Chapter One

Politics, Nature, and Communities

> "We do not know whether to confront this sea of troubles or to stand away, care for our own, and take comfort in the belief that the power to act lies elsewhere. It is this paralysis in the face of disaster… that would cause someone looking from the outside to say we face a crisis of character. It is not a crisis of policy or of law or of administration. We cannot turn to institutions, to environmental groups, or to government…. If we mean to make this a true home, we have a monumental adjustment to make… we must turn to each other, and sense that this is possible."
>
> -Barry Lopez

In the six years I have been involved with managing the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) I have built trail, dug privies, and sat through many meeting discussing issues ranging from commercial use of A.T. lands to the proper way for humans to mange wilderness areas. These experiences led me to increasingly question many of the dualities that we apply to our world. In clearing trails, digging pit toilets, and attending meetings, I found it increasingly

difficult to find the separation between places which are wild or tame, natural or cultural, and preserved or ruined. Americans continue to express a bizarre tendency to apply much effort and ingenuity to keeping places that are seen as “natural” free from the negative impacts of industrial development at the same time as we give little thought to the impacts of that development on places which are seen as “cultural.” The questions trail managers confront are not questions of whether to use or preserve nature, but questions of how to use nature, for whose benefit, and who would decide, carry out, and monitor such uses.

On the Appalachian Trail, I learned that all places are natural and all places are cultural because the two are so intertwined as to be inseparable. Understanding this, I recognized that addressing environmental problems requires more than setting aside certain areas as natural while we continue to degrade and exploit places which are cultural. Such behavior ultimately only increases efforts to develop those places set aside for nature. Addressing these environmental problems will require finding ecologically sustainable ways to live, work, and play in all places. The processes of deciding how humans will relate to and use nature are far from open and democratic. Most often such decisions are presided over by technical and professional

experts, and occur in boardrooms, laboratories, and courtrooms. Ideas of community are popular in American and environmental imaginations. Perhaps it is due to a sense that community involves recognizing the need for members of a community to solve problems themselves rather than turning to other for solutions. This thesis explores the potential for people to organize through common work grounded in common interests and to reshape built and unbuilt environments through repoliticizing questions of how humans will value and use nature.

The manners in which humans relate to and use the places and resources of the physical world commonly referred to as nature are shaped by the values they assign to such places. Value is a human concept, and while often seen as a reflection of some sort of absolute worth, conceptions of value are relative. As values are assigned by humans, the concepts vary through time and from one group of people to another. Some environmental writers have attempted to advance the idea of intrinsic values in nature beyond those assigned by humans.[1] As the concept of value is a human concept, it is impossible to speak of values not assigned by humans. Arguments to recognize intrinsic values are necessarily as centered in human ideas and conceptions of values as any other ways of valuing and

using nature. Since there are no inherent capacities to differentiate between valorizations, questions of how to use nature are political questions of who gets to assign values to nature and who will benefit from how nature is valued.

The term nature is typically used to refer to the non-human world, but such distinctions become problematic when closely examined. Since nature will figure prominently in this project, however, it is important to get a better sense of what is meant by the concept nature. Most often, nature is conceptualized as "the physical world, and all of its properties."[2] However, like human concepts of value, ideas of nature are "always historically mediated, and indeed 'constructed' through specific conceptions of human identity and difference."[3] Despite a long tradition from the Enlightenment to the Scientific Revolution to assert human separation from nature, humans are a part of nature.[4] Karl Marx described the relationship between humans and nature by commenting:

> Nature is man's *inorganic body* - nature, that is, in so far as it is not itself the human body. Man *lives* on nature - means that nature is his *body*, with which he must remain in continuous intercourse if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means

> simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is part of nature.[5]

That humans must maintain a continuous intercourse with nature is Marx's way of saying humans must eat, breathe, and drink, thus taking other parts of nature and making them a part of themselves. In using nature to survive, humans change nature. William Cronon finds that the interactions between humans and nature (here called environment),

> are dialectical. Environment may initially shape the range of choices available to a people at a given moment, but then culture reshapes the environment in responding to those choices. The reshaped environment presents a new set of possibilities for cultural reproduction, thus setting up a new cycle of mutual determination.[6]

In such a relationship, nature is far more than a static physical realm acted upon by humans. Nature is a complex intermingling of human induced changes and natural responses those changes, which in turn lead to additional human changes. After thousands of years of interactions between humans and nature, it is almost impossible to disentangle the natural from the cultural.

Yet, many writers persist in making distinctions between places that are natural and places that are cultural. This thesis focuses on the Appalachian Trail,

which would seem to be a natural place. However, as this thesis will reveal, the very value of the Appalachian Trail is the way it has been constructed and reshaped by human beings to provide certain experiences for users of the trail. While this reconstruction of places has not been as extensive as one might find in the middle of a city, humans have nonetheless applied aesthetic, scientific, religious, economic, and other forms of value to help them shape places that are conducive to experiencing "nature." While making distinctions between places that are natural and cultural may seem simple, as these distinctions are examined, they become increasingly difficult to maintain. A hiking trail is the product of the same culture that produces shopping malls and superhighways. At the end of the twentieth century, there are likely no places on the earth that are wholly natural or wholly cultural. Rather than referring to places which are cultural or natural, this paper will use the terms built and unbuilt environments to suggest that all places have in some way been valued, influenced, and restructured by human societies. Nature as it is used in this thesis, refers not to some pre-human, unmodified world, but to the physical world that has been shaped and reshaped by human and non-human actions and processes.[7]

Human societies have developed a number of forms of knowledge to guide the valuing and use of nature. Since the scientific and industrial revolutions, industrialized (and industrializing) societies have privileged technical and scientific knowledge in revealing how nature should be viewed and used. Thus,

> symbolic analysts, professional experts, technical planners, administrative specialists and design consultants have been empowered through their knowledge in both the private and public sectors to command and control the ecologies and economies first of advanced industrial societies and now of advanced informational societies.[8]

A society where technical and professional experts mediate and control human interactions with each other and nature leads to the loss of relationships between people and places. Under such a society, "the responsibilities of government, law, medicine, engineering, agriculture, education, etc. are given into the hands of the most skilled, best prepared people."[9] Giving professional and technical experts authority over various realms of daily life "requires the abdication to specialists of various competences and responsibilities that were once personal and universal."[10] The result is a society where individuals have only two tasks: making money to purchase the goods and services offered by other experts (most often performed by

being an expert in something oneself) and passing the time when not engaged in one's specialty (although this latter task is aided by experts in the entertainment, fashion, and media industries).[11]

By disempowering people and communities in decision making processes, questions about how and why to use nature are rarely made through direct public input or action. Most often, such decisions are made by professional or technical experts working in committees, laboratories, and boardrooms. Timothy W. Luke writes that political processes are "all too often depoliticized by the professional-technical rhetorics of civil engineering, public health, corporate management, scientific experiment, technical design, and property ownership."[12] Ulrich Beck refers to the realms where professional and technical experts make decisions as sub-political, which distinguishes them from the processes and events that are often considered political.[13] While citizens have the right to vote in elections, some sort of technical or bureaucratic expertise is required to influence, or even participate in, discussions that occur in sub-political arenas. Wendell Berry argues that in the agriculture of the future, people "will have nothing to say about how the land is used or the kind of quality of its produce… The

people will eat what the corporations decide for them to eat."[14] The future, as they say, is now; while modern consumers may have the illusion of choice in what kind of apple they buy, few, if any, have the ability to influence how, where, or why apples will be grown. If one did want to participate in such discussions, it would be necessary to receive some sort of formal training in a professional-technical field. As it is rare that what is commonly considered politics addresses questions of how nature will be used, environmentalism can be understood as efforts broaden who is involved in the processes that address such questions.

Modern efforts to address environmental problems grew out of the political conflicts of the 1960's, and led to the empowering of a new class of technical and professional experts to monitor and direct human interactions with nature. Timothy W. Luke discuses how this empowering of experts also involved the bounding of nature in the disciplinary space of the environment which "basically comes to encompass everything."[15] Amid the turbulent politics of the 1960's, environmentalism represented a political issue with broad appeal. Environmental problems, "reflected universal concerns, whereas the more charged political goals of the decade were closely linked only to

segments of society. Even the so-called silent majority could embrace the call to clean up water and air…"[16] This universal appeal allowed environmental concern to become rapidly insinuated into the existing forms of American politics.[17]

The "environmental decade" of the 1970's saw the passage of a number of major federal laws relating to the environment and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. In addition to government responses, conservation organizations recast themselves as environmental groups and began membership drives to finance building staffs of environmental experts. By recasting nature as the environment, environmental experts became empowered to enter into discussions on issues ranging from pollution to production to reproduction. Rather than creating a forum for citizens to become involved in decision-making, regulatory, legislative, and legal processes, environmental groups cast themselves as representatives of the common people who were able to participate in process more meaningfully and effectively than private citizens. Collectively, these efforts have come to be called mainstream environmentalism to indicate their understanding that environmental problems could be solved by technical fixes, increased regulation, and

participation in government and business decisions by environmentally minded professional and technical experts.[18]

The lack of substantive accomplishments by mainstream efforts to address environmental problems have resulted in alternative responses to environmental issues collectively referred to as radical environmentalism. While there are a number of distinctions discernable between the various sects of radical environmentalism, all share an understanding that environmental problems stem not from faulty technologies or laws that need a bit more tweaking, but from the way humans live in advanced industrial societies. In many ways, radical environmentalism is also a reaction against the professionalization of efforts to address environmental problems. Radical environmentalists stress the responsibility of non-experts to address environmental issues through their daily lives. Many radical environmentalists are concerned by how easily mainstream environmental concern has been absorbed by advanced industrial society and used as a legitimizing force for “earth-friendly” consumption and increased management of human and non-human communities by technical and professional experts. Unfortunately, much of radical environmentalism remains preoccupied with preserving or safeguarding non-human nature.[19]

In addition to mainstream and radical responses to environmental problems, a number of groups have formed to address local environmental issues and problems. Collectively, these groups have come to be called “environmental justice advocates,” and they are most often formed in response to some sort of threat to families and localities. These groups are often composed of homeowners, neighbors, and workers, and are often far more sexually, racially, and culturally diverse than mainstream groups. Where mainstream environmentalism can trace its roots to earlier conservation movements, efforts for social and environmental justice draw on the efforts of twentieth century social reformers like Alice Hamilton and Florence Kelly. Environmental justice efforts also emphasize the social reform aspects of people who are traditionally mobilized as conservation or wild-lands preservation icons, such as Bob Marshall and Aldo Leopold. Historian Robert Gottlieb contends that the most apparent distinctions between mainstream environmentalists and environmental justice activists are their respective motivations. Mainstream groups are often staffed by professionals and supported by members who are acting out of a concern for leisure activities or species they like. In contrast, the involvement of people in environmental justice issues stems

mostly from who they are and a their sense of family, place and community.[20]

Efforts to reintroduce concepts of place into the way people live and work are called bioregionalism. Most generally, bioregionalism involves coming to think of localities in ecological rather than political boundaries (watersheds rather than states or counties). Bioregionalism emphasizes that through coming to know places it is possible to develop ways of living and working that are more ecologically suitable than those currently used. Bioregionalism's "crucial… task is to understand *place*, the immediate and specific place where we live."[21] Understanding a place requires learning about soil types, topography, water sources, weather patterns, as well as which plant and animal species are native, and which have been imported. Such understandings would presumably help people realize "the limits of [a place's] resources; the carrying capacities of its lands and waters; the places where it must not be stressed; the places where its boundaries can best be developed."[22] Understanding the limits and capacities of places would allow people to develop ways of living that restore rather than degrade the ecological systems around them. Gary Snyder contends "there's an appropriate everything, appropriate mining and

appropriate logging. But the closer it gets to local control and local economies the healthier it gets. Because real people have an interest in not ruining the place."[23] Bioregionalism does not dispute that people will use and change nature, rather bioregionalism assumes that people who live in and inhabit a place will search out ways to use the place that satisfy the needs of humans without degrading the long-term ability of that place to provide for the needs of humans and non-humans.[24]

Ecologically sustainable human societies would involve very different modes of living and working than found under advanced industrial society. Rather than continually stressing living better and having more, sustainable societies, or permacultures, are social-ecological systems that attempt to find ways for all people to live well. The idea of a permaculture implies the inputs removed from systems would be replaced so that human habitation would not degrade the quality of a place, or reduce that place's ability to sustain both human and non-human communities in the future. While the form of permacultures would necessarily vary from place to place, there are four general principles of a permaculture:

> It must produce more energy than it consumes; it must not destroy its own base through misuse of soil or water

> resources; it must meet local needs, not serve some mass-produced, processed and packaged market; and it must find all the necessary nutrients on site…It success depends on very careful design, the use of a very large number of plant and animal species, the recycling of all materials, and hard work.[25]

In industrial societies, development is guided by the idea that people's quality of life can only improve through continued economic growth and increased consumption of commodities. Bioregional permacultures on the other hand, emphasize that people can only live well when living well becomes the focus of development. Bioregional efforts hope that by reinvolving places in social, political, and economic systems, more sustainable ways can be found to value and use nature.[26]

As radical environmentalists suggest, addressing environmental problems will require more than increased regulation and after-the-fact efforts to clean up pollution and the negative effects of advanced industrial society. Mark Dowie writes:

> It's not that environmentalists have completely failed. In fact, they have triumphed in many Earth-saving battles and fostered environmental sensibilities embraced to some degree by a vast majority of Americans. But in doing so

> they have been unable to produce a significant improvement in the country's environmental health.[27]

Environmentalism has approached environmental problems as if they could be solved by passing laws, donating money, or through personal consumption choices. Rather than better ways to minimize or displace the effects of industrial society, substantively addressing environmental problems will require developing a society that offers ways for people to live that do not degrade the capacity of natural systems to sustain human and non-human life. Many environmental problems stem from decisions that are made in sub-political realms by technical and professional experts. The efforts that have come to be called environment justice demonstrate the potential for communities to become involved in shaping and reshaping built and unbuilt environments. Unfortunately, advanced industrial society has abolished most of the relationships that once tied people together in identifiable communities connected with concrete ecological locations. Modern communities are often little more than interest groups and have little in common with the sense of a common goal and a recognition of the need to work with other people to accomplish those goals that are typically associated with traditional formations of community. Given this, involving communities

in finding more sustainable ways for people to live will require a reconsideration of the concept of community in advanced industrial society.[28]

Rather than discussing concepts of community in a purely theoretical manner, this thesis uses explorations of the volunteer construction and maintenance of the Appalachian Trail to frame the development of a work-based conceptualization of community relevant to efforts to collectively re-empower of citizens in advanced industrial, and increasingly informational, economies. Chapter Two reviews the history of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, which demonstrates that private citizens can have a significant impact on the value, use, and management of places. This 2,100-mile trail began as an idea and rapidly became a project involving tens of thousands of people to plan and construct a hiking trail. Additionally, this chapter explores how the construction and management of the Appalachian Trail was and continues to be carried out largely by volunteers.

