

Maine Appalachian Trail Club
September 4, 2015
University of Maine Augusta

Present: President, Lester Kenway; Vice President, Mike Ewing; Recording Secretary, Janice Clain; Corresponding Secretary, Doug Dolan; Treasurer, Elsa Sanborn; Directors, Dennis Andrews, Tony Barrett, Laura Flight, Bruce Grant, Sherri Languais, Don Stack; Overseer of Lands, Dave Field; District Overseers, Craig Dickstein, Ron Dobra, Tom Gorrill; Club Coordinator, Holly Sheehan; Guidebook Editor, Ray Ronan; ATC Maine Resources Manager, Claire Polfus; ATC Outreach Coordinator, Katie Mann; ATC Vista Volunteer, Evan Watson; MATC Campaign Director, Alicia Nichols

Absent: Directors, Bob Cummings, Dan Simonds; District Overseers, Dick Fecteau, Rick Ste Croix

Call to Order: President Lester Kenway called the meeting to order at 7:00. With guests present, he called for introductions. Guests included Katie Mann, ATC Outreach Coordinator, who is stationed in White River [Jct](#), Vermont, and Evan Watson, ATC Vista Volunteer, based in Millinocket.

Secretary's Report: Janice Clain presented the Secretary's Report for the May 1 meeting and asked for changes or corrections. Hearing none, Elsa Sanborn placed a motion, seconded by Craig Dickstein, to accept the report. The Executive Committee voted its approval.

Treasurer's Report: Elsa Sanborn presented the Treasurer's Report, which showed total assets of \$669,959.62. She signaled negative figures in April to August activities, but assured that the club finances are sound and strong, with grant monies still coming in.

Corresponding Secretary's Report: Corresponding Secretary Doug Dolan reported that e-mail traffic is down about 30%. He has had little correspondence.

Bureau of Parks and Lands Proposal for a Connector Trail: Ron Dobra reported on the proposal for a new connector trail near Barren Mountain developed by the Bureau of Public Lands. At the May meeting, the MATC Executive Committee asked to see something on the ground. A committee of MATC representatives, including Lester Kenway, Ron Dobra and Dave Field, along with ATC representative Claire Polfus, received a proposal for a link on an existing logging road, but no date has been set for a visit to the site. If built along the road, this proposal would not need much work. Ron will be the contact person and will inform others when the BPL sets a date for a site visit.

ATC Report: Claire Polfus reviewed some of the points in the ATC update she sent to the Executive Committee. She first introduced Katie Mann, the new ATC Outreach Coordinator. Katie announced that she is looking at a license plate program, which groups in the south have used to successfully raise about \$2 million. Katie investigated the regulations for Maine and Massachusetts. To propose a new special interest plate requires 2000 pledges for \$25 per plate, and the club receives \$10 per plate for the initial 2000 people and a lesser amount for renewals. The club would need all 2000 pledges within two years and it can decide how to administer the program. Attendees at this meeting expressed concern because club membership is far less than 2000 so the program would have to reach many outside participants and there are already many specialty plates in Maine. Lester suggested that Katie consult the DMV to see how feasible the plan is, how likely the club is to reach a goal, and the success rate of other groups. Dave Field suggested polling club members to see how likely they would be to enroll; with the new club data-base Dick Welsh can send an e-mail message to find out who would be interested.

Claire noted that the AT has been in the news a lot lately, some for positive reasons, some not. She noted a good partnership with the Friends of Baxter, which is committed to solving the hiker issues raised by Baxter State Park officials. There was a good representation of interested groups at the July 21 meeting, which launched a task force to work on the issue. She emphasized that the AT needs to improve its visitor management practices. Some of the suggestions that came from the summer meeting include: a station at a visitor center in Monson, staffed by ATC seasonal personnel, to help hikers sign up for the Birches, advise hikers and spread people out through the Hundred Mile Wilderness; increase ridge runners across the trail, especially in New England; assume more of the responsibility for informing and educating hikers, to take the onus away from Baxter State Park.

Claire and Craig Dickstein briefly discussed the situation at The Birches, which accommodates twelve hikers. Currently, if hikers arrive to find the Birches full, rangers help them find a place to stay; they've reached capacity three times this season. By signing up for the Birches, that's the day a hiker gets to summit, which results in an unofficial permitting process, similar to the voluntary registration process instituted at the southern AT terminus this year in which about 60% of hikers participated. Craig asked how to enforce the registration rule, and warned that, given the numbers of hikers he's seen at the Kennebec crossing, hiker tallies are about to be overwhelming. Claire concurred that enforcement is a serious problem.

