Chapter Chairs Message
Get Out And Play!
(Under The Red Felt Crusher)

Chapter Chairs Message

Time flies, I can’t believe it has been almost two years since Barbara handed the red felt crusher over to me and soon it will be my turn to hand it over to the very capable hands of our current vice chair, Steve Ciras. It’s been a great two years and we have accomplished a lot as a chapter. Some of the many accomplishments over the last two years were getting our Chapter Youth Program up and running, adding new graduated hiking series to get more people involved in hiking and backpacking, and building the shelter in the Maine Woods are some of the many things we should be proud off. I want to first off all thank all of the executive committee, our leaders and volunteers for helping to make the Worcester Chapter the vibrant chapter that it is. I also want to invite you all to join us at the Chapter’s Annual Meeting this November 14th (Details are available on the website and in Sept/Oct Outdoors). We have a great speaker lined up this year. Jeanne Stawieki, a local women who started running seriously when she was 44 and then went on to run marathons on all 7 continents and climb each continents highest peak. Come hear her inspirational story.

Annual Meeting also means it’s time to recognize our volunteers. The Chapter’s highest honor is the “Appie of the Year”. This award is intended to recognize a volunteer who has made a significant contribution to the chapter over the past years, someone who contributions to the chapter and/or club have made a difference. If you know someone who is deserving of this recognition please consider nominating them for Appie of the Year. Please send me a short note or email with your nominee and why they should be Appie of the Year by October 23rd. Previous winners of this award include Jim Walsh, Barbara Dyer and last year’s winner Patricia Lambert.

In closing, it’s been a pleasure serving as your chapter chairperson the last 2 years and I hope to see you on November 14th.

See you out there,
Sharon

Sharon Foster,
Out going Chapter Chair
TRAILS

Wachusett Mountain was the site for the July Third Wednesday Social and along with the annual summer BBQ, was a demonstration by the Trail crew of how the chapter has been quarrying rock for the work being done on the mountain’s trails. Many thanks to Fred Mezynsk for setting up the event and helping the Trail Crew get the word out about the work the chapter has been doing to rebuild the trails. Several hikes were also offered for folks who could get there earlier in the afternoon.

Dwayne Ericson, the former Facility Supervisor at Wachusett Mountain State Reservation, who has been conducting the Trails University - monthly events oriented toward developing high level trail reconstruction skills – provide a demonstration on splitting large rocks. After dinner Dwayne directed the group to the back of the garage where he had set up two rocks to be split in half. He explained how to look for cracks in the rock, where it is easier to split the rock as weathering has already begun the process. The rocks were rifled, a process of using spalling hammers to help create a weaker spot where the rocks could be split. Then the rocks where pre-drilled, using a rotary-hammer drill to create 7/8 inch holes every 5-6 inches across the rock. These processes require eye and hearing protection so they were done before everyone was gathered around to prevent injury to anyone. Folks from the crowd volunteered to help with finishing the drilling and setting the pins and feathers used to split the rock. Then the pins were hammered into position, hitting each one several times and then going back and forth across the row. Then you wait as the pressure from the pins and feathers begin to work on the rift in the rock. Slowly the pressure builds and the pins are hammered further into the rock. Both rocks were able to be split successfully using this system.

The demonstration then switched to how the rocks are moved to the trail. Steve Crowe, John Grote and Dave Sensenig had set up the high line system on the Bicentennial trail. Using a one-ton griphoist to tension the cable, this lifts the rock off the ground and using a pulley it is slid along the cable out to the trail. Using this system helps to protect the ground and the forest from damage. Many more rocks are able to be quarried in one day using the system, than could be accomplished with the old method of rolling rocks out to the trail.

Matching grants were funded from the Worcester Chapter Endowment and the Conservation Committees Special Project Fund to acquire a generator, rotary-hammer drill, various hammers, other small specialty tools, a one-ton Griphoist and a Highline System. These provide the Volunteer Crews with more efficient methods to safely handle rocks that are better suited for the particular rock structures being built and critical to accomplish the highly technical work required to rehabilitate these trails.