Chapter Three explores the meaning and relevance of the concept of community in advanced industrial society. As processes of industrialization and urbanization have disrupted traditional formations of community, the concept of community has become increasingly used to refer to a

group of people with common interests. Examining ideas of traditional community formations reveal that a community is much different from an interest group. The concept of a work-based community is developed out of the willingness to work together to achieve common goals of traditional communities and the unifying potential of common interests of interest-based communities. This thesis contends that while groups may coalesce around common interests, it is the work of addressing those interests that lead to the formation of community relationships.[29]

This conceptualization of work-based community is explored further in Chapter Four using the example of the volunteer management of the Appalachian Trail. A.T. managers begin working together out of common interests in hiking and maintaining or developing a foot trail. What is recognized by these volunteers, as well as state and federal land management agencies, as the Appalachian Trail Management Community comes to exist through the work trying to accomplish a common goal, and the understanding that a great many people will be needed to accomplish the community's goals. This chapter uses qualitative research to consider the organization and composition of the Appalachian Trail Management Community. This chapter draws on three years of participant observation of local

maintaining clubs, regional management meetings, and special committees designed to address specific issues relating to the management of the Appalachian Trail. Additionally, in depth interviews with A.T. managers were used to supplement impressions and understandings gained from participant observations.[30]

As the Appalachian Trail is primarily a hiking trail, it may seem appropriate to classify it among efforts to provide places for certain people to recreate, and thus little connected with themes of community and developing sustainable societies. In considering the Appalachian Trail, perhaps it is more important to explore the processes by which it has come to and continues to exist, rather than the end result. The Appalachian Trail was conceived, planned, built, and continues to be maintained, almost entirely by volunteers. The lands that would become the Appalachian Trail were far from a wilderness, and often included farms, mines, old logging roads, orchards, balds, and other signs of human induced changes on landscapes. Beyond the simple establishment of a hiking trail, the construction and maintenance of the Appalachian Trail is a large- scale, popular revaluing of a long strip of the Appalachian Mountains in attractive rather than extractive ways. Through the actions of private citizens, places that

were once valued for the wealth that could be extracted from them, become valued for the experiences they are seen to offer.[31] More than just an interest in the Appalachian Trail signified by use of the trail or donations of money to organizations associated with the A.T., volunteer managers can be reimagined as a community based on their work, common goals, and willingness to work with diverse groups of people to achieve their goals. While these volunteers may be working to protect and maintain a hiking trail, their experiences offer an example of how non-experts can become involved in revaluing and reconstructing places. Environmental concern could too easily be used to legitimize increased management and control of social and natural realms by professional and technical experts. Such management could be used to maintain inequitable distribution of wealth and negative effects of industrial development.[32] The involvement of communities concerned with the impacts of polices and practices on their local environments offers the greatest potential for the development of ways to live that will be both socially equitable and ecologically sustainable.

Notes

Barry Lopez' comments were taken from The Rediscovery of North America (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1990).

[1] For more on the concept of intrinsic value see Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary,” in Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, eds. The Deep Ecology Movement (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 3-9; Bill Devall and George Sessions, Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered (Layton, Utah: Peregrine Smith, 1985); Christopher Manes, Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1990), 139-164.

[2] Gary Snyder, The Practice of the Wild (New York: North Point Press, 1990), 9.

[3] Kate Soper, “Nature/’nature’ in George Robertson et al., eds., FutureNatural: Nature, Science, Culture (New York: Routledge, 1996) 23.

[4] See Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983).

[5] Karl Marx, “Economic and Political manuscripts of 1844,” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd Ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 75.

[6] William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 13.

[7] David Harvey, The Limits to Capital (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), and Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996); Anne Whiston Spirn, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in William Cronon, ed., Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature (New York: Norton, 1996), 91-113; Neil Smith, “The Production of Nature,” in Robertson, et al., eds., FutureNatural, 35-54.

[8] Timothy W. Luke, Capitalism, Democracy, and Ecology: Departing From Marx (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 1.

[9] Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 19.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Luke, Capitalism, 1-5; Berry 19-20.

[12] Luke, Capitalism, 112.

[13] Ulrich Beck, Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1992), 233-234.

[14] Berry, 74.

[15] Luke, Capitalism, 122.

[16] Hal K. Rothman, The Greening of a Nation?: Environmentalism in the United States since 1945 (Fort Worth TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 107.

[17] Rothman 105-134.

[18] Mark Dowie, Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 29-62; Robert Gottlieb, Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement (Washington: Island Press, 1993); Luke, Capitalism, 120-139.

[19] For an overview of various forms of radical environmentalism see Carolyn Merchant ed., Ecology: Key Concepts in Critical Theory (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994).

[20] Gottlieb, 162-208; Dowie125-174.

[21] Kirkpatrick Sale, Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision (Philadelphia: New Society, 1991), 42.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Snyder, Real Work, 140.

[24] Sale; Snyder, Real Work, 138-141.

[25] Luke, Capitalism, quoted on 61.

[26] Luke, Capitalism, 60-61. For a fictionalized example of a permacultural society, see Ernest Callenbach, Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston (New York: Bantam, 1990).

[27] Dowie, x.

[28] Luke, Capitalism 107-113; Berry 19-21.

[29] In this thesis, work is conceptualized as activities undertaken to produce a product where both the end product and the process that leads to it are satisfactory to the worker.

[30] For more discussion on the methodology of these interviews, see the Appendix.

[31] For further discussion of attractive versus extractive development, see Timothy W. Luke, “On the Political Economy of the Clayoquot Sound: The Uneasy Transition from Extractive to Attractive Models of Development,” in Karena Shaw and Warren Magnusson eds., Rainforest Crunch: The Politics of Clayoquot Sound, 1997.

[32] For examples see Al Gore, Earth in the Balance (New York: Plume, 1993); Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich, The Population Explosion (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990); Lester R. Brown, Christopher Flavin, Sandra Postel, Saving the Planet: How to Shape and Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy (New York: Norton, 1991). For a critique of these perspectives see Timothy W. Luke, “Worldwatching at the Limits of Growth,” in Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 75-94.

Chapter Two

The Anonymous Trail: A Brief History of the Appalachian Trail

> “Remote for detachment,
> narrow for chosen company,
> winding for leisure,
> lonely for contemplation,
> the Trail leads not merely north and south
> but upward to the body, mind and soul of man.”
>
> -Harold Allen

In a less than 80 years, the Appalachian Trail developed from an idea embraced by a small number of trail advocates into a 2,100 mile hiking trail that yearly sees the involvement of 4,500 volunteers who give 175,000 hours of labor to maintain a hiking trail that is used annually by tens of thousands of people.[1] Following the publication of a call to develop an Appalachian Trail in 1921, A.T. advocates began working to plan and build a hiking trail along the length of the Appalachian Mountains. This trail was completed in 1937, though almost all of it lay on private land or public roads. A.T. volunteers struggled to maintain a continuous trailway in the face of land closures, storms, and scenic highway development projects.

Government assistance finally came in 1968 with the passage of the National Scenic Trails Act, which enabled the Park and Forest Services to designate an A.T. corridor and purchase lands for a permanent, protected trailway. Volunteers continued to plan and reconstruct sections, and the activities of these volunteers were formally legitimized through cooperative agreements with federal and state land owning agencies.

The Idea of an Appalachian Trail

The idea for an Appalachian Trail landed in fertile ground among the well-established hiking and trial building clubs that developed in New England during the latter part of the nineteenth century. America's first hiking club, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), was formed in 1876. In addition to hiking trips, members of AMC (and other clubs) began developing networks of hiking trails throughout New England. By 1915 work had begun on Vermont's Long Trail, and the promoters of that trail had begun to think of grander trails connecting New York with Quebec, and trails south to the Delaware Gap. In 1916, members of the New England hiking community formed the New England Trail Conference to coordinate the trail building activities of the region's outdoors organizations.

Historians Guy and Lara Waterman attribute the growth of trail building activity in the early twentieth century to the development of the automobile. Before the easy and flexible transportation offered by automobile, hiking trails usually centered on loops and mountain climbs from popular vacation spots. With automobiles, the possibility of grand linear trails that connected mountain ranges became more practical as hikers could more easily travel to various trailheads.[2]

The idea that would become the Appalachian Trail originated with Benton MacKaye, a land use planner and graduate of the Harvard Forestry School, who worked for Gifford Pinchot in the early years of the U.S. Forest Service. MacKaye's interests were not limited to forestry, as Donald Jackson writes, "he was ultimately most comfortable being described as a 'regional planner,' if pigeonholing was essential, but he identified his true profession as making the world more habitable."[3] MacKaye was inconsistent in his recollections on the origin of the idea for an Appalachian Trail. He variously placed the inspiration for the idea at the top of a tree he scaled while climbing Vermont's Mt. Stratton in 1900, or in 1897 when he camped in the White mountains, or perhaps as a boy of twelve while listening to a one-armed John Wesley Powell

recount his explorations of the Grand Canyon. By 1921, though, MacKaye had developed the idea enough to write an article that outlined his ideas for the A.T. The article was written shortly after the suicide of MacKaye's wife, suffragist Jessie Hardy Stubbs, during the summer of 1921. MacKaye spent the summer staying with architect Charles Whitaker who promised to publish the article in the journal he edited. In October of 1921 "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning" appeared in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects.* More than a call for a mere hiking trail, the article is a proposal in keeping with MacKaye's self-described project of making the world more habitable.[4]

The article called for the development of the Appalachian Mountains as a place where workers could be refreshed through direct contact with nature. MacKaye contends that industrialization has made people "as helpless as canaries in a cage."[5] The scouting movement developed in an effort to regain some of the self-reliance lost through industrialization.[6] While the ability to navigate in the woods and cook one's dinner was a beginning, such abilities were not enough for MacKaye, who envisioned a place where people could grow their own food and live "with less aid – and less hindrance – from the

complexities of commerce."[7] Not a call for the overthrow of industrial society, MacKaye's plan was a proposal for places that people could go in their time off from work to regain their health and vitality. As a means to develop these places, MacKaye turned to the untapped potential of American leisure time. MacKaye contends if just one percent of the spare time of the American population in the 1920's was focused on the job of increasing facilities for outdoor community life, it would be the equivalent of having 40,000 people on the job full time. The benefits he foresaw would come not only from having places to go for recreation, but also from participating in the creation and improvement of those places.[8]

MacKaye found a place for this labour to be applied in the relatively undeveloped lands of the Appalachian Mountains. By the 1920's, millions of acres of land had been designated as National Parks and National Forests. Most of these public lands, however, were in the western part of America, and almost entirely inaccessible to the majority of eastern workers and city dwellers that MacKaye focused on. If it was not possible to take the majority of the people to the parks, then MacKaye saw the need to bring the parks to the people. The Appalachian Mountain regions seemed ideal for this purpose. Several National Forests

had already been established in the area, and the region was close to many of the centers of population in the east. Under MacKaye's proposal, the Appalachian region would be developed not only as a place for the re-creation of city dwellers, but as a region with a way of living distinct from the hustle and bustle of city life, and the traditional loneliness of rural life.[9]

The project MacKaye proposed was the construction of a series of camps from New England to Georgia connected by a hiking trail. The purpose of the project was to "establish a base for a more extensive and systematic development of outdoor community life."[10] The first aspect of MacKaye's proposal was for a hiking trial that extended from Mt. Washington in New Hampshire to Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina. The A.T. would be divided into sections that would be constructed and maintained by groups of local people. MacKaye's proposal also included the idea of shelter camps with inns and places to eat which would be spaced a day's walk apart. MacKaye hoped that small communities of privately owned homes would grow near shelter camps, and that eventually these residential community camps would produce food, crafts, and other non-industrial goods. These camps would provide not only a way-point for walkers on the hiking trail, but a place to

live for people who were not well suited to urban-industrial life. While the social reform aspects of the proposal would find few supporters, the idea of a hiking trail caught on almost immediately.[11]

Spreading the Idea, Building the Trail

Following the publication of the article, MacKaye himself quickly focused on the trail idea, which he sensed had more popular appeal than the community development aspects of his plan. Historian Brian King contends that MacKaye's proposal was embraced over other proposals for a long distance eastern hiking trail because of its grandeur and lack of complex, field-level details.[12] Additionally, MacKaye widely distributed copies of his article and courted reporters to spread the idea of an Appalachian Trail. Whittaker, MacKaye, and other friends approached members of existing hiking organizations to garner support and sell the idea of the Appalachian Trail. In addition to pre-existing clubs in New England and North Carolina, groups were formed in Georgia, New York, and New Jersey to develop the A.T. Less than two years after the publication of the article, in the summer of 1923, the first section of trail built specifically for the Appalachian Trail was completed in New York's Hudson River Valley.[13]

