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News and Notes

The Appalachian Mountain Club Names Susan Arnold Interim President

The Appalachian Mountain Club's Board of Directors has appointed Susan Arnold, AMC's vice president of conservation, as interim CEO. Susan took the role of interim CEO on January 3, 2022, after the departure of President and CEO John Judge, who left for a new position as president and CEO of the Trustees of Reservations. This is a historic moment, as Arnold's appointment marks the first time AMC will be led by a woman in the organization's 145-year history.

Arnold has been with AMC for more than eighteen years and is well positioned for this leadership role. She has been a key player on many of the organization's high-profile accomplishments in recent years, including AMC's expanded recreational offerings in New York and ecolodges in Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness.

"I'm honored by the opportunity to continue to advance AMC's mission of fostering the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the outdoors," Arnold said. "From trail maintenance to education programs in public schools to science-based advocacy, AMC is at the forefront of ensuring some of our most treasured natural resources are here for the use and enjoyment of future generations."

AMC's Board of Directors has established a search committee to find a permanent leader for the organization. More details will be available as this leadership transition progresses.

"Susan's more than eighteen-year tenure as a senior leader within AMC makes her uniquely positioned to steer the organization during this transition," said Elizabeth Ehrenfeld, the board chair. "This is an exciting time for the organization and Susan will be able to continue the tremendous forward momentum we have experienced in recent years."

—AMC

Shelter at Imp Campsite Restored Using Historic Techniques

Choosing restoration over replacement in fall 2021, the Appalachian Mountain Club Trails Department repaired and rehabilitated the shelter at Imp Campsite

in the Carter Range of the White Mountains. For eight weeks, a collective of AMC staff, contractors, and partner organizations carefully disassembled and restored the native-log shelter, which was originally built in 1980 by the AMC trail crew.

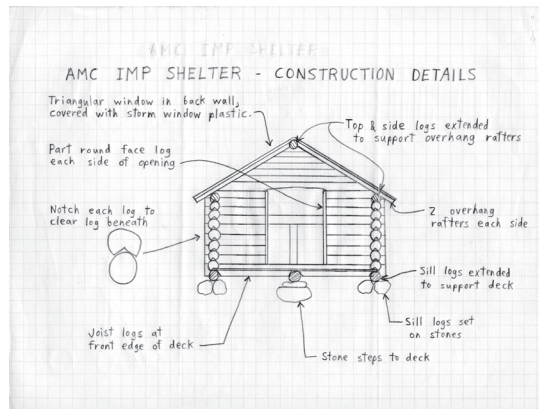
Cradled between North Carter Mountain and Mount Moriah, Imp Campsite is a fairly quiet place, a stopover for Appalachian Trail thru-hikers or occasional

camp groups as they traverse the Carters or circle through the Wild River Wilderness. First established as a hunting and tramping camp from nearby Gorham, New Hampshire, the general location of the site and the shelter has shifted over the years. The current shelter stands about a half-mile or so from the previous locations. Earlier creative and unique shelter design options included the original tiny bark and spruce pole lean-to and a shingled barn-like structure with a hinged door.

The compelling reasons for repair over replacement were a combination of the historical value of the shelter and the simple reason that the majority of the shelter was in excellent shape. Imp is one of three of the original “Mahoosuc style” shelters build in the 1970s and 1980s. They are called Mahoosuc style because the first one built this way went up in the Mahoosuc Range at Gentian Pond Campsite. The other from that era is the shelter at Carlo Col Campsite. The shelter at Guyot Campsite, positioned between Mount Guyot and the Bonds, was originally built in that style, but it was torn down and rebuilt in 2019.

To construct the original shelters, AMC trail crew members harvested, hauled, peeled, notched, hewed, and assembled the shelters from locally harvested spruce and fir trees from around the campsite.

Before Imp, all the logs of the shelters were only flattened and stacked with crude notches at the corners. In 1976, John Nininger had a seed planted in his



This 1980 sketch details construction of the Imp shelter, the first the Appalachian Mountain Club trail crew built using a Swedish technique of joining the logs. The shelter was in good enough shape in 2021 that the restoration team reused its original floor joists. AMC

biome (so to speak) after one week working on Carlo Col Campsite. In 1980, he had just completed his fourth year on the AMC trail crew and had for three years been practicing ancient skills of log building dating back to the fifteenth century in Scandinavia. The trail crew leader, John McIntosh, invited Nininger to share his recently acquired skills with the crew. Thus Imp shelter became the first shelter in the Whites to be built using the Swedish cope full scribe technique, raising the bar for all shelter work going forward as well as increasing the potential longevity that could be expected. By 2021, the pudding had proved itself. Imp shelter had stood up to the test. A full replacement was not needed. Imp could be saved. The hewing, scribing, and notching of each row of logs was done by hand with axes and hatchets, and traditionally is all that is needed to hold the logs together. Screws were used (spikes originally) as additional reinforcement with oakum stuffed into the coped joinery for backup sealing.

