

Berkshire Chapter  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
2006 Annual Report

Chair's Report

I want to express my gratitude to you all for the wonderful opportunity you've given me to serve you as Chapter Chair for the past two years. I've experienced significant personal and professional growth as a direct result of this work, and I've received tremendous satisfaction and enjoyment as well. I've certainly received more than I've given - and this seems to be the experience of other volunteers as well.

I've had the pleasure of working with the talented and dedicated volunteers on our Executive Committee for the past two years. These people are fantastic. They're positive and motivated, and they work hard to support their Committees and the Chapter.

Our Officers were:

Pat Stevenson - Secretary  
Kelly Druzisky - Treasurer

Our Committee Chairs were:

Cosmo Catalano - Appalachian Trail  
Jon Hanauer - Berkshire Exchange  
Charlie Camp & Connie Peterson - Canoe & Kayak  
Alicia Wendolowski - Chapter Youth Programs  
Patricia Lukas - Conservation  
Deborah Levine & Chris Mangano - Membership  
Alice Hodgdon & Jim VanNatta - Mountaineering  
Gary Forish - Noble View  
Dave Koerber & Bob Napolitano - Outings  
Bess Dillman - Public Relations  
Pat Fletcher - Trails  
Donna Walters - Training & Education  
Ian Beatty - Website  
Kelly Druzisky & Stephen Beauregard - Young Members

Others who deserve thanks include:

Chris Ryan - who handles our "Membership in a Bottle" program.  
Norm Sims - who is finishing term as Regional Director.  
Maureen Flanagan and Gail Blackhall - who assist in editing and do the proofreading for the Berkshire Exchange.  
Gloria LaFlamme, Dave Conley, and Rosmarie O'Connor - who have served the Tuesday Hikers faithfully.

Roger Scholl, AMC's Director of Volunteer Relations, and Faith Salter, AMC's Assistant Director of Volunteer Relations, have been incredibly helpful and supportive to the our Chapter, and to our sister Chapters. Other AMC staff members who deserve thanks include Heather Clish, Julie Wormser, Joe Carper, and Andy Falender.

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I'm very grateful, too, for the opportunity to meet so many great people, and to have made some very good friends I'm especially grateful to Jon Hanauer, who has been a good friend and an excellent sounding board, for stepping forward to serve the Chapter for the next two years.

Finally, I want to recognize and thank Gary Forish, our former Chapter Chair and the outgoing Noble Chair, who has done (and continues to do) an incredible job mobilizing volunteers, material, and labor at Noble View. A group of about 75 AMC members, staff, and members of the local community recently enjoyed a festive day at Noble View celebrating the rededication of Double Cottage. The finishing touches are under way now, but the building is in use as a destination for lodging, programs and training. I'm really excited about Noble View's potential for the Chapter, the general public, and the AMC as a whole.

I'll be serving now as Chair of the Noble View Committee, and I'll continue to enjoy working with Jon and the new Executive Committee, and with our members, our sister Chapters, and our responsive and effective AMC staff.

Again, many thanks, and keep up the good work.

Yours in service,  
Rob Robertson  
Berkshire Chapter Chair

#### Appalachian Trail Committee

Appalachian Trail Volunteers contributed over 3000 hours to the management and maintenance of the trail in Massachusetts this season. Highlights for this year were

- 1000ft trail relocation in North Adams involving two flights of rock steps
- Completion of a new section of the Race Brook Falls Trail
- New trail signs between Jug End Rd. and Race Brook Falls Trail
- The removal of an old car and other debris between the Mass Pike and Route 20
- Treadway improvements on Day Mountain, south of Blotz Rd., and south of Webster Rd.
- Boundary marking and signage on trail corridor lands between Gulf Rd., Dalton and Furnace Hill Rd., Cheshire.
- 21 weeks of volunteer caretaking at Upper Goose Pond Cabin

These projects were in addition to the regular trail maintenance and boundary monitoring duties of over 75 volunteers like yourselves. There is room for you in this group; please don't hesitate to join us next season.

Cosmo Catalano  
AT Committee Chair

#### Canoe and Kayak Committee

The Canoe and Kayak Committee is completing another year with many successful boating trips. Our major activities include quiet water trips and white water trips for both open boats and closed boats. We also offer a smaller number of rafting trips and sea kayaking trips.

Our quiet water program is coordinated by Rudy Julian and about 25 quiet water leaders. The whitewater program is coordinated by Tad Jackson and is also supported by about 25 leaders. Our

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rafting offerings are coordinated by Al Howcroft with the support of a number of raft guides, and our sea kayaking program is coordinated by Rich Hamilton and Mike Zabre.