In 1925, advocates of the A.T. idea asked the Federated Societies on Planning and Parks to convene a conference on the Appalachian Trail. The meeting was called “for the purpose of organizing a body of workers (representative of outdoor living and of the regions adjacent to the Appalachian Range) to complete the building of the Appalachian Trail.”[14] The advocates and interested parties met at the Hotel Raleigh in Washington, D.C., and decided to create the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC) as a permanent organization to coordinate the efforts of those involved in the creation of the Appalachian Trail. A provisional constitution was adopted that formed a 15-person executive committee. William Welch, who had been previously active in the formation of state parks in New York, was elected as chairman of the Conference. The meeting also led to the adoption of a work plan for completing the estimated 1,700 miles of trail and extended the southern terminus to Cohutta Mountain in Georgia. The plan called for the development of an interconnected network of trails across the east. In addition to the route for the Appalachian Trail, the plan included branch trails to the cities of Buffalo, Atlanta, Birmingham, and to mountains in Maine, Tennessee, and North Carolina.[15]

Despite the organization of ATC, actual progress in constructing the A.T. lagged in the years following the 1925 meeting. A 1937 ATC report commented, “the project lost momentum; it had failed to enlist sufficient workers and was rapidly degenerating into a fireside philosophy.”[16] As happened so often in the history of the Appalachian Trail project, rejuvenation came in the form of a new, enthusiastic member of the A.T. Conference. Connecticut Judge Arthur Perkins supervised work crews and helped solve routing problems in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. When Welch sought to take a less active role in the A.T. project, the newly retired Perkins accepted informal control of ATC. Perkins also recruited Myron Avery, a young admiralty lawyer and Naval reserve Captain, to the A.T. project. While MacKaye continued to develop and publicize the idea of the Appalachian Trail, Perkins and Avery would oversee the completion of the actual A.T.[17]

Avery moved to Washington D.C. in 1927 and helped organized the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC). In addition to constructing over 250 miles of trail between 1928 and 1932, PATC was instrumental in the development of other A.T. clubs in Virginia. Work on the Appalachian Trail in the southern portion of Virginia began in earnest with the 1930 formation of the Natural Bridge Appalachian

Trail Club, and Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club in 1932. The Potomac club hosted the second meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference in 1928, where a revised constitution and smaller executive board were approved. Also at this meeting, the northern terminus for the A.T. was officially extended to Mt. Katahdin in Maine. During the meeting, Welch was elected honorary chairman, Perkins was selected to serve as chairman and Trail Supervisor, and Avery was named to the executive committee.[18]

Following the second meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference, Avery became a more important figure in the construction of the A.T. and development of the Appalachian Trail Conference. When Perkins suffered a stroke in 1930, Avery was made acting chairman, and was elected chairman at the 1931 meeting of the A.T. Conference, a post he would occupy for the next 22 years. Avery became a prolific writer about the Appalachian Trail, and continued to narrow the focus of the A.T. Conference and the A.T. itself. In a 1930 article Avery described the Appalachian Trail, “as conceived by its proponents and already partly realized, is a footpath for hikers in the Appalachian Mountains, extending from Maine to Georgia.”[19] Avery’s idea of the Appalachian Trail was more limited than both MacKaye’s regional vision, or the 1925 ATC plan for Eastern United

States cities linked by connecting trails. In addition to writing about his idea, Avery undertook the work of realizing his idea of the Appalachian Trail directly through scouting trips and route marking. Bill Bryson writes, “MacKaye always gets credit for the trail… but it was really Avery’s trail. He mapped it out, bullied and cajoled clubs into producing volunteer crews, and personally superintended the construction of hundreds of miles of path.”[20] While some considered Avery to be domineering and abrasive others admired his hard-charging style. Whatever his personality, the construction of the A.T. proceeded rapidly under his guidance.[21]

By 1933, the Southern third of the A.T. was completed, with only the sections in Maine yet to be built. When Avery and contemporaries from the PATC began searching for a route through the southern Appalachians in 1930, much of the region was not even covered by topographic maps. Not even three years latter, the A.T. had been flagged, planned, and largely constructed from Mt. Oglethorp in Georgia through northern Pennsylvania. The sections of the A.T. in Maine were little more than vague lines on planning maps and some advocates favored simply shortening the A.T. to Mt. Washington. Avery would hear nothing of shortening the trail, and in 1935 the Maine Appalachian Trail Club was

formed with considerable assistance from PATC and Avery, who served as the club's trails supervisor. PATC members traveled to Maine during summers to work on the uncompleted sections of trail. Also in 1935, assistance from the federal government on the project began when Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews began working on sections of the A.T. in Maine.[22]

A philosophical split that had been developing for a number of years came to a head at the 1935 ATC meeting over the appropriate response to a proposal by the federal government to construct Skyline Drive very close (in some cases on top of) the Appalachian Trail in northern Virginia. Avery and other Conference leaders felt they needed government allies to ensure the long term existence and protection of the A.T. Avery and his allies chose not to fight the project, and instead opted for a cooperative relocation of the Appalachian Trail that would be completed almost entirely by CCC workers. MacKaye led those in the A.T. community opposed to the Skyline Drive project, including the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, the two largest member clubs in the Trail Conference. The issue of building the drive consumed the 1935 meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference and while there were lengthy debates over the issue, Avery and

his allies prevailed, and the A.T. Conference did little to oppose the scenic highway's construction.[23]

Over the winter of 1935-36, MacKaye and Avery traded letters about the debate and the vision each had of the Appalachian Trail. In the years since his 1921 proposal, MacKaye had come to favor protecting wilderness as a place of refuge from the excesses of industrial civilization. Avery sought merely to make the mountains accessible for outdoor recreation, a goal that better road access seemed to further rather than detract from. Following this series of letters, the two became more critical of each other's position and broke off all relations. There is no record of any reconciliation between 1936 and Avery's death in 1951. While MacKaye maintained active correspondence with club and Conference leaders, he turned most of his intellectual energy toward the establishment of the Wilderness Society with Bob Marshall.[24]

Avery remained active as the head of ATC, and continued to push for the completion of a continuous footpath. By the end of 1936, the A.T. was nearing completion, and Avery had walked or flagged almost every section. A late summer snowstorm prevented the completion of a two mile section in the Maine woods, so the A.T. was not officially completed until August of 1937, only twelve

years after the formation of the Appalachian Trail Conference. That same summer, Avery challenged members of the ATC to recognize the responsibilities that remained even though a continuous A.T. had been completed, commenting, "those of us, who have physically worked on the Trail, know that the Trail, as such will never be completed."[25] Avery introduced the concept of an Appalachian trailway that would establish a strip of lands surrounding the A.T. to protect the experience of those using the A.T. Additionally, the members of the A.T. Conference and member clubs almost immediately began the task of relocating sections of the A.T. (some of which ran along roads for a number of miles) into more optimal locations, a task which continues to the present day.[26]

Protecting the Appalachian Trail

Though a trailway was completed in only 12 years, the continuous trailway lasted for only a year after its completion. A 1938 hurricane in New England destroyed many miles of trail in that region, and Congresses' decision to build the Blue Ridge parkway as an extension of the Skyline Drive in Virginia led to the relocation of 120 miles of Appalachian Trail further to the west in Virginia. The Appalachian Trail as a continuous footpath would not exist

again until 1951. Judge Perkins was often quoted as having asked MacKaye, “When we get the trail, Ben, what are we going to do with it?”[27] Most A.T. volunteers however, realized that the A.T. would need some sort of formal protection if it was going to continue to exist. In 1938, A.T. Advocates encouraged the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service to sign cooperative agreements with ATC. The agreements created a two mile buffer strip along the 875 miles of trail that lay on federal land. In this strip of land, no new road or facility constructions would be allowed, though logging would be permitted to within 200 feet of the trail. Soon after, all the A.T. states but Maine signed similar agreements that protected the A.T. where it crossed state land (the buffer strip was reduced to one-half mile). These agreements recognized a public interest in the protection of the Appalachian Trail, and are the beginnings of official partnerships between the Appalachian Trail Conference and federal and state land agencies to ensure the A.T.’s protection.[28]

After the end of World War II, members of the A.T. community began to seek more lasting protection than the cooperative agreements offered. Even the strongest agreement with federal agencies could not protect the more than 1,000 miles of the A.T. that lay on private land. In

1945, Pennsylvania Congressman Daniel Hoch, who was also the president of the Blue Mountain Eagle Hiking Club, introduced the first legislation calling for a system of national foot trails. Hoch's bill was an amendment to a highway act, and designated a national series of trails up to 10,000 miles in length, as well as appropriating $50,000 a year for purchasing of lands and construction of the A.T.. The bill faced significant opposition, and was shuffled into a congressional committee that killed it. While Hoch was also unsuccessful on his second attempt in 1948, his bills mark the first efforts to designate a nationwide, protected series of hiking trails.[29]

The 1950's saw a reopening of a continuous footpath and continued efforts to bring about the trailway concept. Returning from active duty after World War II, Avery again galvanized volunteers to restore a continuous footpath. These efforts were boosted by the national attention garnered in 1948 when Earl Shaffer completed the first "thru-hike" of the 2050 miles of A.T. open that year in a four month backpacking trip. In 1951, Avery delivered remarks to celebrate the completion of the final section that reopened a continuous trail. While the Appalachian Trail had been closely associated in public with its founders and leaders, Avery wrote that:

> This Trail might well…have been termed, 'The Anonymous Trail' in recognition of the fact that many, many people…have labored on [it]. They have asked for no return nor recognition nor reward. They have contributed to the project simply by reason of the pleasure found in trail-making and in the realization that they were, perhaps, creating something which would be a distinct contribution to the American recreational system and the training of American people.[30]

Avery retired from the Chairmanship of the A.T. Conference in 1951 and died later that same year. Avery was succeeded by Murray Stevens, an active member of the New York A.T. building community. Since Stevens lived in New York, volunteers in the Washington area carried on the day to day running of the Conference. Among these volunteers were Jean Stephenson, the founder and editor of *Appalachian Trailway News*, and Ruth Blackburn who became president of PATC in the early 60's, and would chair the Appalachian Trail Conference during the early 1980's. Throughout the fifties and sixties, volunteers continued to erect shelters and relocate sections of A.T. to enhance the quality and location of the Appalachian Trail. Intensive commercial development forced the relocation of the A.T.'s southern terminus from Mt. Ogelthorp to Springer Mountain in 1958,

and renewed efforts to secure some sort of formal protection for the A.T.[31]

In the 1960's, continued commercial development and renewed proposals for scenic parkways scattered along the length of the A.T. reinvigorated efforts to gain federal protection for A.T. corridor lands. In 1961, Stanley Murray, who would hold the chairmanship until 1975, succeeded Stevens. Meeting in 1963, Murray, Stephenson, and others agreed that the A.T. needed some sort of federal protection along the lines proposed by Hoch in the 1940's. A.T. advocates were encouraged by the passage of the National Wilderness Preservation Bill in 1964, and approached Senator Gaylord Nelson who had supported an extensive statewide series of hiking trails while Governor of Wisconsin. In 1964, he introduced a bill to secure protection for the Appalachian Trail. The bill stalled, and in 1965, Nelson revived Hoch's call for a national system of hiking trails. In 1965, Nelson learned that President Lyndon Johnson liked the idea of a national trails system, and had asked Interior Secretary Stewart Udall to develop recommendations for a series of trails. The Appalachian Trail Conference worked with the Department of the Interior to develop the legislation that wound its way through the halls and committees of Congress before

being passed and signed into law by President Johnson in October of 1968.[32]

The National Trail System Act provided official recognition for the Appalachian Trail as well as offered the assistance of federal agencies in completing the construction and relocation of the A.T. to an optimal location. The act directed the Interior Department to develop and publish a desired route for the A.T. Once the route was published, states would have two years to purchase lands for the A.T. corridor before federal agencies could directly purchase lands. If landowners were not willing sellers, the 1968 Act allowed the Park Service to condemn lands as a last resort to securing a continuous trail corridor. The Act also authorized $5 million to be used for land acquisition programs, though the monies would not be allocated for almost a decade. At the time of the Act's passage, around 1,030 miles of the A.T. (almost half of its total length) was located on private lands or roads. Like the cooperative agreements of the 1930's one of the most significant features of the Trails Act was the authorization of the Park Service to enact formal agreement with nonfederal agencies, such as ATC, to construct and maintain the Appalachian Trail.[33]

The passage of the National Trails System Act led to a significant increase in the membership of the Appalachian Trail Conference, as well as the hiring of the first paid ATC employees since the Conference's formation in 1925. In the early 60's, ATC had around 600 individual members; by 1975, ATC would have close to 10,000 members. With the passage of the Act, the Board of Managers (ATC's executive committee) felt a need for a permanent presence in Washington to coordinate A.T. construction and protection efforts with federal agencies. Lester Holmes was hired as a part time administrative officer in 1968, and his position was soon upgraded to a full time executive director. After 1968, additional staff members would be hired to coordinate the activities of the many A.T. maintaining clubs and Conference members. The professionals working for the A.T. Conference affirmed the role of private citizens in the Appalachian Trail project, as most acted in positions to support, rather than replace the efforts of volunteers. Trailwide policy continued to be set by the Board of Managers, and maintenance and construction tasks continued to be carried out by volunteers.[34]

A growth in interest in being outdoors in the late 60's and early 70's helped strengthen the case for

protecting the Appalachian Trail, but also created a new set of problems associated with overuse of the A.T. To address overuse, ATC devoted resources to develop user education programs that worked with hikers, backpackers, and landowners to create a “trail ethic” to minimize damage to the A.T. and surrounding lands. These education efforts did not always work and as overuse problems continued, private lands were sometimes closed to A.T. users. Additionally, developers were buying up farms and forested lands near the A.T. These two processes once again forced ATC to move sections of the A.T. onto public roads in many places. In 1971, the Interior Department published the “official” A.T. route, which began the two-year process of state acquisition of lands along the A.T. corridor. Almost immediately following the passage of the 1968 Act, the Forest Service had begun to purchase large tracts of A.T. corridor lands that lay within the designated boundaries of national forests. With the publication of the official corridor, A.T. advocates worried that such a narrow strip of land would not provide sufficient protection to the environment and experience they saw as so important to the A.T.[35]

