

Maine Appalachian Trail Club

The MAINEtainer

Volume XLIII Number 4 Fall 2019



Maine Appalachian Trail Club would like to thank summer camps, outing clubs and colleges. This hiking season saw excellent compliance with group's pre-registering their backpacking trips on the Appalachian Trail, following A.T. guidelines and practicing Leave No Trace Principles on the trail.

Special thanks goes out to:

- Alfred Lakes Camps
- Bowdoin College
- Camp Tekakwitha
- Colby College
- Harvard University
- Tufts University
- Wavus Camp for Girls
- Bates College
- Camp Merrowvista
- Chewonki
- Kieve Camp for Boys
- Pine Island Camp
- Unity College

Maine Youth Trail and Stewardship Coalition's Fall stewardship weekend was a success!

by Holly Sheehan

There were 21 participants for our October 13 work trip. Together we cleared out a great many drainages and pushed back a lot of brush on the Appalachian Trail. We also got 10 Portland High School students to experience the Bigelow Mountains on a perfect fall weekend, in both rain and shine. Our housing was awesome at the Bigelow Lodge (thanks to the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands) and there was abundant free food (thanks to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy). We had help from multiple different conservation groups including the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Unity College, Maine

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Sign Making Along The AT In Maine

by *Stephen Clark*

I first became involved with the AT project as a sophomore in high school in 1953. By the late 1950's under the presidency of Louis Chorzempa I had become the Overseer of Trails in Western Maine (at that time there were only three overseers).

As Overseer, I became aware that the Club had no process to construct and install new signs. It was Myron Avery who had established the original sign list during his tenure as Club president. It is not known who was actually constructing signs up until his death in 1952. But he was the author of both the Maine Guide as well as the original sign list.

At that time, the signs were constructed on one inch boards, painted white, with black stenciled lettering.

During the mid to late 1950's the Trail's route began to evolve.

The relocations over Little Bigelow and the Carry ponds, the Bemis relocation, the Moxie Bald relocation, the West Branch to Rainbow Ledges relocation, changes on the route through the Barren- Chairback Range and many more lesser changes brought about by harvesting operations altered the route and it's signage greatly. All these caused the old sign list to become essentially obsolete. Further causing the obsolescence was the rapid addition of new lean-tos (2-3 per year) by leaders Louis Chorzempa and Carl Newhall. No new lean-tos had been added since the ending of the Depression Era Civilian Conservation Corps in 1938.

Surprisingly, all those major changes occurred prior to the massive changes brought about by the NPS-MATC relocations initiated in the late 1970's and 80's (more that 170 miles of new trail).

In 1960 taking all these changes into consideration, it became apparent that the old sign list and current signs had to be completely revised. This was especially true since all the mileages were now altered. Luckily my wife Barbara was a good typist and was invaluable to this revision.

It also became apparent that the old white signs with black lettering was an inferior format for a complete new sign construction for more that 450 signs. There had to be a better format.

After some experimentation and good advise, it was decided to upgrade the signs by the process of routing the

lettering on each of the signs. That way if the paint flaked off it would be still readable. Also, the signs could be made more attractive and longer lasting by using a light brown stain with white lettering. Olympic Stain made just the right color.

So a new process was born. Routing the letters on the board first, use one inch boards for most signs, two inch thick for roadside or major junctions, three coats of Olympic stain, white hand-painted lettering and a coat of spar varnish to finish the signs. Nail or bolt holes were pre-drilled. The name MATC appeared on all signs.

Barbara and I started to manufacture these during the long winter days in our basement in 1961. We would do about 50-70 signs per year.

We found that the shinny spar varnish although preserving the signs, was sometimes of interest to bears as a few were ripped up and chewed on by our bear brethren, just out of hibernation. Also, erection of these signs near roads presented problems as they proved to be nice souvenirs for car travelers. So we found ways to lessen this by using heavy lag bolts. We also found that sign placement near roads or at important trail junctions were better when using heavy 8-10" cedar posts to mount signs and other techniques to numerous to mention here.

Before ending, a couple of stories of sign erection trips that might entertain the current Club members.

In the late 1960's we had completed the needed signs for the north end of the 100 Mile Wilderness, from the Golden Road at the West Branch southward to Yoke Pond and its related camps. The old trail route use to touch the pond and pass through the camps. That approximately 48 mile stretch included about 80-100 pounds of new signs, plus the tools and fasteners to erect them. Too much to back pack along with our camping equipment and food for a three day trip.

