



BERKSHIRE EXCHANGE



FROM *the* CHAIR

Berkshire Chapter Sets Goals, Needs Your Support!

As I write this report on my trusty laptop, I'm riding home from Spring Gathering with Roger Scholl, the AMC's Director of Volunteer Relations, on a lovely Sunday morning. The weather has been beautiful, and I've been in meetings indoors for most of the weekend! What insanity possessed me?

A Bigger Picture

The Mohawk-Hudson Chapter did a fantastic job hosting Spring Gathering at YMCA Camp Chingachcook on the western shore of Lake George, NY. The facility was comfortable, the food was great, and the Mohawk-Hudson volunteers were incredibly friendly and welcoming. It required a tremendous amount of work, and the AMC's smallest chapter did a perfect job.

Those of us who participate in AMC-led outdoor recreation activities may think that the AMC runs only paddling trips, or that the AMC just hikes, or that the AMC is just August Camp or whatever Committee we're involved in—in other words, whatever our main area of interest is. Of course, the AMC has much more than a single focus—not only the specific activity we favor.

The Gatherings are a great opportunity to get a broader view of the AMC. As Chapter Chair, I'm especially grateful to be reminded of the extremely wide scope of the AMC's interests, activities, advocacy work, and projects.

On Saturday at the Spring Gathering, our Chapters Committee (Chapter Chairs and Vice Chairs) had the chance to meet with our Regional Directors and AMC staff, who told us more about progress on the Highlands Coalition. For some years, the AMC (among others) has been advocating for the protection of the Highlands Region, which runs from southeast Pennsylvania through northern New Jersey, across southern New York into northwestern Connecticut, where it terminates at the Massachusetts border. The Highlands Coalition Act was passed in 2005, but funding

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“Development” on the Appalachian Trail

by Cosmo Catalano, AT Committee Chair

Pay phones? Showers? Solar lights? Are these amenities you associate with a hike on the AT? In and near some shelters on the Trail, that is exactly what you will find. In addition, some newer shelters are constructed more like houses, with walls framed in commercially sized and finished lumber, plywood sheathing and foundation piers of cast concrete rather than native stone or wood. Roofs are protected by asphalt shingles.

Why does it matter? Shouldn't hikers have a nice place to crash at the end of a long, cold rainy day (or even a hot, sweaty one for that matter)? It matters because as volunteer AT managers (our AT Committee), one part of our job is to preserve the “trail experience” for hikers. Perhaps the most eloquent and concise description is found in a passage from the National Park Service's “Plan for the Appalachian Trail,” a document developed by NPS and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) for the management of the AT as a National Park “unit.” This excerpt is from the introductory pages that try to quantify what the trail is all about.

The Appalachian Trail is a way, continuous from Maine to Georgia, for travel on foot through the wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. It is a means of sojourning among these lands, such that visitors may experience them by their own unaided efforts.

Pretty eloquent language, especially coming from a government document. The part about visitors experiencing the lands “by their own unaided efforts” seems to be getting lost as clubs build fancier and more elaborate shelters. How should this shelter construction be approached? Why do we have shelters on the AT in the first place? Why not just let folks camp out wherever they are at the end of the day?

Providing simple three-sided shelters and primitive cabins for backcountry visitors goes back well over 100 years. A tradition in the Adirondacks and other northern New England areas, shelters were intended as a place of refuge from the elements where “sojourners” could sleep, cook, and generally make use of a base camp for an extended stay in a particular area. This tradition arose long before “thru-hiking” to a succession of shelters was a common activity. The AT, which incorporated prior existing trails in New England and in large National Forests and Parks, provided access to existing shelters as well. As the AT became a permanent trail, well supported by volunteer maintaining clubs, a “shelter project” became a way to rally volunteers around work that was fun and created something that all could be proud of.

As the AT became more popular and use increased dramatically in the 1960s, the National

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Noble View: Volunteers Make Progress *page 3*

Flock of Seagulls (and Other Critters of Cape Cod) *pages 4 & 5*

Volunteer Opportunities *pages 2 & 7*

Chapter Vice Chair Needed

This Chair position requires a significant investment of time and energy, to be sure, but the rewards are tremendous. The kinds of activities the AMC's leaders offer attract great people, and you will meet many new friends.

