

First Draft
Mid Atlantic Regional Partnership Meeting
Boiling Springs, PA
March 8, 2008

Attendees:

MARPC Delegates and Alternates - PATC - Kerry Snow, Peter Brown ; CVATC - Dallas Owens, Frank Bohn ; MCM - Paul Ives, Michael O'Connor ; YHC – Tom Morley ; SATC - Phillip Day ; AHC - Anne Griffin, Barb Wiemann ; PTC – Paul Schubert ; DVAMC - Dan Schwartz, Bill Steinmetz ; Batona - Al Britton ; WTC - Debra Palermo ; NYNJTC - Ron Rosen, Walt Daniels, Dan Hoberman
ATC – Karen Lutz, Jeanne Mahoney, Sally Naser, Bob Proudman, Bob Sickley
NPS – Pete Irvine, Pam Underhill
Other - Sam Palermo

Lutz called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM. She reported that Scott Birchman, RPC Chair, was ill and unable to attend. Everyone present introduced himself or herself.

1. Elections – Snow, Nominating Committee, presented a slate of candidates: Chair: Day; Vice-Chair: Owens; Secretary: Wiemann. Rosen moved to elect the slate by acclamation, Snow seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Day thanked everyone for the vote of confidence.

2. Volunteer Center Database – Mahoney, ATC Volunteer Coordinator, presented a power point update about the Volunteer Center database, intended to promote volunteerism and connect volunteers to AT opportunities. Potential volunteers will be able to access the database to identify volunteer opportunities, volunteers can use it to track their hours, and club managers can use it to post volunteer openings, recruit new volunteers, and manage volunteer information. The objectives for 2008 are to bring the database online, to recruit and manage volunteers, and provide training and training resources. The system should be live by August 1 and officially in use by the end of September. Individual information about volunteers will not be publicly available. Episodic volunteers are a new trend, but will not replace traditional club based volunteers.

In response to questions from RPC members, Day asked that Mahoney follow-up with information about user groups, the ability to customize the software, information about who owns the software code, and whether this is an open source product.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting – Daniels moved, Rosen seconded that the 3rd draft of the minutes of the November RPC meeting be approved; the vote was unanimous.

4. ATPO Report – The report by Underhill is attached.

5. Volunteers in the Parks – The report by Underhill is attached.

Lutz - Packets (as mentioned in the report) will be distributed. ATC needs a point of contact for each club so that NPS knows that each club has received them

Underhill - Someone who is not doing approved work would not be covered. It is unknown if a hike leader is a covered volunteer.

Snow – Unlike other National Parks, volunteers, not paid employees, are the managers of the AT.

Day – Issues still to be addressed are whether a hike leader is a volunteer covered by VIP and identifying the contact person for each club.

6. Club Activities Since Last RPC Meeting

SATC - working on former BVOC section of AT; joining with CVATC to offer joint hiking program ; undertaking 1 mile relocation on AT

PATC – built boardwalk at Rt 522 ; Weaverton parking lot will cost \$500,000 ; Mather trail project completed

MCM –new composting privy at Cove Mt. ; recruiting new corridor monitors ; undertaking a major rehab of trail near Darlington

CVATC – joint hiking program with SATC ; replacing several bridges within 3 miles of Scott farm

YHC – dealing with ATV trespass issues

AHC – working on parking lot improvement project at Fort Franklin Rd. ; expanding corridor monitoring corps

PTC – Boy Scout has resurrected old escarpment trail ; 5th annual public relations meeting held at Lehigh Gap Nature Center

DVAMC – gas pipeline near Wind Gap will impact trail June-November; corridor monitors uncovered old tree houses on NPS land

BATONA – training people to do boundary monitoring ; working on improving Wind Gap parking lot ; planning reroute on north side of Wind Gap ; have a new bulletin board by Eagle Scout

WTC – beginning corridor boundary work ; will need to relocate trail due to gas line

NYNJTC – in NJ, will be installing a mouldering privy and several reroutes are planned ; in NY, ATV problems continue ; the Bear Mt. construction project will require 7 years of work with more Trail U opportunities ; a 1200 acre development by Wind Rose, a high end recreation community, is planned for both sides of AT and a boardwalk will be needed north of the development (\$160-200,000)

7. Corridor Monitoring - Naser said that annual monitoring reports are now due by February 1 of each year. A new monitoring handbook should be available this month. As part of their delegation agreements, every club is responsible for corridor monitoring. Those clubs who also perform boundary maintenance are designated as AT Corridor Stewards.

