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Fall 2010



BERKSHIRE EXCHANGE

FROM *the* CHAIR

Some Fall Events and a Final Word of Appreciation

I hope everyone has had a wonderful summer full of outdoor adventures of all kinds. Autumn brings continued opportunities to enjoy our region and beyond. Our leaders have been busy planning many outings for the fall. Check the listings at amcberkshire.org/schedule and in *AMC Outdoors*—and join in!

Coming up are two major events for the Berkshire Chapter.

On Appalachian Trail Day join Jim Pelletier, AT Committee Chair, and the many active members of the AT Committee on October 9 for a day of hikes along the length of the AT in Massachusetts. See page 5 for details.

On Saturday, November 6, our Chapter's annual meeting will take place at the American Legion Hall in Hadley. The highlight of the meeting will be the election of your new Berkshire Chapter Chair, Dave Sauriol. Dave brings a great deal of experience and enthusiasm to the role and I hope many of our Berkshire Chapter members will come out to meet him and share ideas for the future of the Chapter. For more information on our annual meeting dinner and guest speaker, see page 3.

This is my last "From the Chair," and I would like to thank all of the wonderful volunteers, Executive Committee members, and other Chapter

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North Quabbin Woods and Our New Vice Chair *by David Sauriol*

Hi there, folks! My name is Dave Sauriol (a/k/a Hikin' Dave), and I'm the new Vice Chair for the Berkshire Chapter. I'm really excited about working with this top-notch local organization dedicated to the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Appalachian region. First, let me share with you a little about myself. I am a chemical engineer by trade, a husband and father of six by design, and an avid adventurer by desire. In our town of Monson, I am a local Boy Scout adult leader for Troop 168 and proud father of two BSA Eagle Scouts. During the last 12 years, I have led numerous Boy Scout outings including hikes, bike rides, and paddles in the scenic Berkshires, White Mountains, and Delaware River. My favorite

book: *AMC White Mountain Guide*. Frankly speaking, I don't need much of an excuse to get outdoors and enjoy the wonders of nature.

Let me tell you about my most recent adventure. The North Quabbin Woods organization, located in Orange, MA, recently sponsored a nature tour of the region including scenic vistas, paddling and hiking opportunities, and visits to several sites of historical and architectural interest. My fellow visitors to the region included members of the Brookline Bird Club, New England Mountain Bike Association, and Boston AMC bicycling committee. It was a great opportunity to meet some fellow outdoors



enthusiasts. The hikers in the group really appreciated the information readily shared by the birders, having scratched our heads for many years wondering, "What's making that interesting bird-song?" We were similarly intrigued to learn about all the conservation and trail maintenance work the N.E. Mountain Bikers are involved with.

Besides the interesting fellow visitors, we were treated to local residents' hospitality and intimate knowledge of the region. Our hosts included Bob and Jean Day, who operate a bed and breakfast in Petersham called Winterwood; Annette Ermini, Director, North Quabbin Woods; Dave Small, President of the Athol Bird and Nature Club and Assistant Regional Director of the Dept. of Recreation and Conservation, Quabbin; and Bob Curley, local wilderness guide, photographer, and Quabbin-Metacomet Trail advocate (a 127-mile proposed loop trail around the Quabbin...WOW!!!).

Our two-day visit began with check-in at the historic Winterwood Mansion in Petersham,

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**DINNER, SPEAKER,
ANNUAL MEETING**
Saturday, November 6

see page 3



Saturday, October 9
APPALACHIAN TRAIL DAY

see page 5





As part of their Appalachian Trail series, the Tuesday Hikers summited Mt. Greylock on September 21. This hike was led by Barb Pitoniak and co-led by Grace Ferrante.
photo by Tiger Waterman