The Committee continues to maintain a fleet of rental boats that are stored in South Amherst. We have canoes and kayaks available for quiet water and whitewater as well as some sea kayaks and rafts. Recently we have been able to upgrade the supply of life jackets and helmets that accompany our rental boats. We continue to maintain first aid kits and we plan to improve our selection of paddles and spray skirts.

The Committee continues to provide financial support for leaders taking first aid courses, river rescue courses, and leadership training courses.

At the start of each paddling season we provide a paddling newsletter, *Ferry Tales*, edited by Heather Roe. The schedule for our season is publicized in the newsletter and on the Berkshire AMC website.

Our Committee maintains contact with other paddling groups in the AMC through the Inter Chapter Paddling Committee. Connie Peterson serves as our Representative to this group which deals with paddling issues of concern to many chapters.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Charles Camp and Connie Peterson  
BK Canoe and Kayak Committee Co-Chairs

#### Conservation Committee

An enthusiastic, dedicated group of volunteers formed at the close of 2006 to begin anew the mission of conservation, renewal and protection of our beautiful western Massachusetts environment. Committee members identified challenges to our forests, waterways, and trails and are hard at work developing fun activities that will enable our members to lend a hand in the rewarding task of maintaining and improving the health of our natural world.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patricia Lukas  
Conservation Committee Chair

#### Membership Committee

The Membership Committee has had an exciting year and continues to explore new ideas to welcome and orient members to the Berkshire Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

During the past year we had an exceptionally successful March Potluck event to welcome new members to the Berkshire Chapter. Information about this year's March Potluck will be available on the web and in *AMC Outdoors*. Save the date: March 31, 2007 at The First Churches in Northampton, MA.

In addition, the Membership Committee organized a series of smaller, informal events throughout the Berkshire Chapter's region to introduce the Chapter to new and prospective members, along with members who hadn't yet joined in on the many activities and opportunities available. Events

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were held in Amherst, Springfield and Lee. There is another event planned in Greenfield for January 17. More information is available on the web or in AMC Outdoors.

A number of hikes have been designated as “new members especially welcome” in an effort to reach out to new and returning members. New member packets continue to be mailed, and we will be adding notices of timely information, upcoming selected events and outings, and conservation information to the welcome letter, survey and *Berkshire Exchange* that compose the package.

In the coming year the Membership Committee will be joining with the newly formed Entertainment Committee to develop plans for more events to bring members and prospective members together.

The Membership Committee is seeking new members with energy and ideas. Please join us and help to keep the Berkshire Chapter dynamic and growing.

#### Mountaineering Committee Report

Another fun year on the rock and trail was had by climbers of all ages and levels of ability. We promoted rock climbing instruction and safety by conducting classes for beginners and intermediates. As always, we continued our emphasis on having fun regardless of climbing ability or experience.

We formed a partnership with the Trustees of Reservations this year as we have for many years, for a Workday at Chapel Ledges to spread wood chips to prevent erosion on the hiking and climbing access trail, to cut a new trail and to build a trail bridge. Members helped out at a “crag day”: sponsored by Western Mass. Climbers Coalition to address access and erosion issues.

Weekend trips ventured to “The Gunks,” Rumney, New Hampshire, Acadia National Park and several local crags. The rainy weather kept us off the cliffs on some weekends but we did get to Cathedral and White Horse cliffs in New Hampshire. Midwinter trips were even held on “warm” Saturdays to climb on some local south facing cliffs. Our Wednesday evening top-rope climbing was ongoing from May to the beginning of September at Rose Ledge in Northfield and Chapel Ledges in Ashfield.

We wish to heartily thank all the trip leaders, co-leaders, our Treasurer and Secretary and others whose time made the events of this year so well planned, successful, safe and fun.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alice Hodgdon  
Jim Van Natta  
Mountaineering Co-Chairs

#### Outings Committee

During 2006 there were over 100 events which involved hiking, biking, backpacking, skiing, snowshoeing, and monthly trail maintenance. Our group of Tuesday hikers was very active again this year with their weekly trips and celebrated their 7th year leading outdoor activities for those

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folks available during the week. Outings continue to be predominantly hikes, but also include backpacking trips, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, biking, and camping trips.

We continue to work at varying the types of outings offered and to offer outings targeted at new members and families.

Our Monthly Coordinators have once again been the backbone of the Outings Committee. The Monthly Coordinators diligently work to fill each weekend with varied and interesting activities.

