

The Register

The Online Stewardship Newsletter for the Appalachian Trail

A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Winter 2009

Sidehill

By Hawk Metheny and Robert Proudman

2008 may go down as one of ATC's most productive. Five years after the former ATC board of managers' historic vote to restructure and rename ATC, a record number of 6,320 individual volunteers performed 202,260 hours of work for the Appalachian Trail in federal fiscal 2008, breaking both previous records of 6,070 workers, set in 2007, and 201,466 hours, set in 2001.

Chain saw and crosscut saw [certification requirements](#) were also adopted five years ago. Today, ATC and the clubs still keep pace—with more than 800 sawyers certified or recertified since 2003. In 2008, ATC signed another five-year memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service to maintain the highest chainsaw, cross-cut saw and worker-safety standard by offering training, and providing A.T. sawyers with personal protective equipment and modest reimbursement for First Aid/CPR certification. All of ATC's seasonal employees of the Konnarock Trail Crew, ATC's flagship crew, received awards for a perfect safety year from the Forest Service.

The Conservancy's stewardship council, in its second term since the reorganization, prepared new direction on management approvals and geocaching (see geocaching guidance to clubs in this issue) and developed a resolution on global climate change. After extensive consultations among all four of ATC's regional partnership committees—which helped the council refine and improve the various proposals—ATC's board of directors adopted them in November. The board also adopted new language to update other ATC policies affected by the changes in the management approval process. The [policies](#) are posted on ATC's Web site.

With people losing their jobs and the economy sagging, President Obama and the new Congress grapple with a growing recession. When the economy is hurting, we have seen use on the Trail increase. The need for trails and forests, wild lands and open space, grows greater with each passing year, and it is perhaps most acutely felt when people find their lives most difficult.

We all have our work cut out for us, to cherish and care for the Trail so it will continue to restore and inspire. Keep up the good work. It's important.

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News and Features

Next Steps for Geocaching Policy

Following adoption of a [geocaching policy](#) by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's board of directors on November 1, 2008, ATC staff developed this guidance to the Trail clubs on implementing the policy.

The policy attempts to strike a balance between the value of geocaching as an outdoor recreational activity and the potentially significant negative impacts to natural and cultural resources that unmanaged geocaching can cause. To that end, A.T. land-managing agencies are encouraged either to manage and monitor geocaching activity, or to prohibit it.

Geocaching Guidance to Appalachian Trail Maintaining Clubs

- Clubs should disseminate the geocaching policy and this guidance to their members, especially trail maintainers and corridor monitors, and ensure that information is available to members who have questions about the policy. Clubs should refer questions and comments back to ATC.
- Trail clubs are not responsible for monitoring geocaches. However, volunteer help in finding and mitigating caches impacting natural or cultural resources is greatly appreciated. Club members who locate geocaches on Trail lands in the course of other Trail duties (such as corridor monitoring and trail maintenance) are requested to document and report their findings. Ideally, club members should document the placement of the geocaches (as well as any visible impacts) as precisely as possible with field notes and photographs and report their findings through their club to the appropriate land-managing agency and ATC regional office.
- Trail clubs are not responsible for managing geocaching requests. Geocachers are responsible for determining land ownership and obtaining permission before placing caches on public or private land.
- If a club receives a request regarding placement of a geocache on A.T. lands, it should direct the person making the request to the appropriate land-managing agency. If the club does not know which agency to contact, it should direct the person to the appropriate ATC regional office.
- If the request pertains to lands managed by the NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office or other lands where the club knows that geocache placement is not permitted, the club should inform the person making the request that geocaching is prohibited on those lands and encourage him or her to contact the appropriate managing agency for more information.
- Club volunteers are not responsible for removing geocaches. If club volunteers find a geocache where they believe that such activity is prohibited, or in an area of sensitive or historic resources, or where it seems to be creating impacts (for example, social trails), the volunteers should notify

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the appropriate land-managing agency. If the location and the prohibition can be verified, the agency staff may ask the volunteers if they are willing to help by removing the cache.

- Volunteers are asked to notify their ATC regional office if they become aware that a cache is being considered for removal. ATC will attempt to contact the appropriate cache owner as well as GroundSpeak (founder of Geocaching.com, a Web site with listings of geocaches and other information on the activity) to apprise them of the situation in order to better educate the geocaching community about existing agency rules and regulations and foster a better working relationship.
- Clubs should examine their sections for areas that they believe are particularly inappropriate for geocaching, using criteria such as existing natural and cultural resources and intensity of use, and highlight these areas of particular concern in their local management plans for the Appalachian Trail. Clubs are encouraged to work with their partner agencies in highlighting such trail-management concerns for their consideration. Conversely, clubs may feel that certain unrestricted areas are appropriate for geocaching and may work with partner agencies that permit and monitor the activity to highlight opportunities and consider options.