Plan of Action: For the past eight years members of the Worcester Chapter, along with the GMC and other organizations, have been reconstructing the Pine Hill Trail at the Wachusett Mountain State Reservation in partnership with the DCR Staff. Other opportunities have included trail maintaining, blazing, cribbing and trail stabilization projects on the Bicentennial Trail. Every project is different and has work for people with all abilities and experiences (including none). The ongoing program has been highly successful with workshops offered to provide the needed instruction to assist interested individuals building competency in trail maintenance skills and to further improve the trails at Wachusett Mountain State Reservation and the Midstate Trail. Volunteers are needed to help with various crews as well as adopting individual trails or maintaining the blazes. Crew leaders are also needed to organize trail crews on the various projects in the Park. Pat Lambert has been spearheading the Ice Storm damage clean-up this season and someone is needed to develop long range maintenance of the Park’s trails.

Starting in April we have scheduled monthly work trips to Wachusett. National Trails Day has been a popular event at the mountain, bringing greater awareness to trails, along with their many benefits and pleasures. We have joined the Student Conservation Association on their July trip to Wachusett and finishing up the season the first weekend in November. Some ideas that have been suggested are a beginners crew day or a Women’s crew, if you have any interest please call Steve Crowe for more information.

Desired Results: Wachusett Mountain will become a premier site for teaching trail building skills, especially teaching use of griphoist and highline systems. Wachusett is easily accessible, with excellent quarries and steep eroded trails that lend themselves to learning the fundamentals of safely moving rock, trail stabilization and treadway protection. Having a wide selection of the proper tools, allows for more flexibility and versatility to build systems that provide a mechanical advantage to accomplish the reconstruction effort and teach different techniques to other AMC Chapter Crews and volunteers.

Reconstruction work continues on the Pine Hill Trail at Wachusett Mountain. The Trail was originally constructed by the CCC as a ski trail in the 1930’s, however since it has become very popular, it has widened considerably into a steep, eroded trail. Join the trail committee for the Reconstruction and trail hardening work which consists of setting rock steps, building rock structures for drainage and waterbars and setting scree walls for trail definition. On different days we will be splitting rock, quarrying rock with high line systems or building the trail treadway itself.

Join experienced leaders to learn the fundamentals of safely moving rock, trail stabilization and treadway protection. Learn the mechanical advantage of moving rocks with a griphoist and highline system. Tremendous opportunity to be involved in a local project whose results will be around for decades. Tools and training available, bring lunch, water, and work gloves.

cont on pg 3
Meet behind the Wachusett Mountain Visitors Center, 8:30 to 4:30.

Register with Steve Crowe (508-450-1091).  steve@SunshineLandscapingCo.com

Dates for this year include:

September 26 and 27 Saturday and Sunday
November 7 and 8 Saturday and Sunday

Check with the leader as we often work on Friday to get the griphoist set up for the weekend.

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Explore Your Inner Winter Hiker

Charlie Arsenault, Ski Chair and Pat Lambert, Hiking Chair

We know we’re still in the midst of the fall hiking season but winter is just around the corner. Once again, the Worcester Chapter is offering a workshop on winter hiking. This workshop is suitable for first-timers but experienced winter hikers are welcome to join us, also. Here are the details of the workshop:

Thursday, November 5, 7-9 p.m., Northborough Historical Society, 50 Main St., Northborough MA. Ever wondered what it is like to view the winter wonderland from a mountain top but don’t know where to start? Then this workshop is for you! We’ll review hike preparation, proper gear, hydration, nutrition and more. This workshop will be followed by a graduated series of hikes from Dec. - Mar. Priority for participation in this series will be given to workshop participants. Workshop is free for AMC members; $5 for non-members. When registering, please provide your AMC membership # and expiration date. This information is available on the address label of your Outdoors magazine.

