

BERKSHIRE EXCHANGE



APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

BERKSHIRE CHAPTER NEWS & EVENTS

FROM *the* CHAIR

I hope this issue finds everyone looking back on great winter hiking, snowshoeing, or skiing, and looking forward to the beautiful spring weather. I'm grateful that I've been outdoors a good deal this winter. It seems so easy to succumb to inertia, or to allow work or other obligations to prevent spending time outdoors. Being active in the Chapter certainly helps to get me out of the house, and I've met some great people!

I've been serving as Chair for a couple of months now, and have been really impressed by the commitment and dedication exhibited by our activity leaders, Committee members, and other volunteers who serve the Chapter. Bob Napolitano and Dave Koerber, our Outings Committee Co-Chairs, together with the Monthly Outings Coordinators, have brought energy and experience to the challenge of increasing the quantity and diversity of outings. Jon Hanauer, Maureen Flanagan and Gail Blackhall unstintingly contribute their time and enthusiasm to bring us the attractive and informative *Berkshire Exchange*, and have recently finished work on a pamphlet, *Experience the Wilds of Western Massachusetts*, designed to introduce people to hiking with the Berkshire Chapter.

Executive Committee News

Past and current Executive Committee members met in December for a brainstorming session on "Attracting and Retaining Members." The group generated some excellent ideas that we'll be putting into practice soon.

I'm delighted that Erica Gees has volunteered to serve the Chapter as Vice Chair. You've probably met Erica on hikes. Given her energy and commitment to the Chapter, I'm sure she'll be involved in many other Chapter activities!

Cinda Jones has stepped down as Conservation Committee Chair, but will continue selling Bandanamaps to support land conservation efforts in Western Massachusetts. Liz Gordon, returned to the area from sunny South Carolina, has agreed to serve as Con-

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The DOUBLE BLAZE

What's up with the ATC?

by Cosmo Catalano, AT Committee Chair

As some of you may have heard, the Appalachian Trail Conference is changing its name to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Although the new name will have little direct impact on our hiking on the AT and the way we work on it as volunteers, it does reflect important changes that have been occurring in the Conference's role in managing the Trail.

For a moment, let's just have a quick refresher about how the AT is managed and what role our Chapter plays. Some of you will remember an article a couple of years ago in this publication, "Alphabet Soup on the Appalachian Trail." It wasn't about the latest in dehydrated trail food; instead, it outlined the interlocking relationships between the groups responsible for the care and feeding of the AT in Massachusetts.

As that article explained, the AT uses a "cooperative management system" of volunteers, government agencies, and non-governmental nonprofit groups to create policy, manage the land, and care for the footpath. In Massachusetts, the partners are:

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), formerly the Department of Environmental Management (DEM)—Division of Forests and Parks. About half the trail miles in the state are in state parks and reservations.

The National Park Service (NPS). The other half of the AT in Massachusetts lies on NPS-acquired lands that provide a protected corridor for the trail as it travels between state parks.

The volunteers of the Berkshire Chapter of the AMC have agreed to care for the AT as one of the 30 other similar trail clubs, all organized under the auspices of the Appalachian Trail Conference (now Conservancy).

Our Chapter's AT Committee is a place where volunteers, comprising staff from the DCR, AMC, and ATC (also representing the NPS), can work together to find the best way to care for the Trail in Massachusetts.

This collaboration recognizes the primary role of volunteers as active management partners. Volunteers created the Trail in the early- to mid-20th century. The federal government, responding to increasing difficulties in preserving land for the Trail in the late 60s, worked with the Conference and its maintaining clubs to place the Trail under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service—and eventually appropriated millions of dollars to purchase a permanent corridor of land for the footpath. The result of this partnership is a trail over 2000 miles long—near the heart of some of the most intensely populated land in the country—that lies on protected lands for more than 99% of its length.

So here we are more than 75 years later. What has been fought and sweated for is now a reality. We can sit back, keep the brush clear, keep the blazes painted, clean out some wa-

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APRIL 23–24

Wilderness First Aid Training

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Meet the *Berkshire Exchange* Committee

A staff of professional volunteers and a recent technology upgrade keep your Chapter newsletter looking sharp.

There are three of us: Maureen Flanagan, Gail Blackhall, and myself. Gary Forish created this Committee, beginning in the fall of 2002 when he asked me to be the newsletter editor. I told him I have good language skills but that I am not qualified to do copy-editing and proofreading; my expertise is in designing and formatting.