Through the early 1970’s, ATC continued to refine the vision of the Appalachian Trail. In 1972, the Conference’s

Board of Managers adopted a measure that called for the establishment of a wider greenway of lands around the Appalachian Trail (up to 10 miles on either side of the actual trail). This Appalachian Greenway should be "of sufficient width to provide a nationally significant zone for dispersed types of recreation, wildlife habitat, scientific study, and timber and watershed management, as well as to provide vicarious benefits to the American people."[36] The 1972 Greenway idea expanded the narrow-Avery era vision of a trailway into something more akin to the broad band of wilderness envisioned by MacKaye in the 1920's and 30's. Rather than direct ownership of lands, the greenway idea stressed using conservation easements and land use planning to maintain the character of private property surrounding the actual Trail corridor.[37]

The Appalachian Trail Conference continued to grow and make adjustments to meet its growing membership and responsibilities toward dealing with the A.T. Following his final message to trial advocates at the 1975 ATC meeting, Benton MacKaye died in his sleep late in 1975 at the age of 96. In 1975, Chairman Murray stepped down, and was succeeded by George Zoebelein who stressed fiscal management and reorganization of the A.T. Conference professional staff. The rapid growth of membership and

responsibilities had implications for the size and location of the A.T. Conference's professional staff. In 1972, ATC moved from its offices in a Washington townhouse shared with the also growing PATC into a government owned building in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia which was a little more than a mile from the Appalachian Trail. In 1976, the Appalachian Trail Conference moved around the corner into its permanent privately owned headquarters in Harper's Ferry.[38]

The tenth anniversary of the National Trails System Act was celebrated with the passage of a series of amendments to the Act which addressed many of the concerns that had developed in the A.T. community over the slow progress of protecting the Appalachian Trail. In testimonies before Congress during 1976, the Forest Service reported that an additional 117 miles of A.T. lands had been added within Forest boundaries. The National Park Service reported no significant additions, and continued to support state, rather than federal purchases of land for the Appalachian Trail. The arrival of the Carter administration in 1977 brought a Secretary of the Interior and Director of the National Park Service who were much more sympathetic to the threats facing the A.T. ATC leaders worked with federal agencies to craft a series of

amendments to the 1968 act that were passed into law in 1978. The Amendments authorized $90 million for Park Service purchases of land and directed the Service to finish acquisitions for the A.T. in three years. The amendments also significantly extended the eminent-domain authority of federal agencies, and widened the width of the protected A.T. corridor from 200 feet to around 1,000 feet. The amendments reiterated directions for federal agencies to maintain close relationships with the volunteer organizations involved with the maintenance and construction of the Appalachian Trail.[39]

Formalizing Cooperative Management

During the 1980's, ATC took further steps to secure an optimal location for the A.T., and provide for strong relations between Federal agencies, ATC, and A.T. volunteers. From 1978 to 1980, ATC opened regional offices in New England, New York, Pennsylvania and Tennessee (the Tennessee office was split into two offices, one in Virginia, and one in North Carolina in 1980). These offices worked to help member clubs recruit and train volunteers in trail construction and maintenance, as well as local and regional coordination of A.T. activities between ATC, volunteers, and federal agencies. In 1980,

Ruth Blackburn became the new chair of the A.T. Conference. Through the early 1980's, ATC worked to increase membership and develop a comprehensive plan for the management of the Appalachian Trail as well as to secure continued appropriations for A.T. corridor acquisitions.[40]

The role of volunteer managers was formalized in 1984 with a formal delegation of management responsibility for the Appalachian Trail to ATC, and from ATC to A.T. Conference member clubs. The agreement in 1984 delegated "to the Conference the responsibility for managing in the public interest the lands acquired by the [National Park Service] for the corridor as well as for maintaining the footpath itself."[41] This agreement formalized the role of volunteer stewardship of what had become a public resource under the 1968 Trails Act. A.T Park Office Manager David Richie commented that volunteer maintainers "are the real specialists in Trail work, and they have more of a commitment. Volunteers really want to do the work."[42] During the mid-1980's, ATC and member clubs began to come to terms with the practical implications of the agreement. Clubs were delegated management authority and developed local management plans, trailwide standards were developed, and regional management committees were formed.[43]

Appalachian Trail volunteers continued to work with federal agencies throughout the 1980's to move towards the completion of a continuous, protected A.T. corridor. Ruth Blackburn and ATC used the "sweat equity" of volunteers to retain funding for Appalachian Trail land acquisitions even though appropriations for other National Parks and Scenic Trails declined during the Reagan years. ATC was aided in these efforts by the commitment, involvement, and willingness of volunteers to construct and maintain the Appalachian Trail. By 1987, only 150 miles of the A.T. remained in private ownership. In 1988 the A.T. community was made up of 31 official A.T. maintaining clubs and 30 supporting organizations which together contained 90,000 to 100,000 members, as well as 29 corporate members, and the 21,000 members of ATC. As the A.T. community continued to grow, ATC and A.T. leaders began to look past the completion of the protected Appalachian Trail.[44]

Volunteer managers have been active in the development and construction of the Appalachian Trail, and while they continue to be active in the physical management of the resource, management activities increasingly address ways to protect the Appalachian Trail from unwanted impacts of industrial society. Since its completion in 1937, the A.T. corridor has been almost continually threatened by

road, utility or development projects on neighboring lands, and problems with air pollution, acid rain, and gypsy moths threatened the health of the larger ecosystems through which A.T. lands pass. These problems have returned attention to previous calls to develop a series of national trails and for A.T. managers to become active in land-use planning and environmental issues. Developing greenways and alternative hiking trails close to centers of population seem crucial to the protection of the Appalachian Trail. As the Appalachian Trail runs for over 2,100-miles along the eastern United States, it is impossible that such a trail will be unaffected by an America that continues to expand its cities, build roads, and power-lines, and cellular phone towers. Perhaps the greatest shortcoming for MacKaye's vision of an Appalachian Trail was his insistence that such places could stand as "a refuge from the scramble of every-day worldly commercial life."[45] Without significant and substantive changes in the way Americans live, work, and play, the Appalachian Trail, like other preserves, parks, and designated wildernesses, will continue to be threatened by the encroachment of industrial society.

Notes

Harold Allen was an Appalachian Trail hiker in the 1930's. His poem is taken from David Embledge, ed., The Appalachian Trail Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 79.

[1] Figures for volunteer involvement for fiscal year 1998, Morgan Sommerville, Southern Region Representative, Appalachian Trail Conference, personal correspondence, March 27, 1999. These figures only cover trail maintenance activities on National Forest and National Park lands. There are no available figures for the amount of time spent by volunteers on the management aspects of maintaining the Trail.

[2] Brian B. King "The Appalachian Trail Project," in Appalachian Trail Member Handbook, thirteenth edition (Harper's Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1988), 4-6; Roderick Nash , Wilderness and the American Mind, third edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982),154.

[3] Donald Jackson, "The Long Way 'Round: The National Scenic Trails System and how it grew. And how it didn't," *Wilderness* 181 (Summer 1988): 17.

[4] Ibid., 17-18.

[5] Benton MacKaye, "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning," in David Embledge, ed., The Appalachian Trail Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 47.

[6] For a further discussion of scouting and its goals, see Nash, 147-149.

[7] MacKaye, 47.

[8] Ibid., 48-49.

[9] Ibid., 47-52.

[10] Ibid., 53.

[11] Ibid., 53-57; Jackson, 18.

[12] King, 14.

[13] Jackson, 18; King, 15-19.

[14] King, quotation on 21.

[15] The Appalachian Trail Conference, “History of the Appalachian Trail,” in The Appalachian Trail: Publication Number 5, third edition, (Washington, D.C.: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1937), 11-12; King, 12-15.

[16] Appalachian Trail Conference, 12.

[17] Ibid.; King 26.

[18] King, 27.

[19] King, quotation on 31.

[20] Bill Bryson, A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), 29.

[21] King, 28-31; Guy and Lara Waterman, “On the Trail’s Founding Fathers,” in David Embledge, ed., The Appalachian Trail Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 72; Bryson 28-29.

[22] King, 32.

[23] Ibid., 32-35.

[24] Ibid.

[25] King, quotation on 36.

[26] Ibid, 36.

[27] Jackson, quotation on 19.

[28] King, 38-39; Jackson 19.

[29] Jackson, 20; King 40.

[30] King, quotation on 43.

[31] King, 42-48.

[32] Jackson, 20; King, 49-51; Nash, 225-226.

[33] Edward Garvey, “The Long Green Line,” *American Forests* 81 (June 1981): 20-21; Joseph Keyser “The AT: Trailbalzing for Tomorrow,” *American Forests* 9-10 (September/October 1988), 29; King, 52.

[34] King, 52.

[35] Keyser, 29; King, 53.

[36] King, quotation on 56.

[37] King, 56.

[38] Ibid, 56-58.

[39] Garvey, 23; Jackson, 22; King 58-59.

[40] King, 60-64.

[41] King, 64.

[42] Quoted in King, 66.

[43] Garvey, 27; King 64-66.

[44] Garvey, 57; King, 67.

[45] MacKaye, 56.

Chapter Three

Reconsidering Conceptualizations of Community

> "The closer we stick to our origins in dealing with basic needs (think now in terms of social arrangements) the more likely we are to be successful. We did not evolve in nation states… Public policy is an abstraction arising out of large social organizations with precedents no more than one hundred centuries old. Community on the other hand, is a particular, a direct production of our biology…"
>
> -Wes Jackson

At first, the idea of considering thousands of people who live thousands of miles apart as a community may seem problematic. Most images of community center around a small group of people living in close proximity to each other. Most Americans however, do not live in daily environments that have much in common with these traditional ideas of community. Processes of industrialization and urbanization have disrupted communities as more peoples and places become increasingly linked in transnational economies. Timothy W. Luke writes that professional and technical "experts coalesce in their own lifestyle niches in ways that have little resemblance

to local communities of any traditional sort."[1] These lifestyle niches are differentiated by the expert status and types of products consumed by niche members, and are quite different from the physical, personal, and political/economic interconnectedness that are often linked to traditional ideas of community.[2]

With the loss of traditional communities, the concept of community becomes mobilized to explore groups of people that share an interest. Ideas of community have been applied to academic and professional experts, shopping malls and Internet chat groups. Through exploring traditional ideas of community, this chapter will consider how these common values and experiences come about not through the holding of common interests, but through common actions. Sharing a common interest can bring a group of people together, but it is only through undertaking work with other people to address those interests that a group of people becomes a community. A community can be understood as a group of people who share common values and experiences. These common values and experiences come from some sort of work which demonstrates not only the holding of an interest, but a willingness to give energy and time to address that interest. In this thesis, the concept of work is used to refer to some sort of physical activity

that a person chooses to do in order to create a product, where both the processes of creation and the end product are satisfying to the worker. As conceptualized in this project, work is different from some sort of labor that is forced upon a person or undertaken merely to secure means of survival. Conceptualizing work and labor in these ways make it conceivable that a person's daily labour (often referred to as a job) could be understood as work if the person chose to do it and is satisfied with both the product and the processes.

This chapter explores ideas of community and develops a conceptualization of community that draws on both traditional and interest-based conceptualizations of community. The concept of community is often used in modern industrial society, but the meaning of this concept is often less than clear. If communities are to play a role in repoliticizing sub-political arenas, then an understanding of community that is neither a romanticiziation of traditional ideas of community or a notion that can be applied so broadly so as to become meaningless is needed. A conceptualization of a work-based community is developed through exploring the role of work in developing relationships between peoples and places. As communities become involved in political and sub-political

processes, their work will allow them to redevelop relationships with places that are necessary to finding sustainable ways for humans to live in built and unbuilt environments.

