

## Youth Stewardship of the AT: Bates College Renews Dedication to the Trail

On May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 a group of eleven Bates College Outing Club Students travelled from campus in Lewiston to their section of trail on Bemis Mountain in Roxbury for some seasonal maintenance. Tom Gorrill, the MATC Baldpate District Overseer accompanied the student group, lead by junior Adam Auerbach and senior Alfred Russo. Most of the work accomplished was clearing blow downs and clipping overgrown brush as well as clearing out a couple water bars. The group was able to clear about half of the 3.5 mile section of trail, roughly to the snow line.

Many of the students who participated were new to trail work, which bodes well for Bates' continued involvement with the trail in the future. According to First Year Rebecca Snow, "What I loved about doing trail work was that we were simultaneously enjoying ourselves while making the trail better for future hikers... I loved it and will definitely be helping out again!"

Another student participant, sophomore Noel Potter, remarked on Bates' long-standing relationship with the Appalachian Trail in Maine. He related, "As a Bates student, having our own segment of the AT to maintain, which the club has maintained for over 70 years, makes me feel like I have some small personal connection to all of those people who have hiked and maintained that segment over all of those years."

Potter is alluding to the fact that the Bates Outing Club section of trail is the oldest continuous assignment within the MATC; Bates has been responsible for it's present section since the 1930s. Bates used to maintain a larger 34 mile section from Saddleback south. Today the section has shrunk to a 3.5 mile stretch going from Bemis Road up to the Bemis Lean-To. Bates was also influential in the initial building of the Appalachian Trail in Maine. In 1934, Bates Outing Club students surveyed and blazed the route of the trail from Saddleback to Grafton Notch.

Presently, the Bates Outing Club is renewing its dedication to the AT. A second trip for the season is scheduled for alumni weekend in June to clear the remaining half of the trail. Moreover, in the fall there will be a trip to re-blaze the section. Bates students are also getting involved in the AT outside of their own section. A group of outing club students participated in the Maine Youth Trail Stewardship Summit organized by the ATC and MATC in March, and a trip is planned to participate in the Maine Youth Trail Stewardship work day in Grafton Notch State Park on May 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Bates work trip in early May was an unqualified successes, and many of the students who volunteered are eager to continue participating in the future. Potter described the feeling at the end of the day best when he said, "To be able to put a couple of days into maintenance and improve the days of hikers for a whole season after that is a great feeling."