So I built my first issue of the *Berkshire Exchange*—December 2002. Before going to press I proofread it as best as I could, and did find a few things. But I have no doubt that a few cupfuls of sloppy grammar spilled through. Then, early in 2003, Gary found not one but two professionals to edit the articles: Maureen and Gail. Beginning with the March 2003 issue a remarkable improvement took place. Maureen and Gail both do a wonderful job—without them, the content in the *Exchange* wouldn't be so concise and professional.

The Berkshire Exchange Committee also produces publications for other Berkshire Chapter committees, including Noble View, Outings, the Appalachian Trail, and a soon-to-come Metacomet-Monadnock Trail brochure for our Trails Committee.

In January of this year, thanks to Gary Forish's creative thinking and negotiating skills, a Supplemental Dues Allocation (SDA) Grant requested by the Berkshire Chapter was approved by the AMC. This funding was requested for the purpose of replacing the seven-year-old computer I'd been using to create the newsletter and other publications.

The new computer, purchased custom-built from Apple Computer in California, makes the process of designing and formatting publications easier. (As a hard-working volunteer, "easier" doesn't sound bad to me.) The faster processor completes tasks in much less time. The larger hard drive stores more projects, so archiving won't need to be done as frequently. The ability to run the latest software allows for more advanced designing capabilities, and also opens up the previously unavailable option of upgrading from dial-up to high-speed Internet access.

Of course, as helpful as updated technology is, the fact remains that people are far, far more important than machines. I would very much like to thank Maureen and Gail for all their hard work. And additional thanks must also go to Gary Forish and Rob Robertson for so much hard work and vital support.

The Berkshire Chapter newsletter was started in the early 1980s by its first editor, Kathryn Burnett (Kay). A contest was held to name the Chapter newsletter, and Kay won when she thought to call it the "*Berkshire Exchange*." Kay was Chapter Chair in 1981–1982, and remained Editor of the *Exchange* for two decades. In the Mount Tom State Reservation, the Kay-Bee Trail is named to honor Kay for her commitment and love of the outdoors.

Best wishes,
Jon Hanauer
newsletter@amcberkshire.org



December 18.
Elated Hikers
make first known
AMC ascent of
Poverty
Mountain,
elevation 278'.
From left to
right:
Robert Church,
Jeannie Jones,
Chris Lenox,
Jack Doyle,
Julie Bermant,
Dan Harrington,
Rob Robertson.
Photo: Rob Robertson

Berkshire Chapter Executive Committee

– 2005 –

CHAPTER OFFICERS

Chair: Rob Robertson
Vice Chair: Erica Gees
Treasurer: Kelly Druzisky
Secretary: Mary Norton

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Appalachian Trail Committee:
Cosmo Catalano
Berkshire County Representative: *vacant*
Canoe and Kayak Committee:
Connie Peterson
Conservation Committee: Liz Gordon
Leadership Training: Cathy Wickens
Membership Committee:
Tom Osley and Chris Mangano
Mountaineering Committee:
Jim VanNatta and Alice Hodgdon
Noble View Committee: Gary Forish
Nominating Committee: Gary Forish
Outings Committee:
Dave Koerber and Bob Napolitano
Programs Committee: *vacant*
Trails Committee: Pat Fletcher
Webmaster: Ian Beatty
Young Members Committee: Kelly Druzisky

BERKSHIRE EXCHANGE
– March 2005 –
newsletter@amcberkshire.org

Editor/Publisher: Jon Hanauer

Editor: Maureen Flanagan

Proofreader: Gail Blackhall

Contributors (special thanks):

Cosmo Catalano, Gary Forish,
Dave Koerber, Gloria LaFlamme,
Norie Mozzone, Bob Napolitano,
Rob Robertson, Faith Salter

Title photo: *Canoe racing on the Westfield River,*
by David Cody

CONTACT INFORMATION

on all Executive Committee members
can be found at amcberkshire.org.

ADDRESS CHANGES

AMC, 5 Joy St., Boston, MA 02108
or e-mail information@outdoors.org

CORRECTION: In a trip report in the December 2004 *Berkshire Exchange*, we incorrectly stated the land area of **Pisgah State Park** to be 35,500 acres. The park is, in fact, the largest in the New Hampshire state park system, but the correct figure is about 13,500 acres. Thanks to Matthew Donachie for contacting us with this correction. He is the Editor of *Update*, the newsletter of the Friends of Pisgah, which supports Pisgah State Park. Contact Matt at matt@monad.net for more information.