A Place in the Woods

I sit here in the woods with nature's perfections....
 It's been awhile since human touch has seeded these forest trees
 A yellow birch hangs onto a rock with its octopus roots
 Tall pines with broken branches lie disarrayed on the rotting leaf covered forest floor
 Tumbled stone walls that no longer go anywhere or mark anything....
 but continue to grow mosses and to house insects within their crevices
 So grand without the clouds of human consumption
 I sit here in the woods to the soothing calm melody of a waterfall

—Janice Doubleday

amcberkshire.org

amcberkshire.org/schedule

NobleViewOutdoorCenter.org

Berkshire Chapter Executive Committee – 2010 –

CHAPTER OFFICERS

Chair: Deborah Levine
 (chapterchair@amcberkshire.org; 413-584-6065)
Vice Chair: David Sauriol
 (davesaur@greyst.com; 401-523-4672)
Treasurer: Kelly Dawson
 (treasurer@amcberkshire.org; 413-592-5724)
Secretary: vacant

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Appalachian Trail Committee:
 Jim Pelletier
 (at@amcberkshire.org; 413-454-4773)
Berkshire County Representative: vacant
Berkshire Exchange Committee:
Chair/Publisher – Jon Hanauer
 (newsletter@amcberkshire.org; 413-568-0990)
E-News Administrator – David Jones
 (enews-admin@amcberkshire.org)
Canoe and Kayak Committee:
 Charlie Camp and Connie Peterson
 (paddling@amcberkshire.org)
Conservation Committee: Bill Scaife
 (conservation@amcberkshire.org)
Family Programs: vacant
Membership Committee: Diane Furtek
 (membership@amcberkshire.org; 413-589-5530)
Mountaineering Committee:
 Bill Fogel
 (mountaineering@amcberkshire.org; 413-427-1693)
 Jim Van Natta (mountaineering@amcberkshire.org)
Noble View Committee: Frank Evans
 (FEvans6568@aol.com)
Nominating Committee: vacant
Outings Committee:
 Bob Napolitano
 (nappyofma@comcast.net; 413-534-8955)
Past Chair: Jon Hanauer
 (newsletter@amcberkshire.org; 413-568-0990)
Public Relations Committee:
 Sabine Prather
 (publicity@amcberkshire.org; 413-949-3914)
Trails Committee: Patrick Fletcher
 (hiker6@comcast.net; 413-562-9863)
Training and Education Committee:
 Christine Fogarty
 (learning@amcberkshire.org; 978-857-7078)
Website Committee:
Chair/Webmaster – Bob Bergstrom
 (webmaster@amcberkshire.org)
Content Editor – vacant
Young Members Committee:
 Wendy Barbour and Paxton Berardy
 (ymchair@amcberkshire.org; 860-758-7275)

Other Helpful Contacts

Chapter Trips Approver: Jon Hanauer
 (approver@amcberkshire.org; 413-568-0990)
Membership in a Bottle: Chris Ryan
 (geolopes@comcast.net; 413-549-4124)
Regional Director: Dale Geslien
 (dalegeslien@sbcglobal.net; 203-778-3651)
Regional Trails Coordinator: Matt Moore
 AMC Southern New England Trails Office, South Egremont
 (mjmoore@outdoors.org; 413-528-8003)
Tuesday Hiking: Sonja Goodwin
 (SGoodwin@alum.rpi.edu)

ALL ARE WELCOME:
old friends • new friends
new members • prospective members!

Berkshire Bash

Saturday, November 6, 2010 • 6:00 p.m.

*Friends, Romans and country folks, lend me your ear.
The time of the annual meeting is near.
There'll be food and much laughter
And a great speaker after
To discuss the Transition Community idea.
So all Berkshire region
Drop by the Hadley American Legion
November 6 just around 6 p.m.
Let us know you'll be coming
So we won't just be wondering
And reply to vicechair@amcberkshire.org.
There's a small nominal fee of \$10 if you please
That we'll collect as you come to the door.
Just mark down the date, so you will not be late
And help us celebrate another great year.*

**Social Hour • Cash Bar • Dinner • Annual Meeting
Volunteer Recognition • Guest Speaker**

A fantastic evening of dining and entertainment.
Special guest will be Tina Clarke of the
Transition Movement.