Our anonymous contributor (KG - *AMC Outdoors* guru) is retiring after many years supporting the Chapter's Outings listings as chief editor and sanity checker. We will miss him. We will again attempt to enter monthly outings directly into the AMC website for listing in *AMC Outdoors* and the Berkshire Chapter Website. We see this as the challenge for 2007.

While we have most of the Monthly Coordinator positions filled, we still have June, July, September and December open and could use a hand filling those months for 2007.

An on-going activity for the Outings Co-Chairs is to keeping a current list of potential, qualified leaders. We continue to work on maintaining a current list of qualified leaders.

Respectfully,  
Dave Koerber & Bob Napolitano  
Outings Committee Co-Chairs

#### Publicity Committee

I took over this position in February 2006, after it was vacant for a while. My main focus has been:

- to raise the awareness of the AMC Berkshire Chapter in the community,
- to attract new members and increase renewals, and
- to increase membership participation in activities, service and leadership.

I have sent releases to daily and weekly publications in our region for outings, membership meetings, trail maintenance and National Trails Day, and they have consistently published our activities. Attendance at membership meetings has increased over last year's numbers. In the spring, the Valley Advocate also printed an article with a large photo about trail maintenance.

I have also written up a preliminary marketing plan for Noble View and worked with Donna Walters on a strategy to increase participation in the Leadership Training Weekend at Noble View.

In the next year, I plan to continue working on these projects.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bess Dillman  
Publicity Chair

#### Trails Committee

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1- The M-M Trail Committee finished putting up new signs on the first 12 sections of the trail. We received a grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and worked with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to design and install two types of signs on the trail. The first type was placed at the start and end of each of the first 12 sections, with a map and information for hikers about the distance of each section of the trail. The second type advises hikers when they leave public land and enter private land.

2 -Working with trail section adopters, we relocated a section of the trail in Amherst at the request of the property owner.

3- We held a workday to open the trail north of a shelter in Wendell State Forest that was closed due to tornado damage. Working with chainsaws, eight of us cleaned up about ¼ mile of trail.

4- My adopter in the northern part of the state continues with stage 2 of a relocation to move the trail off private land into Warwick State Forest land just north of Mt. Grace and off old tote roads that are being heavily used by 4 wheel drive vehicles and ATVs.

5- We received the long-awaited 72-page feasibility report from the National Park Service with the four alternatives for the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail System in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Committee met and voted to support Alternative 3. Under this alternative, the entire trail system from the Long Island Sound to the New Hampshire border would be designated as a National Scenic Trail under a name such as the New England National Scenic Trail. The route would include a significant deviation from the historical Metacomet-Monadnock Trail for the portion of the designation north of the Mt. Holyoke Range and be relocated to the Quabbin region from here up to the Wendell State Forest. The designation would be on public land only initially, and be extended to landowners if they want to be included. We hope to be able to maintain and keep open to the public the historic route of the M-M Trail with the cooperation of landowners also.

6- I met with the DCR and National Park Service (NPS) personnel to discuss this proposal and we are waiting for the expected permission. Some of the requirements include a prohibition on camping within Quabbin and use of existing trails and roads. We would stay as far away from the watershed as possible and look for a possible camping area before we enter Quabbin and after the trail leaves. There would be a closure during hunting season and during national emergencies.

7- We entered into an agreement with the National Park Service rivers and trails to have a timeshare person give administrative help with our trail in 2007.

8- I hope to start forming a stewardship council to implement efforts to protect the trail. This council would be composed of land trusts, landowners, the AMC, the DCR, the NPS, and the local communities.

We are entering into a very exciting time of significant change for the M-M Trail and I continue to look for more people to help with various tasks to protect this valuable recreational resource for future generations.

Patrick H. Fletcher  
Trails Committee Chair,

#### Website Committee

Our Website Committee Chair was living overseas from December 2005 to June 2006, with limited internet connectivity. In December 2005, therefore, we trained representatives from most event-organizing committees, including Outings, Mountaineering, and Young Members, to enter their scheduled trips into the Chapter website by themselves. (Previously, they had emailed trip information to the webmaster to be entered.) We also implemented a mechanism whereby KG, our Chapter's anonymous liaison with *AMC Outdoors*, could download lists of trips from the

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Chapter website in a magazine-ready format, perform final edits, and send the trip listings off to the magazine editors. This mechanism relieved our event enterers from having to enter trips into our website and also send them to KG formatted for the magazine.