Essentially, the Vice Chair performs the same role as the Chair, with the expectation that he or she will become the Chair. The Vice Chair:

- Attends (and in the Chair's absence presides over) the monthly Executive Committee meetings;
- Attends functions, meetings, and activities such as new member events, socials, and potlucks where Chapter leadership representation is needed;
- Represents the Chapter's members and solicits their feedback and comments;
- Works with Executive Committee Chairs and other Chapter members on specific projects;
- Serves on the AMC-wide Chapters Committee and attends AMC-wide gatherings such as the Annual Meeting, Spring Gathering, Chapters Retreat, and Fall Gathering.

The Vice Chair is also responsible for organizing our Chapter's Annual Meeting, customarily held on the first Saturday in November.

If you're interested in serving as Vice Chair, or would like more information, please contact Rob Robertson at chapterchair@amcberkshire.org or 413-549-4963.

Solo Excursions *by Jack Doyle*

I like to hike alone. As much as I enjoy AMC outings, some of my most pleasant times on the trail have been solo excursions, sometimes in preparation for leading such outings. It's fun to share, but doing so on the trail can present a dilemma.

William Wordsworth's poem about his surprise encounter with "A host of golden daffodils," which I read rather late in life, has an artless ring of truth for me (and for you, I hope) because I have such memories, that when "In vacant or in pensive mood / They flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude." Would this be possible, I wonder, if he had not been "wandering lonely as a cloud"? Perhaps not.

I was wandering alone on a trail through a vernal marsh many years ago, mostly dry by early autumn, through a passage scarcely as wide as my shoulders among reeds half again as tall as I. An abrupt bend in the path brought me close enough to touch a big, beautiful monarch butterfly at eye level, its proboscis fully extended into the bright orange button of an aster with violet-blue petals. The flower's stems had grown tall, reaching for the sun. The monarch had a companion, almost as close, flitting over and under and between stems, sampling blossoms, searching for one the bees may have missed. I never before realized that a butterfly, especially as large as these were, could be so agile. Its brightly colored wings never brushed a stem. Their porcelain-like bodies were shiny black, with a spattering of white spots of different sizes: living jewels, and mine to keep.

I'd guess that others of us who hike alone have more than a few similar memories. I don't need to collect such special delights in order to return from a walk in the forest restored. The wildflowers don't run away, we have a wealth of lakes and ponds and streams in the Berkshires, a tree is always a tree, the mountains and hills are constant, and the changing views they present do not diminish in loveliness. You won't find many jaded hikers in this area, one of the best day-hiking regions in the country, I'm told. But who doesn't like surprises? At such times I am left with feelings of gratitude. How long would I have remained mesmerized if I hadn't been alone?

Wordsworth writes about his rambles through forests and meadows and hills with his sister, inspiring in him feelings of "a presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts." But he and his sister were very close.

Times like these, shared with others, can deepen connections between people, I suppose. Even so, what we bring to friendship evolves in solitude. We must wander our own paths alone, but for our perception, when it occurs, of our mutual connectedness within the mystery that only the heart can know.

Among the pleasures that cannot be enjoyed to excess, if I were asked which painting or poem or musical composition is my favorite, I'd have to answer, "Whatever I am enjoying at a given moment." Treasured memories are among such kinds of pleasures. But among the particular class of such treasures that one may acquire in the forest, I do have this one favorite, which after many years still will occasionally "flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude..."

And then my heart, with tranquil sighs / Dances with the butterflies.

Editor's Note: As Mr. Doyle clearly illustrates, hiking alone offers a very rewarding experience different from that which one gets when hiking with others. One senses a certain connection with nature that is not so easily obtained when with a group. But please remember to exercise an extra level of caution both during preparation and on the trail. Bring plenty of food and water; extra clothing, a first aid kit, a whistle, and a flashlight. Always let somebody know where you're going and when you expect to return. —JH

Berkshire Chapter Executive Committee

– 2006 –

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Need a phone number?