Contact information

NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office Chief Ranger Todd Remaley 304-535-6171

Appalachian Trail Conservancy Regional Offices

New England	603-795-4935 (until March 17; 413-528-8002 after that date)
Mid-Atlantic	717-258-5771
Virginia	540-953-3571
Southern	828-254-3708

ATC partner awards for New England

Bob Spoerl was named 2008 agency partner of the year at the fall meeting of ATC's New England regional partnership committee (RPC). As a land agent for the bureau of forest lands in New Hampshire's department of resources and economic development, Spoerl was instrumental in the recent acquisition of the final A.T. tread tract on the historic summit parcel in Mt. Washington State Park. He also was influential in a land exchange securing the former Sentinel Mountain State Forest as part of the A.T. management area in the White Mountain National Forest. Earlier, as a staff member of the bureau of off-highway vehicles in the department, Spoerl's diplomatic skills enabled him to minimize conflicts among various trail users and organizations and build relationships with hikers, snowmobilers, bicyclists, and equestrians alike.

Larry Ely was selected as New England volunteer of the year. A long time A.T. volunteer in the White Mountains and member of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Ely has worked as a volunteer Trail steward, and served as a leader of other volunteer stewards in his area for several years. He is active in A.T. management—currently serving as a representative to the New England RPC and having

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previously served on ATC's Stewardship Council. His recent work with local communities in the Mahoosucs has been instrumental in creating a growing region-wide initiative to coordinate land use and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Maintainer's Tips

Methods for Safe Chain-Saw Transportation

By Kerry Wood

As A.T. maintainers head out to clear the Trail of the usual lot of trees downed by winter storms, many will employ a chain saw to do the bulk of the clearing. And, as most maintainers know all too well, that involves not only cutting the often-snarled mess of trees, but also getting the chain saw and its associated equipment to each worksite. While a considerable expense in both money and time is made to teach safe and efficient use of chain saws, only a small portion of time is spent in training for transporting them safely. This article offers some guidelines, suggestions, and examples.

The U.S. Forest Service's *Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw Training Course—Student Guidebook (2006)* provides these guidelines:

Saw Transportation

Saws must be transported in a way that protects them from being damaged, from injuring people, and from damaging property and equipment.

Transporting Chain Saws in a Vehicle

- Keep the bar and chain covered with a chain guard.
- Properly secure the chain saw to prevent it from being damaged and to prevent fuel from spilling.
- Never transport a chain saw or fuel in a vehicle's passenger compartment.

Transporting Chain Saws by Hand – The muffler and power head can reach extremely high temperatures. Avoid these areas when carrying a saw that has been used recently.

- When carrying the saw for short distances, set the saw at idle speed and set the chain brake.
- When carrying the saw farther than from tree to tree, or in hazardous conditions (such as slippery surfaces or heavy underbrush), and in all cases if the saw is carried more than 50 feet, the saw shall be shut off and carried in a way that prevents the chain, muffler, and bumper spikes (dogs) from contacting your body.
- When carrying the saw on your shoulder, take extra care because of the sharpness of the chain and bumper spikes (dogs). A long-sleeved shirt, gloves, and a shoulder pad must be worn. The bar, chain, and bumper spikes (dogs) should be covered, preferably with a manufactured bar and chain cover. Chain saw chaps can be used to cover the bumper spikes (dogs).

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There are a number of ways to satisfy those basic guidelines, many of which come down to ease of use, cost, and simply personal preference. [Read the full article.](#)

ATC Regional Program Manager Kerry Wood is based in the Blacksburg, Virginia office. He manages ATC's sawyer certification program in the region and oversees the Konnarock Trail Crew. He also is an A.T. maintainer for the Outdoor Club of Virginia Tech.

Monitoring

A.T. Resource Management Plan Now Online

The NPS-Appalachian Trail Park Office recently announced the National Park Service's *Appalachian Trail Resource Management Plan*. It is available online at appalachiantrail.org, and printed copies are being provided to the Appalachian Trail maintaining clubs. A digitally indexed version of the plan with maps and appendices can be obtained by contacting Casey Reese, GIS specialist, at Casey_Reese@nps.gov or 304-535-4009.

Appalachian Trail Resource Management Plan

The *Appalachian Trail Resource Management Plan* describes the baseline natural and cultural resource information available as of September 2008, and identifies new information that must be gathered in order to provide an adequate scientific basis for decision-making.

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail passes through five major geologic provinces, with a range of vegetation that extends from northern hardwood, spruce-fir and alpine krummholz to southern Appalachian oak forest and high-mountain southern balds. It encompasses more than 2,100 documented occurrences of rare plant and animal species and rare or exemplary natural communities, 4,500 acres of open areas and mountain vistas, nine National Natural Landmarks, 19 properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, hundreds of additional sites that are eligible for the National Register, and thousands of other cultural resource sites.

