

CHIPS & CLIPPINGS SUMMER 2026

President's Report - August 1, 2026

I hope you are all having a fantastic summer filled with family, friends, and outdoor adventures. Thanks to all of you for your continued stewardship of the outdoors and support of the TCA. Thank you to my fellow board members: Bob Biddle, Dylan DiMartino, Willie Janeway, Peter Jensen, John Lamanna, Nate Lowry, Alex Milde, and Colin Pogue. What a pleasure it is to work with you to make this organization the best that it can be. Peter Jensen is stepping down as Treasurer this year after many, many years of devoted service. Peter, your steadfast leadership, unwavering support of the organization, and knack for cool economic wisdom will be sorely missed. Willie Janeway will be the new Treasurer.

It has been an eventful year so far starting with our negotiation of a Shelburne Cabin lease agreement with the new owners, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF). Thank you to Matt Scaccia and Carrie Deegan of SPNHF for working through the process with us. We are very much looking forward to this relationship between TCA and SPNHF. For reference, the lease and the survey plan may be found in a white binder in the back of the cabin near the cabinets. SPNHF wants all users to sign a waiver to use the cabin. Please sign in once a year. Waivers are next to white binder. Happy Cabin 50th Anniverary! Thanks to the 1976 crew who built it and to all who have maintained it over the years. We are planning a work weekend in October at the Cabin.



In May, we had two TCA gatherings: the annual patrol of our AMC-adopted Mahoosuc Notch section of the Mahoosuc Trail between Notch Trail and Joe May Cutoff. Thanks to Craig Heinselman of AMC Adopter Program for setting us up. Much like the patrols of our crew days, this patrol went well into the darkness. Even though patroller bodies were sorer than they once were after a long day of patrolling, it was worth every chop! The goal for next year is to camp out in the area and spend even more time working on the trail and hanging together in camp.

The weekend after the Mahoosuc Notch patrol, we met at Shelburne Cabin for the spring work weekend. The woodshed is full, the place is clean. Stay tuned for the dates of the fall work weekend in October.



We had our fourth annual All Crew Day with the current crew this year past Zeacliff on Twinway above Zealand Falls hut. Six TCA members spent the night at the hut on Sunday, July 12, and met the current crew to standardize on Monday, July 13. Three members carried on to Guyot on Monday and Tuesday nights and continued standardizing with the current Crew who were working on the Twinway for the week. Thank you to Matt Moore and Liesl Magnus at the AMC Trails for working with us to organize the event, to Nathan Hamidi of the current crew for your leadership on the trail, and to the joint TCA/AMC Centennial Fund for funding. Patterned loosely after the Trail Sprees of a century ago, All Crew Day is a great opportunity for TCA members to catch up with both current Crew folks and current Crew practices. We're looking forward to All Crew Day next year. The TCA Reunion was August 1. Summary of proceedings to follow in the Fall edition of *Chips*.

This edition of *Chips & Clippings* is a condensed version of this fall's *Chips*.. The expanded .pdf version will be available from the TCA web site.. Thanks to all of our contributors. Please send additons/corrections to the editor, Mark Dannenhauer, ninots@crocker.com.

All in all, it has been a very successful season. Next year, look for a spring Cabin work weekend, Mahoosuc Notch Patrols, All Crew Day, our Annual Reunion, and Fall Work weekend. Looking forward to it! [photos: 1976 Crew and Shelburne cabin logs ; 2026 All Crew Day, Twinway; Sam Kilburn, Marshall Pontrelli, Lonsesome Lake Trail, 2017]



Foo!
Marshall Pontrelli, *TCA President* '14-'15, '17, TM '18
marshallpontrelli@gmail.com (781) 879-0258



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2026 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

[photo: Crush/Katie McCahan]

NATE LOWERY '80-'81: AXES AND SAWS



One of my favorite photos captured members of the 1924 AMC Trail Crew while they posed proudly with tools in hand before the Flume Gorge. The tools reflect the Crew’s original task of clearing and standardizing hiking trails. Trail Master Harold Miller, standing slightly aback with pipe in mouth, looks the part of a seasoned woodsman while carrying both a double-bitted axe and crosscut saw. The saw has perforated lance teeth, ideal for cutting softwood but also good for general utility work. The double-bitted axe is a classic Maine-wedge pattern with characteristic diamond-shaped eye. The only first yearman, looking a bit tense, carries the Crew’s single-bitted axe.

The Crew’s reverence toward their axes is illustrated in the evening recollections of Charles W. Blood, an

early Trails Counselor: “The grind of carborundum stone on axe steel fills our ears as first one and then another puts the best edge possible on his axe for the morrow. No man wants to suffer the disgrace and ridicule of having one of the “Old Masters find him trying to work with a dull or nicked axe.” “With the Trail Gang, Charles W. Blood, Appalachia, June 1929, p, 247.

