partnership committees (RPCs) presented awards honoring volunteer and agency partners of the year.

### Deep South RPC Awards

David Kuykendall, outdoor planner of the Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Chattahoochee National Forest, was recognized as Agency Partner of the Year for his work with the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club ([www.georgia-atclub.org](http://www.georgia-atclub.org)) on several Trail relocation projects, as well as a major airlift that delivered 43,000 pounds of building materials for several privies and shelters. Kuykendall coordinated the airlift plan and operation, including procuring a helicopter, overseeing assembly and delivery of the materials to lift sites, staging Forest Service personnel at the various drop zones, and safety management of GATC volunteers and Forest Service personnel.

The Volunteer of the Year is Jim Mowbray, who has volunteered more than 2,000 hours since April 2005 as a ridgerunner in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The award recognizes his service in a number of areas—educating visitors on good stewardship of park resources, ensuring the function and sanitation of shelters and privies, performing Trail maintenance (from sawing downed trees to cleaning all the water bars on the 72-miles of Trail in the park), and gathering information and mapping Trail-work needs for ATC crews to use in planning their work in the park. Additionally, he has completed a report on resource impacts from visitor use at A.T. shelters in the Smokies between 1985 and 2006.

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

## **Virginia RPC Awards**

Laurie Foot received the Virginia RPC Volunteer award. For more than 20 years she has been an active member of the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club ([www.nbatc.org](http://www.nbatc.org)). She has held the offices of president, vice-president, and membership chair and is currently club treasurer. She has helped maintain a section of the Trail for 20 years and coordinates the club's telephone tree and its Adopt-A-Highway project. Foot has completed the A.T. and is a field editor for the *Thru-Hikers Companion*. She and her late husband Bill were instrumental in getting the A.T. pedestrian bridge over the James River (named in Bill's memory) constructed. The couple was the first to traverse the American Discovery Trail (ADT), and she is a past president of the ADT Society and currently serves on its board and as newsletter editor. She also serves on the steering committee of Virginia Greenways and Blueways and on the Lynchburg Master Trails Team committee. She often makes presentations to groups and is a valued spokesperson not only for the A.T. but for all hiking.

Alan R. McPherson, Wilderness and Trails Recreation Specialist for the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, is the Virginia RPC's Agency Partner of the Year. The award was presented by Anne Christensen, U.S. Forest Service director of recreation for the southern region, and Laura Belleville, ATC regional director for central and southwest Virginia. A dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of the Appalachian Trail, he has been the "go to" person whenever any of the Virginia A.T. clubs need advice or assistance in the management of their trails or wilderness areas. He has been an active participant in the variety of meetings and working groups associated with managing the Trail on Forest lands, always providing timely and beneficial information on which to base decisions. Virginia RPC Chair Ned Kuhns, said, "Al McPherson's contributions epitomize the cooperation that exists among all the organizations responsible for the A.T. The Virginia A.T. clubs are pleased to acknowledge and recognize his superb efforts."

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## **News**

### **Georgia Appalachian Trail Club Outreach Program**

By Marianne Skeen

The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club has initiated an outreach program designed to:

- Increase awareness of the A.T. as a national treasure
- Instill a sense of A.T. ownership in communities near the Trail
- Increase appreciation for nature and conservation
- Increase political and financial support for Trail and conservation issues
- Expand opportunities for community service
- Foster responsible recreational use and Leave No Trace awareness

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

- Generally expand the base for conservation, A.T. appreciation, and outdoor recreation to include people of all ages (especially youth), of diverse ethnicity, with disabilities, and “armchair hikers.”

We began to address these goals in 2006 with a variety of programs.

## **Public School Programs**

After an in-town orientation session, students from the New Schools at Carver in urban Atlanta, serving primarily African American students, spent a day on the A.T. hiking from Woody Gap south to Ramrock Mountain. Educational activities, including Leave No Trace concepts, were conducted along the way, and culminated in a picnic lunch on Ramrock Mountain. The students then had an opportunity to set up tents and crawl into sleeping bags at a simulated campsite.

Middle- and high-school students participated in a more extensive program in Towns County, which is near the A.T. in north Georgia. A day hike on the A.T. was preceded by four classroom sessions—an introduction to the A.T. and thru-hiking, hiking and backpacking gear, cooking for backpackers, and preparation for the day hike, including clothing recommendations, safety issues and Leave No Trace information.

## **National Trails Day**

In addition to the traditional GATC-sponsored NTD event in the north Georgia Mountains, the outreach committee participated in an urban event at Stone Mountain Park near Atlanta. The program included trail and hiking related workshops, exhibits from outdoor organizations and hiking outfitters, and 16 guided hikes in the park. An estimated 650 people from a wide range of ages and ethnicities participated at some level throughout the day, with 150 of them joining in one or more of the hikes. Many of the participants were unfamiliar with the A.T. prior to this event.