If the person you want to contact by phone has no number listed, please call the Chapter Chair, Rob Robertson, at 413-549-4963.

Noble View Adds to Facility and Builds Relationships

This spring, volunteers have been busy completing the updated Double Cottage at Noble View and maintaining trails in the area. For the Earth Day celebration on April 22, seven volunteers, led by Sara Sheehy of the AMC Southern New England Trails Office, held a trail maintenance day. On that very wet and cold Saturday, they removed organic materials from drainage ditches and constructed water bars along Laurel Lane and the Pitcher Brook Trail. The crew also completed turnpike construction on the Pitcher Brook Trail in the vicinity of Snow Place. A turnpike is where a trail is built up to elevate it out of a wet area, aiding hikers in staying out of the drainage channel that now flows alongside the trail.

The first week in May brought Student Conservation Association (SCA) Americorps for its annual trail skills workshop. For six days, SCA Americorps staff instructed 26 of its members from across the US in trail building and maintenance. Work was completed on a relocation of the southwest section of the Border Trail from a 300-foot muddy, wet area to a high and dry area on the adjacent hillside. This main trail leads from the parking lot to the Pitcher Brook Trail. In addition, a 30-foot section of bog bridge was built to span a major wet area on the Ski Trail's northwest corner.

SCA Americorps members joined the conservation program as interns serving the community. Kristen Brumbaugh of Houston is taking all she learns here to build a better world. David Duran of El Paso is here to find a community of like-minded people as stewards of the earth. Luke Grange of Portland, Oregon continues to work in service, education, and environmental issues. Michelle Johnson from the island of Maui is here to get more experience with environmental education. Dustin Laverack of Ashland, New Hampshire is interested in community service, working outdoors, and making a difference in the lives of our next generation of leaders. Kyli Mann of Seattle plans to work with the environment in a positive way.

The Berkshire Chapter is also taking the lead in supporting trail maintenance on site. At 9:00 a.m. on the third Saturday of every month, Chapter and other volunteers spend a half-day or more on trail projects. Come out and join, give back to the trails, meet great

people, and (of course) have fun.

The Double Cottage is scheduled to open on July 3 in time for the annual chicken barbecue and fireworks viewing, which will be held that evening (see page 8). The rebuilt kitchen of the updated building features all stainless steel appliances (two commercial stoves with hoods and two commercial refrigerators) and stainless steel counters.

A rededication and celebration of the Double Cottage is scheduled for October with food and beverages supplied at no cost. Details will be provided in the Fall *Berkshire Exchange*. Come meet the volunteers and AMC staff, and make new friends while viewing your estate.

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These hard-working volunteers enjoyed making Earth Day a trail maintenance day at Noble View. *photo by Sara Sheehy*

The Joy of Trail Work at Noble View *by Michael Delaney*

I became interested in Noble View when I went to the Chapter's potluck dinner in March. Before that, I was vaguely aware that the AMC owned a lodge and some land near Westfield, but hadn't done much thinking about it. However, after seeing the maps and brochures at the potluck, I became very interested in using this great resource. Who'd ever believe you didn't have to drive to the White Mountains to stay in a rustic lodge with scenery and trails at your doorstep?

So when I saw the announcement for volunteer trail cleanup posted on the Berkshire Chapter website, I decided it would be a good way to help the Chapter, meet other members, and get a guided tour of Noble View. As it turned out, I wasn't disappointed in any of these expectations.

Rob Robertson, the Chapter Chair and organizer of this event, picked me and another member up in Hadley to carpool to Noble View. On the drive down, the weather looked like it might wash out the whole enterprise, but by the time we arrived the sun was shining and the birds were chirping. The temperature started to warm up, so I left my rain gear and sweater in the back of Rob's Subaru and brought all my water and an energy bar.

To Rob's apparent joy, seven other members were there to pitch in. After he explained the basic plan of action, we each took the hand tool of our choice and headed for the worksite. What followed was three hours

of snipping undergrowth and overgrowth, raking leaves, removing debris, and cutting trees whose corpses littered the trails. Fortunately, one regular volunteer in the group knew how to use a chain saw safely, which was essential for cutting the larger trees that had fallen across the trails. The crew worked steadily, but at a comfortable pace that allowed plenty of water breaks. Aside from stretching and using some normally dormant muscles, I found the work neither difficult nor tiring.