Normally, NPS surveyors did not mark boundaries adjacent to other state agencies (such as Game Lands). Such boundary lines can be marked with NPS signs. Some lands were not surveyed, or the boundary may have been surveyed by the other agencies.

When submitting corridor reports, give specific details of work performed (painting, brushing) and where it was performed (listing the monuments). Compasses are available for clubs that may need one.

8. ATC Report – Lutz’s report is attached.

Sickley reported that 9 of the 10 Mid Atlantic ridgerunner positions are filled (with 4 returning ridgerunners). The Mid Atlantic Summer Crew schedule is completed. 320 volunteers completed 1500 feet of trail on Bear Mountain in New York. In two weeks the relocation on the south side of Little Gap will begin. This is the last year of the five-year trail assessment effort.

Proudman reported that Laura Bellville has assumed the Director of Conservation position (in addition to her previous position as Southwest Virginia regional director. In 2007, ATC showed a slight budget surplus.

9. Stewardship Council – Wiemann and Daniels introduced issues that the Stewardship Council and its subcommittees will examine in May and asked for RPC comments.

A. Side Trails (Wiemann) – An ATC member has requested that all side trails and roads on official AT maps should have 1) detailed directions on how to find them; 2) a sign at the trailhead; 3) a sign at the AT junction; 4) trail should be blazed and maintained

Daniels – signs don’t last; many trailheads are located on land that the club does not own, and the landowner does not want/permit signs

Rosen – a linear trail needs to be treated differently from a circular network; this request seems to be a question of how we can meet the needs of section hikers

Britten – if every side trail on the map needs to be signed and maintained, this could become a burden to the club

Snow – these requests are outrageous ; the Subcommittee does not need a new policy or guidelines

Morley – we do the footpath and approved blue blazed (side) trails that are “our” trails

Ives – the maps and guides should contain only the official trails that the clubs maintain; the others should be removed or clearly labeled “unofficial” or “not maintained”

Lutz – the person who submitted this request is an experienced and reasonable hiker ; perhaps there are a few trails that in certain areas need to be addressed

Snow – how can we have a policy on this?

Proudman - if we have an official side trail on a map and in a guide, we need to maintain it

Morley – then put disclaimer in the map and guide if it is not as official trail

Wiemann – side trails are valuable additions to the main trail, and can be vital in an emergency

Snow – but there are places where we cannot place signs
Irvine – that concern needs to be addressed ; but do we need another policy?
Lutz – what is being pointed out by this request is that there is a disconnect between our maps and guides and what hikers see “on the ground”
Irvine – we need to pay more attention to what information is included in the guide and map and be sure they reflect what we maintain ; all clubs have official trails that they maintain them, and have unofficial trails in their sections that they do not maintain
Day – do we need a policy for the color of side trails that are built and maintained by other agencies?
Britton – should the AT be a marked like superhighway? ; where is the challenge? ; how much should we do for hikers?
Owens – what are the basic assumptions of hikers? ; if it is not an official side trail and it is shown on a map and the club does not assume responsibility, add a disclaimer to the maps and guides
Proudman – we can diminish the primitive experience with too many signs
Steinmetz – most of what is requested by this hiker is good ; we need to address the problem trails
Hoderman – we need to label official trails
Owens – thru their management plans, each club can control which side trails they will maintain
O’Connor – with GPS, all trails heads can be identified even if signs are not allowed or stolen

B. Group and Commercial Use of AT (Wiemann)– The Trail Management subcommittee will be examining the previous ATC statements and discussing possible changes/clarifications.

Underhill – the NPS does not issue permits for commercial use ; this comes down to the use of overnight facilities, since day use does not have the same impact on the trail and its facilities ; should we have a mechanism to allow commercial use of AT? ; and what is meant by commercial use – a commercial vendor or a commercial guide?

Britton – groups represent a big use of the trail in certain areas and at certain times

Proudman – “under the radar” groups are an accomplished fact ; what about urban people who need a guide or some structure when they head into the woods ; if we issue permits, we would require insurance, need assurance about food handling safety, and ATC would need staff to issue permits and monitor them

Morley – even if we tighten the rules, who will enforce them?

Steinmetz – the Adirondack Park has stopped large bus loads from overwhelming trails; how have they done this?

