

Meet Mike Fisher, CMC Conservation Chair

By Danny Bernstein



Mike Fisher is a serious man – and a serious outdoors person.

He grew up in Fairview, outside of Asheville, though he spent forty-five years away from Western North Carolina.

But in 2014, he and his wife Sandra moved back to the area and now live in Swannanoa. Well, they moved back to North Carolina. Sandra comes from eastern NC and they split their time between the mountains and the coast.

Mike spent his professional life as an economist, specializing in environmental and energy policy. He worked for a think tank in Cambridge, MA which advises on public policy. The best definition of a think tank is a group of people who are paid to read, discuss, think, and write, usually to address and redress a matter of vital importance to humanity.

One example. Appalachian Voices commissioned his company to look at a proposed coal fired power plant in SW Virginia. They found that it would be more economically beneficial to Virginia for the power company to meet its electricity needs by investing in energy efficiency, while also cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution. The company could actually save money and be more earth friendly.

Mike worked on projects all over the world, commissioned by governments and public policy organizations. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Yale.

CMC Life

He joined CMC in 2015. Barbara Morgan and Becky Smucker encouraged him to join the CMC Conservation committee. They felt that with his background and training, Mike would contribute a great deal. Mike became Chair of the committee this year.

The Conservation Committee has been active in the Pisgah Nantahala Forest management plan, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=stelprdb5397660> from its inception, at least since 2013.

Such a long lead time might be very upsetting to some, maybe even convince them that they don't want to get involved in this project. But not Mike.

“I'm not bothered. I'm used to long-term projects.” Some of his work projects were on the books for 10 to 15 years.

After years of collecting comments and holding meetings, the US Forest Service will release its draft management plan this year. The day that it comes out, the public (that's us) has 90 days to comment. This is where we, the CMC membership, need to pay attention and comment. The final Management Plan will dictate the Forest Service guidelines on how to manage Pisgah and Nantahala Forests for at least twenty years, making it a very important document for CMC hikers and maintainers.

The committee will help CMC members, by having Comment Writing Workshops and focusing on a small number of issues. We need to write as individuals. CMC will also have a club response which will be approved by the CMC Council.

Mike finally retired from his professional life in 2017. But he is as serious about the Conservation Committee work as he was in his prior professional paid work – digging in, going to meetings, meeting deadlines, writing reports...

He knows how to prioritize his work. Because he and his wife live part-time in Wilmington, NC, he also volunteered with the Cape Fear River Watch, an environmental non-profit which advocates for the health of the river. But when he realized how much work and involvement the Forest Plan would involve, he dialed back on his Cape Fear activities. Sorry, Wilmington, but Western North Carolina is glad to have him.

Mike's Full Life



Mike was also a serious skier and climber and, in his late sixties, still is. But now, Mike spends a lot of time exploring our area. He likes to hike Graybeard with friends and is exploring Pisgah Forest.

Mike has been a hiker, climber and skier since he joined the Yale Mountaineering Club in college. He joined the [Appalachian Mountain Club](http://www.outdoors.org), [www.outdoors.org], the oldest outdoor club in the United States. With them and with friends, he's climbed and skied all throughout much of North

America, including New England, western U.S. and the Canadian Rockies.

But he is also a musician, specializing in Rock and Blues. He plays a guitar he received from his uncle in Madison County, when he was twelve years old. Mike's mountain roots run deep.

The Last Question

If you could take an out-of-town guest, who hikes as well as you do, on one hike to show off the area, where would you go?

“The Black Mountain Crest Trail, starting at Mt. Mitchell,” Mike said without hesitation. Though Mike didn’t explicitly say how far he would go on the trail – it’s a tough one – you know it would be all the way. That’s how Mike Fisher does things.

**Watch for details on the Forest plan in the eNews and the specifics on the Comment Writing Workshops.