Only the lowest course of logs, the very ends of the roof logs, and the shingled roof itself showed any signs of decay. The rest of the logs were merely weathered on their exterior surfaces after 40 years of high-altitude battering. The Trails Department sat down with Nininger and Hawk Metheny (New England regional director of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, which manages the Appalachian Trail in that area) to design a plan for repair and rehabilitation that would reuse the logs.

During the same 40 years that Imp had been shielding hikers from storms, Nininger had been progressing his skills building numerous log homes throughout the Northeast and beyond, and in 2007 he began contracting with AMC for shelter replacements. His Wooden House Company work can be found across the White Mountains: Besides Guyot already mentioned, he built shelters at Kinsman Pond Campsite (2007), Eliza Brook Campsite (2010), Garfield Ridge Campsite (2011), Speck Pond Campsite (2016), and the Dartmouth Outing Club's Moosilauke Ravine Lodge (2017), all of them unique in design.

The Imp shelter project started simply: removing the roof. Following that, every step grew increasingly complex and involved real-time problem solving. Next came the process of disassembling: labeling logs, creating a backcountry equivalent of a crane to lift the gables into the air, then cautiously squeaking and prying each row apart from the spikes holding them together, and arranging the logs for re-use.

Previous restoration efforts and new shelter replacements had used milled lumber to rebuild the floor system. For Imp's restoration, the team decided to reuse the original log floor joists reinforced with new sills and the central

summer beam, all of cedar logs harvested in Vermont close to Nininger's business. Pre-notching of the replacement logs in Vermont made for efficient use of time onsite after being flown in. Each old log joist was then re-notched into the new sills.

Each 40-year-old hand-hewn log was given new life using the techniques Nininger deploys in any full-scribe construction project. The rows are stacked in place, Nininger walking up and down by hand tracing or "scribing" the lines to ensure each row fits snugly beneath the log above. In place of axes, Nininger and his work partner Adam Miller used lithium-ion battery powered chain saws—quiet, clean, and powerful. When the notch is fitted, and the log slides into place, it feels like the two logs are sucking each other closer together. It is a method that maximizes what a log has to offer. When these notches slip into place, it is nothing less than magic.

Minor but important structural shifts for the shelter included lifting it a foot higher into the air on rock cairns, eliminating contact with the ground and promoting air flow. The porch is now a step down from the inside floor, offering additional air flow. The final cap to the shelter was a roof of red cedar, the same style of shingles pulled off only a few weeks prior.

Backcountry construction projects are never easy or straightforward. There is no permanent electricity source, there is no "inside" to do things if it's raining, and it is so easy to lose tools and hardware amid the forest duff. The nearest hardware store is a 4.8-mile hike before you even get to your car. Log construction always benefits from a crane, whether land- or helicopter-based, to place each log directly into the notch without nicking a curve, but a crane could not be used at the Imp site. While the restoration effort of Imp represents sophistication of methods and technology, the crew still faced the same conditions of the original construction crew.

Special mention goes to AMC Backcountry Campsite Program Coordinator Joe Roman, AMC Campsite Program Field Coordinator Brianna Russell, Wooden House Company's Nininger and Miller, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and White Mountain National Forest. The project was funded partly by the Appalachian Trail/National Park Service, also the source of funds for previous shelter projects.

—Sally Manikian
News and Notes Editor, with thanks to John Nininger

News and Notes Editor's note: Imp Campsite was the first campsite where I worked as a backcountry caretaker in 2007, launching my career in the AMC Trails Department. In

fall 2021, knowing this project was going on, I wanted to make a trip to the site but not in a way that interfered or put me in the middle of any construction decisions. I also wanted to make a trip to the site on a beautiful weather day, relatively easy to do as I only live a few miles from the trailhead.

On September 20, that day came, and despite my best efforts to leave my desk and my day job, it was almost 1 P.M. when I pulled into the trailhead with one of my dogs, Gemma. The last time I had hiked to Imp had been in 2015, when I last worked for AMC as the campsite program manager, the job Joe Roman holds now. The trail seems a lot shorter when you're not hiking it for work.

