

Appalachian Mountain Club, Mohawk Hudson Chapter

Annual Report, Year 2013

The Chapter Year 2013 was full of activities, new initiatives, and formalization and revision of old operating habits. To begin with the latter, we had no documented training procedures for new trip leaders, which are needed for Chapter growth and rejuvenation. The Annual AMC Summit offered a great opportunity to learn what other Chapters are doing in this regard. Based on this we now direct our aspirant leaders to one of the twice yearly sessions, offered jointly by the nearby Worcester and Berkshire Chapters. Our Chapter is too small to produce by ourselves the number of qualified instructors they provide. A committee (Sharon Bonk, Chair, John Tiff, and Kevin Cox) then drew up guidelines and procedures for the whole (Basic and Field) process, which was approved by the executive committee (ecomm). On another note, it was felt that our Bylaws, including those describing the ecomm structure, were too rigid. These were revised accordingly.

As in previous years the most popular frequent outings were those of the HARP (hiking at a relaxed pace) group organized and led by Frank and Dee Wind. At our annual meeting they received, from the hands of our Outings Chair (Kevin Cox), the first yearly price for this achievement, calculated on the basis of the number of returned signed trip release forms. Their hikes are on Thursdays or Fridays. Next in popularity are the, usually somewhat more demanding Wednesday trips, organized by Gerry Weber. Frequent leaders for these trips and/or weekend A-, and B-level trips include Sharon Bonk (Treasurer), John Tiff (Trails Chair), Nancy and Will Crowther, Ken Hubert, and Gerry himself. In addition to these day trips Randy and Amy MacDonald continued to organize weekend-long outings. These are in winter snow shoe/ cross-country ski trips using the Colonial Inn in Weston, VT as the overnight abode and in summer flat-water kayak camping adventures. For the Annual Chapter Fall Outing we returned to the AMC Highland Center.

Trail and terrain clearing outings were further expanded this year. John Tiff, who received a 2012 AMC Stewardship price for over 100 hours worked, was even more active leading these activities this time. We worked with several other outdoor organizations in some of these ventures, such as the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy, the Rensselaer Land Trust, and Audubon International. The latter administers the Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary, where, as discussed in last year's report, we had made substantial improvements, such as to public accessibility and trail signage. That work was continued this year, in part with an AMC grant.

This sanctuary was the scene last year (see the 2012 report for description) of our Hollow-een family festival. A second expanded edition held this Halloween drew some 160 participants of all ages, as

compared to 100 last year. Mary Folsom (Vice-Chair and Conservation Chair) was the chief organizer with support of many volunteers, among which John Tiff and Jean Laverdure. These events have given us increased community recognition. They also served as our first steps toward family activities and getting young people out-of-doors, in accord with the AMC 2020 objectives.

The Hollow-een festival also helps bringing in new members. Mary Folsom, in collaboration with Martha Waldman (Membership Chair) and several others, also made considerable further efforts in this regard. Several personal letter writing campaigns were used to obtain better contact with our membership-at-large and learn the reasons why some people join and others leave the Club and Chapter. On the latter point our total membership shrank somewhat this year from 780 to 740, a trend opposite to our long-term goal of growing to 1000. Without these campaigns there would have been some further loss. However, all such efforts came in the second half of the chapter year and pay-off can be expected in following years; as should be that from the Meetup group Mary established near the tail end of the Chapter year.

Outings leaders also contribute to attract new members, as too many people participate in our events, who need to be persuaded to join the Club. The relative dearth in numbers of weekend day leaders and participants, as compared to the mid-week trips, is reflective of an age distribution skewed toward retirees. This remains another problem demanding attention. The Meetup group should help here too.

Direct contact with our membership-at-large is continued to be provided in the first place by our Newsletter, the Western Slope, and our Website. Both of these were lifted to new heights by our Editor-in-Chief, Chris Simson-Boucher, and our Webmaster, Jeff Carden, respectively. Chris Grossman, our Secretary, provided meeting minutes. She was a good source of information on the way things are handled by other similar organizations on whose boards she serves. The Outings Weekly Digest and the e-blasts, both of which we receive through Joy Street, are very useful. From our side Mary Folsom provided the inputs for these and kept our Facebook entries up-to-date for most of the year, gradually transferring that task to Myra Fedyniak.

Thanks are due to Henry Schreiber, our Regional Director, who attended most of our ecomm meetings, driving all the way from New York City in sometimes nasty weather conditions. He continued to provide good advice and suggestions, including those regarding the Bylaws modifications. The pleasant relations with the AMC Headquarters staff are gratefully acknowledged. Roger Scholl, Faith Salter, Cindy Martell, Susannah Hatch, Terri Morrow, and your assistants, here is to you!

Arthur Fontijn, outgoing Chapter Chair