Register with Don Cunningham, don.cunningham@gmail.com, 508-344-7221.

We’re also looking for qualified winter hiking leaders and leaders-in-training to help plan the series of hikes that will follow the workshop. If interested in helping with the series, contact Charlie Arsenault at cca100@verizon.net.

Enjoy the trails no matter what season you traverse them!

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Volunteers of the month for June/July/August:

June - Don Flye
July - Dawn Foster
August - Steve Gabis

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Explore Your Inner Winter Hiker
The forecast called for clear skies and a hot and sunny August day for the big sea kayak adventure in the open waters of Portsmouth Harbor. Dave Cole, our patient, experienced and entertaining paddling chair organized nine folks to test the waters (and my skill level). Leading up to the event, I questioned my abilities to keep up with what was entered as an intermediate voyage, as my previous sea kayak trip years ago was rather intimidating with large vessels coming straight towards me wondering if they see our boats, and a struggle with the tides with having to be towed. I thought back then I’ll just stay with recreational boating and all the other activities I enjoy. Can’t do it all!

However, I soon found out that all the recreational kayaking I had been doing over the years at Hopkinton State Park paid off and so I set sail with the experienced crew to what was a challenge, yet pleasant day at the lighthouses, islands and beaches watching the big boats come through (and racing out of their way). We spent a spectacular six hours enjoying the surf soaking up the sun and swimming wherever we felt like getting out with no restrictions, plus had lots of laughs and interesting dynamics of participants. Several lessons were learned along the way with various leadership experiences.

The day ended with drinks and dinner at the fun pubs on a beautiful warm evening in the lively town of Portsmouth, and a very late return home exhilarated and relieved that the day I almost passed on turned out to be one of the best days of the summer “The Perfect Day”. I found a new sport that I absolutely loved and encourage those who might want to try it to just do it by renting a boat at your local outdoor retailers, practice at lakes and rivers, and hook up with our chapter paddlers who are welcoming to share their enthusiasm and knowledge of the exciting sport of paddling. You’ll be glad you did!
Everyone should spend a night at an AMC hut in winter. Yes, it’s rustic, that’s how you house 40 people deep in a pristine forest. Besides, the simplicity adds to the adventure, slowing time to a walking pace, reducing necessities to what fits on your back, and offering a new perspective on comfort. So while the rest of America turns up the thermostat, at Zealand Falls Hut sustainable cutting translates to 6 hours of wood heat a day - and sweeping snow out of the dining room. Light is similarly husbanded, provided courtesy of your caretaker packing in 100 pound gas cylinders.

Consider it a history lesson, a kind of alpine Sturbridge Village in which you get to live like your ancestors. Warmth is relative, achieved with proper dress, reinforced with mugs of hot, iron tasting water, and interspersed with shivering while changing clothes, getting in or out of bed, and visiting the outhouse. At 32 degrees, the dining room is warm. In the unheated bunk rooms nail heads and knots blossom with frost, the rough board walls glittering in the beam of a headlamp. But it really “isn’t so bad” as I somehow find myself observing in the toilets at 2 am and 14 below zero.

We wake the first morning to wind and snow, 4 inches so far and expected to continue all day. Departing for Mt. Zealand, Mt. Bond, and Bond Cliffs the temperature rises above freezing, but thankfully there is no change to rain. Around us glint snow flakes as big as sequins, showing off a crystal structure exactly like the paper cutouts made in grade school.

Reaching Zealand peak we calculate our rate of progress at one mile per hour, less than hoped. Ahead, the trail toward Bond is a foot and a half deep of unbroken snow. If we continue, we’ll be racing nightfall on the way back while retracing a path obscured by drifting. Besides, Ken Pickren’s knee hurts. We reluctantly decide to turn back.