American Legion Hall
162 Russell St. (Route 9), Hadley, MA

For Directions and More Information
Please contact David Sauriol at
vicechair@amcberkshire.org or 401-523-4672

A Positive, Community- Building Response in this Time of Change

Transition Towns is a vibrant, global grassroots movement bringing people together to build community resilience. Long-term energy cost increases and climate change, together with economic instability, pose a "Triple Challenge" that requires bigger, more creative solutions. With change unfolding quickly, local action has become essential.

Tina Clarke will describe the Transition Movement, why it has been successful in the U.K. and is growing globally, and how communities in the U.S. are using it to increase community well-being. She'll explain how the Transition process catalyzes positive action and community-building as it addresses the fundamental challenges of our time. Come check out how people around the world are transitioning their communities as a part of this rapidly growing international movement.

Tina Clarke, a U.S. Transition Trainer, shares details of her firsthand study of the Transition Movement, and her experience training and supporting Transition Initiatives, with leaders in both Totnes, England and the U.S.

Tina has been a campaign director, advocate, trainer, consultant, and executive director of nonprofit programs for 25 years. She has worked in cooperation with over 400 organizations, recently working with the Sustainability Institute and 350.org. In Washington, DC she led a nationwide citizens training program sponsored by 16 national religious bodies, and directed Greenpeace USA's citizen action network. She lives in a below-zero energy "power house" she helped design. The Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) house won two major awards, and generates 2.5 times more energy than needed.

BERKSHIRE EXCHANGE

–September 2010–

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Title Image: photo by Janice Doubleday
Isle of Skye, Scotland.

Berkshire Chapter Executive Committee – 2011 Nominees –

OFFICERS

Chapter Chair: David Sauriol; **Vice Chair:** *vacant*;
Treasurer: *vacant*; **Secretary:** *vacant*

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Appalachian Trail: Jim Pelletier;
Berkshire County Representative: *vacant*;
Berkshire Exchange: Jon Hanauer;
Canoe & Kayak: Charlie Camp, Connie Peterson;
Conservation: Bill Scaife; **Family Programs:** *vacant*;
Membership: *vacant*; **Mountaineering:** Bill Fogel, Jim Van Natta;
Noble View: Frank Evans; **Nominating:** *vacant*; **Outings:** Jon Hanauer;
Past Chair: Deborah Levine; **Public Relations:** Sabine Prather;
Trails: Patrick Fletcher; **Training & Education:** Christine Fogarty;
Website: Bob Bergstrom;
Young Members: Wendy Barbour, Paxton Berardy

– VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES –

VOLUNTEER FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

If you're interested in one of these exciting positions, or would like to know more, please contact David Sauriol at 401-523-4672 or vicechair@amcberkshire.org.

Chapter Secretary

This is a very important Chapter Officer position on our Executive Committee. Primary responsibilities include recording the minutes at our monthly meetings and emailing those minutes to Executive Committee members. The Secretary may also collect annual reports from committee chairs and compile the Chapter's Annual Report.

Chapter Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the financial affairs of the Chapter. Duties include receiving income, paying expenses, maintaining bank accounts, recommending an annual budget which reflects the priorities determined by the Executive Committee, reporting periodically to the Executive Committee, and submitting an annual report and books to Club auditors.

Family Programs Chair

Do you enjoy getting outside with your family? Would you like to share your love of the outdoors and the excitement of introducing children to new adventures in the natural world? Then consider becoming involved with Family Programs. We are looking for someone with energy and enthusiasm to take on this role and develop family-friendly outings and activities.

Nominating Committee Chair

We are looking for someone to assist our Chapter's committees in identifying and developing qualified individuals for leadership roles in the Berkshire Chapter. This role is vital to the continuity of Chapter leadership. We are looking for someone who has, or is willing to develop, a broad knowledge of our Chapter and its members, and who would enjoy helping to identify talented members and leaders and encouraging them to become more involved.