We decided to call it quits for the day at about 12:30. Several people had to leave, and the rest of us were getting hungry, so it was a good time to stop. We trekked back to the cabins at Noble View, stacked our tools, and relaxed on the porch while Rob heated up some soup. Other members brought fresh fruit, bagels, and homemade brownies, so no one went hungry. In addition, once we returned to the cabins Rob gave us a tour of the cottages under renovation as well as the farmhouse. Once the renovations are completed this July, the AMC is going to have a wonderful facility for hiking or just getting away from the city.

This was my first time doing trail work, but won't be my last. I had worried about backbreaking labor and hours of monotony, but the work wasn't tough and the time passed quickly. The weather was great, the people nice, and we saw our share of wildlife. Anyone thinking of doing volunteer work for the Chapter should consider trail work as a good option.

The Critters of Cape Cod

by Kathleen Davis

An early May weekend of camping in a State Forest was a good time to see critters on Cape Cod. Probably the most interesting ecosystem was Cape Cod Bay at low tide. First of all, as we slogged through the advancing waters of the tidal flats in Brewster, we saw mating horseshoe crabs—the male latched onto the female, with their beach travels etched in the sand behind them. The female comes ashore in May and June and, over the period of a month, lays clusters of 2,000 eggs or more in each of three to ten nests! Once the reproductive process is complete, the male hooks on to the female, fertilizes the eggs, and rides out to sea with her.

In the same locale, buried in the sand with only a speck of its bluish-white shell showing at the end of its winding tracks, was the moon snail. A patient and steady hand can scoop up the snail and see the huge foot it uses to explore the bay floor for edibles.

At the site of the seventeenth century grist mill in Brewster, the herring running upriver captured our attention. We were almost as interested in these fish making their way upstream as were the many squawking gulls poised along the shore, ready to dive in for an especially tasty meal. The female herring can lay up to 100,000 eggs each season—of which only 1% may survive. Contrary to what some may believe, Atlantic herring survive the spawning process and can live up to 10 years. They return year after year to spawn in the freshwater ponds where they were born.

Other interesting wildlife observed over the weekend included fiddler crabs scurrying in and out of their holes along the shores of Cape Cod Bay at low tide, musk turtles resting on logs at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (Mass Audubon), and a young harbor seal sunning itself on Coast Guard Beach (Cape Cod National Seashore).

During this weekend I really enjoyed the friendly group, the great weather, and the quality time with nature.



Salt marshes and Cape Cod Bay, Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary.

photo by Jane Perkins



A flock of seagulls is attracted to the herring run in Brewster.

photo by Patricia Lukas



A young harbor seal rests on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.

photo by Jane Perkins



The group checks out the moon snail on Kathy Davis's hand. photo by Jane Perkins

On Wing's Island in Brewster, folks take a break on the beach after walking out on the tidal flats.

photo by Patricia Lukas



• Passages •

DONALD E. HASTINGS, a senior member of the Berkshire Chapter since 1981.

ANTHONY A. WOJCIK, a member of the Berkshire Chapter since 2002.

Don't forget to check in at home!

amcberkshire.org

LAST-MINUTE ACTIVITY LISTINGS
LATE-BREAKING NEWS
IMPORTANT CHAPTER INFORMATION

The Appalachian Mountain Club and the Abandoned Railroads

I first became acquainted with the extensive network of former rail corridors adapted to trails in our region as part of a Berkshire Chapter outing last spring. Craig Della Penna, rail trail evangelist/real estate agent/author, led a group of AMCers along the Northampton Rail Trail to Florence and the Williamsburg line on an idyllic summer evening. The pace was not torrid, and the historical notes about this former rail line (which connected to Boston as well as New Haven) were quite engaging. Hearing about the 200 rail trail projects underway within 100 miles of Northampton was inspiring.