So Barbara and I figured out to use air power to accomplish the task. We drove to Yoke Pond where we left our car. Then a Folsom's seaplane landed at Yoke Pond to pick us and the signs up. We had bundled the signs into three packets to drop off along the route.

Our first stop after taking off was at Antler's Camps on Lower Jo Mary Lake where we offloaded and hid the 3rd batch of signs. Then we flew over a ridge to the Namakanta Lake Camps located at the lake's north end to drop off the 2nd batch of signs and our overnight equipment. We would stay there that night, if we got back. When we reached the dock, we beheld a smiling Sidney Tappan, long time Overseer of

Trails for Eastern Maine. We told him we had to install the signs north of this point on the trail, then work our way back to the camps by nightfall. The last stop was at Hurd Pond. We then piled back into the plane and took off on our third and last lap. The pilot then flew us over several ridges to the north end of wild Hurd Pond. The Trail does not touch the pond so we were left off on a wooded shore. The signs for the 1st batch were loaded into a pack basket along with the tools. The plane left us there.

In order to reach the Trail we had to bushwhack in the forest, northward for about a half mile. We had my old trusty compass so off we crashed. In about a half hour we hit the Trail along an old tote road. At this point we began to erect signs. The Hurd Brook Lean-to was soon reached. It would be the first of seven lean-tos or campsites where signs had to be installed during our trip. We then proceeded over Rainbow Ledges, erecting signs as we went. Then we hiked along the south shore of four mile long Rainbow Lake, then down Rainbow Stream and reached the Namakanta Lake Camps just at dusk. Long Day!

Next morning after a fine breakfast, Sidney suggested a great idea. He would take care of the signs over to Wadleigh Pond, then back to Namakanta Lake, at the sand beach. That would allow us to be boated down to the lake's south end and commence sign erection from that point. This we did and began the long hike over to Lower Jo Mary Lake, passing the Potaywajo Spring and Ridge. We reached Antler's Campground before supper and stayed there for the night.

On the last day of our sign adventure, we grabbed the 1st batch of signs we had left there, plus our camping gear and struck off with heavy packs. We followed Cooper Brook westward passing its stunning falls, pulling up signs as we went. In the late afternoon we finally reached Crawford Pond and the walk along a tote road back to our starting point at Yoke Pond. The northern part of the 100 Mile Wilderness was "all signed up" with new signs.

We marveled that it had taken us only an hour or two to get to Hurd Pond and 2 1/2 days to hike the 48 miles back!

The second of our two sign adventures was to a slightly higher place, the summit of Katahdin. In the early stages of Baxter Park, the Appalachian Mountain Club had graciously maintained the trails and its signs on Katahdin. When the AMC and MATC made a swap of trail responsibility, in the Mahoosuc for the AT on Katahdin, that included the summit sign.

With a crew of Explorer Scouts, we camped at Katahdin Stream erecting signs in that area. The new two inch thick summit sign weighing about sixty pound, and would be carried on a pack board, along with the sawhorse style mounting assembly. Off we went, up the hill. We luckily had a couple of strong young men and we rotated on the pack board-sign. It was an especially difficult climb through the boulders below Hunt Spur. About noon we reached Baxter Peak and began the assembly of the sign's sawhorse mount. As the winds there exceed a hundred miles an hour during the winter, we had to carry rocks to anchor the mount around it's base. But we finally got the sign bolted on and agreed that routed signs would survive if the paint might be flaked off.

We took a lot of pictures and headed down. It was a very unique sign erection. Glad there is only one Katahdin in Maine that needs signs!

The sign program has continues to the present by a series of fine sign makers. This was especially true when we had to make many, many new signs during the establishment of 170 miles of new trail by the NPS and MATC in the 80's and 90's.

Today we have a number of very fine sign makers to take care of worn-out, missing, signs clawed down or the occasional souvenir hunters.

Some say the MATC has the best signs on the entire AT!

Editor's note -

A MATC member wrote to me recently asking for a story about the MATC's sign program. Upon inquiring I was sent this great article from Stephen Clark which does a great job of describing the fascinating history of A.T. sign making here in Maine. Look for an interview in an upcoming issue with the Chair of the MATC Sign Committee, Louis Chartier.

Louis and Janice Clain were the recipients of the 2019 MATC President's Award.

