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News and Notes

Appalachian Mountain Club Proposes New Hut in Crawford Notch

The Appalachian Mountain Club has filed an application with the state of New Hampshire to build and operate a new hut in Crawford Notch. The building, accessible off a connector trail from the Arethusa-Ripley Falls Trail and the Ethan Pond Trail, would serve meals and offer overnight sleeping bunks between May and October. It would be open as a self-service hut the rest of the year. Like most AMC facilities, it would incorporate green energy systems such as solar and wind power.

The AMC said that it has seen record occupancy in the huts in recent years. The last hut was built 50 years ago, and since that time, use of the huts has tripled. The huts play an important role in introducing new audiences to the outdoors and in growing a new generation of conservation advocates.

The AMC has requested to build a parking lot for 30 to 50 cars off Route 302 at the Ethan Pond trailhead. Other visitor services proposed at the hut include information services, educational programs, and interpretive displays.

The state of New Hampshire announced the proposal to the public in July, adding that the AMC would create a four-season trail off of the Ethan Pond Trail connecting the state park with Zealand Valley.

The New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development Division of Parks and Recreation held two public meetings on the proposal, which would require the AMC to lease land in Crawford Notch State Park. For details about the plans, see outdoors.org/about/newsroom/crawford-notch-hut-proposal.cfm.

—From State of New Hampshire press releases and AMC

AMC Opposes Transmission Project, Which Still Lacks Permits

The Appalachian Mountain Club continues to oppose the Northern Pass Transmission project in New Hampshire, a 187-mile transmission line that will visually affect the White Mountain National Forest, Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and more than 95,000 acres throughout the state.

In late July 2015, the U.S. Department of Energy released its draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Northern Pass project.

The AMC is still reviewing the extensive document, but some preliminary observations are already apparent.

In its draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), the Department of Energy's alternatives analysis provides strong evidence that the overhead transmission line proposed by Northern Pass, or just partial burial in the vicinity of the White Mountain National Forest, would cause considerable environmental and scenic damage compared with total burial of the project.

Furthermore, although Northern Pass has promoted its proposed overhead transmission line as a project that would provide jobs in the region, the DEIS provides clear evidence that full burial of the line would provide almost twice as many jobs, a much smaller impact on property values, and more long-lasting economic benefits to the region than would overhead transmission lines or partial burial.

"Both this DEIS and a review of the Clean Energy Link transmission project in Vermont show that 100-percent burial of HVDC transmission lines is technically feasible, cost-effective, and has fewer societal and environmental impacts," said AMC Director of Research Kenneth Kimball. "Unlike the Northern Pass overhead transmission proposal, the Vermont project is completely buried and includes a very substantial \$400 million mitigation and enhancement fund. We challenge Northern Pass to follow the lead of the Vermont project and bury the line for its entire length for the sake of the landscape, people, and economy of New Hampshire."

Northern Pass has said its next step will be to seek a permit for the project from the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee (SEC). The SEC process for reviewing and certifying the siting of energy projects is complex and adjudicatory, meaning it is run like a trial, with multiple lawyers representing competing interests, testimony by expert witnesses, cross examination, and more.

In 2013, the AMC along with such colleague organizations as the Conservation Law Foundation, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and The Nature Conservancy, worked with legislators to get important changes made to both the structure of the SEC itself, and to the rules under which it will consider applications. Although the new SEC structure is in place—the committee is now composed of nine members, including for the first time two public members—the new rules were not yet finalized when this journal went to press. The AMC sought clear standards for evaluating proposed energy projects and was planning to take part in technical sessions and other meetings at the SEC.

After more than four and a half years since first proposing this project, Northern Pass has yet to receive any of the three permits it needs to proceed.

—*Susan Arnold, Rob Burbank, and Ken Kimball*

Dream Comes True on Long Trail: Winooski River Footbridge

The Winooski Valley Long Trail Relocation opened in Bolton, Vermont, on June 12, 2015, completing an effort that began as a dream in 1910, coalesced into a “board action item” of the Green Mountain Club in 1989, and became unstoppable in 2011 when the club secured certification and licenses. Even Hurricane Irene did not halt the plans.

The Long Trail relocation includes 4.6 miles of new trail tread from Bolton Notch Road leading around the summit of Stimson Mountain to connect with the old Long Trail on Oxbow Ridge. This new route eliminated nearly two miles of road walking, and the Long Trail itself now measures 1.7 miles shorter.

This relocation includes a 224-foot clear span steel suspension bridge over the Winooski River. The towers soar 40 feet over normal river water levels, and the deck is designed to remain above the river’s 100-year flood level.

The project cost \$2.5 million. Contributors included the state of Vermont and private donors.

—*From a report by Dave Hardy, Green Mountain Club*

Appalachian Trail Speed Record Surpassed

Ultramarathon runner and Boulder, Colorado, resident Scott Jurek set a new speed record for hiking the entire Appalachian Trail when he reached the summit of Katahdin, in Maine’s Baxter State Park, on Sunday, July 12. Jurek won the Western States 100-Mile race seven times, in addition to competing in numerous other ultramarathon events. As a supported traverse, Jurek’s run of the trail depended on crews who met him with food and gear along the way. Jurek completed the 2,189-mile Appalachian Trail in 46 days, 8 hours, and 7 minutes, just three hours faster than the previous record, set by Jennifer Pharr Davis in 2011. In the next issue of *Appalachia*, Lucille Stott will report on Baxter State Park’s response to Jurek’s celebration on the Katahdin summit.