It was an expensive year for the Computer Committee in 2006, and we went significantly over budget. The first major, unanticipated expense was an upgrade to our web hosting plan. This was necessitated by the fact that our website was consistently exceeding the memory limits of our prior plan, causing web server crashes. The second major, unanticipated expense was a subscription to a supplemental service contract with our web hosting provider, to cover troubleshooting and technical upgrades our webmaster was unable to effect from overseas. Although costly, both of these expenditures resolved serious problems and avoided web outages and data loss. A third major, unanticipated expense was up-front payment of a two-year contract with a new web hosting provider, necessitated late in the year by the abrupt closure of our previous provider (details below).

Late in 2006, two new volunteers stepped forward to assist with web and computer duties. Nancy Gonter is training to be our website Editor-in-Chief, responsible for all content of the site, including both static web pages and a flow of timely, interesting news articles. Bob Bergstrom is preparing to take over many of the infrastructure-related tasks, such as administration of email lists and overseeing of the Chapter's use of the AMC Trip Listing System (see below).

In October, the Chapter Executive Committee decided to change the way the Chapter lists trips and events. During 2005, designated individuals from most committees were responsible for entering event information into the database underlying our Chapter's website, from which it would be listed on various pages of the site. Our Chapter's volunteer liaison to *AMC Outdoors* would download the trip information, proof and format it, and email it to the *AMC Outdoors* editors for inclusion in the paper magazine. (The Chapter's trips were not being entered into the new all-chapters trip database at <http://trips.outdoors.org>.) We are presently changing the workflow so that committee-level people will enter our trip information directly into [trips.outdoors.org](http://trips.outdoors.org). It will be proofed by a representative of our Computer Committee, and then automatically submitted to both the AMC's all-chapter trip listing website and to *AMC Outdoors*. Initially, trip listings will not appear on the Chapter website; instead, we will link to [trips.outdoors.org](http://trips.outdoors.org). Eventually, we will build a web tool that can show searchable, interactive trip listings on our own website, using the data residing in the AMC trips database. Significant development work on this tool has already occurred.

This change makes KG's position, liaison to *AMC Outdoors*, obsolete. Rather than retreat, KG has chosen to retire. We are grateful to him for many years of dedicated, reliable, painstaking service with little public acknowledgment.

On November 3, we learned that the web hosting provider we have been using for a few years was abruptly going out of business. The announcement was titled "Zettai will cease operations within 3-6 months." On November 20, an amended schedule was announced: "Zettai will cease operations any day now." At present, the Website Committee is frantically moving all of our website content, "amcberkshire.org" email addresses, email list rosters, and other computer-based resources to a new web hosting company. This requires completely rebuilding the website and each email list, not simply copying them wholesale. We are taking advantage of the transition to adopt a new, more modern, easier-to-manage website framework. In the past the Berkshire Chapter has been recognized for having the best website of any AMC chapter, and investing the time to do this transition properly now will help us maintain that status into the future.

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As a side benefit of changing providers, we have gained a new domain name. We now own "amcberkshire.net" as well as "amcberkshire.org" and "amcberkshire.com".

Your Computer and Website Committee Chairperson and webmaster recognizes that the Chapter has been more dependent on his particular knowledge and skill-set than is healthy for the Chapter, and is taking steps to reduce that dependence and distribute both duties and knowledge to others. One aspect of this plan is delegating large portions of the workload to our two new volunteers. A second is switching to new, easier to learn, easier to manage, less heavily customized, less "niche" software for web content management. A third is making use of the AMC's new facility for centrally writing and listing events, rather than duplicating the workload by maintaining our own. A fourth is choosing a new web hosting provider that specializes in easy server management through a proprietary, industry-leading web-based "control panel".

Although 2006 was an anomalously expensive year for the Committee, 2007 promises to be anomalously cheap, and subsequent years should be less expensive as well. To get the best rates from our new hosting company, we have signed a two-year contract, which means we will not be billed again for web hosting costs until November 2008. In addition, the new company's rates are far lower than the old company's, due to (1) economies of scale and (2) the fact that the new content management software we are adopting requires much less in the way of computer resources.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ian Beatty  
Website Committee Chair

Young Members Committee

The Young Member group was quite busy in the past year with hikes being led almost every weekend from spring through the coming winter. Our popular Thursday Night Hike Series is now alternating between Tuesday and Thursday to accommodate the schedules of our members. We also continued with our "Hikes for Kids" and introduced many very young members to the joys of the out-of-doors. We found our Young Members enjoy their socials as much as our outdoor activities so we had several successful events through the course of the past year. A few Young Members attended Leadership Training at Noble View this past year and we are still working to integrate them into our pool of YM leaders. For the coming year, we are looking to improve the diversity of hikes offered by the YM leadership. We're planning on more hikes for beginners and new members, as well as more challenging hikes throughout Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephen Beauregard  
Young Members Chair