## **Keeping it Wild Hike Program**

The Wilderness Society sponsored a series of hikes in Atlanta and north Georgia as part of an outreach program to help connect the urban African American community to the natural environment. GATC led three hikes. Club volunteers also attended some of the other hikes in the program as well as a dinner and seminar that provided opportunities for making connections within this community.

## **A.T. Summer Institute**

A week-long training session last summer, sponsored by the National Park Service and ATC in West Virginia, set the stage for A.T.-related programming in schools. A teacher who attended the institute is organizing a field program for her students. Mary Ann Millsagle attended as the club liaison and will be helping with that program as well as incorporating some “lessons learned” at the Institute into GATC outreach programming. Bob Almand also attended in a dual role as GATC outreach volunteer and ATC Board member.

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

## **National Forest Foundation-REI Wilderness Volunteers Program**

Supported by a grant from the NFF/REI Wilderness Volunteers Program, and in partnership with the Hall County Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the Chattahoochee National Forest, and ATC, we established an educational/service program for youth from populations who do not traditionally participate in outdoor activities. Two groups of students hiked five miles to the Len Foote Hike Inn, spent a night there, then hiked back to the vehicles. During the hike in, they learned about public versus private land, wilderness as a subset of public land, the Appalachian Trail and volunteer trail management, and Leave No Trace principles

At the Inn, they learned about A.T. thru-hiking as well as environmentally responsible systems used at the Inn such as solar panels, water catchment systems, composting toilets, and vermiculture for disposal of food wastes. USFS partners talked to them about the hemlock woolly adelgid infestation and its potential impacts on the forest ecosystem, and about stewardship of public lands and the role of volunteers.

The service/stewardship component involved the students in monitoring and treatment efforts for the adelgid. They have since spent two field days in a monitoring exercise, visited a predator-beetle rearing laboratory, and released beetles on USFS land to help control the disease.

## **Community Outreach**

We took the GATC exhibit to three events celebrating the 150th anniversary of Towns County in 2006 and interacted with local community members. In the second phase of this outreach, we will schedule presentations for civic group meetings, using materials developed by our information and education committee.

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## **L.L. Bean Grants to A.T. Clubs**

Thirteen Trail-maintaining clubs have received grants totaling \$21,988 from ATC for a variety of projects. The grants program, primarily underwritten by the outdoor retailer for more than 20 years, provides financial support to ATC's affiliated Trail clubs for projects related to Trail and facility construction, Trail maintenance, visitor services, and public education. The following grants were awarded:

<b>Club</b>	<b>Project</b>
Maine Appalachian Trail Club	Build tent platforms, purchase tents/tools for crew
Appalachian Mountain Club	Tent-platform materials and airlift to site in N.H.
Green Mountain Club	Shelter rehabilitation and upgrade
AMC-Connecticut Chapter	Convert pit privy to moldering privy

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference	Shelter improvements, bridge replacement
Allentown Hiking Club	Purchase equipment, safety gear, and supplies
Batona Hiking Club	Purchase tools and protective equipment
Mountain Club of Maryland	New club brochure and Web-site redesign
Potomac A.T. Club	Tools for new Trail crew
Piedmont A.T. Hikers	Electrify tool storage building
Mount Rogers A.T. Club	Privy improvements at two shelters
Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club	Volunteer recognition patches, sleeping platform, and bog bridging
Georgia Appalachian Trail Club	Web-based volunteer work report system, stain for new shelter, replace signs, and purchase tools

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## Monitoring

### **Predator Survey**

In the fall of 2006, an environmental monitoring symposium hosted by ATC galvanized support for the idea of the A.T. as a large north-south Mega-Transect for the systematic collection of data to monitor the environmental health of the eastern United States.

One of the first projects emerging from the symposium is a cooperative effort among ATC, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Smithsonian Institute for monitoring predator species along the A.T. The survey will use motion-sensitive infrared cameras to photograph wildlife at specific locations. To avoid the cameras being triggered by hikers, they will be placed in the Trail corridor, not on the Trail itself. Scented baits will be used to attract predators to the trees where the cameras are placed.

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

Citizen groups are expected to adopt sections of the Trail and move cameras from point to point on a monthly basis. Cameras, supplies, and training will be provided. Digital pictures will be shared among the volunteers, the organizations, and the scientists. The data will provide a baseline so population fluctuations over time can be determined.

About 90 volunteers began a pilot survey in April. The pilot will run through November at locations in Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. If successful, the collaborators hope to expand the study area to the entire Trail. The study is being led by Bill McShea, Smithsonian wildlife ecologist.