Rosen – Connecticut has designed and built hardened group use campsites

Schwartz – the Trail to every Classroom is bringing new groups of people to the trail and we must accommodate this group usage

Proudman – we need to staff and manage this usage, or staff and forbid this usage, or delegate to NPS

Hoderman – can we separate commercial use from non-profit user groups and have different policies?

Day – the maintenance burden falls on clubs when large groups use a facility or area

Britton - the current statement has good policies, but it needs to be enforced

Proudman – everyone needs to be aware of this type of use

Schubert – society is withdrawing from nature and we need to get people back outside

Morley – is group and commercial use a problem? ; perhaps if there is a problem in some area, we need to address that specific problem

C. Special Events (Wiemann) – The Trail Management Subcommittee will also be examining this issue.

Rosen – NPS policy should govern allowing special events

Snow – the JFK 50 Miler is grand fathered, since it predates the AT becoming a unit of the NPS ; refusing to allow it to be held would be a political nightmare ; we can’t make a case for Leave No Trace and then allow special events

[for further discussion see #12-C]

D. Transportation Sharing – Daniels passed out a Transportation Sharing Questionnaire from the Energy Subcommittee and requested that each club fill it out and return it. The questionnaire relates to each club’s policies on the use of public transportation and car-pooling for club events.

E. Geocaching (Daniels) - The Land and Resources Management Subcommittee is addressing this issue. Whether geocaching is allowed on the AT depends on the policy of the landowner. We want to offer guidance on how to react to unauthorized caches.

Britton – we should not allow geocaches due to the fact that we have sensitive and endangered plants to protect

Brown – Pennsylvania allows geocaching with a permit

Underhill – geocaching used to be verboten on NPS lands ; now NPS can identify areas where we will allow it

Snow – geocaching is one way to encourage people to enjoy nature ; but we should only allow people to find things in nature (virtual caches) ; we could have a section of the web site to promote virtual caches

Proudman – ATC has a draft policy written by Ben Lawhon of Leave No Trace

Bohn – we need to keep virtual caches near trail to prevent trampling

Daniels – even virtual caches could create herd paths

Snow – I think we can accommodate these users

10. Energy and Utility Infrastructure – Proudman stated that there are four proposed power lines that would cross the AT in the Mid Atlantic region and displayed a map showing the new routes. ATC policy says that new power lines should be aligned with existing lines and the trail fully mitigated.

Proudman also stated that half of AT land is open to hunting (Game Lands, Forest Service, etc.)

11. Carbon Footprint – Proudman and Daniels stated that ATC is looking at its footprint and will have a draft statement for Stewardship Council consideration.

12. New Business

A. Clubs and delegates are reminded to update email addresses for RPC members and club presidents when changes occur. The list is on the MARPC web site.

B. The new LL Bean Grants to Clubs have been awarded. Mid Atlantic clubs receiving funds are NYNJTC, SATC, YHC, CVATC, and PATC.

C. Rosen passed out information about a proposed “Bear Mountain 85th Anniversary Appalachian Trail Experience” (a hike-a-thon on the AT, limited to 300 persons) designed to raise awareness of the AT and funds for the Bear Mountain Project.

Underhill – this is not a gray area ; events of this type are addressed in our policy ; although this would not be held on NPS land, you need to look at the broader implications,

Griffin – do not hold this event on the AT ; perhaps you could find other trails somewhere else

Snow – instead of a hike-a-thon, perhaps you could hold a festival at Bear Mt.

Wiemann – holding this event would set a poor precedent ; how could we deny other charity walks?

Irvine – the AT Museum proposed a hike-a-thon to benefit the museum and the idea was rejected

Underhill – instead of sponsoring a hiker, people could sponsor a rock on the new trail

Brown – take as your model the Link Trail 1000 Steps project ; people and organizations bought steps

Rosen – if 300 hikers raised \$100 each, we would have \$30,000 profit

Lutz – could I see club sentiment on this? [*a straw show of hand was unanimously against the idea*] ; the consensus is against doing this

D. Day asked everyone to take a flier about proposed Pennsylvania legislation allowing Sunday hunting in the state.

13. Next Meetings – The fall meeting will be held Sep. 20-21, 2008 at the AMC Mohican Center in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Cabins and tent sites are available. The spring 2009 meeting will be March 7 in Boiling Springs and the Fall 2009 meeting will be Oct. 24-25.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara L. Wiemann
MARPC Secretary