

March 31, 2008

**ATC Southern Partnership Meeting  
March 28-30, Mountain Lakes, VA**

Don Walton, Howard McDonald and I represented CMC at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Southern Regional Partnership Meeting. This meeting, held once a year, is a joint meeting of the Deep South and Virginia Regional Partnership Committees (RPCs), and involves representatives of ATC Trail-Maintaining Clubs from Virginia south. The meeting also was Don's last meeting as Chair of the Deep South RPC. Gary Monk of Georgia ATC was elected as the new Chair, and Joe DeLoach of Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoe Club was elected to the newly established position of Vice-Chair.

Key items from the meeting included:

- ATC is building a new Volunteer Information data base, which will be part of its website. ATC hopes to have the data base up and running in October. It will have two parts:
  1. A public section which will allow ATC and its trail-maintaining Clubs to advertise volunteer opportunities. The goal of this section is to make it easier for people not already involved in A.T. volunteer efforts to become involved.
  2. A restricted section which will have a volunteer data base containing contact information about volunteers, data on hours worked, certifications, etc.

Club participation in the ATC's system will be voluntary. If a Club joins the system this year, ATC will pay all of the costs of getting their information into the system. If they join at a later date, ATC reserves the right to charge them for the costs of adding their information to the system. ATC's system is limited to volunteer information. It is not being designed to be a membership data base. ATC will keep its own membership information in a separate data base.

CMC should take advantage of the public section of this data base as a way of making it easier for people to find out about us and our trail-maintaining efforts. The decision about whether to take advantage of the restricted section is more complicated. Our existing maintenance data base and related records do everything that the ATC's new system is expected to do for work on both the A.T. and MST. It is unlikely that ATC would want to keep records of work that CMC does on the MST. This means that if we used the ATC system for work on the A.T., we would still have to use our existing system for work on the MST. Also, the A.T. system will not have anything equivalent to the trail issues portion of our maintenance data base. The ATC system is still in its design phase, so a final decision

about its attractiveness to CMC cannot be made. Jeanne Mahoney is the ATC Staff person responsible for this project. She will use Don Walton as her contact with CMC.

- ATC is conducting a survey of carpooling practices among its trail-maintaining Clubs as part of its effort to reduce its carbon footprint. The survey is straight-forward. I will fill it out and circulate it to Council members for review before submitting it to ATC.
- The movie version of *A Walk in the Woods* is apparently back on track. At the Sundance Film Festival, Robert Redford announced that it would be his next big project. Paul Newman announced some time ago that he was retiring, so it will not be a Newman-Redford buddy movie. The script is being rewritten and filming is supposed to take place this fall. If the movie is shown, ATC expects a surge in A.T. use. However, there have been so many ups and downs on this movie that I will believe that it has actually happened only after I see it in movie theaters.
- ATC has recorded its 10,000<sup>th</sup> A.T. end-to-end. Early reports from Georgia indicate that thru-hiker starts this year are higher than the past few years, which were lower than the years before that.
- Morgan Sommerville reported on the status of the Rocky Fork Tract. The Conservation Fund and US Forest Service (USFS) expect to close on part of the tract in June and on the remainder of the tract in December. The total price for this land, which adjoins part of CMC's portion of the A.T., is \$40 million. \$18.5 million of the required funding is in hand, and another approximately \$18 million has been promised, but \$4 million still needs to be raised. Morgan expressed confidence in ATC's ability to do this.
- ATC, the USFS and the National Park Service still need to acquire about 4,000 acres to protect the last 6.5 miles of the A.T.
- In fiscal year 2007, ATC records show that 6,070 volunteers spent 196,620 hours working on the A.T. This is the highest number of volunteers and the second highest number of volunteer hours ever recorded.
- October 2 is the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the National Scenic Trails Act which created the National Scenic Trail System and designated the A.T. as the nation's first scenic trail. I will work with Bruce Bente to schedule a hike on the A.T. on Sunday, October 5 as CMC's commemoration of this anniversary.
- The Deep South RPC discussed a resolution proposed by an ATC member from Kansas that would require that side trails and side trailheads to the A.T. be clearly marked and

described. The ATC Stewardship Committee will consider this resolution at its next meeting in May. There was general support for the resolution, but a number of concerns were raised. First, the resolution does not consider the limitations on signage in wilderness areas. Second, trail-maintaining clubs will have to decide which side trails they want to maintain, and the appropriate level of maintenance. Not all trails accessing the A.T. would be officially designated side trails. Finally, it will take some time to correct A.T. maps and guidebooks to reflect the decision made about side trails.

In the discussion I supported this resolution. The side trails indicated in ATC information should be real trails and hikers should be able to count on them.

- The North Carolina A.T. license plate program has raised \$191,000 for the A.T. to date. Similar license plate programs are close to starting in Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia. North Carolina's first designated motorcycle plate, supporting the Blue Ridge Parkway, is about to be issued. Leanna Joyner, who coordinates the NC license plate program, is looking into an A.T. motorcycle license plate program for NC.
- ATC's Southern Regional Office (SORO, Morgan Sommerville, et al.) are looking into an evening fund-raising event in the Asheville areas for later this year. Stay tuned for details. Longer-term, SORO hopes to raise 50% of its operating costs from non-ATC sources.
- Morgan summarized the SORO's five year plan. It is an ambitious expansion of all of the activities SORO is currently involved in, and too complex for inclusion in this report. If you are interested in more detail, contact Morgan.
- The meeting also included a discussion of Konnarock Crew's accomplishment and future work schedule. Don Walton and Howard McDonald attended this discussion; I did not.

Lenny Bernstein