But first, as consolation, I indulge a favorite winter hiking pastime and snowshoe a hundred yards of the trail we aren’t taking, effortlessly bounding downhill, enjoying the sensation of fresh powder yielding and sliding underfoot. Uphill is a lot more work.

Returning to the hut mid afternoon, we have it to ourselves for a few hours. Ken asks, “You’re not disappointed are you?” and I am not. We chose carefully, and I believe wisely. “Winter is the best time to hike,” as Ken observed earlier, “but it’s dangerous.” I burn a little residual energy by hiking the hundred yards to fetch water. Hint: you have to pump fast.

Next comes the golden rule of the huts, change all your cloths. Since the indoors is much like the outdoors (i.e. cold), treat it as you would any stop on the trail, only more so. You will get cold unless every piece of clothing is dry and you dress warmer than when you were hiking. Of course this requires you to bring two complete sets of cloths, from skivvies to top fleece. After changing, you hang what you wore hiking on the drying racks that lift to the ceiling on pulleys.

In the middle of my obligatory clothing change an older woman walks in wanting to know all about our trip to the Bonds – illustrating a couple more principles of hut life: One, the camaraderie, and two, the coed nature of the living quarters. Her group intends to hike to the bonds and is pleased to think we have broken trail for them. I finish dressing in the next room, and next day she and her retired friends do indeed reach the bonds.

Next morning at dawn I leave my warm sleeping bag and head to the toilets asking “Why am I subjecting myself to this torture?” You can’t even wash your hands, unless you count the waterless hand sanitizer, which I don’t. But stepping outside I glance toward the next peak, every branch luminous with frost, and my mood lifts.

After washing breakfast dishes, and hands, in water heated on the stove, I step onto the porch under a blue sky when I’m treated to another novel effect of sun and snow. Just yards away in the direction of the sun, from zenith to ground, the air shimmers in a dazzling column of light. Like dust motes visible only where the light catches them, a thick swarm of tiny ice crystals blaze. What’s most remarkable is their combined effect, like an array of mirrors focused on the observer, producing this blinding, gold fringed halo.

Intrigued, but eyes scorched, I return to packing for the 6 mile hike back to the car. That accomplished, and back in the embrace of conventional comforts, I’m in a kind of culture shock. Days spent in the cold, miles walked in the snow produce a mixture of feelings: accomplishment, respect, and yes dread. I turn up the heat and put on an extra fleece to drive away a chill. But we are already talking about next year, and our wives seem likely to join us.

David Elliott, www.linkedin.com/in/dkelliott

A Night on the Wild Side
By Scott Karpuk

For the second year, Clinton Middle School Principal Michael Vetros and teacher Scott Karpuk led 13, grade 8 students on an Appalachian Mountain Club-Mountain Classroom program. This is a summary of the trip.

On the first day of our trip the weather was beautiful. We left the middle school at 9 a.m. Our first stop was a rest area on the Kangamangus Highway where we enjoyed lunch. The White Mountains of New Hampshire surrounded us with beautiful views. We pulled into Joe Dodge Lodge, in Pinkham Notch around 1:30. Lindsey and Stephen, college graduates from University of San Diego and University of Montana respectively, introduced themselves as our instructors. In their early 20s, it was soon clear they had plenty of outdoor education experience. After playing a series of team building activities together, they took the kids into a classroom and talked about building and committing to a contract for the mountain classroom together. Students agreed to never ask two key questions on the trail: “Are we there yet?” and, “How much longer are we hiking?” They also discussed respect for oneself, the leaders, and the surroundings. The classroom part of the program wrapped up with teaching the students on the Leave No Trace philosophy and principles so instrumental to AMC’s cornerstones of education, conservation and recreation.

