



Carolina Mountain Club

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In This Issue

[A Letter to the Members](#)

[CMC Receives Sierra Club Green Award](#)

[Max Patch Trail Ambassador Program](#)

[VISTA Date Change](#)

A Letter to the Members

Dear CMC Members,

As I hand the presidential reins to Debby Jones, I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have been the president of this club. It has been an honor to work with the other members of Council and with all of you who volunteer your time to make this club a success. Its rich tradition and reputation in the community are things of which we can all be proud. As I take up my role as immediate past president, I look forward to continued work and friendship with you all. Here's to a successful and enjoyable 2020, and congratulations to Debby in her new role as president.

Randy Fluharty

CMC Receives Sierra Club Green Award

by Randy Fluharty

The Carolina Mountain Club received a Sierra Club Green Award at the Sierra Club's December meeting. Randy Fluharty and Ron Navik accepted the award for the Green Volunteer Club category, which was awarded for the club's trail maintenance efforts and specifically for its work on Max Patch. CMC and Sierra Club member Bill Snow, shown with Randy and Ron, was responsible for nominating the club. Several awards were presented, including the Green Retailer award, which went to one of our partners, REI. The Sierra Club is one of the country's leading environmental advocates, making this award particularly gratifying.



Max Patch Trail Ambassador Program Launched by CMC

by Paul Curtain

This fall CMC launched an ambitious Trail Ambassador program for Max Patch with the support of the ATC and the USFS Appalachian Ranger District, as well as fellow Southern region A.T. clubs like GATC and NHC. Following in the footsteps of these successful programs, we focused our efforts on Max Patch, a jewel of the southern A.T. that is being "loved to death" by increasing numbers of hikers and campers. Max Patch is in desperate need of a Visitor Use Management program, which is in place, and guides the TAs and activities of our trail crews.



2020 will be critically important to protecting Max Patch and giving the TA program a strong foundation. To achieve critical mass the program needs at least 25 people who are willing to go out as TAs about eight times per year on weekends to make the program sustainable and impactful. If you enjoy talking to people you would enjoy giving back in this way. Our next training class is scheduled for Saturday March 21st. Please contact Paul Curtin at pmcurtin@hotmail.com if you are interested in joining this effort.

What are the issues at Max Patch? • Daily use is rising, with numbers of visitors routinely greater than 500 on the weekends. • Increasing levels of trash, poor sanitation control, and expanding user created trails. • Hundreds of cars parked on each side of the road, at times creating an impassable roadway and at minimum a one way street. • At times more than 100 tents camped on top on weekends, and proliferating fire rings. • Widespread promotion of the area on social media and Asheville tourism sites, as well as outdoors magazines. What has been done at Max Patch in the last two years? Recognizing the escalating situation, CMC worked with the ATC and the USFS to create a Visitor Use Management program for Max Patch. Under the auspices of this committee, National Trails Days event have been held there in 2018 and 2019 (also scheduled for 2020) to promote responsible use of the bald and to implement actions to better control visitor impacts. The key focus areas are visitor education, trail improvements, and access limitation. We have: • Installed a 3 panel kiosk with a viewing platform to help educate visitors. • Installed signage and weatherable maps around the loop to keep visitors on the trail and show them where they are. • Added locust and plastic snow fencing in various locations to block off user created trails. This is still a big challenge. • With approval from the NC DOT, added No Parking signs on one side of the road for 750 ft. This may need to be extended. A.T. Blaze Stakes Used for Fire Pit

•Hardened the trail for increased usage by rebuilding all the locust steps (>100), adding needed water diversion, widening the access trails, and adding truckloads of gravel to the steps and trail. In spite of all this work, more needed to be done. The next step was to implement a Trail Ambassador program. TAs spend a day at the bald, talking to and educating hikers on how to reduce their impact and keep Max Patch the special place it is. We held a full day training class in September for our first group of eight TAs, focused on the issues at Max Patch, background on the area, and teaching them how to approach hikers using the Art of the Resource technique, along with Leave No Trace. They enthusiastically went out and took their first patrols this fall, making an immediate impact and providing invaluable usage data we did not have.

Here are some of their thoughts about this program : What motivated you to become a TA? See if we could make a difference and "save the Patch". A desire to help others enjoy the Appalachian Trail and Max Patch in particular. Max Patch needs some safeguards in place to maintain it for future generations. I was motivated to become a TA since I maintain a section of the AT near Max Patch and after working on a trail day there felt that the challenges of the area could be addressed. What was your favorite part of your first patrol? Speaking with people who were visiting Max Patch and providing information that would make their trip more enjoyable. Things such as providing the names of the mountains and National Forests they would be able to view, sharing the Trail Loop description, and the principals of "Leave No Trace" hiking. Often, I was asked to provide more information on the surrounding area of Hot Springs and other places to hike. My favorite part of the patrol was interacting with all of the people. What are the challenges Max Patch faces? There are just too many people and animals for the area. "Being Loved to Death" is the expression often used to describe the

challenges. The traffic is higher than anyone imagined, and if we don't put in place some sound management guidelines, the area will be buried under trash, and stripped of flora and fauna by the traffic. The Carolina Mountain Club has done an amazing job of both

Helped These Campers Bring Gear Down

protecting and repairing this beautiful natural resource, but the traffic continues to increase and more must be done to keep it beautiful and safe for all of us. Parking is one of the biggest challenges as well as people staying on trail. Who was the most interesting person you met? A 4 year old boy who came up to us and said he had just waked thru the clouds - it was very foggy that morning. He was so excited. I met "runaway bob" who had just completed a thru hike with his friend and they were there to provide trail magic. Runaway was fascinated with what we were doing and when he saw anyone going up the wrong trail he would yell "get the hell off the trail", these ladies are trying to save this area". He also wanted Sallye to go for a ride on his Harley with him but she told him she was trying not to shorten her life. Thanks to Jim and Sharon Spicer, Henry Kassell, Ed Shaw, Morgen Yeakley, Paula Massey, Debby Jones, and Sallye Sanders for being pioneers to get the program started. So far we have Jim and Judy Magura, Randy Fluharty, Susan Hutson, Dick and Suzanne Ott, Miranda Peterson, Darla Schuerger, and Mary Zoch are signed up for the March class.

VISTA Date Change

by Kathy Kyle

The date for the first Appalachian Trail VISTA has been changed from 2020 to 2021. The 2021 date for the multi-day hiking extravaganza is Aug 6-9 at State University of New York in New Paltz.



The 2021 VISTA is being coordinated with the celebration of the NY/NJ Trail Club's 100th Anniversary. The NY/NJ trail club are the sponsors and have noted that 2021 is also the 100th anniversary of Benton McKaye's article that conceived the Appalachian Trail concept. Updated information is available at www.atvista.org, so save the date for this event.

Previously, the multi-day event was called the ATC Conference and was last held in Maine in 2017. The event featured multiple workshops and hiking excursions and overnight trips on the Appalachian Trail. The location changes each time and the Carolina Mountain Club has co-hosted the conference in the past. Details are not yet available about hikes, excursions and workshops that will be offered in 2021.

The ATC Conference was changed to VISTA and the plan was to have the VISTA every three years and separate the business of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy from the VISTA.



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