Noble View Enjoys Volunteerism and Progress, as well as a \$75,000 Grant

by Gary Forish, Noble View Chair

In a groundbreaking move, the Boston Chapter has awarded Noble View a \$75,000 grant for Phase 2 construction updates. They see their contribution to Noble View as an opportunity to form a closer alliance with the Club as a whole.

The Boston Chapter believes that by fostering a closer partnership with an active, club-wide facility they are supporting the values of lower cost, self-service facilities. Their grant will engage a matching grant in the near future (source to be announced).

This spring's Phase 2 plans include road widening, electrical and phone installation, and bathhouse construction. The Double Cottage will be able to open when road, electrical, and phone work is completed as directed by building codes.

Some Chapter members have inquired about the funding of Noble View. Phase 2 funding has been a financial challenge. The AMC has not funded Noble View. All funds have come from grants, donations, and volunteer labor. Noble View has been self-funded for the past three years, with an annual operating budget that includes plans for major maintenance and capital replacement as directed by the AMC's financial policies. Noble View has invested all excess funds back into the facility. Donations so far are \$95,000 with a balance of \$92,500. Material costs are \$63,850 to date, with volunteer labor expended at \$117,900.

Volunteers are the backbone of this Club. It is only through the efforts of volunteers such as those at Noble View that the membership enjoys low-cost facilities, and the Boston Chapter has recognized the importance of volunteers with their grant. The enthusiasm within

the Boston Chapter is demonstrated by their spirit of generosity. Their contribution to Phase 2 reflects their regard for community, dedicated volunteerism, and the love of outdoor recreation. Noble View thanks the Boston Chapter for enriching the organization with a vision of this opportunity for the future.

Carpenters Union Local 108 Apprenticeship Training Program under the direction of Rick Gumaer has been volunteering during the week since the first of December. They have completed the porch repairs and framed second floor interior walls. A thank you goes out to Carpenters Union 108 for the community-based efforts.

Additional completed porch repairs include new roof sections and new railings. Noble View has been working with the Town of Russell to solve the concerns of a fire sprinkler system. By the first of April, the sprinkler issue should be answered. The balance of the Double Cottage work will consist of an electrical system, fire alarms hooked into the town system, insulation, and sheetrock. The Summer *Berkshire Exchange* will have information on the cottage's opening date.

Visit Noble View this spring, and volunteer or visit during the summer, to see what we have built. Noble View has a long road ahead in finishing this project; ask how you can help.

Check out the Noble View calendar on page 5. Take an educational course, hike the trails, or just enjoy the view. Wildlife can be spotted; bird watching is superb, as an eagle has been seen. Reserve a bed for a quiet weekend and come enjoy the outdoors.

Trails Committee Update

by Patrick Fletcher, Trails Committee Chair

Each year I have struggled to get enough AMC members to attend the Trail Busters dinner. Last year we had only 27 and the church that feeds us was gracious enough to charge us only for the attendees. We should provide at least 40 people to make it worthwhile for the volunteers who cook the great dinner we get. I don't know how many of you know the history of this event, but Walter Banfield started this as a way to reward the trail maintainers who work on the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail (M-M) and for many years it was held at his home. When it got too large for him to handle, it was moved to the Sunderland Congregational Church.

Since this year's reservations were once again very low, I decided to cancel the event. It turned out to be a good decision, as we were treated to a blizzard that started about 3 p.m. on the day it was scheduled.

I now have to decide if we should schedule this event for next year, and would like to hear from you. I would like to find out if enough Metawampe from UMass might be interested in joining us to make this a successful fundraiser for the church. In the past, the UMass people have had a separate dinner at the church, but their dinner was also cancelled because of low attendance. After talking with the people from the church, I have decided to increase the price next year, but with the increase you will get more food.

I want to thank everyone who worked on the M-M Trail this past year. You know who you are so I don't have to list names. We accomplished three major relocations that put large sections of the Trail on public land and are moving forward to submit a report to Congress on the feasibility of our trail attaining National Scenic Trail status. I held an End to End series of hikes on the M-M this year that was well attended and gave me a chance to survey trail

conditions. A side benefit was getting two new trail adopters for sections of the Trail. We did not get in the last hike to the top of Monadnock this year because of weather, but I have rescheduled this for April.