Berkshire County Representative

If you live in or near Berkshire County and you can spare a few hours per month, this position could be perfect for you. You'll solicit approved Chapter leaders to run hikes and other outdoor activities, as well as other events, in the Berkshires. If you'd like, become an approved Chapter leader yourself and lead a few of your own events.

Website Content Editor

Are you web savvy? Would you like to use your skills to keep Chapter members up-to-date on happenings? We are looking for a website content editor to work with the Website Committee Chair and keep the information on our website current and interesting. We are currently redesigning our website and this would be an exciting time for someone with some time, energy, and skills.

REGISTRAR NEEDED FOR TRAINING & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Training and Education Committee needs a Registrar in order to continue its programs!

We are looking for someone who lives in the Berkshire Chapter territory to:

- Respond to inquiries and register participants for Leader Training and other programs.
- Prepare registration rosters and provide current headcounts to the T&E Committee.
- Collect and accurately account for all training fees.
- Send materials (agendas, equipment lists, directions, etc.) via email to participants well in advance of the programs.
- Scope and recommend venues for trainings and other programs.
- Communicate and coordinate with other chapters' registrars when we participate in joint ventures.

Our new Registrar should be friendly, enthusiastic, and welcoming. She/he must have a positive attitude, be timely in responding to phone and email inquiries, and be wicked detail-oriented. Proficiency in email, Word and Excel preferred.

If you'd like to help, please call Christine Fogarty at 978-857-7078 (before 9 PM). And thanks for helping us continue our excellent Leader Trainings in 2010 and beyond!

VOLUNTEER AT NOBLE VIEW OUTDOOR CENTER

Sat.–Sun., Nov. 13–14. Trail Work Weekend. Enjoy a fabulous fall weekend in the woods of Russell. Great opportunity to build new skills and have fun contributing while meeting other AMC members. We'll be brushing and clearing cross country ski trails, plus other basic and advanced trail work. No experience necessary. Lodging available for volunteers. Contact Gary Forish (413-519-3251; forgary@comcast.net).

Sat.–Sun., Nov. 20–21. Woodcutting Days. Many hardy folks are needed to get in a supply of firewood for the coming year. Bring gloves and a strong will. A large supply of wood will be available for splitting and piling into the wood shed. No fees charged for the work party. Hot chocolate, water, snacks, and a beef stew lunch (vegetarian optional available) will be provided. Lodging available for volunteers. Contact Gary Forish (413-519-3251; forgary@comcast.net).

Celebrate Appalachian Trail Day on Saturday, October 9!

The Massachusetts Appalachian Trail Management Committee is again sponsoring hikes along the AT in Massachusetts.

Hikes vary in difficulty and length. Please contact the appropriate trip leader for more info and to learn of any changes in rendezvous time/location. For general information about AT Day, contact Debra Weisenstein at 508-277-4826 or weisenstein@aer.com.

For all hikes, wear suitable clothing and bring plenty of water, as well as lunch or snacks for longer hikes. Hikes will go rain or shine.

After the hikes, the AT Committee will be sponsoring a cookout at the Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, off Rte. 7 near the border of Lenox and Pittsfield. Follow the signs off Rte. 7 onto Dugway Rd., 1.6 miles to the Sanctuary. Stop by for a bite to eat, meet other hikers, and report about trail conditions and what you saw on your hike.