Craig's enthusiasm was infectious, and as a result I have helped to organize the Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways (FNTG), a group that advocates expanding the network of former rail trails in Northampton. We are involved in raising funds for the trail, educating users, improving signage, and organizing fun activities. More info about FNTG can be found at fntg.net. Activities include Tuesday evening bike rides co-sponsored by the AMC, which are scheduled most weeks this summer (see *AMC Outdoors*).

Besides organizing a spring cleanup, putting together a newsletter and meetings, and working to improve signage, we have begun a project to document trails and outings that are accessible via bike or public transportation from the Pioneer Valley. Sometimes there may not be time to head far afield, or there may be a group that can't easily be accommodated in a single vehicle. We are hoping that people will share short (or long and detailed!) descriptions of places that we can get to without having to drive. Creative use of alternative transportation, little-known loops, and hidden beautiful spots are all welcome. All entries received by September 30, 2006 will be eligible for a prize drawn at random.

I'm really excited about ways to combine my love for the outdoors with safe, effective, and sustainable human-powered transportation networks, and I look forward to continuing to connect the great work of the AMC Berkshire Chapter with my local efforts with the Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways.

Nicholas Horton
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was not approved until this fiscal year. Limited funding has been allocated in the current Federal budget.

A substantial Penn Foundation grant will fund a new five-year AMC staff position in Bethlehem, PA (where the AMC's Mid-Atlantic office has moved). Our staff members will continue to develop relationships with our neighbors and partners, and will continue to build awareness of the special treasures in the Highlands Region. For more information on this project, check highlandscoalition.org.

We also learned more about the Maine Woods Initiative. In partnership with the Nature Conservancy and the Forest Society of Maine, we have an unprecedented opportunity to mitigate real estate development and to permanently conserve over 400,000 acres in Maine's North Woods. Keep an eye on <http://outdoors.org/conservation/wherewework/maine/index.cfm> for details.

These projects lie far afield, and though we may think they don't really affect us here in the Berkshire Chapter, that isn't the case at all. The northern border of the Highlands Region designation ends at the CT-MA border, but the region actually continues into western Massachusetts. The economic and conservation benefits of the Highland Conservation Act have the potential to extend into our area. And, of course, the conservation and protection of open space preserves opportunities for outdoor recreation.

If you're interested in learning more about what the AMC is and does, and how to get involved, our redesigned website, outdoors.org, is a great place to start. Our Berkshire Chapter website, amcberkshire.org, is also an excellent resource.

Conservation Opportunities

Liz Gordon recently resigned from her position as Chair of our Conservation Committee. Happily, she has agreed to continue as a Committee member. Thanks, Liz, for your work over the last years and for your willingness to remain on the Committee.

I'd like to encourage everyone who's interested in working to support conservation to consider serving on the Conservation Committee. Ideally, we'd like to have about six people on the Committee.

For anyone who's interested in working on conservation projects, there's a great new opportunity to get involved. The AMC's Conservation Department has begun focusing its efforts on fewer, longer-term campaigns where investment of AMC staff resources and volunteer efforts can make a significant difference. On July 12, 2006, AMC staff will host a meeting in our area to pull together knowledge of past and current AMC activities in the "Berkshire Highlands" and to consider existing and emerging opportunities for conservation and outdoor recreation in the area.

If you've ever considered working to aid conservation efforts, now's the time! If you've got a specific idea or area of interest, I'd especially encourage you to attend this July 12 meeting. Please give me a call if you're interested.

Long-Term Planning for the AMC and the Chapter

All the Chapters have been asked to identify goals important to their needs. These objectives will be utilized as part of a long-term planning process in support of the AMC's Vision 2020. Our Executive Committee has identified some things we'd like to do:

- Recruit additional members for our Conservation, Membership, and Trails Committees.
- Conduct a survey to identify members' interests.
- Expand our offerings of activities and events of interest to members, including kid-friendly hikes, family-oriented programs and activities, half-day events, and conservation-oriented activities.
- Recruit, train, and develop leaders interested in offering family-oriented programs, dog-friendly hikes, conservation or nature-oriented hikes and activities.
- Identify leaders who will serve as mentors to new leaders.
- Offer two prospective or new member hikes or events per month. Publicize hikes and events for prospective members in local newspapers and radio (and through other outdoor organizations and retail venues).