I also want to announce that I will not be seeking the Trails Chair for the Berkshire Chapter next year. It is time for new blood in this job. I have done it for more years than I care to count. I will continue to work on trails, in particular the M-M Trail, and help the person who steps forward to give to future generations and help preserve the Walter Banfield legacy. I have enjoyed the work, or as Walter called it, "fun." Also, I'd like to thank the staff of the AMC for support during the years I have been in this position.

Interested in bagging the northeastern 4,000 footers?

A few Berkshire AMCs would like to start a Chapter group. We plan to hike on a regular basis until we have them completed. We can start in New Hampshire and go on from there. Some trips might entail an overnighiter or two so the driving time doesn't seem overwhelming, and in many cases we can summit more than one peak in a weekend trip. Carpooling also makes it easier. If you are interested in joining us for the challenge of all or just a few, as a hiking partner or as a potential leader or co-leader, please email or phone me at vesta@crocker.com or 413-222-7776.

Erica Gees

Give Back with Trail Maintenance

The Outings, AT, and Trails Committees have joined together to offer our active members a means of “giving back” for all the good times we spend in pursuit of fun in the great outdoors. We will be offering joint programs where members can participate monthly in an organized work day with one of our maintaining groups. In May, Pat Fletcher could use some help opening Upper Goose Pond and in June, Cosmo Catalano and the AT Committee will need help with maintenance activities along the AT.

Please plan to join one or both of these important activities and pitch in to help keep the Berkshire Chapter’s trails open for business so we all can enjoy them.

The Berkshire Chapter Executive Committee believes that the opportunity to give something back is so important that the Outings Committee will not schedule any other activities (hikes, etc.) on the days we have set aside to help with maintenance activities. Please join us to help these hard-working committees and give a little something back. They’re our trails; let’s pitch in.

Dave Koerber (413-568-4650; outings@amcberkshire.org)
Bob Napolitano (413-534-8955; outings@amcberkshire.org)
Outings Committee Co-chairs

Learn to Climb Outdoors!

The Berkshire Chapter has a very strong, committed, and fun-loving group of rock climbers with an excellent safety record. If you have never climbed outside, never climbed at all, or need a little brushing up on the basics, our Beginners Class is for you. During two days at different local climbing cliffs each participant will learn climbing safety, top rope belaying, climbing technique, and proper communication. In addition to the Beginners Class (held April 16 and 17), Wednesday night climbing starts in May. Alternating between Rose Ledge in Northfield and Chapel Ledge in Ashfield, Wednesday evening climbing gives beginners an opportunity to practice the skills they learned during the Beginners Class, meet other climbers, and perhaps go out to the local brew pub afterwards. Wednesday climbing continues through Labor Day. All are welcome, though please call ahead if you haven’t taken the Beginners Class as we can provide individual assistance only to a limited number of people each week. In addition to the activities mentioned

above, the climbing group runs local and regional trips for more advanced climbers during the spring, summer and fall. We also hold our Intermediate Class in early June. For more information on the Beginner Class, please call Ed Daniels at 413-527-4384. The fee is \$40 for AMC members and \$50 for non-members. For information on any of the other activities, please contact Alice Hodgdon at 413-238-5355 or ahodgdon@yahoo.com.

Tuesday Hiking – Another Day in Paradise

by Gloria LaFlamme

Three days after that major snowstorm, Al Shane took the group to a conservation area which is literally in his back yard. He again demonstrated how to use your poles to slow down on steep hills. Some of us were on, in and off that beautiful snow.

Canterbury Farm Ski-Touring Center in Becket beckoned the following Tuesday. Owners Dave and Linda Bacon make this delightful place even more delightful because of their friendly, helpful presence and delicious chili and soup.

Back on October 5 we celebrated two milestones at Chesterfield Gorge. It was our fifth anniversary hike, and we had a chocolate cake for Al Shane as he’d just completed hiking the AT. The cake cutting was followed by a group reading of William Cullen Bryant’s poem “Robert of Lincoln.” Merriment was the tone for the day. We had a lot of fun reciting the “Bob-o-link, bob-o-link, Spink, spank, spink,” and the women, in particular, with the “Chee, chee, chee.”

Al finished the AT in September. He hiked the first section when he was in high school in Philadelphia. It took him 50 years to complete the Trail—but he did it! Congratulations, Al!