Hike #1: Sages Ravine to Race Brook Falls Trail. Ten miles with waterfalls, hemlock groves, and beautiful views from open cliffs. Includes part of the Undermountain Trail, Paradise Lane, and Race Brook Falls Trail, as well as a section of the AT. This is a strenuous but rewarding hike for those in good condition. Meet 8:30 AM; contact leader for meeting location. Leader: Bob Napolitano (413-534-8955 before 8 PM; nappofma@comcast.net). A3AB

Hike #2: Race Brook Falls Trail to the AT and north to Jug End Rd. Beautiful waterfalls, plus views of Mt. Greylock, the Catskills, other mountains, and the Housatonic valley. A strenuous hike of 7 miles using Race Brook Falls Trail as an access. Meet 9 AM at Race Brook Falls Trail parking area on Rte. 41, South Egremont, 3 miles south of Jug End Road. Leader: Dave Koerber, (413-568-4650; dkoerber@earthlink.com). B3AB

Hike #3: Jug End Rd., Sheffield, to Boardman St. A moderate hike of 5.5 miles with no major ascent. See a variety of habitats from open fields to woodlands. Meet 10 AM at Guido's parking lot across from the Great Barrington Fair Grounds. Leaders: Jon Hanauer (413-568-0990), Diane Furtek (413-589-5530). B3D

Hike #4: Home Rd. to Benedict Pond. Moderately strenuous, 7.5 miles, over East Mountain and along ledges with nice views. Meet 9:30 AM at Guido's parking lot across from the Great Barrington Fair Grounds. Leaders: Bob Snyder and Mary Berryhill (413-528-4022; rls@simons-rock.edu). B3BC

Hike #5: Benedict Pond to Tyringham Cobble. Moderately strenuous, 9 miles, including views, a beaver pond, shelters, spruce grove, and interesting rock formations. Meet at the Trustees of Reservations Tyringham Cobble parking lot on Jerusalem Rd., Tyringham, 9 AM. Leader: Debra Weisenstein (508-358-4169; weisenstein@aer.com). A3C

Hike #6: Fernside Rd. to Goose Pond Rd., Tyringham. This is a moderate and enjoyable 7.5-mile hike with varied scenery including old stone walls and overgrown pasture. Meet 9 AM at the Tyringham Fire Station on Main Rd. Leader: Pete Rentz (413-442-6732). B3C

Hike #7: Rte. 20 to Goose Pond Rd. Explore the Upper Goose Pond area. Cross the Mass Pike on the footbridge. Also take a side trip to Upper Goose Pond Cabin. Approximately 5.5 miles of moderate, scenic walking. Meet 10 AM at the AT parking lot, Rte. 20, Lee/Becket. Leader: Steve Smith (978-692-8219; stevensmith@verizon.net). B3C

Hike #8: Rte. 20, Lee, to Pittsfield Rd., Washington. Moderately paced, moderately strenuous, 9.5-mile hike through October Mountain State Forest, over Becket Mountain, and along scenic Finerty Pond. Meet 9 AM at the AT parking lot, Rte. 20, Lee/Becket. Leader: Steve Schimpff (413-243-8902; shs@bassets.net). A3B

Hike #9: Pittsfield Rd., Washington, to Grange Hall Rd., Dalton. A pleasant, moderate hike of 7 miles with good views from Warner Hill summit and a visit to Kay Wood Shelter. Meet 10 AM at the Burgner's Market parking lot, 777 Dalton Division Rd. at Williams Street, Pittsfield. Contact Deb Weisenstein for hike leader information (508-277-4826; weisenstein@aer.com). B3C

Hike #10: Housatonic St. to Grange Hall Rd. Round trip total of 4 miles. This will be a short, interesting hike for those who are not free to walk in the morning. Possible 0.5-mile extension to Kay Wood Shelter. Meet 1 PM at AT crossing near the train tracks on Housatonic Street, Dalton. Leader: Jim Pelletier (413-454-4773; at@amcberkshire.org). C4BC

Hike #11: Cheshire to Gulf Rd., Dalton. About 8 miles of mostly moderate hiking. Nice views of Cheshire Reservoir (Hoosac Lake), the valley and mountains from Cheshire Cobble, and Gore Pond (one of the highest ponds in the state). Meet 9 AM at the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail parking lot, Depot St., Cheshire. Leader: Becky Barnes (413-499-7003; Rebecca.Barnes@state.ma.us). B3BC