The overall Mega-Transect goals are:

- To understand the changes in air and water quality and the health of the plants and animals in the public lands associated with the Trail.
- To more effectively protect natural resources on those lands.
- To foster public appreciation for nature generally and conservation of the Appalachian Trail specifically.
- To better tell the story of the status of the health of the Appalachian Trail's lands to visitors, Trail neighbors and the general public.

More information on the Mega-Transect can be found at [www.appalachiantrail.org/megatransect](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/megatransect).

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## News

### **Hazard Trees**

In the early evening on April 16, a strong wind caused the trunk of a moderately-sized hardwood tree to crack and the top of the tree to fall across the Pine Swamp Branch Shelter on the A.T. in Virginia. The roof and rear wall of the stone shelter were heavily damaged. Four hikers were inside the shelter and, fortunately, were uninjured. The trunk of the tree, still rooted and upright, was found to have significant internal rot and decay.

The event highlights the importance of hazard-tree awareness by hikers and maintainers, especially at overnight sites. ATC recommends that Trail and shelter maintainers inspect overnight sites for hazard trees at least annually.

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

Hazard trees can be dead or living, with indications of damage, disease, or stress. One source of information on recognizing tree defects is “How to Recognize Hazardous Defects in Trees” ([http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht\\_haz/ht\\_haz.pdf](http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_haz/ht_haz.pdf)) by the U.S. Forest Service.

A good rule of thumb is to inspect the area for at least two tree-heights around the overnight site, paying particular attention to dead limbs and leaning trees. Special care should be taken in the mitigation or removal of identified hazard trees. Don't try felling a tree if you are not qualified or do not feel comfortable about it. Local agency partners or ATC regional offices are good sources of advice and assistance, including tree-removal contracting if necessary.

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## **Lyme disease**

Trail workers should take precautions against Lyme disease, a debilitating tick-borne illness that can cause cardiac and neurological problems as well as arthritis. It is spread by black-legged ticks (deer ticks) and is found along most of the Trail, but is particularly prevalent in southern New England and the mid-Atlantic states.

The ticks go through a three-stage life cycle over two years that requires a blood meal at each stage. Typically, larval ticks become infected with the bacteria that cause Lyme disease by feeding on infected animals (white-footed mice are the most common source). Those larvae then molt into infected nymphs. After feeding, the larva molt into adults, which seek a final blood meal before mating and laying eggs.

Nymphal ticks are most active from late spring through mid-summer, but ticks can be active any time the temperature is above 45 degrees, sheltering in leaf litter and becoming dormant in colder weather.

The ticks are tiny and hard to spot. An adult female is about 1/10 of an inch long. A male is even smaller, and a nymph may be less than half that size. Bites are generally painless. People can become infected without being aware of having been bitten.

However, there is some good news: Ticks generally crawl on a potential host for some time before beginning to feed and can be removed before becoming attached; they must feed for 36 hours or longer to transmit the Lyme disease bacteria; and, the disease can be prevented or treated.

## **Recommendations for Trail workers**

- Treat clothing with the insecticide Permethrin, which lasts through several washings (launder separately from untreated clothing).
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET to the skin and clothing. (*Be sure to follow all directions for using products containing Permethrin or DEET.*)
- Wear light-colored clothes that a dark, moving speck will be visible against. Long pants tucked into socks and long sleeved shirts tucked into pants provide the best protection.

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

- Inspect your body daily for several days after a field trip (look for “moving freckles”) and feel your scalp.
- If you find an attached tick, grasp it as close to the skin as possible with tweezers and remove with a steady pull. Treat the area with antiseptic.

The likelihood of an infected tick transmitting Lyme disease depends on how long it has been feeding. If the body of an embedded tick is still flat, it has not been attached long enough to cause infection. If symptoms develop, however, seek treatment—they could be caused by an undetected bite.

## **Symptoms**

A red rash centering around the bite is characteristic, often appearing as a ring that is clear in the center. It may become larger and spread to other locations. If you develop such a rash, seek medical treatment. Treatment also should be sought if flu-like symptoms of fever, headache, and muscle aches develop within 30 days of a known tick bite or possible exposure. If untreated, painful or swollen joints may develop.

## **More on Lyme disease**

Last year, the Infectious Diseases Society of America published clinical guidelines for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease, and other diseases that can be carried by the blacklegged tick.

Treatment of a known bite is based on the prevalence of Lyme disease in the area, identification of an attached tick, how long it is estimated to have been attached (based on the degree of engorgement), and whether treatment can be started within 72 hours of it being removed. Information on diagnosis and treatment when symptoms occur without a known bite also are provided.

The guidelines were published in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 43, No. 9. (To view online, go to [www.journals.uchicago.edu/IDSA/guidelines](http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/IDSA/guidelines) and scroll down to “The Clinical Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention of Lyme Disease, Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis, and Babesiosis: Clinical Practice Guidelines by the Infectious Diseases Society of America”.)