Also that day, the record was broken for the number of people showing up. We had 36 for the hike and 38 for the celebration. Thank you all!

We marked another achievement this fall. Diane Crowell arranged a party at Atkin’s in South Amherst after a Tuesday hike, to recognize Phyllis Freeman’s accomplishment last summer. Phyllis has conquered all 67 of New England’s 4,000-foot mountains. She saved Mt. Katahdin for last. What a feat! Congratulations, Phyllis!

Highland Center TRAINING PROGRAMS

47th Annual Mountain Leadership Schools • June 15–19, August 17–21

Mountain Leadership School (MLS) is the AMC’s premier outdoor leadership training program. After the success of last year’s trainings, we will again hold two sessions at the Highland Center at Crawford Notch. This program is designed to teach the skills needed to lead groups safely in the mountains of the Northeast. There is rolling admission for all programs, with final application deadline 5/30. To receive a full program description, contact the Leadership Training and Risk Management Manager at 603-278-4453 x2010 or leadership@amcinfo.org. To reserve a space today, call the Reservations Office at 603-466-2727.

After a day of instruction at the Highland Center at Crawford Notch, each group of student leaders and facilitators undertakes a rigorous four-day experiential backpacking adventure. Trip planning, group leadership skills, safety management, navigation, low-impact travel, clothing, and equipment are all covered. Students take turns leading the group through scenarios involving judgment and safety awareness. This program is intended for participants who already have at least basic backpacking skills. Facilitators are senior AMC volunteers. WFA course (see below) is recommended. Fee: \$330 (nonmembers \$367). Includes instruction, materials, and meals from Wed. lunch through Sun. breakfast, excluding trail lunches. The first night (6/15) at the Highland Center is included.

Mountain Leadership School/Wilderness First Aid Package • June 13–29, August 15–21

Offered at the Highland Center as a recommended precursor to the AMC’s Mountain Leadership School, the two-day WFA course covers the hands-on basics of wilderness first aid. Emphasizes responding to backcountry emergencies using available supplies and equipment. Instruction by SOLO, a leader in wilderness emergency medicine instruction. Fee for MLS/WFA package: \$537 (nonmembers \$610). Includes instruction, materials, lodging, and meals Mon. lunch through Sun. breakfast.

Noble View CALENDAR

Noble View Trails Weekend

April 23–24: Open to all who want to give a little back to the hiking and ski trails at AMC's Noble View Camp. No experience necessary. Come learn the basics of trail maintenance, share your own trail knowledge and experience, or simply lend a hand. Work may include rock and log water bar construction, large rock step construction, grade dips, and general tread hardening. Work with AMC staff and other volunteers on a variety of trail restoration projects. Come for one day or two. Bring lunch, sturdy boots, work clothes, and work gloves. Meeting time on Saturday is 9:30 a.m. Late arrivals will not be able to participate. Free camping and/or bunk for all who participate. Water and snacks will be provided. Pre-registration required; call Gary Forish at 413-562-6792 to sign up.

SOLO – Wilderness First Aid

April 23–24: Standard first aid practices are generally based on the assumption that help will arrive shortly and that the patient will be out of your hands and at the hospital in under an hour. Wilderness First Aid training intends to prepare you for the medical situation that arises where there is no ambulance, roof, or walls to provide shelter from the elements, your supplies are few, the wait for help is unknown, and moving the patient a short distance might take hours. The SOLO Wilderness First Aid course is an intense yet fun journey through the world of wilderness emergency care and is recommended for all outdoors people. It covers the full range of situations, from scrapes and blisters to life-threatening emergencies. In addition to wilderness medical care, it teaches accident scene management and effective communication with an outside world that may be days away. While much of the material appears to be standard emergency care information, the backcountry emphasis on long-term care and evacuation complications make this course unique. Fee \$140; includes water, snacks, and lodging if required. Subsidized funding of \$80 is available for current and future Berkshire Chapter leaders. Also, full scholarships are available for Chapter members who have a financial need. For further information, call Cathy Wickens at 413-268-7340 or e-mail cathywick3@yahoo.com.

