



BERKSHIRE APPALACHIAN TRAIL NEWSLETTER

Issue 8: April 2020

COVID- 19

Due to the Coronavirus outbreak, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Appalachian Mountain Club are asking to suspend all trail related activities until at least April 30th. Currently, Massachusetts has issued a “Stay at Home” Advisory until the 7th. This is a constantly changing and fluid issue, and dates and restrictions may change at any time.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy states; “The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is communicating regular updates on the impacts of the COVID-19 virus on the Trail and its visitors, volunteers, communities, and partners through its website, social media, email, AT Camp, and through media partners like The Trek and Guthook Guides. For the most up to date information, go to: wildeast.appalachiantrail.org/covid19. The patience and adaptability of A.T. clubs during this time has been incredibly heartening, especially in the move to online meetings, suspending hikes and work trips on the A.T. The Conservancy is committed to keeping the well-being of its volunteer corps, adjacent Trail Communities, and visitors safe. The ATC will continue to monitor the situation, share information on closure statuses, and provide guidance on its website.”

All overnight sites in Massachusetts are temporarily closed. So far, several signs have been posted at road crossings to encourage this. Please take the appropriate precautions for yourself and follow the recommendations of the ATC and AMC. For specific information regarding the AMC please go to:

<https://www.outdoors.org/articles/newsroom/amc-preparations-for-covid-19>

The AT Committee Chair will be sending updates regularly through email once policies change as well. Thank you for complying and we are hopeful that we can get back out on the trail soon!

CORRIDOR MONITORING COORDINATOR

The Berkshire Chapter's A.T. Management Committee is seeking a Corridor Monitoring Program Coordinator. The Corridor Monitoring Program Coordinator is responsible for oversight of the regular monitoring of Appalachian Trail lands by the assigned Corridor Monitors, reporting on the results of Corridor Monitoring, overseeing implementation of the Corridor Boundary Maintenance program and follow up on Encroachment Reports.

A member of the A.T. Committee, the position requires good communication skills with staff and volunteers through email and phone, an organized work style and attention to details. Primary duties involve managing a 20 person volunteer Corridor Monitor corps, planning work schedules, and connecting regularly with staff from ATC and NPS regarding Corridor Boundary issues and policies. Although this is primarily an "office" position, 4-5 field visits to projects near the A.T. are likely between April and November. Experience with land surveys, property deeds and maps is helpful but not required. An extensive and experienced mentoring system exists to assist new Coordinators.

Attendance at six bi-monthly A.T. Committee meetings in Lanesborough, MA per year is important. Occasional absences can be supplemented by written updates. Average estimated weekly time commitment is 2 hours, with short periods of 10 hours per week.

Contact Cosmo Catalano, at@amcberkshire.org for more info.

GUTHOOK USE POLICY

Several AT volunteers will have applied for the use of the Guthook App for the AT in Massachusetts. Word from ATC is that the maps to use the App should be available soon. Part of this App, beyond the mapping capabilities, allows descriptions about specific locations on the Trail. Through the App developer, we can update these "official" wording of locations such as shelters, trailheads, etc.

The App also allows users to post public messages about their experiences on the Trail. To manage our public "face" on Guthook, we've developed the following guidance. Trail volunteers may post accurate information for hikers regarding condition updates at various locations (shelters, water sources, view points, etc), keeping in mind that these are visible by the public, and that such messages should be brief and to the point. Volunteers should refrain from posting about hiker or group conduct, personal encounters with hikers, non-trail issues, and ATC, APPA, DCR or Committee policy. If a volunteer believes a post should be made about such topics, they should refer it to their Coordinator who will share the idea with the Committee. If erroneous posts are being made by other users, volunteers should bring them to the attention of their Coordinator right away.

HISTORY THROUGH STORIES

Below, is a letter written by Richard H. Fitzgerald Sr. to his son Richard H. Fitzgerald Jr. whom in 1956-1957 had worked on creating the bridge over the Massachusetts Turnpike in order to ensure that the Appalachian Trail remained intact. This letter was originally seen in February of 1991 in ATC's *The Register*. Richard Sr. was one of the first people to design and create the first Highway bridge for the Appalachian Trail.

Dear Richard,

Son, I'll try to tell this story without making a novel out of it.

As you know, I was involved with practically every "order of taking" in the eminent-domain land-takings for the initial turnpike and the Boston extension of the Massachusetts Turnpike.

One day, after signing my pay check in a branch office of the first National Bank of Boston, I used a hand blotter to dry the ink on the endorsed check. On the blotter was a picture of a man wearing a backpack and the wording "Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia--an unboken line," or words to that effect.

My curiosity was aroused because I could not recall any reference to the Trail at any point across the entire state by the turnpike authority. I returned to the office and, after a diligent search, reported my findings to the chief engineer (Philip Kitfield). This time frame was around 1956-57, and we had practically completed construction of the initial turnpike, be we had not as yet opened the road to the toll-paying. We had, however, severed the trail!!!

The Trail was near the Lee- Becket town lines at Goose Pond in the Berkshire County.