By the time I joined Trail Crew size had tripled and our labor rock work. Axes, nevertheless, woodsman’s personal tool and a heritage. After each first year they gradually learned to hang, with practiced skill. Although clearing operations to be were still opportunities to build shelter.s Like their preferred the traditional Maine-wedge axes, especially the Three-Diamond brand manufactured by Emerson & Stevens into the mid-1960s. I was proud indeed to heft my own double-bit the following year, another Maine-wedge axe made by the North Wayne Tool Company.



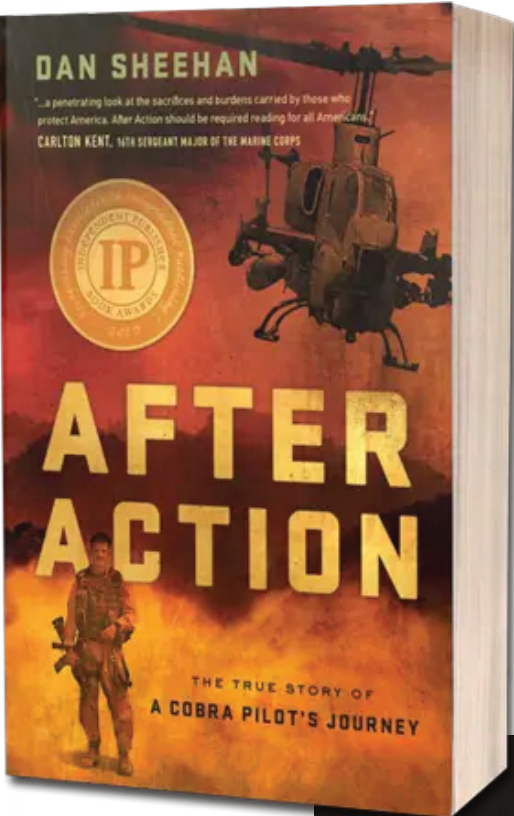
almost sixty years later, membership was increasingly directed towards continued to be valued as both a symbol of the crew’s shared received their own single-bitted axe, sharpen, and eventually swing them the crew’s larger size enabled completed in a two-week blitz, there bog bridges and construct a new predecessors, the upper years



I never had a chance to use a crosscut saw while on Trail Crew myself, but I am told that that Sam Kilburn’s 2017 crew resurrected them while constructing bog bridges. Since retiring and returning to New Hampshire a few years ago, I have been fortunate to attend the crosscut saw certification course taught by the US Forest Service during the AMC’s annual spring Trail Skills College. It was a terrific experience and although I have yet to use one during trails maintenance, it has peaked my historical interest and led me down the road to becoming a saw filer. Meanwhile on the West Coast, Dennis Damici, [photo right] a fellow alumnus from the early 1980s, has also become certified and put his skills to use clearing some truly massive blowdowns. [photo left: Haven Fifiel, 1940, post-'38 hurricane]



FROM THE TCA BOOKSHELF



One Hundred Summers: Natalie Beittel '09-'11 & Kyle Peckham '08-'10

After Action: Dan Sheehan '92-'94

Free Innovation: Eric von Hippel '58

To Live Upon Hope: Rachel Wheeler '91-'93 TM '95
[photo: Molly Warner]

One Hundred Summers



The People of the Appalachian Mountain Club
Professional White Mountain Trail Crew,
Their Work and Adventures

Natalie Beittel & Kyle Peckham

TO LIVE UPON HOPE

MOHICANS AND MISSIONARIES IN THE
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NORTHEAST



RACHEL WHEELER

DAVE DETHIER '67-'70 & COUPONS/COLIN POGUE '16-'18: CREW, PACKING AND CAIRNS (EXCERPTS)

Colin: ...And, of course, vroom vroom, up comes a couple of trucks from down the road. And who is it but the Trail Crew rolling in to come dig into the smorgasbord that's laid out at Camp Dodge. And there I was, you know, watching these truly crazy looking people get out of the trucks. And I was pretty blown away by that. So I think somebody said, well, that's the Trail Crew. Those people live in the woods all summer and they work on the trails and that's just their life... I think I didn't even know what to make of that. I couldn't even conceptualize what it meant to live in the woods all summer long. .. I was immediately fascinated. I think from there I determined that I would absolutely apply and work as hard as I could to get on to the cCew.