About a mile from the campsite, I came to a lone backpacker moving slower than I was with a heavier pack. As Gemma approached him, I coughed to make our presence known. He turned around, and as I opened my mouth to ask if my dog could pass off-leash, my jaw dropped.

"John?"

"Sally?"

And so, John Nininger and I found ourselves hiking together, ten years to the day since we had flown into the shelter at Garfield Ridge. A decade that marked extraordinary changes for both of us: the previous year, John had lost his wife to cancer, and I had recently lost my mother. Had I left on time, I wouldn't have shared the last mile of trail with him to Imp, the place where so much began for me. Whether coincidence or a message from the great beyond, being in that place with John, on that day, was nothing short of a powerful reminder of human spirit and love of the mountains.

Echo Lake Camp Turns 100

The Appalachian Mountain Club's Echo Lake Camp on Mount Desert Island, Maine, marks its centennial in 2022. It started with one of the Appalachian Mountain Club's August Camps in 1922. The site then became Echo Lake Camp. In its first year, Echo Lake Camp was made possible in its location on the southeast shore of Echo Lake by the invitation and cooperation of George Dorr, superintendent of Lafayette National Park, which later became Acadia National Park, and his assistants Ben Hadley, chief ranger, and Henry Smith, ranger. A rough road was put into camp, a site was cleared for tents, and a small cabin was built to serve as a kitchen and later as an office.

The first year was rough. Campers put up tents wherever the topography of the land permitted. The dining tent, with open sides, served as a shelter from the sun but didn't protect campers well from the wind and rain. Zenas "Zeke" Staples, the camp master, said in *Appalachia* (vol. 16, 1924–1926, pages 367–368), "The usual excellent spirit of the campers soon overcame physical discomforts, and they became enthusiastic over the features and attractions



A group of Echo Lake Campers, wearing brimmed hats, ties, and bloomers, rests during a hike in the 1920s. AMC LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

peculiar to the Lafayette National Park.” This enthusiasm resulted in a unanimous agreement by AMC and Lafayette Park that this campsite should be made permanent. The Excursion Committee then appointed a subcommittee with the power to equip and continue the camp.

On July 29, 1922, the first campers traveled to the remote island by steamship, as Irving Meredith recounts in “Twenty-Five Years of Echo Lake Camp” in the June 1947 *Appalachia* (vol. 26 no. 3, page 320). Carl S. Whittier was the leader.

They were up before daylight to transfer to the *J. T. Morse* for the delightful four-hour sunrise sail to Southwest Harbor between the rugged shoreline and the rocky spruce-covered islands. Here they were met by Z. Carleton Staples, who had arrived on July 21 to set up camp. On August 12, the first section returned to Boston and the second section, under the leadership of G. Clifford Hicks, started for camp.

From 1922 to 1933, almost all campers came by boat. They would take the Eastern Steamship Lines boats the *City of Rockland* and the *City of Bangor*, leaving Boston on Friday at 5 P.M. and arriving at Rockland about 4 the next morning. Then they’d change to the *J. T. Morse*, which took them from Rockland to Southwest Harbor, arriving around 9 A.M. They would repeat

this trip in reverse on the way back home. The round trip from Boston to Southwest Harbor cost \$21 and included a stateroom and meals aboard the overnight boat. The *City of Rockland* could take as many as 2,000 passengers and had staterooms to accommodate 700 people. The cost for two weeks at camp was \$35.

In its early days, two-person tents housed as many as 50 campers per two-week section. Without hot water or showers, everyone bathed in the lake. Echo Lake Camp has changed with the times, but has managed to keep its simple, rustic lifestyle for which it is so loved. Today, campers number some 90 per week, and there are hot showers and comfortable tents with beds, nightstands, chairs, and wooden floors. Each week has a volunteer hiking leader, two assistant hiking leaders, a naturalist, and an evening leader. Campers can take part in as many or as few group activities as they wish. They eat their meals in a communal dining hall with no assigned seating. The uniqueness of Echo Lake Camp remains as true as it was in 1922, when an AMC publication reported that the location “is unique in that it combines mountain, lake, and seashore recreation.” About 100 miles of trails extended around the island, giving campers “ample short walks and long tramps.”

The Echo Centennial Committee has planned activities for summer 2022. See amcecholakecamp.org.