Tony Barrett photos



2019 Campsite Committee Privy Projects

by Laura Flight

The Campsite Committee and its dedicated pool of volunteers contributed a total of 1,660 hours pre-building, site prepping, material hauling, building, and painting and staining 3 new accessible moldering privies this season. This brings the total count of these structures to 16 at 14 different campsites (there are 2 at the Horns Pond campsite, and 1 at the Kennebec River ferry crossing). So, hikers have a nearly a 1 and 3 chance of doing their business in one of these commodious commodes on the A.T. in Maine.



Colby College volunteers packing in materials - Brad Deanne photo

The first privy project of the season was at the Little Bigelow campsite. This early June project did not disappoint for density and ferocity of black flies, but this kept the haul crew moving on the trail instead of enjoying the view or taking rest breaks and possibly delaying progress. 26 dedicated volunteers put in a full day's work hauling the materials the ~1 mile to the campsite (yes, they did get rest breaks), and several volunteers finished the job the following day. We had such a great volunteer turn-out that we did the site prep, hauled in all of the materials, razed the old privy, and had the new privy ~70% built in two days! This is despite the wet, cool weather on the second day. This made for an easy day-trip the following weekend to finish the project. A thank you to the State Bureau of Parks and Lands who assisted with transporting the materials closer to the work site. Another thank you to the AMC Maine Chapter group who took a load of materials up on their planned hike.

The next two privy projects of the season were later in the summer due to the exploitation of groups of freshman from Bowdoin and Colby Colleges. Truthfully, we are forever grateful for their youthful contributions. The first challenge of the Leeman Brook privy project was to get the materials

up a big hill on a rough road. The quantity and weight of all of the materials necessitates the use of a trailer, but with the elevation gain and rough road even a beefy pick-up truck wasn't going to be successful. Thankfully, Brad Deanne had a stout tractor to lend to the effort that was up to the challenge. Well, mostly. The road got a little steeper, and the traction a little looser, and the big-engine-that-could was having a rough go of it. So, we unloaded some of the materials from the trailer and then the tractor advanced, but only another couple of hundred feet. At this point we were so close to the top (and not in a good place to park...). So we latched the tractor onto a pick-up truck which was just enough of an anchor to advance the rest of the way- success!

Also on the tractor day, 3 MATC volunteers did the site preparation including installing the 4 base timbers for the crib. But, 3 MATC volunteers weren't going to be able to shoulder the 4 pressure treated 4x6s as well as a chainsaw and all of the digging tools to the campsite. Thankfully, Shaw's in Monson offered up 2 thru-hikers for the morning in exchange for free breakfast for them! One of the thru-hikers (Cat) hauled in 2 of the 4x6s in one trip! The other thru-hiker (Wing-It) was more strategic and made two trips, but his efforts should not be understated as these things weigh ~40 pounds each! The next phase of the project was a group of 14 Bowdoin freshman hauled the materials part way in to the campsite. Many thanks for their work again this year! Due to the ~1.5 mile commute to the campsite, a second haul effort of 23 MATC volunteers finished the job. In addition, Shaw's in Monson supplied 4 thru-hikers for the day! This primed the build crew for success on a beautiful weekend in September. The build crew patronized Shaw's by staying there for the weekend, but Shaw's wasn't done gifting MATC as the volunteers were treated to a free breakfast of eggs, bacon, home fries and Poet's famous blueberry pancakes! Special thanks to Shaw's for helping with all aspects of this project!



New Privy at Leeman Brook - Laura Flight Photo

The East Branch campsite privy project saw some weather extremes over its duration. The site prep work was done in mid-July during one of the sweltering heat waves. A good-sized crew allowed us to switch in and out of work to get some water and rest. Although the temperatures were plenty toasty, it was several degrees cooler in the woods at the campsite than at the road when we returned from our day's efforts. At the end of August, a group of 15 Colby College freshman were scheduled to haul the materials in the ~0.6 miles to the campsite. There was some initial confusion on the meeting spot which resulted in a delayed start, but they hauled all of the materials into the campsite in what seemed like a flash; it was about 5.5 hours! The build crew got going in the afternoon and the privy was completed the following day. The weather that Labor Day weekend was quintessential fall, and it may have been below freezing that night, completing the weather extremes.

Thanks again to all of the volunteers on these projects; they wouldn't be possible without you! If you have been bench warming for awhile but want to get in on the action, contact Laura Flight (campsite@matc.org). As we say: "Many hands make lighter work!"