We hiked our first day in Pinkham Notch to a large outcrop called Square Ledge. We had lessons on native plants along the way. The view from Square Ledge was of 6,288 foot Mount Washington and The Presidential Range. There were large patches of snow along Tuckerman’s Ravine this late in the season. Lindsay conducted a class on glaciers and wind. She explained that Mount Washington has had the highest recorded wind speed in the world, 231 miles per hour in April 1934. We hiked back down the mountain and prepared for dinner.

At the Joe Dodge Lodge the students roomed together in groups of four. Dinner was served family-style, after which we adjourned to the gear room. There we received instructions on how to properly pack a backpack. Consideration was given to weight distribution and access to the things we needed most while on the trail. Each of us was equipped with sleeping bags, rain gear, fleece pants and jackets, backpacks and boots.

Lights were out at 9:30. Wakeup call came at 6 a.m. to get ready for breakfast at 6:30 before heading out from Pinkham Notch. After breakfast we hauled our backpacks to the classroom where we divided up the food we would carry for the next two days’ meals.

Then it started to drizzle. Then it started to sprinkle. Then it started to rain.

Our trail went uphill, crossing and re-crossing the brook numerous times on plank bridges and split log bridges. Various students took the lead position. They were motivators and encouraged all of us to take water breaks. After completing the first two miles of the trail, we came to our first intersection with Carter Dome Trail.

Then it started to rain steady. We were all soaked. Each of our packs probably gained 10 to 20 pounds in water weight. We continued on as the trail became steeper through a forest of mixed hardwoods, fir and spruce. The riddle games kept spirits high and we made good time up the mountain.

Then wind started driving the rain. As we cleared 3,500 feet in elevation, the rain was blowing sideways. It was with relief that we came upon the sign that it was 0.3 miles to Carter Notch Hut. We carefully picked our way down the short descent to Carter Lakes and on to Carter Notch Hut. We had hiked just short of five hours in the rain.

Heidi, the hut caretaker, knew how to welcome the wet and weary. The scent of baking cookies lured us like Hansel and Gretel, filling the hut with a warm inviting smell. The stone hut is capped with a green metal-roof; the inside has six dinner tables, a kitchen and the caretaker’s quarters. The compound has three main outbuildings: two sleeping quarters that can accommodate 20 people each in four rooms, and an outhouse with composting toilets. The buildings are all connected via rock stairs and paths. The buildings have neither heat nor electricity. Thankfully, they had extra blankets to supplement our sleeping bags.

We all changed out of our wet clothing and gathered at the hut to spend the afternoon playing chess, Scrabble, cards, guitar, telling stories, snacking and building puzzles.

For dinner, it was all hands on to make burritos. Heidi coached as we did all the prep work, cooking and cleaning. Food always tastes better when you work so hard to bring it to your destination and then share in the process of bringing it to the table. Everyone fell exhausted and happy into bed around 8:30. Although we were in a remote, stunningly-scenic wilderness, visibility was about 20 feet.

Lindsay and Stephen treated us to blueberry pancakes and bacon for breakfast around 6:30 a.m., accompanied by coffee and hot chocolate. We packed our bags, said goodbye to Heidi and went back on the trail. An hour or so into the hike, one student turned her ankle. She was treated with an cont on pg 7
ace bandage and given two walking sticks to take most of the weight off her ankle. This worked well and, since we were a cohesive group, her needs set the pace for the descent.

We walked downhill through the dampness, with limited visibility, and suffered no other setbacks. Our hike out took only three hours; everyone agreed it was too short, and were ready to turn right back and do it all over again.

We took a group picture and Vetros commended students. He spoke about how proud he was of their accomplishments along the trail; how he never heard any complaining about the hike, the trail or the weather; how the last two days along the trail were some of the toughest days he has seen recently.

In retrospect, when we consider the perfect day, the perfect weather for a hike, how is it that we had the perfect trip because of the imperfect weather? The weather caused us all to look more inside ourselves rather than at distant scenery. Our journey, though arduous and physically challenging along the trail, was to us longer and deeper in achievement.