Exploring Ideas of Community

Ideas of traditional communities typically involve a group of people living in an agrarian or pastoral setting and emphasize face-to-face interaction, a willingness to assist each other, and the general self-sufficiency of the community as a whole. These ideas likely center on agrarian images because rural life is replete with examples of cooperative efforts, such as livestock branding or harvests so often associated with notions of community. A traditional community is perceived as a place where cooperation with one's neighbors is necessary to survive and flourish. Cooperation is needed because one individual or one family simply cannot accomplish all the tasks that require specialized skills or equipment. Traditional ideas of community turn on a willingness to give time and energy to help a neighbor, in the full knowledge that neighbor will at some point give time and energy to help you. Community assistance is not unselfish service to others,

but simply a recognition that the survival, prosperity, and well being of each individual requires the assistance of others. Traditional communities also turn on the understanding that assistance and interaction are not limited to people that one likes or is friends with. To achieve the goals of community requires working with a variety people from diverse backgrounds.[3]

This idea of a traditional community is developed well by Daniel Kemmis in his book *Community and the Politics of Place*. Kemmis describes a barn raising from his boyhood on the Montana plains in the 1950's. During the construction of his family's new barn, Kemmis recalls the presence of neighbor named Albert whose manner, language, and behavior Kemmis' mother Lilly thought were a bad influence on her family. However, Albert's involvement in constructing the new barn had more to do with the necessity of the situation than Lilly's personal preferences. Describing this necessary interaction between members of a community, Kemmis writes:

> In another time and place, Albert and Lilly would have had nothing to do with one another. But on those Montana Plains, life was still harsh enough that they had no choice. Avoiding people you did not like was not an option. Everyone was needed by everyone else in one capacity or another. If Albert and Lilly could have

> snubbed one another, our barn might not have been built, and neither our calves nor Albert's branded.[4]

Traditional ideas of community stress the dependence of each person on the people around them. Avoiding people one did not like was a luxury that was denied by one's need to survive. Traditional ideas of community turned on the implicit understanding that "everyone was needed by everyone else." This recognition of interdependence and a willingness to work with each other are central to traditional ideas of community.[5]

The development of industrial society, and the processes of urbanization that accompanied this development, destroyed many of the traditional communities in America. Communities in America were rarely completely self-sufficient, as they were almost always linked to some sort of market or commodity chain. Population displacements and increasing involvement in national and transnational markets were accelerated through urban industrialization, and by the end of the twentieth century, most traditional communities had been completely subsumed into national and transnational economies.[6] The occasion for Kemmis' book was the rapid loss of the bonds and understandings that marked the Montana of his boyhood, as reflected in the political and economic troubles of the

Montana of his adulthood. In the course of a generation, the relationships which framed and empowered people to work together in communities were abolished. The interactions of communities became fractured into political conflicts between differing interest groups.[7]

The development and empowerment of professional and technical experts replaced the relationships between people in a community with more transient relationships centered on the production and consumption of commodities. With the ability to purchase assistance and expertise for needed projects, also came the ability to associate only with the people one chooses. Survival, once dependent upon other people becomes dependent on developing some sort of professional or technical position, to secure the resources to purchase whatever assistance or services are needed to live. Wendell Berry contends:

> What happens under the rule of specialization is that… the community disintegrates because it loses the necessary understandings, forms and enactments of the relations among materials and processes, principles and actions, ideals and realities, past and present, present and future, men and women, body and spirit, city and country, civilization and wilderness, growth and decay, life and death – just as the individual character loses the sense of a responsible involvement in these relations.[8]

The loss of community can thus be understood as a loss of the relationships that tie people to each other. With loss of such relationships, people become individuals whose identity comes not from a certain place and connection to certain people and processes, but through professional or technical status, and the purchasing and use of commodities. In advanced industrial society, the focus of community shifts from production to consumption. Many of what are currently called communities are more properly recognizable as lifestyle niches. Membership in these niches is based upon the type and amount of commodities consumed. Rather than understanding the need to work and live with people that one does not like, modern commodity communities are based on the principle that one may associate only with the people of a similar technical/consumptive status. This association can be physical, in the sense of gated or spatially separated sub-divisions, or intellectual, such as membership in certain organizations or participation in certain cyberspaces. With the loss of traditional communities, people increasingly become involved with more than one community. Community involvement then, comes not from work with other people in particular places, but often through a more ephemeral holding of an interest or a donation of money.[9]

With the disruption or abolishment of traditional communities, the concept of community has become increasingly used to refer to a group of people with common interests. While some interest groups may share similarities with the relationships and values expressed by traditional communities, what is important here about traditional communities is not that members hold common interests, but that they are willing to undertake common collective and physical work to further those interests. Membership in interest based communities is often based on professional or technical status or a simple donation of money rather than the complex personal and spatial relationships which develop from common tasks undertaken in traditional communities. Sociologist Dan Chekki defends the idea of an interest-based conceptualization of community for:

> If we tend to confine the concept of community to those positive connotations such as a small, closely-knit, interdependent, cooperative realm in which individuals participate in the creation of a symbolic whole, then it is obviously too restrictive a term that is not useful for empirical research.[10]

Unfortunately, while the resulting broad idea of a community may seem useful as a tool for empirical research, it becomes utterly unhelpful as a way to explore the

relationships between a particular people and a particular place. The positive connotations that make the concept of community too narrow for Chekki, however, are what make it useful as a locus for political action in advanced industrial societies.[11]

One of the most troubling aspects of industrial society is that it reduces a person to a creature charged only with fulfilling certain kinds of tasks and consuming commodities produced by others. Once, community involved notions of interdependence and collective self-sufficiency. Within a traditional community, people could grow food; raise, kill, and prepare animals; construct shelter and clothing; and provide some measure of common governance and defense. The much venerated idea of a town meeting which has been appropriated as a means for bureaucratic experts to converse with common people, is a perversion of the idea of a meeting where members of a community come together and decide for themselves how to address issues facing the community. Implicit in traditional concepts of community is the idea that an interconnected group of people takes responsibility for their own lives and the way that those lives connect with the places around them. Rather than merely making comments at a public hearing or voting in elections, ideas of community suggest that people can com

together through common work and develop relationships which enable them to collectively address topics which are not currently included in political processes. The remainder of this chapter develops a work-based conceptualization of community through exploration of the concepts of work and place, and how they relate to concepts of community.[12]

Work, Nature, and Community

As traditional community formations have largely been abolished, discussions of community here do not focus on ways to recapture such relationships. Rather, considerations of ideas of community are used to develop a work-based idea of community that is relevant to the largely expert population of industrial and informational societies. Explorations of traditional communities considered the role of physical work in developing the relationships of community. Unfortunately, membership in most communities in industrial societies comes through symbolic, rather than physical involvement. Wendell Berry writes,

> Akin to the idea that time is money, is the concept, less spoken but as commonly assumed, that we may be adequately represented by money. The giving of money has thus become

> our characteristic virtue. But to give is not to do. The money is given in lieu of action, thought, care, time.[13]

The donation of money is a common symbolic involvement through which people demonstrate their membership in an interest-based community. Symbolic involvements with interest groups are easier and more ephemeral than physical involvement and often change with a person's fancy, whim, or style. A work-based community may begin with a commonality of interests between people, but it is the undertaking of work, rather than the holding of interests, which leads to the redevelopment of the interconnected relationships of community.

Chapter One discussed how humans must use and make changes to nature in order to survive (see page 3 above). Work, or labor, is the method through which these changes and uses of nature are accomplished. Yet, work is more than just what humans do to survive in the world. Geographer David Harvey writes, "work… is the fundamental process through which our relation to and understanding of the world of nature gets constituted."[14] In addition to developing the relationships through which people relate to the world, work provides and forms the relationships that people use to relate to each other. It is the work of raising a barn that reinforces the interdependence of

families on each other, and such work leads to the formation of relationships of community. The development of industrial society though has led to the development of types of work (and labor) that lead people to feel separate from, rather than connected to, nature and other people. Writer Michael Pollan contends:

> Work is how we situate ourselves in the world. Like many people nowadays, mine put me in a relationship to the world that often seem abstract, glancing, secondhand… Whenever I heard myself described as an "information systems worker" or a "symbolic analysts," I wanted to reach for a hammer, or a hoe, and make with it something less virtual than a sentence.[15]

Pollan does not deny that his work situates him in nature, what he does write is that his particular work as an editor provides him with a relationship to the world which seems abstract. In Pollan's case, he undertakes planting a garden and then building a small writing studio in the hopes that doing so will help him develop a relationship with the place where he lives that is more direct and personal than if he merely paid someone to come and plant a garden or build a studio for him.[16]

The work that many people undertake in modern industrial society provides them with a relationship to the natural world that is abstract and disembodied. Historian

Richard White recognizes that while modern work is distanced from nature it is not disconnected from nature. White contends:

> I do modern work. I sort, compile, analyze, and organize. My bodily movement becomes electrical signals where my fingers intersect with a machine… There is no dirt or death or even consciousness of bodily labour when I am done… Nature, altered and changed, is in this room. But this is masked. I type. I kill nothing. I touch no living thing. I seem to alter nothing but the screen. If I don't think about it, I can seem benign… but, of course, the natural world has changed and continues to change to allow me to sit here… My separation is an illusion. What is disguised is that I – unlike loggers, farmers, fishers, or herders – do not have to face what I alter, and so I learn nothing from it.[17]

White touches on the idea of some sort of abstraction, or distance, between one's work and the effects of that work on what is commonly called the natural world. In modern work there is a high level of abstraction from the natural world as people work to move or slightly change commodities or information that have been produced by others. Since people rarely deal directly with the natural world, it is easy to mistake alienated work as work that has no effect on the natural world. White contends that the distance

between modern work and the effects of that work is what leads to the denigration of productive work so prevalent in environmental thinking. Sitting in an office typing on a computer in the midst of a suburban office park, it is more challenging and requires much more of a conscious effort to see the connections between one's work and the impacts of that work on nature.[18]

Learning to recognize these disembodied connections is essential to developing new ways of living and working in the world. Attempting to develop such connections motivates millions of Americans to undertake trips that involve backpacking, boating, biking, hunting, or some other means that allow them to get back to nature. Exploring the retellings of the first journeys of whites across America, White comments, "we have masked the work of the first white men. We have equated their work with our play. We have implicitly presumed that the journey of the first white men must have been one long backpack across the West."[19] Seeing the history of expansion in the American West as a parallel not with the activities of loggers, farmers, and ranchers, but of backpackers is highly problematic. Yet such epic journey-myths parallel the growth in increasingly risky outdoor sports. "It is no wonder the risks we take in nature become more extreme. We

try to make play matter as if it were work, as if our lives depended on it. We try to know through play what workers in the woods, fields, and waters know through work."[20] As fewer and fewer people engage in productive work as a part of their daily lives, sports like backpacking, mountain-biking, and rock-climbing become an increasingly popular metaphors for relating to and understanding nature. Perceptions of backpackers as good for nature and loggers as bad for nature are simplistic, and divert attention from realizations that all people have impacts on peoples and places through their work, however abstract or disembodied from the natural world it may seem.[21]

While modern work does provide a relationship to nature, many people see value in more direct contact and work with nature. It is direct contact with the world, rather than whether that contact occurs in built or unbuilt environments that makes physical work valuable. For poet and writer Gary Snyder,

> working in a tanker with my body and my hands in the engine room of a ship is in some ways less alienated than it would be to sit and look at this beautiful view, constantly on a telephone and typing on a type writer and never touching it. It's the use of the body and involvement of all the sense that is important at that point.[22]

Work provides a direct involvement of a person with nature through the mixing of human energy with nature to change the world. As we will see in Chapter Four, this work also provides the basis for developing relationships of community between managers on the Appalachian Trail. Though work-based ideas of community may begin with a common interest, it is the common experiences of choosing to undertake physical efforts to accomplish a shared goal that develops feelings of interconnectedness and commonality. Direct, physical contact with the world allows people to develop relationships with other people that are more concrete and enduring than developed through mere symbolic involvement. Such involvement, however, also allows people to develop relationships with places.

Place and Community

The process that abolished traditional forms of community also replaced connection to places with the promise of a placeless America. Increasingly, one is able to eat at the same restaurants, shop at the same stores, listen to the same music, and learn about the same events with little regard to the place one is located. The notion that particular places shape the form of the people that inhabit them is something that humans are assumed to have

progressed beyond though industrial development. In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold writes of the need to develop some sort of ethical relationship between humans and the land. It is notable that Leopold does not simply write about the need for humans to develop ethics to deal with certain places (like wilderness areas or other unbuilt environments), but with the land as a whole which includes built as well as unbuilt places. Communities are connected not only through common labors, but through the common places in which those labors occur. Developing more sustainable ways for humans to live will require reinvolving notions of place in decisions about how and where people will live and work.[23]

The idea of place has received much attention from environmental writers as necessary to developing more ecologically sustainable ways of living. Many environmental writers locate the source of environmental problems in human efforts to dominate and control nature.[24] Timothy W. Luke writes, "the 'domination of nature' is often not so much the total control of natural events as it is the willful disregard of local ecological conditions in building."[25] Technological developments allow almost identical houses to be built in warm, dry climates, and cold, wet climates. Rather than developing ecologically

sensitive means of building shelters in specific places, Americans build and buy the dream homes seen in magazines, movies, and on television shows. Farmer and writer Wes Jackson contends,

> we are unlikely to achieve anything close to sustainability in any area unless we work for the broader goal of becoming native in the modern world, and that means becoming native to our places in a coherent community that is in turn imbedded in the ecological realities of its surrounding landscape.[26]

Developing a more ecologically sustainable society would involve major changes in the way people live, work, and play. The greatest potential for ensuring that changes are both equitable and sustainable comes through reintegrate both communities and places into decision making processes which are currently governed by professional and technical experts following cultural attitudes, whims, and styles.[27]

Coming to develop relationships with places involves seeing places as they are, and as they have been, in addition to seeing a place for what it could be. There are many eloquent descriptions of developing a sense of place in unbuilt environments. One of the more impressive of these descriptions is Aldo Leopold's description of the song of the Gavilan River in Mexico. Leopold writes:

> This song of the waters is audible to every ear, but there is other music in these hills, by no means audible to all. To hear even a few notes of it, you must first live here for a long time, and you must know the speech of hills and rivers. Then on a still night, when the campfire is low and the Pleiades have climbed over the rimrocks, sit quietly and listen for a wolf to howl, and think of everything you have seen and tried to understand. Then you may hear it - a vast pulsing harmony - its score inscribed on a thousand hills, its notes the lives and deaths of plants and animals, its rhythms spanning the seconds and the centuries.[28]

Leopold describes the sense of place he was able to develop after long hours of contact and observation. Such encounters with places in the wild are important, for they offer more apparent opportunities to develop one's ability to learn about the soils, waters, animals, plants, and characteristics that make a place unique. However, developing an ecologically sustainable society will require being able to cultivate a sense of place for the places people live and work, as well as the places people go to play and re-create themselves.[29]

Establishing a relationship with a place is more than just looking at or passing through somewhere; developing a relationship requires becoming involved in a particular

place through physical work. Developing a sense of place does not prevent humans from changing or using that place, but it does impart a certain character to the use of the place. Daniel Kemmis writes that inhabitation "implies right and wrong ways of doing things."[30] Donald Worster's *Dust Bowl*, an environmental history of the Great Plains in the 1930's, depicts the ecological and social damage that can be done when a people live in a place using methods that are not suitable to that landscape. Farmers came into the arid Great Plains and continued to use ways of farming unsuited to arid, windy conditions. When a few bad years of drought made the soil dry and light, the resulting Dust Storms swept from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean.[31] These sod-busting farmers were not doing right, at least not in the way Gary Snyder defines doing right. "Doing things right means living as though your grandchildren would also be alive, in this land, carrying on the work we're doing right now."[32] The objectivity that Kemmis and Snyder write about is an objectivity that comes from finding ways to live as a part of a place rather than just as squatters pausing to extract value before moving on to extract value from somewhere else.