Lester advised that Trail officials should look at incentives, not penalties. He reminded that people walking the Hundred Mile Wilderness are looking for a freedom experience, free of any restrictions. He pointed out that MATC has a lean-to system that encourages hikers to camp in the right places. He suggested that Trail organizations devise a way to encourage hikers' compliance and cooperation. Mike Ewing concurred, adding that we need to educate more, explain why, guide, and influence hikers. Lester noted that ATC has heavily promoted thru hiking, hiking the length of the Trail in one year, as a continuous trip. He recommends that ATC and MATC examine that practice.

He would like to see an emphasis on stewardship, not on promoting the freedom to hike unrestricted.

Claire noted that Baxter Park sees good effects of its caretaker stationed at the Baxter kiosk. Holly explained that this was formerly an MATC position, then a joint Baxter Park - MATC position. Baxter Park assumed full responsibility for that position in recent years.

Ron Dobra commented that the Trail is close to too many people. He observed that most national parks have rangers to regulate users, which the Trail does not. He suggested rebranding the Trail as the AT National Park, so people relate the entity to other national parks and show it the respect it is due. Dave Field reminded that the national park does not exist in Baxter Park.

According to Bruce Grant, Shaw's says a lot of thru hikers are spending time on-line there making travel reservations. Hikers are focused on a summit slot because of their travel reservations, so they get locked into a hiking pattern to avoid expensive changes to their travel plans. In late fall there is also the threat of the October 15 deadline before the park goes to winter rules which are more restrictive. Bruce suggests a service to help hikers plan transportation and a registration system that would help hikers space themselves to avoid bunching up at Katahdin.

On another topic, Claire reminded that the ATC budget is due for approval in November. She advised that the capital plan requires more detailed information about Trail Crew projects, including what the work is, the materials, specific details on location, who's doing the work, and how long a section the project rehabilitates. Overseers and Lester send information to Claire by October 20. Lester says it won't be difficult to amend club requests, and that ATC hasn't asked for this kind of information before. He observed that the five year plan has made us better planners, and this will improve the system even more. Claire is willing to go out with overseers to look at potential projects and determine specifics and priorities. Lester said he hopes to move more into redesign than reconstruction.

Dave Field asked about the missile defense threat that the MATC Executive Committee heard about last year and that Claire commented on in her report. Claire explained that some members of congress want this facility, not the Missile Defense Administration, the Department of Defense or the President.

Biennial Committee Update: Sherri Langlais and Tony Barrett presented a slide show and report of the Winchester Biennial, which twelve of the fifteen 2017 Biennial Steering Committee members attended. They had positive comments on the organization and registration process of the event. They were able to learn a lot about how to organize and carry out the MATC - AMC sponsored event in two years. They also showed the promotional video for the 2017 conference that attendees in Winchester saw.

The next Biennial steering committee meeting would take place on September 30 at Colby College.

Wind Power Committee Update: Tony Barrett presented an update on wind power. The Wind Power Act passed in 2008, but bills to address deficiencies in the act were not submitted until 2011. All fifteen bills to amend the act were blocked in committee under the Republican controlled legislature. In 2013, all fourteen bills to amend the act were blocked in committee under the Democratic controlled legislature. The 127th legislature, in 2015, saw three wind related bills presented and two passed. LD 911, the bill crafted by MATC and its partners passed in June, but it wasn't technically this club's bill as it included many changes influenced by powerful lobbyists. That bill did add four definitions for the consideration of cumulative visual impact that MATC deems problematic: combined observations, cumulative scenic impact, sequential observations, and successive observations. MATC's concern about taller turbines, visible up to 15 miles, is being evaluated but was not addressed in LD 911.

Senator Tom Saviello will introduce a new bill in the next short session in January. It will allow evaluation of the visual impact for projects up to fifteen miles from selected view points.

Tony noted that the other bill that passed, LD 828, the Expedited Wind Zone petition bill was considered one of the most heavily lobbied bills of the session. This bill allows areas to be removed from the expedited zone.

Tony showed photos of the progress on the Bingham Wind project. Developers started by treating the area in preparation for construction, excavating and building turbine bases.

Claire Polfus spoke on another threat to the Trail, the Next Era energy transmission line, which is planned to transmit renewable energy from Quebec to southern New England. Claire showed a map that indicated where the transmission line would cross the AT just north of Route 27. MATC - ATC authorities are considering whether to make their own visual assessment. The transmission line won't go forward without being selected during the RFP (request for proposals) process by the Southern New England states. Tony observed that the time for reaction is 2016; there will be further discussion of the matter at a later date.