In fact, the Appalachian Trail contains so many outstanding natural, cultural, and scenic features that it sometimes seems impossible to protect and manage them all. Fortunately, the job does not fall to any one agency or organization. The cooperative management of the Trail includes more than 100 public and private partners that carry out many of the tasks needed to preserve the Appalachian Trail's remarkable array of natural and cultural resources.

Why protect the Trail's natural and cultural resources? Well, it's not just that these resources need to be protected to comply with federal and state laws and policies. These resources represent our nation's natural or cultural heritage, and if they can't be preserved in a protected landscape like the Appalachian Trail, they probably can't be preserved anywhere. Their presence also enhances the experience of the millions of people who visit, hike, and enjoy the Appalachian Trail, and the knowledge and appreciation of people who don't visit the Trail but still value its existence. But there's another reason to monitor, manage, and protect the Trail's resources that may be more important than anything else.

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The Appalachian Trail—by virtue of its geographic expanse, its location on the heights of land across the Appalachian Mountain range, its iconic status, and its cornucopia of natural and cultural resources has the unique potential to provide scientists, researchers, visitors, educators, and the general public with a better understanding of the health of the environment throughout the Appalachian Mountains and the Eastern United States. That is, in fact, the basis for the [A.T. MEGA-Transect](#).

The *Appalachian Trail Resource Management Plan* will guide resource-management activities conducted by the Appalachian Trail Park Office and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (and other partners who wish to participate) for the next decade, establishing priorities for funding projects and programs to manage and protect the Trail's natural and cultural resources. In some cases, this plan recognizes and identifies the need for preparation of future action plans to deal with specific resource-management issues. It dovetails with ATC's and ATPO's intent to revitalize Appalachian Trail Club local management plans and to update understandings with our many governmental partners along the Appalachian Trail. It will be updated every five to ten years, or earlier if significant new program needs are identified or new planning direction is issued.

—Pam Underhill, Park Manager, Appalachian National Scenic Trail

World Water Monitoring Day 2008

Preliminary reports are in for water monitoring on the Appalachian Trail during [World Water Monitoring Day](#) (WWMD), a month-long event hosted annually by the World Water Federation. Water sampling took place at 172 sites in 11 of the 14 Appalachian Trail states. 649 individuals spent about 2,500 hours taking water samples and submitted their results. Among the groups participating were A.T. maintaining clubs, Scout troops, Indian Guide youth groups, and participants in the Trail to Every Classroom program.

WWMD takes place between September 18 and October 18 each year and engages communities in monitoring the condition of local rivers, streams, and other water bodies. Volunteers record water and air temperatures at each site and use simple kits to test for pH, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. This is the second year that ATC has encouraged its Trail clubs and members to participate. ATC intends to use the annual water-quality sampling event along the A.T. to get a snapshot of the status of A.T. water resources and to raise awareness of the significant freshwater resources that occur along the Trail.

Invasive Species Online

The Nature Conservancy has created a Wikipedia-style Web site compiling information on invasive species and their management. Called "[Invasipedia](#)", site users can edit and add material. The resource includes descriptions, photos, natural history, management/monitoring recommendations and bibliographies for many species.

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Clubs

Volunteers to be Recognized at ATC Biennial Conference

The National Park Service-Appalachian Trail Park Office is seeking the names of Appalachian Trail club volunteers who have worked on the A.T. for more than 25 and more than 50 years. Since 2001, ATPO has recognized long-time A.T. volunteers by presenting Silver Service (25 years) and Golden Service (50 years) awards at ATC's biennial meetings.

This year's recognition will be made at the [2009 ATC biennial conference](#) in Castleton, Vermont, in July. Years of "active volunteer service" include all time and effort contributed by an individual for the benefit of the Trail, regardless of the location—not just on NPS-acquired lands. Areas of service may include maintenance (Trail work, boundary monitoring, overnight sites), management (local management plans, resource monitoring, Trail assessments), administration (accounting, newsletter), and public service (leading hikes, ridgerunning, outreach).

To submit names, or for more information, contact Pete Irvine (pirvine@fs.fed.us) or Rita Hennessy (Rita.Hennessy@nps.gov), or write the A.T. Park Office—National Park Service, P.O. Box 50, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425. The deadline is April 6.

Wednesday Trail Maintenance Crew Sets Club Record

By Tom Brown

Adapted with permission from *The Virginia Hiker*, newsletter of the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club

On Wednesday, October 15, the Wednesday Trail Maintenance Crew faced one of its biggest challenges and may have set a record in the process. Responding to a report of a large tree across the A.T. near Petite's Gap, the crew set out with crosscut saws in hand in search of the blowdown. What they found was a daunting challenge: an enormous red oak so large that it would take at least two people to reach around it.