David: And so it was pretty much at first sight. It was a professional trail crew, something we never said in my day, but capital P professionals. Right, yes..... And we were in Whitefield, the center of the world at Hutton House there. And there were rumors ... about moving, but it wasn't going to happen at the time. And we were able to be pretty isolated and certainly not under anyone's thumb except for at the time, 5 Joy Street, which we complained bitterly about and were in constant conflict with..... We had a wonderful supervisor, a guy named Joe May [center in photo] who was a high school teacher in Littleton, I think had come out of the Marines. And he had a really good angle on us.



packing. [photos: middle, TM E. B. Cook/Abigail Lown packs LLT. lower, Dobie Jenkins, Bob Willard, Katahdin, 1952]

Colin: And as we worked our way down, [the giant Eisenhower cairn] we would find mementos. We would find little rocks with people's names written on them.. . I remember we found one rock that was some sort of a memorial to somebody who had passed away and somebody had buried this sort of fist-sized river rock with like an engraved name and a lifespan dated into it within the structure... we felt very strongly that these needed to be treated with respect...we laid them really safely aside and made sure that we were going to reincorporate them deep into the cairn structure.... It was a real privilege to feel like we were allowed to work on something that so many people have had such profound experiences by being up there in the high summits...we got the thing disassembled... huge, massive, massive pile of stone. .. And in the middle of the night, I just remember waking up to the sound of somebody in camp retching very loudly. And then...a second person started retching...within a matter of what felt like 10 minutes, the entirety of our crew there in our camp were on hands and knees in the dark losing our suppers. ..I think countless people must have gone to the higher summit that day... only to find what would have looked like basically a mortar strike that had hit the summit of the mountain... we hiked back up and built that cairn on another day with no hikers around. Basically, from the hiker perspective, the cairn was destroyed with no explanation, and then magically rebuilt with no explanation.



MAHOOSUC MAC/ALEX MCKENZIE '58-'60 INTERVIEWED BY BECKY FULLERTON, AMC ARCHIVIST: (TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS)



Alex: ...I understand now they do patrols without packs. I think that might have been the way the Trail Crew started in the '20s. But in our day, almost all the patrolling was pack patrolling. We're carrying a pack and doing a trail, and our mileage was a lot less than what they do now, of course. But we didn't have to return anywhere, so we could keep going.

...in those days, there weren't any hikers. Where later crews were trying to keep the footpath from being eroded and demolished and widened out, our job was to make it so you could find the trail. ..You could only, with your feet, feel the treadway...We were always behind. The Trail Crew was always behind in standardizing from before I got there until well after I left...With no hikers going through, it really was pretty easy to lose the trail.

The normal Trail Crew week in the woods was 5 1/2 days. We went into the woods on Saturday, and we came back on Thursday around noon. Then we had Friday to blow off steam, relax, write letters home. Friday to clean the house, sharpen tools, organize supplies for the next week.

The privies and can pits were another feature that don't exist anymore. ..The can pit cover was a cover made of two by fours and one inch lumber that was about six feet square. We dug a hole that was about 5 feet square and put this over the top. There was a trap door in the middle...you just picked it up and threw your trash in there. You're supposed to only throw in non-organic things, but a lot of organic stuff, old clothing and uneaten food and stuff like that got thrown into the can pits too....The privy wasn't private at all... It was a box as high as a toilet seat, and that was it. .. every now and then they get full and we'd have to dig a new privy hole.

They wanted us to be clean shaven. It was the era of Fidel Castro. The clean-cut Boston masses who came up to use the AMC facilities took any sign of facial hair as a sign of Communism. Of course, the Trail Crew had a long history of wearing beards, growing beards and mustaches. That didn't go over well... Nobody will be allowed to have beards. We will all be clean and neatly dressed at all times in the woods, which was impossible doing the work we were doing.. .Some of the rules were okay. You should brush your teeth every day. Well, yeah, you should. But, you know, we were 17 and 18- and 19- and 20-year-olds. We didn't need _____ telling us to brush our teeth for God's sake. He called us in one at a time and we all quit one after another. “You're going to accept these rules?” We said, “No, these rules are crazy... “I don't want to talk about it, accept them or not. OK, you quit? Next.” We were all gone.

[photo: 1958 Crew at shelter and at Whitefield, courtesy of Alex McKenzie]



KURT WINKLER '66-'68 & ALEX MILDE '14-'16: EMAILS

1) A fond Trail Crew Memory that keeps returning: Early on Sunday morning, in the summer of 1966, the first year men grouped up and walked down from Hutton Lodge to the Whitefield Town Commons. We were hoping the exercise would increase our appetites for the annual All You Can Eat Pancake Breakfast. Duncan, our imperturbable Sign Man, was already there, quietly reading the Sunday newspaper and well underway towards setting a new Trail Crew benchmark. A model of senior respectability to live up to.

2) A favorite tool I remember: Well, concerning shovels, pickaxes, crowbars, spuds, Sandvik saws, Limmer grease, pack-boards, chainsaws (plus gas and oil) and sharpening stones? Most of us would probably favor the now collectible Snow & Nealley “Our Best” 3.25 lb. double bit axe. But, wait - what about the ‘ol’ Woodman’s Pal (WP284)? What did we used to call that thing? The guffer stick or... something like that? This was (and still is) a great trail-working tool and self defense item. Every few years I look into buying one to hack and pull on the trails around here. Until I rediscover the price.