Campsite Committee Report: Laura Flight reported on activities for the Campsite Committee. Volunteers prebuilt two moldering privies in May, but had to delay work trips while waiting for permits. They planned to construct a Black Brook campsite but didn't get permits in time for this year. They had to overcome obstacles to build a privy for Bemis Stream; the road was open for a time, but when crews started to work, the road was closed again. They were able to work with the Oquossoc ATV club to transport materials and workers to the site. They tallied over 418 volunteer hours for the Bemis privy.

Construction of a lean-to at Nahmakanta Stream was postponed to next year because permits were not obtained to start construction while sap was still in the trees. Volunteers replaced the ridge pole and one roof panel at the Wadleigh Stream lean-to. With help from Camp Tekikwitha, volunteers replaced the old baseball bat bunk floor and the front log at the Poplar Ridge shelter.

Plans were in place to construct a moldering privy at Potaywadjo Spring campsite with LL Bean the last weekend of September.

Club Coordinator Update: Holly Sheehan commented on her report as Club Coordinator. Fund raising didn't wrap up for the season until August, and she has already started preparing grant applications for 2016.

Ron Dobra asked about monies from Piscataquis County, and Holly explained that money came in late, and can be allotted to any needs; the budget committee will decide where to use these funds.

Maine Trail Center Update: Lester Kenway and Alicia Nichols asked to speak to Executive Committee members for the Maine Trail Center update; The Capital Campaign Committee leadership includes Chairman Lester Kenway and Honorary Chair Dave Field. Other committee members include Sherri Langlais, Elsa Sanborn and Mike Ewing.

Alicia spent June and July working with Vreeland Marketing and Rising Tide on a theme, logo, branding, and visual elements. The theme chosen is "Trail Champions." Alicia is working with Susan Tompkins and Vreeland Marketing on story boards for the campaign video.

Alicia showed a draft of a campaign brochure that will be used for the major gift phase, to be delivered in person at the time of a solicitation visit. The infrastructure is in place for gifts and pledges by mail, on line and gifts of stock.

In August, the campaign received its first major grant, from the Quimby Family Foundation. The Capital Campaign Committee held its first meeting on August 19. Their next meeting was September 16.

CARE Committee Report: Holly Sheehan reported that the CARE program is going well this season. Former ridge runner Audrey Laffely has been serving as site supervisor for the Horns Pond position, and has been a welcome addition to the program. Bigelow Preserve Manager, Steve Swatling, retired in early summer, and Pete Smith is now the contact between that organization and MATC.

Rising Tide PR Update: Susan Tompkins distributed an update from Rising Tide. State and national publications have featured many articles on the Appalachian Trail this summer, mostly over the Baxter State Park issue. While MATC didn't create these stories, it benefited from the publicity.

Grafton Loop Trail Agreement with Mahoosuc Land Trust: Tom Gorrill reported on the Grafton Loop Trail agreement. He attended a meeting in the spring with several stakeholders. MATC did an assessment to see how much work would be needed to bring the trail back to good shape; Tom thinks it's not in bad shape, except for the north side of Long Mountain. The club's major concern is that the Mahoosuc Land Trust wants MATC to assume full responsibility to maintain the trail to acceptable

standards. The priority of MATC, as defined in the Local Management Plan, must be the AT, and there are many sections on that Trail that need attention and resources.

Tom's concern is that some GLT maintainers can't access their trail sections because of their remoteness and the lack of landowner agreements, so they can't perform adequate maintenance. He would like to know the cost to bring the Grafton Loop Trail back up to acceptable standards.

Overseer of Lands and Berry Pickers Trail Update: Dave Field reported as Overseer of Lands that Corridor Monitors have been out and have found no boundary issues. Boundary technicians are working on some of the worst obliterated boundary sections. The American Hiking Society planned its annual volunteer work trip for sections in Blanchard. Several MATC volunteers planned to join them.

Dave reported on changes to NPS landowner liability status that he heard at a workshop at this summer's Biennial Conference. Landowner liability, the duty owed by a landowner to anyone using the owner's land, increases as the status of that person moves from "trespasser" (no permission at all to be on the land), to "permittee" (someone given verbal or written permission but making no payment for the privilege), to "invitee" (often someone paying for the right to be on the land). The NPS has decided that simply encouraging the public to enter its land and hike on the Appalachian Trail grants those hikers the status of invitees, to whom the highest level of protection is required. This means we have to keep the trail safe and open, with the emphasis on safety, especially in areas, such as overnight sites, where people tend to congregate.