An engineer named Ken Wolfson, who worked for Stone Webster on that particular section of the turnpike, met with me at my office in the Little Building and explained that there was no money left in that area (for construction); that the road was practically completed; that there appeared to be no way to provide access, and that there were four (4) different and extreme elevations between the south and north sides of the turnpike! Also, there were no plans to provide a bridge, since the angle from the high point on the south and low point on the north was extremely acute and would in effect be more like a slide than a bridge.

Cognizant of the necessity to reinstate the rights of access along the trail and across the turnpike, I took a pencil and quickly (in my naivete in architectural matters) sketched a line from the southern high point, as shown on his plants, to a point in the median strip which was very wide, made a circular marking and then made a line from the median strip to the low point on the northern side. My comment was "Could we bridge the eastbound roadway, drop down the median, come up again and bridge the westbound roadway rather than have one bridge?" Also, we had to keep in mind that people might cross these bridges in ways other than on foot (i.e., horseback), or even take cattle across, hence the ramp- like sections down to and up from the median.

The results of that meeting are obvious when one sees the structure that was built. It matches my sketch on Wolfson's plans!!! Apparently, there was not enough time and not enough desire to delay the opening to have formal submission of architectural plans and bids.

Mel Crain, later chief engineer for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, told me at a later date that the structure cost several million dollars. He is now retired. He was a resident of Longmeadow, Mass., and was acquainted with the people and construction at the time.

The original "order of taking" and amendments thereto would be on file in the Berkshire County Courthouse in Pittsfield, Mass.

I had to write one amendment to spell out the rights granted at that point and across the turnpike.

So you see, son, I did have something to do with the Appalachian Trail. I have a somewhat dubious monument to my architectural skills and a pride in the fact that I saved my employer the conflict from historical societies and sport organizations that would have taken place if it had not been for that little hand-blotter.

Whenever you see that monstrosity on the turnpike, think of me!!

Love, Dad



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Eileen Quinn stumbled upon the role as AT Community Coordinator for Cheshire in 2017. She and her husband John Tremblay, and some community members started the Cheshire Community Association in 2015 in order to bring positive energy and events to their town.

They heard that Dalton had been designated as an official AT Community, and felt that it made sense for Cheshire to also have this status, under the umbrella of their Community Association. The AT comes right through the town and residents have been supporting hikers for years. It was time to make it official.

In August 2017 Eileen attended the AT Designation Celebration for Dalton to see what it was about and was hooked! Soon afterwards, with the help of Margaret Cahill and Andrea Lassar, the Dalton AT community leaders, Eileen and other dedicated volunteers started the large application process to become an AT Community, and by June 2018 they were official! Since then, they've been active cheerleaders and supporters of the trail and its hikers.

Eileen assists as the AT Community leader by serving as a liaison between the AT Committee and the Cheshire community. With the invaluable support from Cosmo Catalano, Jim Pelletier, Karen Daigle and others, she coordinates Cheshire's annual AT Community celebration, assists with trail maintenance and other trail related tasks. Recently, she's been spearheading preparations for the new AT Campsite which is located in town, across from the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and Diane's Twist Ice Cream & Sandwich Shop. It is scheduled to open May 1st with an electricity hub, water source, posts for hammocks, picnic table and a port-a-potty. For many years AT hikers stayed at St. Mary's church hall and grounds, where Father Tom Begley, a lover of the AT and avid hiker, offered hospitality to them. For various reasons, that arrangement disbanded last year. However, with the collaboration and support of the town government and AT volunteers, the community will soon have a place for hikers to camp. The site will be named in honor of the late Fr. Tom.

Eileen and John are avid hikers and often go to the Cheshire Cobbles, which can be seen from their kitchen window. Eileen works part time for a Fair Trade organization, and occasionally teaches yoga & meditation. She is a passionate woman who dives headfirst into whatever she is working on! Thank you Eileen for your continued support of the trail and keeping the spirit of the AT Trail Communities alive!

ATC SURVEY

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy has requested us all to fill out this survey to help clubs have a better understanding of their volunteers, what kind of trainings they may need to implement especially in regards to Saw Safety, and perceived confidence versus skills in members. This is highly relevant because we will be getting the information back on our club specific skills as well as a general understanding of the A.T. clubs as a whole. A high percentage of participants is required to get the most accurate data.

Each survey participant will also be entered in a raffle to win one of several daypacks, perfect for a day on the Trail. Clubs with the highest percentage of survey participants (based on tiers of small, medium and large clubs) will then have their members entered into the raffle twice, doubling chances of winning!

The Survey takes about 30 minutes to complete. You can follow this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AllVolsAT>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Currently, much of our volunteer work is halted or tentatively postponed until the Covid-19 pandemic settles down a bit more. Once we are actively volunteering you can follow the link below to see upcoming events.

Link:

[2020 Project Schedule](#)

HOURS REPORT

After volunteering (on or off the Trail) please enter your own hours regularly. You can use this link to easily input them yourself:

<http://bit.ly/MassATHours>



CONTACT US

Email us at:

at@amcberkshire.org

Like us on Facebook at:
Massachusetts Appalachian
Trail Management
Committee

Check us out at:

[https://amcberkshire.org/
getting-involved](https://amcberkshire.org/getting-involved)