Crew member Joe Chavez was amazed, "I haven't seen a blowdown that big in the eleven or twelve years I've been maintaining the Trail!" He estimated the tree to be about forty inches in diameter—a record-setting blowdown in Joe's experience.

The tree was completely blocking the Trail. Fortunately, it was on a slope so that on the uphill side of the Trail there was sufficient clearance for hikers to crawl under the tree. Unfortunately, that part of the Trail was in a wilderness area meaning that chain saws were prohibited. Removing the tree would require two cuts using only crosscut saws and a lot of sweat and heavy breathing.

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The Wednesday Crew was up to the challenge. There were nine people on the crew that day and everyone took a turn on the saws. After about two hours of steady sawing, the cuts were completed and measured. Joe's estimate wasn't far off: the tree's actual diameter was thirty-six inches. Finally, a section of the tree measuring about five feet in length was rolled off the Trail and once again the A.T. was back to business as usual.

Along the Trail

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference Honors A.T. volunteers

In November, two Dutchess County, New York, volunteers received awards from the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference for their commitment to the Appalachian Trail. Tim Messerich was honored for more than a decade of work, including rock work, bridge and privy construction, erosion control, and trail reconstruction projects. In addition to his own work on the Trail, he puts on an annual three-day trail workfest, drawing both local volunteers and friends from out of state. Also honored was Ollie Simpson, who first set foot on the Trail about eight years ago, and now supervises a section of the Trail and its 12 regular trail workers. She has worked on building bridges and on trail relocations, become chain-saw certified, and also monitors the National Park Service corridor boundary around her Trail section.

PATC Presents Myron Avery Award

The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) presented its Myron Avery award to Patrick Wilson at its annual meeting in November. Wilson contributed nearly 2,000 hours of work to the club in FY 2008, taking on leadership roles for many trail projects and coordinating partnerships with other groups. He helped design and teach the club's popular workshop on traditional tools and provides information on proper tool use and safety on work trips. Wilson is the club's co-manager for side trails in the central district of Shenandoah National Park, where he is the longtime overseer of the Buck Hollow Trail. His step-by-step trail-skills techniques can be found on PATC's Blue and White Crew Web site. [blueandwhitecrew.org]

U.S. Forest Service Personnel News

Hank Kashdan has been named associate chief for the USDA Forest Service. Kashdan will be the Forest Service's highest ranking executive after Chief Abigail Kimbell. He replaces Sally Collins, who was recently named director of the new office of ecosystem services and markets. Charles "Chuck" Myers was named to replace Kashdan as deputy chief for business operations. Myers had served as associate deputy chief for the National Forest System in Washington, D.C. since March 2008. Immediately prior to that assignment, Myers served as regional forester for the southern region of the U.S. Forest Service.

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Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Rebecca Harriett became superintendent of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park [home.nps.gov/hafe] on February 2, succeeding Don Campbell who retired last year after 29 years in that position. Harriett began her National Park Service career as a seasonal park ranger at Cape Lookout National Seashore and served most recently as superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument in Virginia. Her interests include hiking, backpacking, and kayaking. This year the park is commemorating the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid.

“Give Back to the Trail”

The theme of this year's Damascus Trail Days [www.trail-days.us] is “Give Back to the Trail.” The annual hiker fest, which began in 1987, will take place May 15–17. The Southwestern Virginia town will recognize individual volunteers and groups and will post submissions on the Trail Days website. To nominate a group or individual, send a short paragraph describing their contribution to the Trail to rswebsites@gmail.com. Include one photo if possible, no more than 200 kilobytes, in a .jpg format.

Side Trails

National Trails Day

June 6 will mark the 17th anniversary of National Trails Day, launched by the American Hiking Society (AHS) in 1993. Find information on organizing, promoting and registering activities on the AHS Web site. [<http://americanhiking.org/>] Nominations for the AHS volunteer of the year award also can be made at that site. The winner will be announced on National Trails Day.

Mountains to Sea Trail

The U.S. Forest Service has added an additional 170 miles of the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) [<http://ncmst.org/aboutthemst.html>] in North Carolina to the National Recreational Trail System. More than 190 miles of the trail in the Blue Ridge Parkway section were added in 2005. When completed, the MST will stretch about 1,000 miles from Clingmans Dome in the Great Smokies to the Outer Banks. About half of the trail has been completed.

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75th Anniversary Web Site

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park has launched a Web site with information about the history of the Park and the activities planned throughout the year to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

[www.greatsmokies75th.org]

Support for Shenandoah National Park

The Shenandoah National Park Association, a nonprofit organization that supports the interpretive and educational programs in the Park through the sale of books, maps and other items, has a new website at www.snpbooks.org. Since 1950, the association has provided Shenandoah National Park with more than \$1,837,000 in support.