On October 24th and 25th, some of our maintainers and volunteers spent the weekend learning chainsaw operation at April Hill in South Egremont. The days were chilly but everyone was in high spirits and attentive to learn. Those receiving their recertification training only attended for the first day while the new sawyers spent both days there.

The ATC outfits every new volunteer sawyer with a hard hat, ear protection, and chaps to ensure they are safe in the field. Doing Sawyer training during a pandemic year was a curse and a blessing. There was a lot less classroom time compared to most years so sawyers were able to spend more time out in the field getting hands on experience. Peter Jensen, with the help of Cosmo Catalano, helped to instruct the new sawyers on how to maintain their saws, proper cutting techniques, and job hazard analysis.

Those going for their recertification were given trees to fell and cut as part of their licensure. New sawyers were given many practice logs to practice bucking in various different ways. On the second day, sawyer was given a scenario was asked to “clear the trail” of the downed logs.

Those that attended included: Josh Weeks, Russ Skelton, Mike Brick, Monica Aguilar, Peter Rentz, Jon Elliott, and Eric Roozekrans. Those that completed the training for the first time received their A certification which means they can work alongside and under the guidance of a more experience sawyer (B or C).

Mike Brick (green) and his assistant swamper running through their bucking scenario. Photo Credit, Monica Aguilar.
Steve Smith, our AT Committee Cultural Resources Coordinator, installed a Knox Trek History exhibit kiosk on Route 23 in Monterey. This has been a goal of his for a few seasons now. Below are the fascinating stories that can be found on that kiosk! If you are interested in volunteering with Steve, you can contact him at stevenhsmith.smith@gmail.com

The Story of Colonel Henry Knox’s Trek from Ticonderoga to Cambridge, 1775-1776

~ The trek passed close to Route 23 heading from Great Barrington to Monterey ~

On December 1, 1775, General George Washington sent Colonel Henry Knox to Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York near Canada to bring 59 cannons to Boston to drive out the British. Knox and his men arrived at Fort Ticonderoga, put the cannons on big flat-bottomed boats, and rowed them through freezing weather to the southern end of Lake George. Then, as he reported to Washington on December 17th, “I have made 42 exceedingly strong sleds and have provided 80 yoke of oxen to drag them as far as Springfield where I shall get fresh cattle to carry them....to present your Excellency a noble train of artillery.”

By January 5th, the artillery had reached Albany, but once again, nature did not cooperate. The ice on the Hudson was not deep enough to support the weight of the sleds. During each of the first two attempts at crossing, Knox saw a precious cannon lost to the river. But by the evening of January 8th, he was able to write “Went on the ice about 8 o’clock in the morning and proceeded so carefully that before night we got over 23 sleds and were so lucky to get the Cannons out of the River, owing to the assistance the good people of the City of Albany gave.”

Continuing eastward, Knox and his men crossed the border into Massachusetts and struggled on to Springfield. From here both the roads and weather improved. With 80 yoke of fresh oxen, the expedition passed through [many Massachusetts towns] and on January 24, 1776, Knox’s “noble train of artillery” entered Cambridge.

Knox’s trek across the Berkshires, mid-January, 1776

With the Berkshire Mountains still ahead of them, they finally forged through the snow into Massachusetts to begin four of the most hazardous days of the entire journey. From Alford, to North Egremont, on to Great Barrington, Monterey, and Otis, the sleds bearing their heavy load moved slowly through the densely wooded mountains, cutting paths where no roads existed.

Yet ahead lay the treacherous Glasgow Mountain [about 30 miles east of AT] separating Blandford from the present town of Russell. The men, some of whom were regulars from the New York militia, recognized the hazards of the descent and hesitated to push on. The hired teamsters also feared for their lives knowing that the unwieldy cargo could come crashing down upon them as they made their way down the icy slope. They refused to move. Here again, as had happened before, and would happen again many times, Knox was forced to rely on the help of the local farmers to provide additional teams of men and oxen that could persuade the drivers to press on.
In mid-January, the cold and weary party arrived in Westfield. Knox apparently had ridden ahead preparing food and shelter for everyone after the frightening ordeal. Partially out of the sense of gratitude to the town for its welcome greeting, and perhaps out of a need to let off steam, Knox agreed to fire one of the cannon, called the “Old Sow”, in a noisy salute to the task ahead. Rejuvenated the band pushed on to West Springfield and across the Connecticut River.

Source: http://todayinhistory.blog/tag/knox-trail/
David Wilson has been hiking for most of his adult life. He decided he wanted to start volunteering on the Appalachian Trail when he turned 40 years old. So, in January of this 40th birthday, in 2002, he began volunteering and maintaining the trail.

David lives in Lanesborough, MA and can see the trail from his front porch. He had his eyes on maintaining and monitoring that section, however, another volunteer currently had it at the time so they compromised and shared the section until that volunteer moved away a few years later.

Slowly, David took on more responsibilities with the club. Steve Smith was friends with David’s uncle, so when Steve asked him to monitor a section of the corridor it was difficult to say no! However, David enjoys jogging and running through the woods so it was a good fit for him to be able to train for races while keeping an eye on the trail.

David is an avid runner and often is out jogging in the woods for hours at a time. He enjoyed being out on the trail while training for his marathons. He recalls that Gore Pond was often a mucky rutted mess which made it difficult to jog. However, today, he mentions, it is in a much better condition due to Steve Smith’s efforts.

In addition to maintaining in Massachusetts, David tends to a blue blazed and white blazed section in Western Maine. This section creates a loop along rivers and brooks with swimming holes. The section is an excellent spot for meeting water seekers just as much as AT hikers. He recalls many fond memories of bringing his family to help maintain that section with him.

This year, David retired from Corridor Monitoring, however, he continues to maintain the trail and hopes to for another 20 years to come. The trail has become part of his identity and has given him opportunities to create lasting, outdoor memories with his family on their trips to Maine.

David Wilson, canoeing on Lake Umbagog in Maine.
Due to Covid gathering restrictions and the safety of our volunteers we are planning to host a Virtual Gathering this winter and then tentatively have a small outdoor group event in the Spring if possible.

For our Winter AT Gathering, it will take place on January 30th from 10am to noon via Zoom. We’ll send out a reminder early next year, but please save the date (and the Zoom link):

Join Zoom Meeting
https://outdoors.zoom.us/j/8022648692
Meeting ID: 802 264 8692

On our agenda we will have:
- State of the trail presentation which includes photos and accomplishments from this past year
- A small entertainment presentation on our Natural Resources program
- Awards presentation
- Q & A open session

Although this is not the gathering we expected to have this year, we hope you will join us (virtually) for some fun and to accept gratitude for all of your hard work this year.

After volunteering please enter your own hours regularly. You can use this link to easily input them yourself:
2020/2021 Hours Report

Email us at:
at@amcberkshire.org

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https://amcberkshire.org/getting-involved