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**Mt. Wachusett and Midstate Trail Clean-up**

*By: Don Hoffes, Worcester Chapter At-Large Chair; Pat Lambert, Worcester Chapter Hiking Chair*

The December 2008 ice storm wreaked havoc throughout central and northern Massachusetts. One of the hardest hit areas was Princeton, MA, home of Wachusett Mountain. Initial estimates for the time that it would take to open up the trails so that they could be hiked safely exceeded 1 year. Dept. of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) crews chain-sawed large limbs and trees that had fallen and blocked trails. On Feb. 28, 14 volunteers from both the Appalachian Mountain Club (Worcester, Boston and Southeast Massachusetts Chapters) and Wachusett Greenways hiked and cleared debris from various trails. Much work remained to get the trails in hiking shape after this initial clean-up effort.

DCR crews continued their work on the trails. During the winter and spring, hikers on the mountain were observed regularly clearing debris from the trails as they enjoyed their hikes. On April 5, the AMC Worcester Chapter sent out another clean-up party and cleared more debris from the hardest hit trails.

By June 6, National Trails Day, Denise Morrissey, Recreation Facilities Supervisor at Wachusett Mountain State Reservation, reported that the trails were in good shape. The only one in need of some additional attention is the Mountain House Trail that requires some re-directing and better signage.

The AMC Worcester Chapter will continue to work with the DCR as needed to ensure that the trails are clear of debris and clearly blazed and signed. The efforts of the DCR, the AMC Chapter volunteers and hikers who enjoy the trails at Wachusett Mountain expedited the clean-up effort so that it took less than 6 months to once again make the trails safe for hiking.

**Midstate Trail**

The Midstate Trail, which is maintained by the Midstate Trail Committee (a Worcester Chapter sub-committee), is a scenic footpath located in Worcester County, 45 miles west of Boston. This 92 mile hiking trail extends from Rhode Island crossing the gentle hills of central Massachusetts to the New Hampshire border.

The Midstate Trail was severely affected for over 50 miles as a result of the December 2008 ice storm. With the help of various landowners, many AMC Worcester Chapter volunteers and the Midstate Trail Committee, the trail is clear and passable through the damaged areas. Trail users should keep an eye out for stray broken tree tops which are still a hazard overhead and recently fallen branches along the trail.
WORCESTER CHAPTER
APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB
5 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108

Sponsored by the Berkshire Chapter at Becket-Chimney Corners. Explore the beautiful Berkshires during peak foliage season! Enjoy great hikes, bike rides, and paddles. Climb cliffs, climbing walls, ropes courses. Family activities, contra dancing, socials, and campfires, music. Meet new friends. Everyone is welcome. Info and registration on http://amcberkshire.org/gathering

Editor, Barbara Dyer. All newsletter submissions should be sent to barbaradyer@hotmail.com. We reserve the right to edit for length and content. All contributions are welcome. Winter deadline December 15.

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AMC Fall Gathering Oct 16-18th.

Sponsored by the Berkshire Chapter at Becket-Chimney Corners. Explore the beautiful Berkshires during peak foliage season! Enjoy great hikes, bike rides, and paddles. Climb cliffs, climbing walls, ropes courses. Family activities, contra dancing, socials, and campfires, music. Meet new friends. Everyone is welcome. Info and registration on http://amcberkshire.org/gathering

Worcester Chapter Annual Meeting

Date: 11/14/2009 Join us for the Chapters Annual Meeting at The Manor Meeting. Dinner followed by a special program “7 Continents, 7 Marathons” by Jeanne Stawiecki. Jeanne will tell us about her adventures in climbing the highest points on each continent as well as running marathons on each one of them. Come enjoy dinner, socialize with friends and hear more of her inspirational story. All are welcome. Members $25, $35 non-members. Time 5:00 -10:00 p.m. Registration required. Details will be mailed to Chapters Members and will be available on the website in Sept.

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