Leadership Training Weekend

May 14–15: Annual training with professional staff. New leaders, group leaders, and family unit leaders are encouraged to participate. There will be an emphasis on group-led activities, leaders' responsibilities, trip planning/management, special needs requirements, weather emergencies, principles of emergency first aid in the backcountry, and leader awareness/decision making. A two-day workshop includes water, snacks, and lodging if required. Bring your own lunch and a daypack with the usual contents. No cost to Berkshire Chapter members; \$25 fee for non-members. For further information, call Cathy Wickens at 413-268-7340 or e-mail cathywick3@yahoo.com.

New Members Hike & Introduction

May 14: An introduction hike—meet fellow members while exploring at Noble View. Visit waterfalls and old farm foundations. Bring a lunch and spend the afternoon relaxing on the porches with a 50-mile view. Water and sturdy hiking boots required. Total distance is 3 miles, suitable for children. Trail fee \$1. Call leader Gary Forish, 413-562-6792.

Spring Opening Day Tradition

May 21–22: Many workers are needed to help open the cottages and prepare the camp for summer use. Inside work cleaning buildings plus field/lawn cleanup of winter debris and weeding flower beds. Rain or shine. Bring work gloves, other tools will be provided. A lunch and water will be provided. Meet 9 a.m. at the Farmhouse, gate open at 8 a.m. For further information, call Gary Forish at 413-562-6792.

Laurel Day Celebration

June 18: Join Chapter members to continue the tradition of this annual event, first held when the founding Chapter members gathered to burn the mortgage. It should be a spectacular day. Renew old friendships and discover new friends. Gate opens at noon. Families welcome. Hike, relax, and enjoy the views. Festivities kick off at 1 p.m. with a hike to view the laurel in full bloom. Social hour with cold drinks provided at 4 p.m., chicken dinner at 5:30 p.m. Cost \$9. Please bring a dessert, and an appetizer for happy hour. For further information, call Gary Forish at 413-562-6792.

• Passages •

Naturalist, photographer, and volunteer **Carl E. Alsing** of Somers, CT, dear husband of Mary Elizabeth Alsing, passed away on December 21, 2004 at the age of 98.

Carl was an electrical engineer who loved philosophizing, writing, hiking, and enjoying the outdoors. An avid world traveler, he also volunteered extensively in his home community and is remembered fondly by the many people he touched with his friendly interest and assistance. He was a talented photographer, and presented many slide shows to community groups, featuring his skilled works on nature and his travels.

As a lifetime member of the Appalachian Mountain Club, he spent many hours hiking their trails and enjoying the scenery at Noble View.

Donations in his memory may be sent to the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter Main Office, 96 Oak Street, Hartford, CT 06106.

Edith M. Libby passed on January 14 in South Hadley, MA. She had been a member of the Berkshire Chapter for 56 years, serving as Chapter Chair 1963–64.

From the Chair, *continued from page 1*

ervation Chair, and is already hard at work. We welcome anyone with an interest in conservation to step forward to serve on this Committee.

All members are invited to attend Executive Committee meetings, which are held at 6:30 p.m. on the third Monday or Wednesday of the month at the Florence Savings Bank Community Room, 355 Russell St. (Route 9), Hadley. Check the calendar at amcberkshire.org.

Annual Meeting News

I attended the Club's Annual Meeting on February 5, 2005 in Waltham, MA. The Chapters Committee meeting, where Chairs, Vice Chairs, Regional Directors, and staff discuss the business of the Club, was professionally managed, and we got a lot done.

The Chapters Committee voted to move forward with the Chapters Youth Program, which was suspended in January, 2004 in order to review and standardize risk management practices. A task force was established to develop principles to promote the safe conduct of chapter youth programs, and its work was presented for discussion. We're now in a position to resume a youth program in the Berkshire Chapter.

Awards for Volunteer Service

At an awards ceremony at the Annual Meeting, ten Berkshire Chapter volunteers were honored with AMC Stewardship Society awards for service to the Club. Cathy Wickens received the Marian Pychowska Award, granted for 96–223 hours of annual service. Elbert Bowler, Cosmo Catalano, Pat Fletcher, Gary Forish, John Murphy, Chris Ryan, Harry Sharbaugh, Susan Sharbaugh, and Henry Warchol received the Warren Hart Award, granted for 224 hours and over. Gary Forish received the prestigious Volunteer Leadership Award, and also an award as Past Chair of the Berkshire Chapter.