Hike #12: Rte. 8, Cheshire, to Mount Greylock summit. This is a strenuous hike of approximately 7 miles. You will hike through meadows and open woods. Then climb—sometimes steeply—through balsam forest and mixed woodlands. Meet 9 AM at the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail parking lot, Rte. 8, Cheshire. Leader: Helga Ragle (hragle@crocker.com). B3B

Hike #13: Pattison Rd. to Mt. Greylock summit. This is a 5.5-mile, strenuous hike involving some steep climbing on Prospect, Williams, and Greylock mountains, rewarded with great views. Meet 9 AM at the Greylock Community Club parking area on Rte. 2 (500 ft. east of Phelps Ave.). Leader: Cosmo Catalano, (413-822-0094; catalano.cosmo@gmail.com). B3B

Hike #14: Massachusetts Ave. to the Vermont border. North on the AT and return using the Pine Cobble Trail. This is 8 miles of fairly strenuous but pleasant hiking with good views from Pine Cobble. Meet 9 AM at intersection of Cole Ave. and North Hoosac Rd., Williamstown. Leader: Jim Montgomery (413-585-2921; jmontgom@email.smith.edu). B3B

AMC Hike Ratings

Hikes are rated according to their distance, pace, and ruggedness. A typical rating might be "B3C."

The first letter indicates the hike's distance:

- AA = over 13 miles
- A = 9 - 13 miles
- B = 5 - 8 miles
- C = under 5 miles

The number in the middle indicates the pace the leader expects to set (on average terrain):

- 1 = very fast (2.5 mph or faster)
- 2 = fast (2 - 2.5 mph)
- 3 = moderate (1.5 - 2 mph)
- 4 = leisurely (less than 1.5 mph)

The final letter indicates the kind of terrain:

- A = very strenuous
- B = strenuous
- C = average
- D = easy

If there are two letters at the end (for example, "B3BC"), it indicates the terrain is somewhere between the levels indicated by either of the letters alone. As always, if you have any questions about what the hike will be like, call the trip leader or hike contact person.



- OUTDOOR EDUCATION -

Leadership Training at Noble View Saturday–Sunday, October 30–31

Whether you'd like to become a Chapter leader, or just want to improve your outdoor skills, you're invited to attend. Training emphasizes group dynamics, leaders' responsibilities, trip planning and management, weather emergencies, incident/accident scene control, leader awareness, and decision-making. Fee of \$25 covers 2-day training and all materials. Attendance both days is required. Overnight lodging is available for \$18/night. Advance payment requested. Current Berkshire Chapter leaders looking to recertify attend at no charge. Please contact Christine Fogarty at 978-857-7078 or learning@amcberkshire.org.

SOLO Wilderness First Aid Training at Noble View Saturday–Sunday, November 20–21

Held at Western Massachusetts' beautiful Noble View Outdoor Center (nobleviewoutdoorcenter.org)! Improve skills and increase confidence. Learn accident scene management and patient care. Lectures and discussions are supplemented by hands-on scenarios. Emphasis on long-term care and evacuation complications in the backcountry make this course unique. Fee of \$140 with optional lodging available. A subsidy is available for active Berkshire Chapter leaders. All are welcome: AMC members as well as members of the general public. Register with Gary Forish (413-519-3251; forgary@comcast.net).

Hey! Are You Still Receiving the BERKSHIRE EXCHANGE in the U.S. Mail?

Berkshire Exchange Online!!

If you're a Berkshire Chapter member, you have the unique opportunity to contribute to conservation, and our budget, by signing up to receive the *Berkshire Exchange* electronically! Just go to www.outdoors.org/membercenter, sign in and update your Chapter Newsletter Preferences. It's that easy. You'll get your *Berkshire Exchange* up to 2 weeks earlier, and you can also choose to receive e-newsletters from other chapters!

What are you waiting for? Do it now!