- Continue to host a geographically focused program, "Introduction and Update to Club Activities and Volunteer Opportunities," for the benefit of prospective, new and inactive members, and the general public.
- Offer location-specific potluck dinners so that members who live in the same area can get to know each other better.
- Solicit photos and articles about hikes, paddle trips, trail maintenance days, and successful leader mentor experiences in the *Berkshire Exchange* and in local papers.

More Terrific Volunteers

I'm so impressed by the many, many people who contribute their time and energy to our Chapter. Our activity leaders plan and lead a wonderful variety of hikes, paddling trips, climbs, bike rides and social events. Our Committee members do a great job pursuing the interests of the Chapter and the various Committees. And our members always pitch in where there's a need.

Our recent Members' Potluck in Northampton is a great example. What a great time we had! Deborah Levine and Christine Mangano, our Membership Co-Chairs, did a fantastic job organizing the event. About 150 people attended and, when tables needed moving and cleanup time came, everyone pitched in to help. Good job, Deb and Chris! Good job, attendees!

Dave Conley is another example of the constancy and diligence exhibited by our volunteers. For three years, Dave has maintained the Tuesday Hikers email list and announced the group's activities by email. In the spirit of rotation, Dave has handed over these duties to Rosmarie O'Connor. Thanks, Dave and Rosmarie.

Many, many thanks to all those who volunteer their time and energy, working and playing in their area of interest on behalf of the Berkshire Chapter.

We Want You!

I invite everyone to consider volunteering with the Berkshire Chapter. Many challenges and opportunities await you.

Any of our Committees would welcome new members—but we're especially looking for people who are interested in contributing to the work done by our Conservation, Membership, and Trails Committees, and also for members for the Noble View Committee. We're stretched about as far as we can go at this point, and we really, really need support here!

We're also still looking for a Chapter Vice Chair, to become Chapter Chair in January 2006.

If you'd like to find out more, call or email me or the Committee Chairs.

I'm looking forward to a summer filled with AMC activities. See you on the trails, or on the water, or at Cardigan Lodge over Labor Day Weekend!

Yours in service,
Rob Robertson
Berkshire Chapter Chair

CARDIGAN LODGE LABOR DAY WEEKEND 2006 Fri. – Mon., September 1 – 4

Join the Berkshire Chapter at the newly renovated Cardigan Lodge for a fabulous weekend of walking, hiking, swimming, walking meditation, fiddle music, dancing, and other programs. Members, non-members, singles, families—all are welcome!

Fee: \$168 per adult (\$115 per child age 15 and under) includes entertainment and programs; 3 nights lodging (bunkrooms with shared baths and showers); and meals (Fri. dinner, Sat. and Sun. social hour and dinner; Sat., Sun., Mon. breakfast and trail lunch). A limited number of tent sites are available for \$120 per adult (\$79 per child).

Early registration strongly recommended—our 2006 Memorial Day trip sold out! Call 603-466-2727 or email lodging@outdoors.org to register. For questions, please contact Rob Robertson (413-549-4963 or cerobertson@comcast.net).

“Development” on the Appalachian Trail, *continued from page 1*

Park Service and the ATC entered into a partnership to manage the Trail. Backcountry management techniques and policies were updated to protect the AT from the wear and tear of an ever-increasing number of visitors—thru-hikers, section hikers, weekenders, and day hikers.

An effective way to limit impact (we could call it destruction, too) on relatively fragile backwoods areas is to concentrate them into the most durable area possible. The best method is to create something that draws campers into a relatively small portion of the forest, damaging that area fairly heavily, but leaving the vast majority of the landscape undisturbed. An average single campsite disturbs about 144 square feet of vegetation; it takes as few as two visits to the same location in a single season to create a noticeable change in the environment. Multiple visits change the location quickly, but after a time, the rate of change decreases as the site gets “worn in.” If the soil is appropriate (i.e., not loose, soft, poorly drained, etc.), once the initial “break in” period is complete, the area remains stable for many years. The trick, therefore, is to keep each visitor from choosing a different spot, and instead concentrate the use in a few specific locations—“overnight sites,” in management-speak.