Dave also reported that a short section by the South Branch of the Carrabasset River crossing is outside the corridor.

Work on the new Berry Pickers Trail can't be done during nesting season of Bicknell's Thrush, late May through July. Dave planned to get started working on that trail later this fall, but does not yet have a permit from the Land Use Planning Commission.

Baldpate District Report: Tom Gorrill reported that the Bald Pate District has only one vacancy and he has two new maintainers. Maintainers reported record blow-downs this year, with one section seeing more than 600.

Tom noted a lot of group participation, including camp Tekikwitha and Dirigo High School. The Bemis Stream trail is closed, and was wiped out by the landowner, Waggoner.

Kennebec District Report: Craig Dickstein also commented on the numbers of blow downs in the Kennebec District. Maintainers helped other maintainers. All sections are assigned. Volunteers replaced or increased some confusing signage in Monson in an effort to improve landowner relations. Craig had a question regarding antique signs that are no longer on the Trail and are not accurate; Dave Field recommended updating signage and saving the originals for display at the Trail Center.

Craig reported on a request from the Old Canada National Scenic Byway for a blue blaze trail that would connect the AT above the Longley property to the Forks Area Scenic Trail (FAST). The FAST runs parallel to the Kennebec River for about six miles, from the helicopter pad opposite the Longley property to West Forks. It is a non-motorized trail in spring, summer and fall. In winter, snowmobiles are allowed. The FAST was established and is administered by the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway. At their most recent meeting, the Board of Directors of the Byway voted unanimously to support a request for a blue blazed connection. The blue blaze connector would only be a footpath and winter snowmobiling would not be permitted. The group requests special permission to establish this connector trail and hopes to invite AT hikers to use their trail. Lester reminded that establishing such a trail would require amending the congressional record, which designated all snow mobile crossings of the AT. Lester recommended that MATC wait for the resolution of the Longley property sale before addressing this request.

White Cap District Report: Ron Dobra reported five vacancies in the White Cap District; he is frustrated with trying to fill vacancies. All maintainers have made at least one trip. Ron made several visits with the Maine Trail Crew, which spent several weeks in the district.

Ron hosted a work trip with the Bowdoin Outing Club, which has a cabin bordering North Pond. Twelve students participated on an orientation trip. Ron was pleased to make a good connection with the college.

Ron scheduled a work trip with former maintainers Dave and Ardie Hacker to the East Branch Pleasant lean-to to tend to an overflowing privy.

Ron has walked half the district. He met a thru hiker who is a welder and offered to help the club.

Maine Trail Crew Committee Update: Lester planned to send a written report of the Maine Trail Crew at a later date. He reported an average season, with volunteer enrollment down in July, and then up in August. Many staff and volunteers commented favorably on living quarters on the island.

Millinocket End Of Trail Festival: The Millinocket End of Trails Festival was scheduled to take place September 18 to 20. Paul Renaud organized a Hard Corps work trip at Gulf Hagas; Schenck High School planned to send some students to help on the project.

Rangeley planned its trail celebration for Saturday, September 5, including representatives from MATLT and ATC.

New MAINEtainer Editor: Lester announced that Jason Phelps responded to Bob Cummings' notice in the spring edition of the MAINEtainer to take over editor duties for the club newsletter. Jason hoped to publish an October issue and planned to reach out to Executive Committee members.

Jason has been invited to attend Executive Committee meetings.

Baxter Task Force Report: Claire Polfus reported on the Baxter Task Force. She suggested that whenever MATC volunteers are on the Trail they advise hikers to work within the Baxter guidelines, to ensure that the trail terminus stays where it is. She asked that anyone on the trail keep the message positive and mention the recommendations: 1, small groups; 2, celebrate in Millinocket; 3, practice Leave No Trace. Anyone who wants to be on the task force should contact Claire.

Lester commented that some club members may feel uncomfortable approaching hikers on controversial topics and suggested that maintainers and trail crews could have a card with focus points to hand to hikers.

Craig recommended using the Kennebec River crossing for a focused outreach point.

Other: Tony Barrett spoke on the work Tom Winsor, former MATC vice president, did in working with the Wind Power Committee to introduce and steer legislation in the state congress. Lester will write a letter of appreciation on behalf of the club to recognize Tom's contributions. Mike Ewing asked for recognition for the Oquossac ATV Club for their help with the Bemis Stream lean-to. He registered a *like* on Facebook. Laura Flight planned to send a thank you note to the group.

With all business addressed, Elsa Sanborn placed a motion, seconded by Don Stack, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Clain
MATC Recording Secretary