We're (Always) Looking for Volunteers

In addition to building a strong Conservation Committee, we're recruiting volunteers to serve on our Membership Committee. Monthly outings or events oriented toward new members will be very helpful in attracting new members and helping them feel welcome in Chapter activities. A membership committee (of three to six people) can share the organizing and leadership here. Many hands make light work!

Dave and Bob, our Outings Committee Co-Chairs, are looking for leaders as well. Our Leader Qualification Guidelines, approved by the Executive Committee on 9/23/04, provide that:

- All current leaders (*as of 9/23/04*) will be "grandfathered".
- All "grandfathered" leaders are encouraged to meet the new guidelines.
- Leaders will be qualified within the specific skill area that they are leading.

With respect to people wishing to become leaders for the Berkshire Chapter, the guidelines read as follows:

At a minimum, leaders must satisfy **one** of these five requirements:

1. Successfully complete an AMC Berkshire Chapter Leadership Training course specific to the skill area that they are leading (i.e. hiking, backpacking, whitewater canoe/kayaking, flat-water canoe/kayaking, and mountaineering/climbing).
2. Be recommended by at least two Chapter leaders based on equivalent previous experience.
3. Successfully co-lead three (minimum) scheduled Chapter trips with at least two different leaders. The leaders must certify that the individual is a capable leader.
4. Be recommended by a Berkshire Chapter leader based on equivalent previous experience, such as having led trips for another AMC Chapter, the Sierra Club, or similar organization. Candidates with such previous experience may apply for approval by contacting the Berkshire Chapter Leadership Chair or the Chair of the committee in the specific skill area.

5. Successfully complete another chapter's Leadership Requirements in the desired skill area.

I want to encourage anyone who previously led for the Chapter to contact Bob or Dave to discuss their situation. We want everyone who'd like to lead to be able to do so. We'll do whatever we can to support your participation, including providing leadership training and refresher courses at no charge.

Training Available

Please take a look at the following opportunities, and contact Cathy Wickens at 413-268-7340 or learning@amcberkshire.org for further information.

- SOLO Wilderness First Aid training: April 23–24 at Noble View Camp (see page 5).
- Leader Training Weekend: May 14–15 at Noble View Camp (see page 5).
- Mountain Leadership School: June 15–19 and August 17–21 at the Highland Center (see page 4). One scholarship is available for a Berkshire Chapter member.

Spring Gathering

The Delaware Valley Chapter is hosting AMC Spring Gathering from May 29 to June 1, 2005 at Bryn Mawr Conference Center and Retreat near Honesdale, PA. This looks like a great weekend, with daily hikes, bike rides, and canoeing; workshops on birding and ultralight backpacking; relaxation technique sessions; game room, tennis, live music, and more! Check for highlights at www.amcdv.org.

Other AMC Chapters News

In a January 31, 2005 letter to Joe Carper, AMC Director of Operations, Boston Chapter Chair Mike Barry announced a \$75,000 grant from the Boston Chapter's Capital Reserve funds to Noble View Camp. Noble View is an AMC-owned property that is operated by the Club as a volunteer-managed facility. We're delighted with the Boston Chapter's demonstration of its commitment to forming partnerships with other chapters.

After I contacted the New Hampshire Chapter's Winter School Director Rick Silverberg to research successful Chapter-led training, the NH Chapter graciously extended me an invitation to attend their Winter Mountain Safety and Leadership School as their guest. The NH Chapter has generously offered to support our efforts to develop Chapter-based leader training. Many thanks to the NH Chapter for their willingness to go out of their way to share their experience.

Rule #1 – Have Fun

I'm truly awed by the enthusiasm that leaders, Committee members, newsletter editors, trip listing checkers, and other volunteers bring to their chosen service positions in the Chapter. Sometimes this service feels a lot like plain old hard work, yet these folks bring joy to the task at hand.

Why do we do this stuff? I think many of us want to share our love of the outdoors with others, while some folks feel it's important to give back to the community, and others are actively developing skill sets which will contribute to their enjoyment of life. Bottom line: I think we're all having fun, whether as volunteers or participants.

Remember, there are no bad days in the woods—just poor clothing choices!

Yours in service,
Rob Robertson
Berkshire Chapter Chair
413-549-4963

What's up with the ATC?, *continued from page 1*

terbars, and enjoy the fruits of the hard work of those who pioneered before us...

Not quite.