On the AT, an overnight site is typically a shelter (sometimes called a lean-to) or a designated camping area. Shelters are usually three-sided structures, often with an overhanging roof on the open side to provide additional weather protection. Shelters do an excellent job of concentrating use. Most trail visitors make a shelter their overnight destination, and most trail clubs arrange shelters to be an easy day’s hike apart—usually no more than 10 miles, sometimes as few as 5. Since appropriate shelter sites are not always available wherever they are needed, this distance can vary considerably. In Massachusetts we have distances ranging from less than 2 miles to almost 14 between overnight sites. It is important to situate a shelter or campsite near (but not too close) to a reliable water supply. Shelters must also not be too close to any road that is accessible by motor vehicles, which tends to attract the partygoers.

So now we have an infrastructure of overnight sites scattered along the trail. Some are old shelters from the 1930s and 1940s, though most have been built in the past 20 years. As trail use increases, the need to accommodate more overnight visitors also increases, and more (and larger) shelters are built. From there, the next step seems inevitable: we now have

the people, money, and technology to make them “nice.” We can incorporate benches, tables, and windows. We can make them with multiple stories to hold large numbers of hikers. Because we are no longer harvesting nearby timber to build with, we can use modern materials that resist rot and decay, and we have helicopters and other mechanical means to transport materials to remote locations. Also, we must meet ever more stringent codes for structural integrity and universal access. Suddenly we are quite a distance from “*the wild, scenic, wooded, pastoral, and culturally significant lands of the Appalachian Mountains.*” We have created our own little bit of suburban living deep in the woods. Instead of simply protecting hikers from the worst of the weather, we have isolated ourselves both physically and spiritually from the thing we are presumably here to experience.

Some will say, “hikers really appreciate these things”...“they look forward to this after a long day on the trail”...“we want to make this a nice place for hikers to come to and relax.” I can’t disagree to some extent, I certainly look forward to getting into the shelter on a cold, rainy day, too. But I really don’t want to come to a structure that could be the cousin of a picnic shelter in a city park or a gazebo in the back yard of some “McMansion.” A shelter should look like it belongs where it is. Materials should be compatible with the surroundings, the construction methods should at least reflect the heritage of native materials and look like they were hand built—just as the trail does.

Nowadays, few clubs have the skills, resources, or even the desire to go out into the woods, harvest some trees and hew them into timbers, planks, and shingles to build a shelter “the old fashioned way.” But even with modern materials and methods, a certain rustic quality can be achieved by using rough sawn native timbers, post and beam type of construction and plank siding. Exterior colors can be dark stained, roof materials can be darkly colored and not look like they came from the neighborhood big box building store. As for the showers and solar lights? You will not find them in Massachusetts, probably not anywhere in New England, for that matter. This penchant for amenities seems to be centered in the mid-Atlantic area—perhaps an extension of Southern hospitality? Here in New England, I think you will notice we are made of sterner stuff—but no less hospitable.

Noble View Adds to Facility, *continued from page 3*

With the Double Cottage completed, the next major improvement is a bath house, which will enable long-term lodging to be practical. This facility will supply potable water for drinking, cooking, and washing while offering bathing and toilet facilities and dishwashing areas. This past spring, volunteers completed the architectural design drawings and budget for the bath house. Erica Gees, past Berkshire Chapter Vice Chair and associate of Kuhn Riddle Architects, donated her services to create all the architectural drawings. The super-insulated building is a green design with propane radiant heat, hot water, and a solar hot air provision.

The completion of the bath house plans was one result of a partnership with the Worcester Chapter. In April, the Worcester Chapter voted on a grant of \$20,000 to \$30,000 for bath house construction in the spirit of the former Worcester Lodge. Another partner in the bath house construction is the Volunteer Managed Facilities Committee (VMF). From their own respective budgets, the large VMF camps have proposed a short-term loan of \$90,000 for the construction as well. These deeds are “Noble Feats” by both parties.

