

State of the Club – October, 2006

Before we get into the formal business of the Annual Meeting, I'd like to take a few minutes to tell you what our Club has accomplished in 2006. It's been a very good year. We currently have over 800 members and our membership is growing at a steady rate.

We formed a very strong partnership with Diamond Brands. Each 2006 membership received a \$20 gift card from Diamond Brand, and I am very happy to report that Diamond Brand has extended that benefit to our 2007 memberships, each of which will receive a \$20 gift card. David Burns of Diamond Brand is here tonight and please join me in a round of applause to thank him and Diamond Brand for this gift. And when you go into Diamond Brand, please let the people there know that you are a CMC member and thank them for the support they have provided to our Club.

We scheduled 179 hikes during 2006, 78 of these were in the Pisgah Ranger District, 18 in Great Smoky Mountain National Park, and 20 on Blue Ridge Parkway land. We estimate that these hikes will attract over 2100 participants. I'd like to thank all the hike schedulers and leaders who made this possible, and particularly Bruce Bente, for all the work he done in coordinating each quarter's hiking schedule.

During the 12 months ending on September 30, 243 CMC trail maintainers put in a total of 15,235 hours of work maintaining the over 400 miles of existing trail we have taken responsibility for, and also building a new section of the Mountains to Sea Trail south of US 74 at Balsam Gap. I'd like to thank all the maintainers, and especially the trail crew leaders and section maintenance supervisors who coordinated this effort.

In 2005 we formed a Conservation Committee chaired by Ruth Hartzler to educate our Club on issues that affect our hiking experience. For important issues, the Council approves formal positions. We now have four such positions. We are in favor of the monetary settlement for Swain County instead of building the North Shore Road. We also support North Carolina buying Chimney Rock and adding it to the new Hickory Gorge State Park. We are opposed to building I-3 and to the block sale of national forest land. We've communicated these positions in public hearings and in letters to our representatives. If you'd like more information on these position, check our website or talk to one of the members of the Conservation Committee.

Our Education Committee has run five events so far this year: a training sessions for hike leaders and for section maintainers, a course on using a GPS, and two courses on map reading. They have one more event scheduled for next month, a wilderness first aid course, which still has some space available. If your interested, talk to Dave Wetmore, Chair of the committee or any of its members.

We formed two new committees this year. The first was the Membership Committee this year, with Becky Smucker our Vice President as its first Chair. The Committee has been busy redesigning our membership application forms and setting up a program to stay in contact with new members. The second was the Communications Committee, chaired by

Gerry McNabb, our former President. We now have a larger Let's Go, thanks to Stuart English, its new editor, and a bigger E-news, which has over 1000 subscribers, thanks to its editor Danny Bernstein.

We also tried a few new things. Thanks to Les Love and Sherman Stambaugh, we had our first Annual Spring picnic in April. It's safe to call it the first Annual because Les and Sherman are already hard at work planning the second annual picnic.

We created a program to recognize the hard work our trail maintainers do week in, week out. In a few minutes, I will be making the first set of awards to trail maintainers for lifetime hours worked. I think you will be as amazed as I was at the thousands of hours that some of our members have put into trail maintenance and the long, long list of members who have qualified for these awards. We also have to thank Piet Bodenhorst for his persistence at reminding us that we needed such a program to recognize trail maintainers.

We adopted a new hiking challenge – the CMC Loop, which is an over 450 mile loop, with long stretches in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pisgah Ranger District and along the Blue Ridge Parkway. It includes all of the sections of the AT and MST that the Club maintains, with side trips to the 40 over 6000 peaks. Tom Sanders designed the loop, and so far is the only person to have completed it.

We reorganized our Council, creating Councilors for Education, Hiking and Trail Maintenance. This has worked very well, and given these activities a clearer voice in the Club's decisions. It's worked so well that in a few minutes, I will ask you to approve changes in our bylaws to create two more designated Council position, for conservation and membership.

If I tried to name all the people who made this happen, we'd be here till midnight, so let me recognize just three. First, I want to thank Piet Bodenhorst, our Councilor for Trail Maintenance, and Dave Wetmore, our Secretary, who will be leaving the Council at the end of this year. Piet has been our first Councilor for Trail Maintenance and as I said earlier, was the advocate for our new awards program for trail maintainers. Dave, in addition to being Secretary, has been Chair of our Education Committee. He also has been our unofficial parliamentarian, making sure that we run the Club in an orderly fashion. Finally, I'd like to thank Becky Smucker, our Vice President, who organized this dinner and meeting. Please give all three of these folks a round of applause.

I would like to be able to stand up here again next year and give you just as glowing a report, but I need your help to do it. We always need more trail maintainers and hike leaders, but in addition, we need people who are willing to do the committee work that keeps the Club running. Our Challenge, Conservation, Education, Hiking, and Membership Committees all need additional members. The chairs of these committees and I will be happy to tell you what needs to be done and how you can help. Please talk to us!