While it is work that gathers people into a community, the places that such work occurs have impacts of the forms

of the community that develops. As a result of the privileging of professional and technical experts and the accompanying migration of political decisions to sub-political realms, Daniel Kemmis contends, “the public dimension of our lives is losing its vitality.”[33] Kemmis refers to this public dimension of people’s lives as the “res publica,” or public thing. In most modern political situations, a citizen has the right to give money, attend a rally, vote, or speak, but rarely, do citizens recognize, or are they encouraged to recognize, their responsibility to develop solutions to problems themselves. Far beyond a responsibility to participate through voting or attending a meeting, having a public dimension to one’s life requires that people “get the idea that they are responsible for coming up with the answer.”[34] Community is not about merely gathering and collectively appealing to others to make changes, but about people coming together and searching for ways to make changes themselves. While this public dimension has largely been lost in advanced industrial societies it can be reclaimed, but it can only be reclaimed through action. For Kemmis, “public life can only be reclaimed by understanding, and then practicing, its connection to real and identifiable places.”[35] This connection can be to a real place, such as city, forest, or

bioregion, but it could also be an imagined place, like the idea of a hiking trail, or the potential for a vacant lot to be a community day care center.[36]

Re-establishing a relationship with a place through physical work is quite literally the foundation for reforming the community relationships between people. As groups of people work to become involved in shaping and reshaping the environments around them in more sustainable ways, the connections between places and communities will become clearer and stronger. Developing connections to places, like redeveloping community relationships can come only through physical work. As much of the discussions of conceptualizations of a work-based communities have been mostly theoretical in this section, the next chapter explores Appalachian Trail managers as an example of such a community. The history of the Appalachian Trail (see Chapter Two) shows that developing a relationship to a place is based not only in what a place is, but what it could be. Private citizens looked at tracts of forest land and old farms and saw the potential for a hiking trail that would allow millions of people to have experiences in settings that seem more natural than the locations of daily life in advanced industrial society. The idea of an Appalachian Trail can be seen as a sort of recreational

"res publica," where volunteer managers have developed community relationships with people and places through direct physical interaction.

Notes

Wes Jackson's comments were taken from Becoming Native to this Place (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1996), 53.

[1] Timothy W. Luke, Capitalism, Democracy, and Ecology: Departing From Marx (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 5.
[2] Dan A. Chekki, "The Local-Global Nexus of Environment and Community Empowerment," in Research in Community Sociology, Volume 7, Environment and Community Empowerment (1997), 6; Luke, Capitalism, 1-5.
[3] Daniel Kemmis, Community and the Politics of Place (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 64-74; Chekki, 3-7.
[4] Kemmis, 71.
[5] Ibid, 64-71.
[6] See William Cronon, Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West (New York: Norton, 1991).
[7] Chekki, 7; Kemmis 37-55.
[8] Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture, 3rd. ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 21.
[9] Berry, 20-21; Kemmis 72-73.
[10] Chekki 7.
[11] Ibid., 6-8.
[12] Kemmis, 64-74.
[13] Berry, 23.
[14]David Harvey, Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 26.

[15] Michael Pollan, A Place of My Own: The Education of an Amateur Builder (New York: Delta, 1997), 5.

[16] Pollan, Room. See also Michael Pollan, Second Nature: A Gardener's Education (New York: Delta, 1990).

[17] Richard White, ""Are You an Environmentalist or Do you Work for a Living?" : Work and Nature," in William Cronon ed., Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature (New York: Norton, 1996), 182.

[18] White, 184-185.

[19] White, 177.

[20] White, 174.

[21] White, 172-177.

[22] Gary Snyder, The Real Work: Interviews and Talks (New York: New Directions, 1980), 55-56.

[23] See Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac and Sketches from Here and There (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 201-226.

[24] For examples see: Al Gore, Earth in Balance (New York: Plume, 1993); Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994); Bill McKibben, The End of Nature, New York: Anchor Books, 1990; Bill Devall and George Sessions, Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered (Layton, UT: Peregrine Smith, 1985); Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983).

[25] Luke, Capitalism, 60.

[26] Wes Jackson, 3.

[27] Luke, Capitalism, 60-61.

[28] Leopold, 149.

[29] Leopold. For other discussions of relationships between people and places see Edward Abbey, Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968); Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape (New York: Bantam Books, 1986); Barry Lopez, About this Life: Journeys on the Threshold of Memory (New York: Knopf, 1998); Gary Snyder, Turtle Island (New York: New Directions, 1974); Gary

Snyder, The Real Work; Gary Snyder, A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds (Washington: Counterpoint, 1995); Wes Jackson, Becoming Native to this Place; William Vitek and Wes Jackson eds., Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

[30] Kemmis, 80.

[31] Donald Worster, Dust Bowl: the Southern Plains in the 1930's (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[32] Kemmis, quoted on 80.

[33] Kemmis, 5.

[34] Kemmis, 113.

[35] Kemmis, 6.

[36] Kemmis, 64-82; Berry, 19-21.

Chapter Four

Exploring Community through the Volunteer Management of the Appalachian Trail

> "Government cannot do what you do and should not do it even if it could. This is a people's trail. That's part of what makes it special. That's part of what makes the Appalachian Trail the greatest example of public/private partnership that I know."
>
> -Bill Damon

The Appalachian Trail Community is the term commonly applied to the many people who use, work on, or have an interest in the Appalachian Trail. This group is an excellent example of an interest-based community, for these people could be hikers, bird-watchers, hunters, trail maintenance volunteers, federal or state agency professionals, or just someone who enjoys the idea of a 2,100-mile hiking trail. Chapter Two considered the history of the Appalachian Trail as the collective effort of thousands of volunteers to plan, build, and maintain sections of the A.T. Using the work-based conceptualization of community developed in Chapter Three,

it is possible to consider the Appalachian Trail Managers as a community based not on their interest in the A.T., but on their willingness to work to protect and further their interests. As the particular incarnations communities will vary based on social and ecological circumstances, this chapter uses qualitative research into the volunteer management of the Appalachian Trail to present these A.T. managers as an example of a work-based community. The primary source for understandings of the Appalachian Trail management community come from three years of participant observation of management activities. This observation involved taking part in A.T. maintaining activities, as well as attendance at local and regional management meetings. Additionally, six interviews were conducted with members of the A.T. management community to more fully explore respondent's motivations for working on the A.T. and their understandings of the process and relationships of A.T. management.[1]

The structure that a community will take depends greatly on the context of community formation and the sorts of issues being addressed by the community. This variability makes it difficult to present some sort of explanatory model for community formation. While there will be a great number of differences between communities,

there will also be recognizable similarities. People become a community through undertaking some sort of work to create some sort of product or accomplish a goal. This work provides people with shared experiences, and a sense of the need to work together to accomplish their individual and collective goals. Through working together, A.T. managers have been able to enter into decision making processes largely dominated by professional and technical experts, and reshape places in the Appalachian Mountains into a 2,100 mile footpath used by tens of thousands of people each year.

The Appalachian Trail Management Community

The Appalachian Trail was constructed by thousands of volunteers who planned sections, negotiated routes, and built a hiking trail that stretches from Maine to Georgia. For close to 50 years, the Appalachian Trail was a project almost exclusively planned and carried out by volunteers driven by the desire for a long-distance hiking trail. Since the passage of the National Scenic Trails Act in 1968, the management and maintenance of the A.T. have become the shared responsibility of volunteers and professionals in a variety of state and federal agencies. The overall responsibility for managing the A.T. lies with

the U.S. Park Service, though the U.S. Forest Service is also involved when the A.T. passes through lands within the boundaries of designated National Forests. Guided by the Congressionally recognized principle of cooperative management, these federal agencies have signed over the management responsibilities for A.T. corridor lands to the Appalachian Trail Conference, a non-profit organization dedicated to the management and protection of the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian Trail Conference has then delegated managing authority for specific sections of trail to the 31 A.T. maintaining clubs. Each club then decides the structure and means by which it will meet its management obligations.

While the lands of the Appalachian Trail may be federally owned, most of the management of the A.T. continues to be accomplished by volunteers. Many of the policies and standards that guide the management of a local club's trail sections come from volunteers serving on the Board of Managers of the Appalachian Trail Conference. The Board of Managers consists of 27 members who are elected every two years at general meetings of the Appalachian Trail Conference. The majority of those elected are volunteers who have played prominent roles in their local clubs. Additionally, specific individuals may be chosen

for special abilities or experiences (such as a financial skills or experience in dealing with commercial use issues) that members of ATC feel would benefit the Board. While Board members usually come from A.T. maintaining clubs, during their tenure on the Board, they are supposed to consider the way issues and policies will affect the entire A.T., rather than merely serving as representatives of their particular maintaining club. The Board makes policy and standard decisions, and these decisions are the supported by the professional staff who:

> work as equal partners with agencies and local trail clubs. But because the staff's direction and policies…are arrived at by our Board of Managers, and our Board of Managers are largely active volunteers, the whole situation comes full circle… The underlying policies and directions that [the staff] are trying to implement comes…from a group of volunteers from the clubs who have been involved with the program for a long time. (David)

ATC began hiring professional staff members after the passage of the National Scenic Trails Act, to coordinate volunteer activities with agency partners. Professional staff may also fill certain needs in the Appalachian Trail Conference (such as development or Land Trust administrators), but the nationalization of the Appalachian Trail and the professionalization of ATC have not replaced

the efforts of volunteers with professional and technical experts. Though federal, state, and professional assistance has been added to the Appalachian Trail project, volunteers still make and participate in local, regional, and trail-wide decisions.

While people become members of the A.T. community merely by having an interest in the Appalachian Trail, becoming involved in the Management Community involves a willingness to become actively involved with the people and activities of maintaining the A.T. Most broadly, the Appalachian Trail community is “anybody who touches the trail in any way.” (Donna) This understanding of the A.T. community makes it an excellent example of an interest-based community (see page 41 above). This interest in the A.T. will often lead people to become members in the A.T. Conference or a local maintaining organization. Membership in these organizations, however, is often easily accomplished through a donation of money and is not the same as becoming a part of the management community. Involvement in the management community requires more than donations of money and attendance at club meetings. Being part of this community requires a disposition to become actively involved in the work of managing and protecting

the A.T. Making distinctions between the larger A.T. community and the management community:

> narrows it down to those people who are specifically involved in some form of management of the trail, or actively working in a committee someplace to do something with the others that are in the management community… as opposed to somebody who might just be out there with an interest. (Robert)

Being involved in the management community requires a commitment to become personally involved with some aspect of A.T. management. David comments:

> I am sure there must be people out there who see value in the trail, but who are not interested in doing physical work on the trail…but it really does prevent them from becoming a member of the trail [management] community, because in the trail [management] community, as it now exists, there is such a value placed on doing the work of the trail.

Rather than donations of money, or technical/professional status, what separates members of the A.T. community from the A.T. management community is the latter's willingness to participate in the physical work of maintaining the A.T. Management activities are what David refers to as "the physical work of the trail." These activities include constructing and maintaining sections of trail, repairing

and building shelters, and the variety of other tasks associated with fulfilling the responsibilities for land management that have been delegated to A.T. maintainers.

While having to become personally and physically involved with the management of the A.T. limits the potential number of management volunteers, it also results in a management community that is dependable and supportive. David contends that the necessity of personal involvement to become a part of the management community is "why people who are brought in as a member of the trail [management] community really get a tremendous amount of reinforcement for the value of their work." This reinforcement comes from other trail maintainers, agency partners, and even larger society through continued public funding of A.T. land acquisitions. Individuals often become involved in management activities out of an interest in the outdoors and the availability of time to work. The people who are drawn into management activities will obviously see some sort of value in protecting and maintaining the Appalachian Trail. On trying to recruit volunteers, Robert comments, "you meet a lot of people and you say "How about coming for a hike?" and they say "I already did that, I was in the Army."… [so] it is obviously a hiking, outdoor interest that is there, it has to be."

Potential members of the management community are drawn from a segment of the population that has an interest in hiking and being outdoors. Thus while there are differences between interest-based and work-based ideas of community, both begin with the sharing of interests by potential members. The main distinction between these two conceptualizations remains that while membership in interest-based communities most often comes through symbolic involvement, becoming a part of a work-based community requires a willingness to work.

In addition to a willingness to work, being a part of the A.T. management community necessitates having the time to participate in management activities. As a consequence, many of the volunteers tend to be younger people in or just out of college, people with no children, individuals whose children are grown, or people who have retired. William comments:

> It is easy for younger folks who aren't married and don't have children to get involved. But folks out of college who… just got married and are working on their first job and working on their one and a half kid family, they just don't have the time resource that the retired… person has.

What matters to A.T. maintainers, however is the involvement and willingness to give time to work on the A.T., whether one is able to give one day a year or one day

a week. However, like many organizations, the more one works and is involved, the more a part of the group one is likely to feel. Something that reinforces this increased involvement is the specialized knowledge of how to dig trail, install, and clean water bars, and many other aspects of trail design, construction, and management that a trail manager needs. Unlike the formal professional and technical knowledge that imparts status in advanced industrial societies, status as a trail manager comes from experiential knowledge gained not through practice and experience while working alongside other people involved in A.T. management. Through this willingness to work and learn by experience, trail managers achieve a status, which allows them to participate in federal, state, and local planning processes as “experts” on the management of the Appalachian Trail. A former manager of the National Park Service’s Appalachian Trail Park Office commented that volunteer maintainers “are the real specialists in A.T. work, and they have more of a commitment. Volunteers really want to do the work.”[2] A person may become adept at building trail, or bridges, or installing water bars, but in the management community, a person’s status comes from their skills and efforts rather than from their formal training or professional or technical designations. The

example of the A.T. management community then should not be seen as a complete revocation of the position of experts in decision making processes, rather it community demonstrates that private citizens can gain expert status need to participate in such processes through work and experience rather than formal training.