As work continues on Noble View’s buildings and trails, be sure to come for a day visit to hike or relax and take in the soaring views. It’s an ideal place for a low-cost weekend getaway, a week’s retreat, or a family holiday stay. And if you’re interested, join in an educational event, or volunteer to help out with one of the many ongoing projects.

Respectfully,
Gary Forish
Noble View Chair

The Membership Committee Needs You!

Are you looking for a way to get more involved and meet other AMC members and volunteers? Would you like to share your enthusiasm for the outdoors and all the activities the Berkshire Chapter has to offer? Perhaps you would like to welcome newcomers into the Chapter? Or you are a newcomer looking for a way to get more active?

Then consider joining the Membership Committee!

We are looking for energetic, enthusiastic Chapter members to help with welcoming activities, program planning, phone calls, and much more. Whether you have a few hours or lots of time to give, there are many ways to be involved and contribute. The Membership Committee is gearing up for another exciting year ahead and we are hoping that you will be there to be part of the fun.

For more information, please call Deborah Levine at 413-584-6065 or Chris Mangano at 413-789-3128, or send an email to membership@amcberkshire.org.

Chapter Introduction and Update Meeting Coming This Fall

Here’s your chance to learn more about the Chapter, get an update on Club activities and volunteer opportunities, and find out how you can participate. A short program will be presented on exciting fall events and outings. Meet the Chapter’s Committee Chairs, hike leaders and other outdoor enthusiasts. All members, including prospective ones, are welcome. New members are encouraged to attend. Refreshments!

Keep an eye on *AMC Outdoors* and amcberkshire.org for the date and location.

**It's the Annual NOBLE VIEW
Fireworks Viewing
and Chicken Barbecue**

Monday, July 3. Celebrate Independence Day with a chicken barbecue and spectacular fireworks viewing. As it did in 1931, the call goes out to Chapter members to "come and view your estate." The updated Double Cottage, which many volunteers have worked on in the past several months, will be open for viewing as part of the celebration. Join in, renew old friendships, discover new friends, and bring the whole family. Gates open at 9:00 a.m. Come early for a hike to Pitcher Brook (1:00 p.m.) or sit and relax while taking in the view. A chicken dinner with salad, potato, rolls, and cold drinks will be served at 6:00 p.m. at a cost of \$10. Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share for four people. Or just come for the fireworks display. Fireworks will be viewed at dark and will be launched from Stanley Park, Westfield, just three miles away. Bring lawn chairs or blankets for the viewing activities, and a flashlight. RSVP to Gary Forish, 413-572-4501.

**- Diane Crowell -
- Tom Eaton -
Get well soon!**

The members of the Berkshire AMC and the Springfield Explorers Club would like to extend best wishes to Diane Crowell and Tom Eaton. Diane has been going through a tedious recovery from an auto accident. Tom is recuperating from a fall at work. We hope you both get well quickly and comfortably, and know you'll be stronger than ever in the outcome!



MEMBERSHIP IN A BOTTLE

For the cost of your annual membership, you will receive:
A Nalgene® water bottle • A \$10 gift certificate good for AMC books, lodging, and workshops • An AMC window decal • A subscription to *AMC Outdoors* • A new member packet with your Club ID, a copy of current Chapter activities, and our quarterly newsletter, the *Berkshire Exchange*.

- AMC Berkshire Membership Form -

I wish to purchase:

- Individual "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$50 each).
- Family "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$75 each).
- Senior "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$25 each, age 69 and over). Age: _____
- Young Member "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$25 each, up to age 30). Age: _____

I have enclosed a check for the total amount of \$_____ made payable to **Berkshire Chapter AMC.**

Please mail the kits to:

Name:
Street:
City, State, Zip:
Phone:
E-mail:

Is this a gift membership? Yes No
(Bottles will be sent to the address above, and the membership recorded in that name, unless you indicate otherwise.)

Note: This offer is for new members only. Not for renewals, please. Thanks.

Please mail completed form with check to:

Chris Ryan, PO Box 9369, North Amherst, MA 01059

Questions? Contact Chris Ryan at 413-549-4124 or bottles@amcberkshire.org

BERKSHIRE EXCHANGE
Summer 2006



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Appalachian Mountain Club**
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