3) Good Trail Crew advice: “Do the job first. Ask questions about it after.” I was at the right age and in the right place to hear this bit of advice. We will take chances and make mistakes. We will learn, improve, and then try again. Probably near the top of the curve for learning environments to grow up in. And leadership.

- Kurt Winkler [photo: 1966 Kurt up a tree]



Hi Kurt,

1) A fond trail crew memory that keeps returning: My second year, I have a vivid memory of running out of the Mahoosucs after finishing our patrol one day. I believe it was myself, fellow second years Archie, Napoleon, Nomar, Smathers and Aesop, a first year. It was late in the patrol season and we really opened up the throttle for the fun of it. I remember absolutely barreling down the mountain, leaping off and over whole staircases in one go, skidding around corners and bounding down leaf covered covered straightaways, all with our axes strapped to our backs and hazel hoes in hand. It was an amazing feeling to be part of such a well-oiled train ripping through the afternoon light with your friends. I remember noticing at the summit that it was

exactly 3.1 miles to the trailhead and we finished in under 17 minutes; by far the fastest 5k I will ever run.

2) A favorite tool I remember: Thinking about this I realized just how much I appreciated each tool for how simple yet perfectly suited for the work we were doing each was. The pack board, with its oiled wood

and leather, that made it possible to pack the ungodly amount of weight into camp that we did. The double bit, with its bright sharp blade and hand crafted handle made light work of most trees, and was equal to all, and allowed us to patrol efficiently. The pick mattock that made it easy to finely tune the position of a massive rock, and the rock bar for when you just had to crank on something. I think I have to say the griphoist, that always smelled like 10W oil, because such a simple mechanism allows us to rig highlines and fly rocks which I was always partial to.

3) Good trail crew advice: “If there’s something heavy sitting there in the pile, pick it up and put it on your pack before one of your friends does.” Ostensibly advice for pack ins, but I think the spirit is generalizable and encapsulates something that I found in all of my trail crew mates and really admire in them.

Foo! Alex “Nova” Milde

HAWK METHENY '90-'91+ & WILLIE JANEWAY '83-'86: TRAILS MANAGEMENT (TRANSCRIPTION EXCERPTS)

Hawk: Each experience in career builds off the other, with more and more breadth and less depth, and now broad oversight of trail management programs from Georgia to Maine.... With direct reports, serve on ATC leadership team, “management.” Depending on the day, prefer moving rocks vs management. Have maintained a connection to field programs with chainsaw training, evaluation, etc...As you progress into management you have to be ready for it and have to adjust. Each job progression has been more management and less field time...See folks struggle with that, as the “field is still calling them...The Appalachian Trail and ATC now 100 years, and it’s really about long-term sustainability, resiliency, changing conditions (bigger storms), and redesign. Relocations...We better embrace redesign / relocation, and pause before we start a major “tread hardening” rebuild, what are our options and is a relo possible and can we get a more sustainable alignment...

My career, [I've] learned that when management brings in a change...it invites opposition, people might feel they are “losing” something. But after a few seasons and in general and overall., you usually see acceptance, especially when conditions improve – especially for the resource. Have a dual mandate of providing a quality outdoor recreational experience and protecting the resource. If a tie vote, I’m going to cast my vote towards the resource... it’s defensive because it brings in science and protecting the ultimate experience for “you and others.” ...Now, GIS, LIDAR, other new tools, drainage patterns, subsubstrate, an x-ray of the first 10’ of the earth.... Different tools and more comprehensive approach layered on “legacy” skills.



Willie: On the AMC Trail Crew learned to prioritize resource protection not user convenience...Importance of leadership expanding understanding of legal management goals (e.g. resource protection/wilderness preservation, user access/accommodation & convenience). The Federal Visitor Use Management (VUM) Framework for planning. And being guided by science...Importance of “leadership” building and maintaining consensus or agreement regarding goals and priorities among key stakeholders involved in land/ resource and public use management. ..The need for a robust informed constituency for trails, funding, and ALSO, maintaining/building a strong expanded base of diverse trail skills and a system to sustain and grow that skill base so crews understand goals and do quality or

“good enough” work...Crews today need to maintain older “legacy” work, and develop broad skills, not just specialization. When a new “pro crew” goes around and doesn’t “see” a blowdown or old drainage, that’s a problem.. Taking a whole trail system planning and prioritization approach to allocating funding and people across multiple trails and trail needs.

[photos: 2017 Crew at Square Ledge; Abigail Lown and Don Stevens on Lonesome Lake Trail 2017]