North Quabbin Woods, *continued from page 1*

MA. Bob Day was a gracious host of this well-maintained and beautifully decorated vacation and group function facility. His wife, Jean, is a fantastic chef who left her guests well fed on a five-course, gourmet meal. Following check-in, the group traveled to beautiful Tully Lake where we paddled our way downriver and were treated to a Q&A by Dick O'Brien, Regional Director for The Trustees of Reservations. Dick told us about his organization, the history of the Trustees' properties in the region, and the great partnership that exists between the Trustees, DCR, local communities, and a variety of other like-minded conservation and recreation organizations nearby. Following our paddle expedition, we visited Doanes Falls, a blue heron rookery. Later, after we enjoyed a scrumptious dinner, Dave Small treated us to some spectacular pictures of the area's flora and fauna.

Day two brought us to several scenic and historic locations in Petersham, New Salem, and other locales. We hiked to Soapstone Mountain,

a summit overlooking the majestic Quabbin Reservoir. The view was so spectacular I added the location to my favorite places on my Blackberry! While at the top, we enjoyed our box lunches from the Petersham Country Store, the oldest continuously operated country store in the United States. Our journey also included a visit to Gate 31, a designated Quabbin fishing area and bald eagle nesting site. Here, visitors can sightsee on the waters of the Quabbin by renting a motorboat for only \$40 per day. Other highlights of the day were tours of the historic Petersham and New Salem town commons—very peaceful, preserved, and picturesque.

It was clear everyone in our group thoroughly enjoyed the region and I know I'll be back soon. I hope you'll join me, as the North Quabbin Woods hold a truly unique, friendly, and impressive area and people. Until next time...get outdoors!

Get Involved with Our Conservation Committee

by Bill Scaife, Conservation Committee Chair

The Berkshire Chapter's Conservation Committee is following advice attributed to the great American philosopher Yogi Berra: "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." We are not literally at a "fork in the road" in the sense of having to make a critical decision. Rather, we are in the fortunate position of having many different paths spread out before us, each of which is practical, useful, and a way to further the AMC's mission of acting as good stewards of our environment.

By many paths, I mean that among our many Chapter members we have numerous interests, skills and ideas for how we may travel in accord with this part of the AMC's mission: "We believe these [natural] resources have intrinsic worth and also provide recreational opportunities, spiritual renewal, and ecological and economic health for the region. Because successful conservation depends on active engagement with the outdoors, we encourage people to experience, learn about, and appreciate the natural world."

This sketch of the Conservation Committee's role in the life of the Berkshire Chapter is meant to whet your appetite to become a catalyst, a coordinator, a disseminator of ideas, a liaison—a human blog, if you will—to help our Chapter participate even more in an "active engagement with the outdoors." The Chapter's Conservation Committee is, at the moment, a committee of one. I'm a humble man, and I don't want to keep all the fun and sense of accomplishment to myself.

I encourage you to join with me in what I envision as a "not just-another-meeting" committee. I didn't insert the term "human blog" by accident. By using the computer for virtual meetings, we can dispense with many in-person sessions. We may well get more done and have greater participation with emails or a blog.

Snorkeling River Trails

It was a hot summer, hotter than most, and when it got too hot to hike the trails, I snorkeled them.

I often hop into a section of river that is relatively deep and maybe a mile or two in length. The underwater scenery is fantastic. Fish swirl about you as they swim up and down stream, boulders zip by, and rocky ledges jut out and beckon you to explore them.

The equipment needed for river snorkeling is pretty basic: a face mask and snorkel, a bathing suit, and sturdy water-oriented foot wear. A light wetsuit can also be helpful to provide floatation, scuff protection, and warmth. Ironically, just like with hiking you need good footwear—essential for safety. Various sharp objects can be found in local rivers such as pieces of glass, shell, steel, and other debris. Water shoes are good for walking around shallow sections of the river or portaging rapids. Shoes also make walking back more comfortable since you are not going to be able to swim back against the river's current. Just as in kayaking, an easy-to-spot takeout should be scouted out ahead of time.