—*From Scott Jurek’s blog and media reports*

A Lament Inspired by a Visit to the Local Landfill

One afternoon last winter, I decided to get rid of some of the stuff that has been in storage at my farm awaiting a day that will never come when it might find use again. I'm not talking about the material things we live with by choice because they furnish our present lifestyle. I'm talking about things that fit an earlier lifestyle, back when I was doing things I no longer do.

I drove to our town's landfill with a lifetime assemblage of mountaineering equipment dumped at random into a large open carton where it had lain for years. It wasn't pretty. Much of it was mouse infested and in bad shape (backpacks, headlamps, ropes, gaiters, balaclavas). And most of it was obsolete by today's standards. (Might that be a metaphor that runs through this lament?) I'll start with my still serviceable 12-point steel crampons. Their only design flaw is that one needs bare hands to work the small clips and straps that affix them tightly to climbing boots. Bare hands can be a problem in subzero temperatures on winter climbs. That's why today we have high-tech step-in crampons. (By the way, the heavy winter hiking boots, and I mean heavy, were discarded years ago.)

This spur-of-the-moment load of stuff, now trash, truly shook me up. Each article conjured up vivid memories of when and where it had served me well, when it (and I guess I) was not approaching obsolescence.

The trash compactor is now home to my beloved Eureka Backpacker aluminum-frame two-person tent. That's where my dearly departed first wife and I bedded down up in Baxter State Park when I first climbed Katahdin a half-century ago. While I was summiting, Carol met her first moose on a hike to Sandy Pond. After a brief staring contest, she beat a hasty retreat back to the relative safety of our tent. That same tent later kept a million hungry blackflies at bay on an overnight canoe trip on the Saco River, it sheltered me from monsoon rains when I was exploring New Jersey's Pine Barrens, and it was my recovery room when I injured my ankle during a remote climb out in Wyoming's Wind River Range.

I tossed out the Coleman stove that boiled water for countless freeze-dried meals on climbs from Maine all the way to California. I remembered how hikers and climbers will wolf down anything they can mix with boiling water as their reward for a day of self-reliance in the wilds.

Parting with those steel crampons I already mentioned really made me pause. They allowed purchase on rock-hard ice and in hurricane-force winds on annual winter climbs across the Alpine Garden on Mount Washington, over a period of 25 years. Why would mountaineers gather each year

on Washington's Birthday to climb through what is acknowledged to be the "world's worst weather? Because it's there, I guess.

I let go of headlamps that pierced the darkness when I needed to see at night but still have my hands free. They lit the trail when I began a solo climb of Longs Peak in the front range of the Colorado Rockies at 3 A.M. in a total blackout. They helped me find a pack of Tums in the recesses of my backpack after consuming an entire bag of freeze-dried Chili Mac With Beef. And they certainly came in handy when I had to exit my sleeping bag at midnight on chilly nights to find an appropriate backcountry spot for . . .

And what further use would I have for my glacier glasses today, even though they were a must to filter out UV rays in high thin air during climbs on the Grand Teton, Mount Rainier, and Mount Whitney? Just "stuff" taking up space, stuff I would never need again.

I saved a few things, like heavy mountaineering gloves and mittens in good shape (not nourishing enough for the mice, I guess). Maybe I can use them when I shovel my New Hampshire roof. I also saved my best backpacks and sleeping bags, ones that accompanied my wife, Jan, and me on last summer's hike over the Continental Divide to the Granite Park Chalet in Glacier National Park.

And I'll never part with my ancient and well-scarred ice ax. Today's high-tech versions are made of chromoly steel with aluminum alloy shafts. You'll only find one with a wooden shaft like mine in an antique shop. Mine also has a tight-fitting leather cover, the envy of many climbers who wanted to buy it. It was handcrafted by an old friend, Windy Reed, of Gageville, Vermont. Windy has been gone for more than 30 years. But that trusty ice ax with its custom leather cover has a stubborn history. It won't leave until I do.

It was a bit depressing that parts of life's journey end up at the landfill. But my long-term memory is amazing. I fixed on one item at a time, and up popped a dozen rich memories. Driving away, I spotted the landfill attendant in the rearview mirror. He scrutinized the contents of my large carton, perhaps looking for something of value. "Just worthless old stuff," I imagined him saying. He'll never know that to me it was much more than that.

—*Bob Weekes*

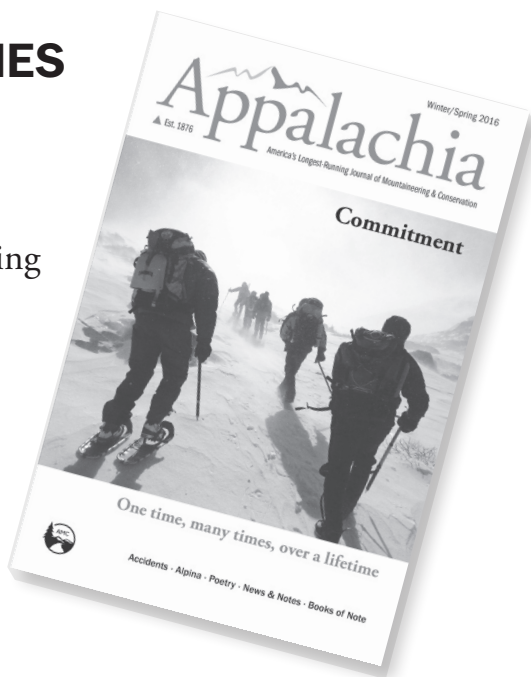
BOB WEEKES lives in Richmond, New Hampshire.

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