Common Experiences, Common Goals

Once potential volunteers discover the A.T. and learn about the management community, becoming involved as a manager is a gradual process that is aided by the management community's recognition of a constant need for more volunteers. All of the volunteers interviewed had first come into contact with the Appalachian Trail as hikers. At the time, most did not know that volunteers maintained the A.T., but once they did, all felt a need to give something back to the trails they had been using. Donna felt that, "since [I had] spent my whole life hiking, I figure [I had] better start pulling my own weight a little bit and helping to keep everything going." Fred recalls that he:

> started hiking, and after a while you realize that there was a Trail, at first you don't realize one trail from another. Because of a guidebook, [I] joined the

> Appalachian Trail Conference. I saw there were articles by the local club, and thought I was too old… Then a person showed up in the Appalachian Trailway News, and I knew who he was…and he was probably old enough to be my father. So I realized I was not that old, and got involved with the club.

Becoming a member of a maintaining club seemed like a way to support the A.T., as well as become involved with people having interests in hiking and the outdoors. Membership in maintaining clubs and the Appalachian Trail Conference is a simple matter of paying dues. Once a member of a club, volunteers were brought into the management community, and many volunteers recalled their involvement began with personal contact with active trail managers. Robert recalled wanting to support the efforts of his local club, “so I gave them my ten dollar membership dues. Very shortly thereafter, the president called and said ‘How would you like to help us?’” While Robert’s interest in hiking and the Appalachian Trail led him to become a member of the A.T. community, it was his willingness to work combined with the management communities efforts to include him that led to involvement in trail management activities. Among the A.T. management community, there is a explicit recognition that the goals of managing and protecting the Appalachian Trail will require the efforts not only of many

people in many places, but also of successive generations of people. The recognition of the scope and involvement needed to accomplish the goals of the community prevent A.T. clubs and the larger A.T. management community from becoming a closed of, exclusive group. The ambitiousness of collective goals requires community members to be open and welcoming to new and potential members.

In addition to the community relationships that develop out of common work experiences, A.T. managers are a community as they share a common goal of protecting and continuing the Appalachian Trail. For Tony, the managers are a community "in that they have the same goal, and that they work together towards that goal." David echoed and expanded on this, commenting that what makes the managers a community is that: "Everybody knows that they are dependent upon their success in the project on everyone else, because the project is seen as such a large thing." For William, the work and the people are related to why he volunteers time on the Trail:

> I just like doing the work, I like doing the physical work, and I like working with the folks that are involved with doing that type of work… Because they are a really dedicated group, and everybody is sort of striving for the same thing, so you feel a sense of camaraderie and accomplishment.

The feelings of community that managers have extend beyond the volunteers that they work with on their section of trail or in their club. Discussing this larger idea of community, Robert said:

> I can walk into a group of hikers that are trail maintainers that I have never met before, and because I am… a maintainer, I am on the inside… There is a sense of belonging. This is something that the more involved you become over time, the more a sense of big community that you get.

Becoming involved with the community is inseparable from the work of managing the trail, for it is this work which demonstrates a person's commitment to the common goals of protecting and maintaining the Appalachian Trail. That common management experiences allow people to work together is not to suggest that everyone in the management community is friends with everyone else. Community, as conceptualized in Chapter Three, is not about friendship; community is about a willingness to work with other people to accomplish complex and multi-faceted objectives.

One of the strengths of the management community is that even though there have been, and continue to be, debates over issues that have major implications for the Appalachian Trail, volunteers continue to recognize the need to work together in order to accomplish their goals.

Building a trail and a trail management community did not happen easily, or without conflicts over the idea of the Appalachian Trail. One of the best examples of this is the "revolt" at the 1935 meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference. In the debate over whether to oppose the construction of Skyline Drive, the "losers" did not withdraw from the A.T. project, nor did they go off and start their own long distance hiking trail. Some of the principles in the debate may have severed personal relations because of the disagreement, but all parties remained committed to working together to establish the A.T. (see page 22 above). On the management community, William comments:

> Like any type of relationship situation, you are going to have people that you don't always agree with, and folks that have real strong opinions about things… Sometimes, when you get involved in this situation and you see all the different issues and people's opinions pulling here and there, it makes you wonder how they can all come together and make this happen… I think it is because there is a sense that everybody is trying to achieve the same one goal…because you have that sense of desire and want to do that, it forms a sense of community because all those people are working together to do the same thing.

In situations where there are personal, political, or philosophical disagreements, the common work of managing the trail leads to common experiences which provide the necessary relationships that allow people to personally disagree yet continue to work for the accomplishment of common goals.

While some of the volunteers were doubtful there would be an Appalachian Trail without the volunteer commitment, the managers agreed that the involvement of volunteer's gives the A.T. a distinctive character. A.T. advocates lobbied Congress periodically for twenty years to receive some sort of protection for the A.T. that volunteers had built. Fred was unsure if the federal government would have ever supported the National Scenic Trails Act if the Act was advanced by groups of hikers who merely wanted the government to build and maintain long distance hiking trails. "The deal with Congress, in '68 when they put the act through, was you buy it, we're gonna [maintain it]." (Fred) Aside from the political considerations gained by an active community of volunteer managers, the character of the trail would be different if it were maintained by government employees rather than volunteers. Part of the identity of the management community is a collective pride that the A.T. was built and

is maintained by people who are working out of dedication to an ideal, rather than merely doing their jobs. Donna maintains that the role of volunteers in managing the A.T. is significant because “just about everybody who is out working on the A.T. is doing it because of the A.T., and it is much more a sense of care-taking, as opposed to a job.” Tony also sees the motivations of the managers as an important aspect of the A.T.:

> I am sort of interested in people’s motivations. I sort of like the honest motivations, where a bunch of people working on the trail…they are not going after an ideal trail, they are working just for the money, and the trail comes second…whereas the volunteers, you know they are concerned with the trail.

For William, it is simply, “the fact that the A.T. was sort of conceived by private citizens and advanced forward by private citizens gives it kind of a special feel.”

Perhaps one of the most apparent aspects of the A.T. management community is the confidence and enthusiasm that seems ever present in the A.T. management community. Given that the history of the Appalachian Trail project has been a continuous effort to build and relocate sections of trail, it is not surprising that volunteers take pride in the fact that this 2,100 mile trail has been built by people who enjoy the work, the fellowship, and the idea of

a hiking trail conceived and maintained by private citizens.

One of the most effective recruiters for the management community is the nature of work in industrial society. Most of the volunteers come from urban or suburban environments and often drive a number of hours to reach the A.T. sections they maintain. David attributes this to the sort of work most of the volunteers do in their daily lives.

> One of the toughest places for us to recruit people is in rural areas. Most of these people are urban and suburban, and they'll travel enormous distances to do this work. They spend most of their working life in an office building someplace, with little or no physical exertion.

Many of the people working on the Appalachian Trail share Michael Pollan's desire for a relationship with the world that is direct and personal, a relationship which is not provided by the work they do in their daily lives. Rather than seeing physical work as something that deters potential volunteers, William holds, "the physical work on the trail is what brings most people in." In contrast to much of the work performed by the volunteers in their daily lives, David adds that the work on the A.T.:

> is immediate and valuable. When people go out and build trail, and maintain those sections of trail, they will walk

> time and time again over crib work and steps, and by shelters that are the result of their effort and their ability, and they know society values this.

These volunteers can gain an immense amount of satisfaction knowing that the Appalachian Trail, and the experiences many thousands of people have had on the A.T., are “all provided through their skill and physical work, and that is probably something they don’t get anyplace else in their lives.” (David) As discussed in Chapter Three, modern work often leaves people feeling disconnected from the products of their work and the world around them (see page 46 above). Many of the people who are involved in trail management activities are professional or technical experts in their “real” lives, but are drawn to the physical work of maintaining the A.T. because of a lack of satisfaction provided by work as an expert. Working to manage and maintain the Appalachian Trail provides people an opportunity to dig, chop, saw, sweat, get blisters, and tire themselves in efforts that provide immediate and lasting results which are valued by their peers and society at large.

While the management and maintenance of the Appalachian Trail result in a physical resource that is used by many thousands of people annually, the work of

managing also enriches the lives of the volunteers. When asking state and federal agencies for assistance in purchasing lands or funding large construction projects, trail advocates often concentrate on the benefit their work provides to larger society. David comments:

> The focus when we sell the trail is always on what we provide for the general public…but probably what is just as important is what we provide to people within the trail community that allows them to feel self-actualized, accomplished; that allows them to live a healthy life.

Much of the discussion about communities in this thesis has focused on how people can potentially come together and develop alternative ways to live and work. As important as the end result of a community's efforts are the effects that these efforts have on the lives of those involved in the efforts. Chapter Three explored how life and work in industrial societies alienate people from each other and the places around them. As David recognizes, very few people have any direct connection with where their food, heat, water, or clothing comes from. Most people,

> are in a society that provides stuff that in a rural community people would physically do for themselves… They have no outlet of physical work and accomplishment. They have a really nice house in a really nice subdivision, but

there is a lack of real accomplishment when the only input you have to that is picking things out and paying for them.

In addition to feeling alienated from people and the natural world at work, people face these same issues when they leave work and go home. To counter these feelings of distance and abstraction, "you see a lot of people take up hobbies…they are looking for something where they can have a skill, and where there is a tangible result and that someone values from their work." (David) Working on the Appalachian Trail provides a means for people to connect with other people through participating in efforts that are valued by their fellow A.T. managers and society at large. Benton MacKaye hoped that building and maintaining the Trail would give people "an exhilarating pursuit in common."[3] In modern America, very few people have barns to raise, calves to brand, or any of the other activities that traditionally helped bring a people together into a community. Becoming involved in new kinds of communities, which are defined by actions rather than interests, can help reintegrate a sense of place into human practices in built and unbuilt environments.

Through working on the Appalachian Trail, managers come to develop a sense of responsibility and stewardship towards the places and the larger Appalachian Trail.

Working on a section of trail over a number of years provides maintainers with a different relationship with places than would be achieved simply by repeatedly hiking a trail. Part of this relationship comes through the involvement between a maintainer's work and energy, and the trail that results. Donna maintains, "if you have to dig a big rock out of a trail when you have to make trail, and it is sitting somewhere the next time you go back, you just have a sense of place that this is my part of the trail." In many clubs, maintainers, or a maintainer, will maintain a particular section of trail for a number of years. If a project is too large for the person or group to handle, they may ask for help from other club members, but largely see maintaining that section of trail as their responsibility. These maintainers develop feelings of responsibility not only for the physical trail, but also for the quality of experience those using the section have. William comments, "There is sort of a sense that this is my responsibility, I want to take care of this, I want folks to come out and enjoy hiking this." Many volunteers compared the relationship that develops between maintainers and a section of trail with a sense of ownership. The managers, however, did not mean ownership in that they feel a right to use the place in whatever way they wish.

Rather, the maintainers used ownership in ways that echo Aldo Leopold's ideas of a Land Ethic (see page 50 above). Listening to trail maintainers discuss their feelings of responsibility for the places that make up the Appalachian Trail, they would agree with Leopold that, "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."[4] Members of the Appalachian Trail management community work to find ways to accommodate a human desire for a hiking trail with the ecological and physical conditions of a place.

The Appalachian Trail began as an idea of a place where people would use and interact with nature in ways that would allow both people and nature to flourish. More than just a hiking trail, Benton MacKaye's proposal included hopes that large numbers of people would come to live and work in communities located along the Appalachian Trail. Rather than a trail through an unpopulated wilderness, MacKaye envisioned the Appalachian Trail as "a hiking trail through the significant wild, scenic, and pastoral lands of east coast," (David) where industrial workers could go and remake themselves through play and work (see page 17 above). For almost 80 years, private citizens have been volunteering time and energy to turn the

idea of a place into a hiking trail that lies within a day's drive of two-thirds of America's population. Through work, Appalachian Trail managers develop relationships that allow them to collectively address and contest complex issues of public lands management often left to professional or technical experts. Though most A.T. managers are some sort of expert in their daily lives, they choose to become involved in an activity where they can develop relationships with people and places that are more direct than those offered by their daily lives and work in advanced industrial society. The Appalachian Trail management community demonstrates that private citizens can become actively involved in revaluing and reconstructing built and unbuilt environments.

Notes

Bill Damon is the Forest Supervisor for the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in Virginia. His comment was taken from The Appalachian Trail Conference Local Management Planning Guide (Harpers Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1997), 1(B).

[1] For more information about interview respondents see the Appendix.

[2] Brian B. King "The Appalachian Trail Project," in Appalachian Trail Member Handbook, thirteenth edition (Harper's Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1988), 66.

[3] Donald Jackson, “The Long Way ‘Round: The National Scenic Trails System and how it grew. And how it didn’t,” *Wilderness* 181 (Summer 1988): 18.

[4] Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac and Sketches from Here and There (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 224-225.