The Pioneer Valley luckily has plenty of swimming trails for snorkeling. Probably the best option is the Westfield River. From Huntington, all the way to downtown Westfield, the river has a swimming hole at nearly

My desire is to further the Conservation Committee's agenda in several ways: by educating the Chapter about conservation opportunities and needs in communities; offering and finding resources to assist Chapter members; compiling information region-wide for the Chapter; and working in tandem with, say, our Trails Committee.

I'm using the AMC's own model for how this Committee could work. It not only initiates its own programs, but it also actively collaborates with other groups that share a similar mission. Within our own region, we can do the same. For instance:

- The Trustees of Reservations and other groups and state agencies are building a network of trails to connect four communities north-west of Northampton. Perhaps the Berkshire Chapter can help too.
- The AMC already is a principal steward of the New England National Scenic Trail in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and at least two AMC Berkshire members serve in leadership positions. More help is always needed.
- Our municipal conservation committees confront some of the same issues as the AMC. By attending and monitoring their meetings, we may be able to form a mosaic of a larger picture or we may find they share a concern that the Chapter wants to address.
- The "Ride Your Bike to Work Week" calls attention to carbon emissions and can benefit from the Chapter's support.

By now, you get the idea. I'm asking anybody who's interested to put your head together with mine and expand on my ideas. Please email me at conservation@amcberkshire.org.

by Paxton Berardy

every bend and connecting these holes is half the fun. I personally like to put in below the dam in downtown Russell and snorkel all the way down to the fishing area across from the old Whipperton Golf Course off of Rte. 20. Other great places to snorkel in the Pioneer Valley include the Deerfield River at Stillwater Bridge, the Connecticut River in Hatfield, and just over the border in Enfield, CT, the Thompsonville boat launch, where some old bridge abutments and a washed-out dam make for some really interesting diving.

Like any sport, river snorkeling has some inherent dangers. If you are in an area with motorboat traffic you should always tow a dive flag on a float to alert boaters of your presence. Additional dangers to watch out for include river levels, which can rise and fall dramatically from dam releases and storms; powerful currents and holes that can be dangerous when they catch you off guard; and strainers (such as debris, like fallen trees in the water, that you can be swept into and drown in). This is not a beginner's endeavor. People who are not solid swimmers or snorkelers and have little river knowledge should not attempt it until they first start with lakes or ponds. But if you think you can handle it, the joys of snorkeling river trails are hard to beat!

From the Chair, continued from page 1

members who have helped to make my experience as Chapter Chair so memorable. It has been an honor to serve in this role. I have had the opportunity to meet many talented, committed people in the Chapter and club-wide who are dedicated to the mission of the club and give so much of themselves to keep it vibrant and moving forward. Consider how you might join in and support the future of the Chapter, and have a wonderful time in the process!

Very best,
Deborah Levine
Berkshire Chapter Chair, 2009–2010

• In Memoriam •

JUNE HOERLE – A member of the Berkshire Chapter since 1982, passed away on July 17 at age 84. She had been fighting cancer for several years. June was a Tuesday hiker and dear friend to many. She was on the very first Tuesday hike and continued with the group until the end. Those who knew her will remember her as a spirited, friendly, talented woman who extended herself to all.

— Diane Crowell

Save the Date: AMC Fall Gathering is October 15–17

The AMC 2010 Fall Gathering, hosted by the Worcester Chapter, will be held October 15–17 at the Prindle Pond Conference Center Hilltop, Charlton, MA. Whether you enjoy hiking, biking, paddling, rock climbing, or just like to socialize with other AMC members (or non-members), October is a great time to explore central Massachusetts. Also, family-oriented activities will be offered, so bring your children and grandchildren. Top it all off with lively Saturday evening entertainment and a bonfire. This will be an event you won't want to miss! For more information, check out our website at: <http://www.amcworchester.org/FallGathering2010.htm>.



At Noble View Outdoor Center, the bathhouse's exterior is completed. It's expected to be open this November. *photo by Gary Forish*

Fall 2010
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BK

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