—*Jenifer Burckett-Picker*
Chair, Echo Centennial Committee

AMC's Maine Woods Property Certified as an International Dark Sky Park

The International Dark-Sky Association announced in May 2021 that the Appalachian Mountain Club's Maine Woods property has become the first International Dark Sky Park in New England. This certification is given to land possessing an exceptional quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, and cultural heritage or public enjoyment. Because most of the eastern United States has light pollution that prevents pristine views of the night sky, only a few International Dark Sky Parks exist in the region.

The AMC Maine Woods Dark Sky Park lies at the edge of the North Maine Woods, an expanse of nearly 8,700 square miles of largely uninhabited forestland that stretches from Monson, Maine, to the border of

Canada. This region is one of the darkest places remaining on the East Coast and has also been identified as an area of exceptionally high habitat connectivity and climate change resilience. In recent decades, many natural wild places in New England have vanished due to the increase of urban development. Much of the North Maine Woods is owned by timber companies, and although large surrounding tracts of private and public lands are under conservation protection, including land managed by AMC, it continues to be at risk of a similar fate. Alongside nearby Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, which was designated an International Dark Sky Sanctuary in 2020, the AMC Maine Woods Dark Sky Park is an important step in preserving this area and driving future dark sky conservation opportunities.

“While the AMC North Maine Woods region retains its rugged character defined by the enormity of the forest here, it stands on the advancing edge of development that brings with it the end of the dark night sky,” said Steve Tatko, AMC director of Maine conservation and Dark Sky Park superintendent. “I see this designation as a way for the people of this area to re-envision the immense importance of this forest in a way that makes tangible the intrinsic beauty of the night sky we all cherish.”

Since 2003, AMC has acquired and permanently conserved 75,000 acres in the North Maine Woods and 100-Mile Wilderness landscape through the Maine Woods Initiative project. This effort has been centered in active conservation work to develop a holistic approach to land conservation, sustainable forestry, outdoor recreation, environmental education, and now the preservation of the night sky.

AMC has also been a lead partner in the Mountains of Stars public science education and outreach program, which uses astronomy to engage audiences in many aspects of the natural environment, such as dark skies preservation. Every AMC facility is outfitted with telescopes and astronomy education equipment; programs are held daily by onsite astronomy guides at the AMC Maine lodges in the summer and weekly during other parts of the year. Mountains of Stars staff also present to local residents and vacationers by holding astronomy programs at other locations, such as schools and libraries.

“AMC recognizes that the dark sky in the 100-Mile Wilderness is an important natural resource, and the AMC Maine Woods Dark Sky Park designation is an important step in protecting it,” said John Judge, former AMC president and CEO. “The creation of this park goes hand in hand with our

existing conservation efforts in the area and will greatly benefit many species living in this region in addition to providing local economic opportunities by opening the door for astronomy-based tourism. The success of the AMC Maine Woods Dark Sky Park will be supported by a world-class outdoor recreational infrastructure, including three AMC wilderness lodges; nearly 130 miles of hiking, cycling, and Nordic skiing trails; and exceptional wilderness paddling and fishing opportunities.”

The International Dark-Sky Association is a nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona. Mountains of Stars offers astronomy-based programs and activities to help people better understand humankind’s place on Earth and our connection with the environment.

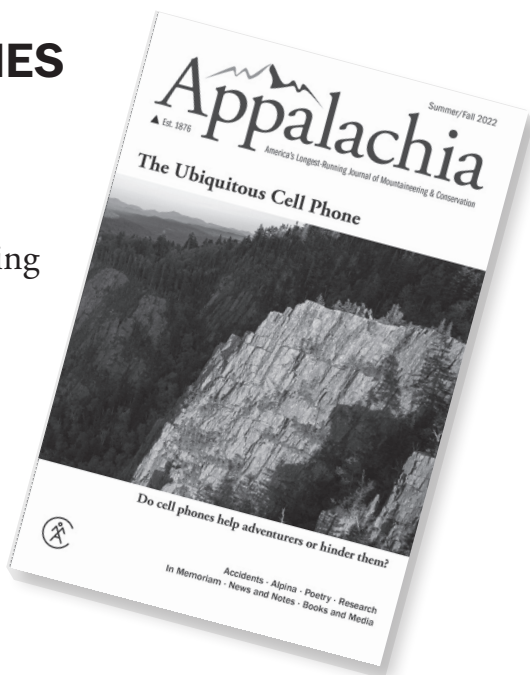
—*Nina Paus-Weiler*

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