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## **Along the Trail**

The Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club ([www.tehcc.org](http://www.tehcc.org)) marks its 60th anniversary as an A.T.-maintaining club this year. In 1947, in its second year of existence, the club began maintaining a little over six miles of the Trail, which became a 31-mile section by the end of that year. Soon thereafter, the club assumed responsibility for its current section from Spivey Gap in Tennessee

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

to Damascus, Virginia, now 132 miles. Between January 1, 1991 and December 31, 2006, club volunteers contributed more than 125,000 hours in A.T. management and maintenance.

## **Lambs Knoll Tower**

In the final chapter of a long-standing controversy regarding the construction of a new communications tower near the Appalachian Trail on Lambs Knoll in South Mountain State Park, Maryland, the last vestiges of a huge relay station were removed from a nearby site. In 2004, as part of a negotiated settlement that allowed construction of a new 180-foot tower, the state agreed to remove two existing towers—a dilapidated fire tower that had been used as a platform for a variety of communications equipment and a large microwave relay tower owned and operated by the American Tower Company on lands leased from the state. (That lease expired in 2006, and the state declined to renew it.) In February 2007, the relay tower was dismantled and removed by truck from the site. The end result is a communications site that is less visible from key viewpoints along the Appalachian Trail on Lambs Knoll and in the open, historically significant Civil War battlefield sites at Fox Gap and Turners Gap.

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## **National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors**

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 gave the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission authority to override state and local opposition to transmission-line projects in “corridors of national interest.” In April, the U.S. Department of Energy declared such a corridor in the mid-Atlantic region, affecting parts of Trail states Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. ATC joined a number of conservation organizations in a letter to a subcommittee of the House of Representatives Government Oversight and Reform Committee. The letter expressed concerns that provisions of the act were not followed in the corridor designation, including lack of consultation with affected states and stakeholders, failure to consider alternatives to transmission lines and failure to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement. The Department of Energy has scheduled public hearings on the corridors, including one in Washington, D.C., on May 15 and one in New York City on May 23; a sixty-day comment period ends July 6. Information, including maps on the corridors and where to submit comments, may be found on the Department of Energy Web site (<http://nietc.anl.gov>).

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## **Underpass Planned**

ATC’s mid-Atlantic regional staff recently awarded a contract to an engineering-design firm selected from a field of 16 firms for a \$1 million-plus pedestrian underpass crossing of Pennsylvania Route 944, north of the Cumberland Valley near Harrisburg. While funding is being provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, ATC is responsible for contracting the engineering and construction work. The crossing was one of 22 hazardous road crossings along

# The Register

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2007*

the Trail identified in a 2003 study by the Federal Highway Administration. Construction is anticipated in early 2008.

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## Side Trails

Gail Kimbell, first female chief of the USDA Forest Service, has succeeded Dale Bosworth, who retired in February after 41 years with the Forest Service. She came to the post from Missoula, Montana, where she had been Regional Forester for Region 1 since December 2003. Prior to that, she was associate deputy chief for National Forest System in Washington, D.C., where she helped carry out the Healthy Forests Initiative, and served as forest supervisor on several national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service has more than 30,000 employees and an annual budget of more than \$4 billion.

Gordon Wissinger, chief ranger at Shenandoah National Park ([www.nps.gov/shen/](http://www.nps.gov/shen/)) received the 2007 National Park Ranger Award. The peer-nominated award recognizes and honors outstanding rangers and seeks to encourage high standards of performance, foster a responsive attitude toward public service, enhance the public's appreciation of the Park Ranger profession, and further the art and science of "rangering." Wissinger started his NPS career as a seasonal park technician at Shenandoah in 1973 and was appointed chief ranger in 2004. Between those appointments, he held numerous other positions in the Park Service, including assignments with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway. He also has been incident commander of the NPS eastern incident management team for more than ten years.

The Waterman Fund ([www.watermanfund.org](http://www.watermanfund.org)) has announced its 2007 alpine stewardship grants. A total of \$11,000 is being provided to four organizations. The Appalachian Mountain Club ([www.outdoors.org](http://www.outdoors.org)) will receive funding for an alpine plant-monitoring program in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Volunteers will track such factors as numbers of plants, locations, flowering dates and related data. Changes in the health of sensitive alpine plants may be an early indicator of climate change. By using citizen scientists, the program also hopes to increase interest in natural-resource stewardship. Other awards were given to the Randolph Mountain Club in New Hampshire, for alpine trail work and photo documentation on Mount Adams in the Northern Presidentials, and to Acadia National Park for the 2007 Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering, which will be held there June 8–9.