Fall Stewardship - Continued from page 1



Bureau of Parks and Lands and the Maine Conservation Corps. Thanks in particular to MATC volunteers Mike Blais, Dick Fecteau and Steve Niles, as well as Unity College student Alivia Acosta for her excellent organizational skills.

Maintainer Openings *Whitecap District*

Are you looking to get more involved with the Maine Appalachian Trail or want to give back some of your time? The Whitecap District has three trail maintainer sections and a campsite available. A trail maintainer is primarily concerned with clearing blowdowns, cutting back brush, painting blazes and clearing waterbars. Most maintainers with a couple of mile section find they can do reasonable job if they spend 2-3 days on trail work each hiking season. The club provides a maintenance handbook and field guide as well as on site training. Access to the maintainer trails usually doesn't require a special car or truck. Chainsaw certification is not a requirement either although the club provides chainsaw training if desired.

The openings are:

A.T. section from the Summit of West Peak to the Summit of Gulf Hagas Mountain. The total distance is 1.8 miles. Access is from the Sidney Tappan campsite. There is a climb from the campsite to West Peak (750 feet elevation change) and from the campsite to Gulf Hagas Mountain (250 feet elevation change). The trail is in good shape since the trail crew used it in 2019.

Sidney Tappan Campsite. This campsite does not have a lean-to. It is tent sites only. It will have a new composting privy in 2020. It is in good shape since it was used by the trail crew in 2019. This campsite is easily combined with the above trail section but can be maintained separately.

A.T. section starting at Little Wilson falls south to the North Pond Tote Road. Total distance 2.4 miles. The total elevation gain for the section is about 700 feet. The section has no major hills but does go up and down a series of small ridges. It is in good shape having been cleared in September of 2019 but does need some trimming in places.

AT. section starting at the Leeman Brook Lean-to south to the parking lot on Route 15 in Monson. Total distance is 3.0 miles. The total elevation gain for this section is about 1000 feet. It has two small hills. The section is in good shape having been maintained through the 2019 season.

Come join a unique group of dedicated club maintainers and spend a couple of days a summer helping to preserve an important part of Maine. Personalized training will get you started with a rewarding experience. If interested or if you want more information, please contact:

Dick Welsh, Whitecap District Overseer
508.954.1235
whitecap@matc.org

A.T. Ridgerunners Reflect on a Successful Season

by Janice Clain

The three MATC ridge runners and their volunteer supervisors packed up their base camps on Saturday, October 19. Koty Lewis was at Saddleback for the season, Matt Shannon at Bigelow, and Bridget Williams at Gulf Hagas. They met with the Caretaker and Ridgerunner Education Committee the following day, along with ATC ridge runner, Carla Mitchell and her supervisor, Paige Gregory, to review this season and make recommendations for the next. They gave thoughtful responses to several reflection questions.

On the topic of training at the beginning of the season, all expressed their satisfaction with their preparations for going into their sites. Carla confirmed that MATC made her feel welcome and a part of the whole team. This has been a building connection, with MATC and ATC improving on coordination and connections each year. All four ridge runners felt well prepared and completely supported by the ATC / MATC community. Whatever information was missing from training was covered in their site specific binders.

Mini-trainings early in the season, in alpine plants and at Baxter State Park, were very helpful. The team building experiences at Horns Pond in July and at Gulf Hagas in August helped them to bond as a team dedicated to preserving and protecting the AT in Maine.

With regards to gear, most of which is provided by LL Bean, the MATC staff said the backpacking packs were helpful for pack in and pack out. They liked the day packs they were issued. In general, they used the MATC gear at their base camps and their own gear when backpacking.

Off-duty housing has been a major concern for ridge runners in recent years, as most are not Maine natives. This was the second year the Gulf Hagas ridge runner was able to take advantage of ATC housing in Monson for its staff. This year MATC was able to make an arrangement with the Town and Lake Motel, in Rangeley, for off duty housing for the Saddleback and Bigelow ridge runners. While the set-up was not ideal, it was a good step in solving an old problem.

On the topic of support, all the ridge runners felt that whatever they needed, they only had to ask. Bridget noted the good interactions with the North Maine Woods gate house keepers and with AMC at Little Lyford Pond and Gorman Chairback Lodge. This relationship has strengthened in recent years.

