

Fred Dieffenbach

From: Fred Dieffenbach
Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 1:22 PM
Subject: Appalachian Trail Environmental Monitoring Newsletter -- March 2010
Attachments: Dieffenbach , Fred.vcf

Email not displaying correctly? [View it in your browser.](#)



2010

As most of you already know, the 2010 winter that delivered substantial snow to the mid-Atlantic and southern parts of the Appalachian Region was uncharacteristically stingy to the northeastern states. For the winter sports enthusiasts among us, myself included, the 2010 winter weather patterns were frustrating! So, the winter that never really seemed to start in the northeast is nearing an end and the field season will be here sooner than we might imagine! Here are a few updates and highlights:

Introducing the New Appalachian Trail Natural Resource Manager

Most of you know Casey Reese and know that he has worked quite hard over the last year to bring change and improvement to the A.T. Natural Resource program. As a reward for his hard work he was recently selected to be the A.T.'s new Natural Resource Manager. Congratulations, Casey!

A.T. Monitoring Plan

For quite a while we have been treating the Appalachian Trail as though it was an independent National Park Service (NPS) Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) network, but unlike any of the other networks in the I&M program we did not draft a monitoring plan specific to the A.T. Yes, we produced pieces of a plan but a comprehensive monitoring plan equivalent to an I&M network plan did not exist, until recently. In December I completed the initial parts of the network monitoring plan and expect to complete the full plan by the end of 2010. While substantial parts of the draft plan were adopted from other I&M monitoring plans without change, there are many unique aspects as well. For example, the A.T. plan deviates from other monitoring plans by outlining a process to rely heavily on data collected by other people and programs, whereas most I&M networks collect their



Contacts:

[Fred Dieffenbach,](#)
 Environmental Monitoring
 Coordinator
 Northeast Temperate Network

[Casey Reese,](#)
 Natural Resource Manager
 Appalachian National Scenic Trail

own data. Rather than go through the long and difficult process of developing protocols and procedures to collect new data - data that we have no budget to collect - the A.T. plan will outline a process that emphasizes collaboration and partnership. Doing it any other way would be cost prohibitive, and while collaboration brings another set of problems it makes sense for many more reasons.

The plan exists as a preliminary draft and I expect to share the next iteration in a few months.

Watershed Programs

During January I contacted more than 300 organizations that were identified by the U.S. EPA as having an interest in one or more of the watersheds that intersect the A.T. Following my inquiry I heard back from about 50 groups that actively collect water quality data, and of those about 20 are interested in collaborating on A.T. related projects. The relationship I envision with these groups will be outlined in the A.T. monitoring plan, but the condensed version is that I hope to encourage A.T. volunteers to work with groups that have an existing interest in targetted geographic areas. The volunteers would collect data according to the procedures developed by the local group, and we will periodically obtain data related to the A.T. from those groups. To aid the process of matching volunteers with existing groups I have begun to develop a GIS layer that identifies the groups and their area of interest by watershed. The result is a "patchwork" of watersheds up and down the A.T. where groups are known to be actively collecting data.

If you are interested in knowing more about this strategy, or would like to recommend a possible collaboration please contact me via email (fred.dieffenbach@nps.gov) or by phone (802-457-3368 ext. 36).

Project Updates

- **Phenology:** We will be expanding the collaboration we launched last year with the National Phenology Network (NPN) by installing a larger network of observation sites. But progress comes with consequences! This winter NPN and NPS have been working through a series of unanticipated hurdles, including obtaining approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to actually collect data using volunteers. Without this requisite approval, we may not be allowed to use the collected data. Despite the OMB hurdle, we still hope to have everything ready to implement this year.
- **NASA Decision Support System (DSS):** Since the last newsletter the DSS team has made progress on selecting "segments" along the trail where we will assess forest health and we have begun to work with the USGS National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) interface that will eventually host the completed DSS. While significant progress is not quite visible, considerable "behind the scenes" work continues

[Sarah Bransom,](#)

Environmental Protection Specialist

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

[Laura Belleville,](#)

Conservation Director

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

[Matt Stevens,](#)

Environmental Monitoring

Coordinator

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

to occur.

- Acid Deposition Effects study: The Deposition Effects team has nearly completed the site selection process, and is currently working on the compliance portion of the project. Barring unanticipated delays, the project team expects to be in the field early this year.

How do you define the A.T.'s area of interest?

How about 5-miles on either side of the trail, or 10—miles, or ... Historically, the answer has been somewhat arbitrary and not consistent. After looking at a number of options I have settled on the use of HUC 10 watersheds to define the limits of the A.T. zone of interest, and have developed a GIS layer that creates a “shell” around the A.T. that ranges anywhere from 5 to 15 miles from the centerline.

Aside from being an interesting GIS exercise, the shell will be a good resource for potential researchers who typically need to know how far outside the corridor to look for existing data and information. The shell will comprise one part of the “researcher data kit” to be assembled in the near future.

Maine Mammal Survey

A few years ago we sponsored a project to inventory rare mammals along the A.T. corridor in Maine. The report was published just two weeks ago and you can get a copy by clicking [HERE](#).

Closing Remarks

Building partnerships and looking for collaboration opportunities is likely to be the key to the future of the A.T. Environmental Monitoring Program. From joining forces with watershed based monitoring programs to fitting into the Fish and Wildlife Service's Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) program to acquiring data from the U.S. Forest Service's FIA/FHM program, building and managing relationships and using existing data will eventually comprise a significant part of what the A.T. Environmental Monitoring Program does. The advantage we have is that the A.T. is well recognized and offers many of these groups a connection that would not otherwise exist, and that is a good thing!

Appalachian Trail Environmental Monitoring

 AT MEGA-Transect

Mailing address:
Northeast Temperate Network
54 Elm Street
Woodstock, Vt 05091

Telephone:
802-457-3368 ext. 36

Copyright (C) 2009 National Park Service, Northeast Temperate Network All rights reserved.

[Unsubscribe](#) from this list.