We've got it, now we have to keep it, protect it, and find out what we've really got on all those millions of acres. As a "unit" of the National Park Service (just like Yellowstone—but somehow different) we must catalogue what we have, and find a way to keep track of the health of what we are protecting. To that end, the ATC and NPS have begun to compile information about rare plants and animals, historic sites and structures, and the environmental health of the land, water, and air along the Trail Corridor. Why, you might ask, are we doing all this "extra" stuff? Just to keep some bureaucrats in DC happy? Blindly following rules created by a bunch of ex-lawyers whose primary outdoor activity is getting in and out of the limo? Although tempting to go there, the truth is quite different.

Think a minute of what we, yes, that's us—this Club and volunteers like yourself—have. A fair amount of land with a skinny little trail running through it. What else is on that land? What was on it before the Trail? Is the land healthy? Is the water clean? What is growing on the land? What animals are living out there? Are they staying put, or using the trail corridor as a pathway to other habitats?

If we relocate the Trail or build a shelter, how are we altering the ecosystem? Is this really the best place to dig the privy hole? Will that cement factory on the Hudson have a negative effect on the Trail?

The only way to answer many of these questions is to catalogue what is out there and monitor it for changes, then try to relate those changes to ongoing events. Some of this work requires experts with advanced training in archeology, botany, and environmental science—but the data gathering is tailor-made for individual citizens who are interested in the outdoors and in seeing it protected. The AMC's own VizVols program is an excellent example of volunteers monitoring air pollution and reporting their findings to a central point for analysis by experts.

The ATC (Appalachian Trail CONSERVANCY) is the central point for organizing volunteer surveys of rare plants, animal populations, and air and water quality within the AT Corridor. The Corridor itself provides a unique transect of connected ecosystems from Maine's north woods, to the New Jersey highlands, across the balds of the Shenandoahs, and into the isolated peaks and valleys of the Nantahalas. The data gathered here can paint a unique picture of the environmental health of where we live and play.

This is a pretty far distance from making rock steps, building shelters, and clipping brush—traditional trail stewardship. How do these other activities fit into our ongoing work? Are the same volunteers being asked to give still more? In some sense, a volunteer is a volunteer—they are engaged in support of something larger than themselves,

and having fun doing it. But we tend to serve in areas that interest us personally...

Jane maintains a section of AT north of Mt. Greylock. She enjoys the solitude, the seasonal changes in the section of the Trail she knows so well, and keeping open a path for visitors to the land. Thrashing about in the underbrush looking for a rare plant is not her cup of tea. But Tom, who has been hiking on Jane's section of the Trail for years, is really interested in plants. He holds a membership in the New England Wildflower Society and uses the AT to get to a field nearby that provides habitat for a plant that grows in only one other place in Massachusetts. When the ATC forms a partnership with the Wildflower Society and invites its members to take part in plant monitoring, Jane learns about the best times of year to clear a certain part of her trail section, and Tom learns about other rare plants that could use monitoring in the area. If Tom's plants show an increase or decrease in their numbers or condition, it is a good bet that the ecosystem is changing. Is it for the better, or an indication of a problem? His reports will alert experts that there may be a problem here. Jane and Tom work together to provide access to wild lands, and monitor, report—and thus preserve—their wildness.

The idea of volunteers, clubs, and management agencies forming partnerships has a long tradition in AT circles. Expanding the ATC as a conservation organization that can serve as an umbrella to many diverse groups is a natural step in its evolution. Trail stewardship will still be the core of the ATC's mission, and the footpath is still the route by which so many discover the good places of our country. But now there are opportunities for volunteers with interests other than taking heavy implements with sharp edges out into the woods to play. They too will have a key role in the care of these resources.

To facilitate this change in its efforts, the ATC is undergoing some structural changes that are intended to broaden its base of support by increasing membership and increasing the diversity of its funding sources. For more information regarding the Conservancy's changes, go to <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/about/namechange.html>.

If you would like to find out more about volunteer opportunities in monitoring air and water quality, rare species, or animal populations, contact me (at@amcberkshire.org, 413-597-2590), or Matt Stevens of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (mstevens@atconf.org, 603-795-4935). It is a program that is just beginning to come alive. There are many different types of opportunities—some require a yearly visit to a specific plant population, some monitor bird activity at a certain time of year. Others are as simple as taking an ozone measuring card with you on your next hike. This is an excellent way for families and individuals to do something that makes a difference—and have fun outdoors at the same time.



Mount Greylock.

Photo: Gary Forish

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