Commenting on youth groups using the Trail and AT campsites, all the ridge runners explained that they had notification from volunteer Elysha Dyer regarding camp groups that had registered through the MATC website. They knew which groups were coming, how many were in the group, and where they planned to camp. All four ridge runners reported that most groups used the registration system and that their Leave No Trace behaviors were overall quite good! This is an improvement over past years. MATC is very pleased with Elysha's contributions to the program; she managed to fulfill requirements for the group registration

Article submission deadline for the next MAINetainer will be January 25th. Exec Comm members will be reminded by email a few weeks before, but please plan to have materials provided to Editor by the 25th.

coordinator even as she hiked the PTC.

On the subject of long distance hikers, none of the ridge runners remembered any big problems. They had mostly positive interactions with long distance hikers. All this year's ridge runners were thru hikers in 2017, so they may have had a good understanding of their clientele. Most hikers knew about the Kennebec ferry, but didn't know much about Baxter State Park until they reached Monson. In her ridge runs south from Monson to Caratunk, Carla was able to advise them to check in at the Visitor Center in Monson for information about Baxter Park. Paige said we haven't heard as many concerns from Baxter as we have in the past.

Paige said the biggest priority is the need for education for south bounders in the Hundred Mile Wilderness. She spoke of many rescues by Maine Fish and Game as southbounders were not well equipped for the terrain and weather conditions. With more hikers making south bound hikes and with weather impacting when Baxter State Park opens trails on Katahdin, MATC should consider having the ridge runner spend more time at the Abol Bridge trail head as an education point and less time at Hurd Brook campsite and further south; The Nature Conservancy has very generously allowed our ridge runner to use their camp near Hurd Brook, and we would have to communicate with them to see if the person could stay there later into June. This will take some advance planning in early spring, looking ahead to the Baxter opening, communicating with Baxter and taking seasonal conditions into account.

The final question was what were the most challenging and the most rewarding experiences for each of the ridge runners? For Koty, the most challenging aspect of the job was the Saddleback ski slope. Many hikers get caught up in publicity and head for trails that are easily accessible but not appropriate for novices. Hikers are unprepared and uneducated about the alpine zone and are not cognizant of the effect of careless treading on fragile alpine landscapes. Dan MATC is corresponding with ATC Director for Science and Stewardship Marian Orlousky about signage and information. The ski slope is not an official trail so NPS has no control. We need to post signage that alerts hikers to the impact of hiking on fragile terrain.

For Carla the three day work week on the trail was challenging; she would have liked more time interacting with hikers. Her schedule was three days ridge running and two days in the Monson Visitor Center. She felt hampered prioritizing between educating and removing trash in the short time on the trail. Fires were more problematic later in the fall.

For Bridget at Gulf Hagas the evenings were lonely and there was the constant battle with mice.

For Matt, at Bigelow, the 10 / 4 schedule was helpful but the two days off on the 5 / 2 schedule was not long enough to check the whole range.

For most rewarding, Matt named fishing and blueberries on Bigelow, Carla the sunrise on north Moxie Bald and seeing people at the Visitor Center after meeting them on the trail, which provided validation that what she taught had meaning. For Bridget, at Gulf Hagas, most rewarding was interacting with hikers, the freedom to do longer ridge runs and the camaraderie with other ridge runners. For Koty most rewarding was seeing the instant pay-off for creating scree wall at the head of the ski trail.

All the ridge runners had thanks for all the support throughout the season.

The MAINtainer

is the newsletter of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of MATC, its members, officers, or directors. The Mainetainer is published four times a year. Our mission as a club is to construct, maintain, and protect the section of the Appalachian Trail extending from Katahdin to Route 26 in Grafton Notch, and those side trails, campsites, and shelters accepted for maintenance by the club. We seek to make accessible for hiking the wild region of Maine through which the trail passes. The Mainetainer welcomes letters, feedback, and information from members and friends of the trail.

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Printing costs are continuing to rise, and one great way you can help the club to maximize funds being committed to our mission, is to sign up for the digital version of the MAINtainer. Once you sign up, you will receive an email with a link to open or download a full color PDF file as each issue becomes available. The paper version will continue to be printed in black and white with grayscale photos and mailed out courtesy of the US Postal service.

There are a number of ways that you can sign up to get the digital version; on the MAINtainer page at matc.org click the blue OPT-OUT button; or send an email to Nancy Grant at membership@matc.org.

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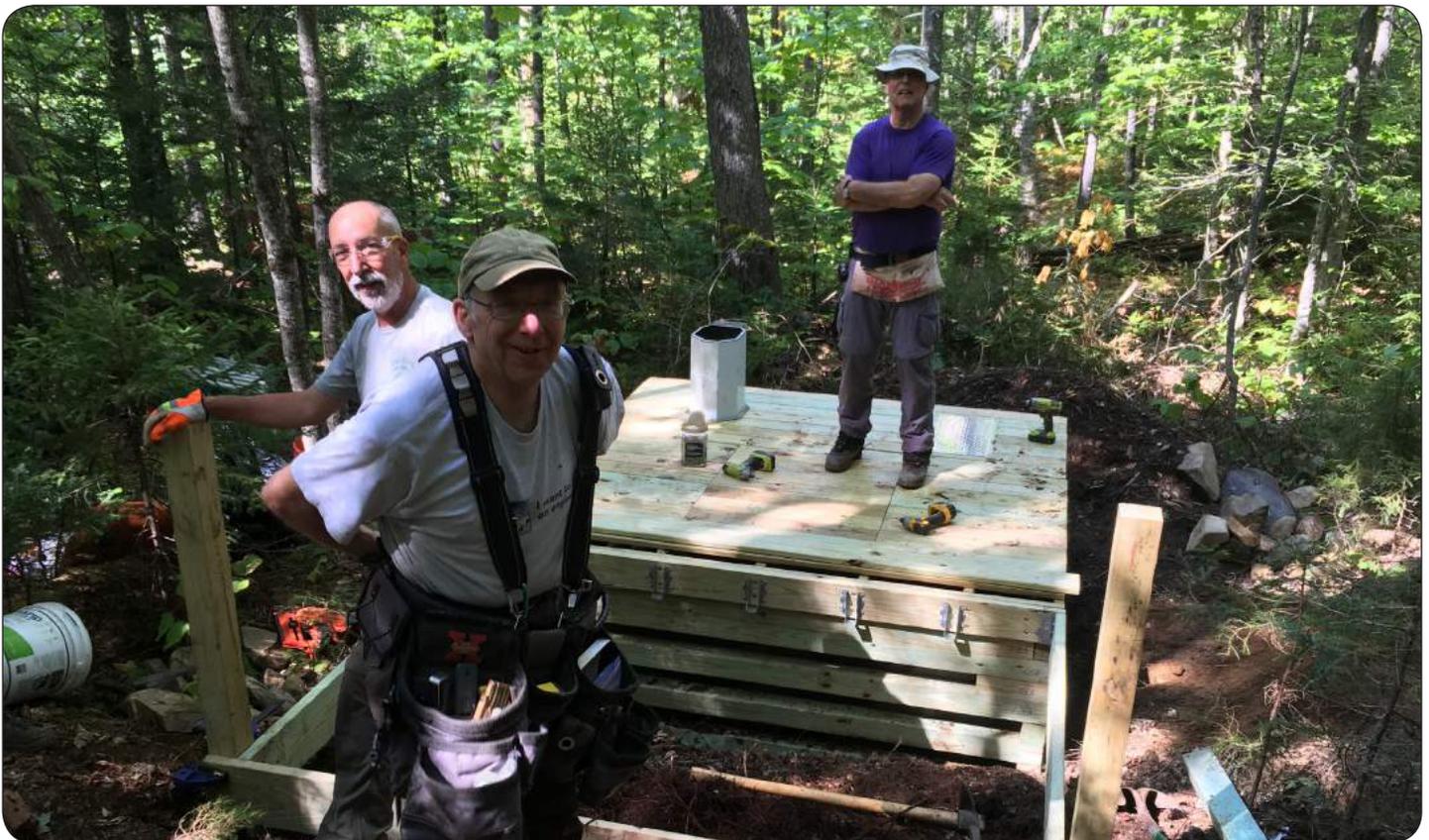
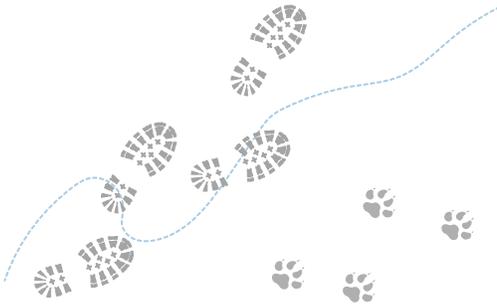
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The MAINEtainer



Maine Appalachian Trail Club

Managing and maintaining 267 miles
of the Appalachian Trail in Maine



Leeman Brook Privy Construction - Laura Flight photo