Conclusion

Rethinking the Human Place in Nature

> "In just a few centuries of setting ourselves apart as the landlords of the Garden of Eden… we have managed…to wreck most of what took three billion years to assemble… Apparently we never owned the place after all. Like every other animal we're locked into out niche: the mercury in the ocean, the pesticides in the soybean fields, all come home to our breast fed babies. In the silent spring we are learning it's easier to escape from a chain gang that a food chain."
>
> - Barbara Kingsolver

One of the most important lessons I learned from being involved with the management and protection of the Appalachian Trail is that no unbuilt place, regardless of the level of legal protection it is given, can exist untouched on the fringes of an industrial society that continues to expand. While the Appalachian Trail may appear to be a recreational issue relevant only to unbuilt places, the history of the A.T. is a constant effort to accommodate the desire for a continuous trail way with social demands for an ever increasing number of roads,

powerlines, cellular phone towers, and ever growing cities and towns. Through experiences of managing the Appalachian Trail, I have come to understand Timothy W. Luke's contention that, "if what has been regarded as "nature" in the yet to be built environment is to survive development, then what has been seen as culture in the built environment must be entirely rethought and rebuilt."[1] Benton MacKaye's original proposal for the A.T. was ambitious in that he called not only for establishing places where people could play, but places where people could live and work in ways different from those offered by industrial society.[2] Almost eighty years latter, it seems that MacKaye's proposal was not ambitious enough. Rather than just setting aside certain places for people to live, work, and play in alternative manners than those offered by industrial society, saving natural places will require reconsidering the way humans live, work, and play in all places.

Regardless of claims and desires to establish and protect places where people can go to get "back to nature," people in advanced industrial society are rarely, if ever, away from both nature and the influences of advanced industrial society. The Appalachian Trail was constructed, and is maintained, by workers using tools and topographic maps, as well as the cars and trails used to transport

volunteers to trailheads. Modern hikers and backpackers have more in common with astronauts than with idealized explorers and primitive peoples. The most venerated of outdoor travelers, those who follow the ethics of “leave no trace,” are dependent on industrial society for the stoves, prepackaged foods, tents, and sleeping bags which allow them to have the least possible impact on the places they stay and travel through. The problem with this ethic is that, like too much of environmental thinking, its applicability is assumed to stop at the border of a designated natural area. While much innovation, education, and attention has been focused on making human habitation and travel less impacting on places that are seen as natural, very little has been applied to those places seen as cultural. The goals of saving nature and finding sustainable ways for humans to live in our world will require reconsidering the ethics, technologies, spatial forms, and economic processes which influence the way humans live in built, as well as unbuilt places.

The history of the Appalachian Trail is a history of groups of working hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of miles apart united by a common goal and common experiences that develop from activities of trail management and trail construction. Chapter Two explored how volunteers

designed, constructed, and maintained trail sections. Once these people had developed a long distance hiking trail, they turned to federal and state governments for assistance in protecting and improving the Appalachian Trail. The passage of the 1968 National Scenic Trails Act, and later amendments to that act, provided legal mechanisms and funding to establish a federally owned and protected corridor of trail lands. Almost eighty years after ideas for the A.T. were first published this corridor nears completion (as of spring 1999 only 27 miles of A.T. lands have yet to be purchased).[3] Volunteer managers continue to relocate sections of A.T. onto protected parcels of land, and have begun efforts to protect the viewshed and lands surrounding the trail which are seen as vitally important to the experience offered to Appalachian Trail users.

Explorations of ideas of community in Chapter Three were used to develop a conceptualization of community that may begin through common interests, but is formed through common actions. Traditional ideas of community turn on geographic proximity, and a recognition of the need for community members to work together to accomplish their collective goals. Reducing ideas of community to a rough synonym for an interest group is a rejection of the interpersonal relationships and willingness to engage in

physical activity to address common goals of traditional ideas of community. Given the almost total disruption of traditional community formations however, it is likely that reformation of community relationships will begin with a commonality of interests. Yet, the formation of community relationships occur not simply through the holding of common interests, but through undertaking work to address those interests. Engaging in real work with real people in identifiable places allows people to develop relationships with places and each other that are less alienating and more direct than relationships commonly offered through living and working in advanced industrial society.

The concept of a work-based community was developed in Chapter Four through the example of the Appalachian Trail Management Community. The community is made up of thousands of people who donate time and energy each year to collectively maintain, mange, and protect the Appalachian Trail. Like an interest based community, potential members are attracted to the A.T. management community out of a shared interest in the outdoors, but these people are drawn into a community only once their interests lead them to take an active part in the work of maintaining the Appalachian Trail. Once involved in management activities, volunteers gain a sense of connection with the people they

work with, and also with distant members of the management community with whom they share common goals and common experiences. This community has not only been able to establish a 2,100-mile hiking trail, but was strongly influential in efforts to draft and pass legislation that created a nationwide series of scenic and historic trails. Through their continued willingness to participate in management activities, volunteers achieved legally recognized status to participate in trail management decisions as partners with federal and state land management agencies. These accomplishments are an excellent example of the substantive impacts work-based communities can have on revaluing and reshaping all environments through a willingness to work to address their interests and assert their right to be included in political and sub-political processes.

Participation in A.T. management activities also offers people the opportunity to develop personal identities through work and relationships with other people and places rather than merely level of consumption or professional-technical expert status. Rather than solely defining oneself through one's expert position and the sort of commodities one consumes, there is an opportunity to define oneself in part through efforts of labor, skill, and

personal involvement with other people and places. Such identities cannot entirely replace the consumptive-professional identity most common under industrial society, however, they can make people's lives more fulfilling and worthwhile. The personal impacts of community involvement are as important as the eventual success of efforts to achieve a more sustainable society. In her novel, *When Rain Clouds Gather*, writer Bessie Head tells the story of a village in Botswana that attempts to develop new ways of valuing, relating to, and using the land around them. The experiences of this village are said to be the efforts of a Good God who "wanted them to show everyone else just how quickly things could really change, how ordinary people could get up and do things for themselves."[4] Like the village in Head's novel, the Appalachian Trail management community offers an example of how ordinary people can come together and address environmental and political issues themselves.

Despite human assertions of separation from and/or mastery of nature, humans are a part of nature. Recent ideas of complexity and chaos theory make it doubtful that humans will ever completely understand, much less control, complex natural systems of this world and universe.[5] Assertions that humans will be able to gain scientific and

technical mastery of natural systems serve the same role as ancient appeals to the gods, and however performative they may be, are ways to make unpredictability of life seem less frightening. Wendell Berry contends, “much as we long for infinities of power and duration, we have no evidence that these lie within our reach, much less our responsibility. It is more likely that we will have to either live within our limits, within the human definition, or not to live at all.”[6] Not being able to gain total knowledge and control of natural systems does not prevent humans from making changes to these systems. Without the ability to find natural limits to human behavior, such limits will have to be recognized and heeded by human societies. Rather than merely setting aside scenic and relatively unbuilt places and protecting certain species of wildlife, environmental efforts must become concentrated on recognizing such limits and on finding ways for humans to live that are ecologically sustainable and socially equitable within the ecological conditions of particular places.

Rather than a quest to always live better through maximizing value and extracting wealth from people and places, living in the world should involve finding ways to live well in places using forms of habitation that do not degrade the long-term ability of places to provide for the

needs of human and non-human communities. Vitally important to efforts to establish sustainable societies will be who defines what sustainable will mean in each place. Efforts to achieve environmental sustainability could too easily be appropriated as further legitimization for the continued privileging of bureaucratic, scientific, and technical experts. Such efforts too often depend on using professional and technical management to maintain inequitable levels of industrial development to maintain the standard of living of industrialized nations at the expense of developing nations.[7] It is important that efforts to develop sustainable societies are equally as committed to developing socially equitable societies. Moving towards more sustainable societies offers potentials to reinvigorate debates about the social equity of many of the processes and decisions that have migrated to sub-political realms. Environmental justice activist Dana Alston comments:

> The environment affords us the platform to address the critical issues of our time: questions of militarism and defense policy; religious freedom; cultural survival; energy-sustainable development; the future of our cities; transportation; housing; land and sovereignty rights; self-determination; employment - and we can go on and on.[8]

Through reconsidering questions on how human beings relate to each other and the natural world, private citizens can collectively address issues and questions that are too often addressed only by some sort of expert. Increasing unwanted impacts on the Appalachian Trail (and other unbuilt places) make it clear that environmental issues are ultimately related to how humans live, work, and play in all places.

As the circumstances of community formation will necessarily vary depending on cultural and ecological contexts, the A.T. management community is presented here as an example of a work-based community, rather than as a model to follow in establishing such communities. While communities are formed through action rather than research, additional explorations are needed into the dynamics of community formation, and to present additional examples of peoples who have become involved in revaluing and reshaping built and unbuilt environments.[9] Rather than trying to save nature, efforts to develop more socially equitable and ecologically sustainable manners of living in the world will require the application of knowledge, desire, and intention to make human ways of living more sustainable for human and non-human communities. While such goals may be daunting, if humans are to find more equitable and

sustainable ways to live as a part of nature, such efforts are as necessary as they are possible.

Notes

Barbara Kingsolver's comment was taken from "High Tide in Tucson," in High Tide in Tucson: Essays from Now or Never (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996), 10.

[1] Timothy W. Luke, Capitalism, Democracy, and Ecology: Departing From Marx (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), xi.
[2] Benton MacKaye, "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning," in David Embledge, ed., The Appalachian Trail Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 53-57.
[3] "Countdown," *Appalachian Trailway News*, Volume 60, Number 1 (March April 1999): 7.
[4] Bessie Head, When Rain Clouds Gather (New York: Heinemann, 1986), 187.
[5] For more on Chaos Theory see James Gleick, Chaos: the Making of a New Science (New York: Viking, 1987); M. Mitchell Waldrop, Complexity: the Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).
[6]Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture, 3rd. ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 94.
[7] For examples see Al Gore, Earth in the Balance (New York: Plume, 1993); Lester R. Brown, Christopher Flavin, Sandra Postel, Saving the Planet: How to Shape and Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy (New York: Norton, 1991).
[8] Robert Gottlieb, Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement (Washington: Island Press, 1993), quoted on 5.
[9] Luke, Capitalism, 246.

Appendix

Interview Methodology

Chapter Four makes use of six interviews to augment three years of participant observation of the Appalachian Trail Management Community. Observations were used to select potential respondents who could provide beneficial information to this project. From these potential respondents, I selected ten individuals in an effort to gain a variety of perspectives with regards to age, gender, and the amount of time respondents had been involved with managing the Appalachian Trail. Letters were sent to potential respondents asking their willingness to be included in this project. The original sample of ten yielded six interviews that were conducted during February and March of 1999. The interviews were unscheduled, meaning there was not a set list of questions asked of each respondent. Questions explored respondent's attitudes and conceptions of the Appalachian Trial Management Community, community, work, wilderness, nature, place and other topics related to this project. The interviews took place at a location selected by each respondent, and typically lasted about an hour. To protect the identity of interview

respondents, each has been assigned a pseudonym to maintain the continuity of individual respondent's attitudes and opinions while protecting their identities. Included below are more detailed demographic descriptions of respondents and the reasons for their inclusion in the original sample.

David

Male, 42. David has lived in southwest Virginia for over 20 years. He has been involved with the management of the Appalachian Trail as a professional for almost two decades. David was selected for the length of his involvement with A.T. management, as well as his ability to discuss the activities of volunteers from the perspective of the professional agencies and organizations that work with volunteers. Interviewed on February 10, 1999.

Donna

Female, 21. Donna has lived in the southwest Virginia and been involved in management activities for less than five. She is currently an officer in a A.T. maintaining club located in a town in southwest Virginia. Donna was selected due to her age and the short period of time between her involvement in A.T. management and her election to an officer position. Interviewed on February 19, 1999.

Fred

Male, 48. Fred has been active in A.T. management since joining a club based in a southwest Virginia urban area in the early 1980's. He worked in industry in southwest Virginia. He has previously held officer positions in the club, and is currently serving a term on the Appalachian Trail Conference Board of Managers. Fred was interviewed because of his long involvement with A.T. maintenance activities, as well as his ability to discuss the different roles of volunteers at local, regional, and trail-wide levels. Interviewed on February 22, 1999.

Robert

Male, 63. Robert has lived in southwest Virginia for over two decades. He worked in industry in southwest Virginia. Robert became involved in A.T. management after joining a trail club in 1985. He is currently an officer in the club. In addition to his knowledge of club and ATC activities, Robert was active in efforts to designate wilderness areas in Virginia in the early 1980's, and has worked closely with federal agency employees on wilderness and land management issues. Interviewed on March 17, 1999.

Tony

Male, 22. Tony has lived in southwest Virginia for less than five years, and has been involved in A.T. management for three of those years. He is currently a trail supervisor in a maintaining club based in a town in southwest Virginia. Tony was selected due to his age, and his relatively brief involvement with trail management activities. Interviewed February 14, 1999.

William

Male, 42. William has been involved with the Appalachian Trail management activities for almost ten years. After completing a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, he began volunteering as an A.T. maintainer in New England. Robert moved to the south after obtaining a professional position relating to the management of the Appalachian Trail. William was included because of the variety of manners in which he has been involved with the A.T. Interviewed on March 10, 1999.

Bryan McDonald

Current Address
1410 Luster's Gate Road
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
(540) 961-3422
bmcdonal@vt.edu

Home Address
6018 Ashmont Circle
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060
(804) 360-0000

EDUCATION:

M.A. Political Science, expected May 1999
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Thesis: Reconsidering the Politics of Nature and Community on the Appalachian Trail
G.P.A.: 3.96/4.0

B.A. English, in Honors, *Magna Cum Laude,* May 1997
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Thesis: Wildness, Holism, and the Failings of American Environmentalism
G.P.A.: 3.8/4.0 Minor: History

EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Assistant, 1997–present
Engineering Communications Program, Materials Science and Engineering Department
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia
- Prepared and delivered lectures on a variety of technical communications topics
- Held tutoring sessions with students to address individual communications needs
- Developed self instructional materials

Coordinating Training Ranger, Service Academy Ranger Program, May - August 1998
Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico
- Developed training materials and worked to teach future military officers to be outdoor educators
- Trained, supported, and evaluated fifty cadets from U.S. Service Academies
- Served as a team leader for search and rescue situations

Land Management Coordinator (volunteer position), 1998- present
Outing Club of Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia
- Developed local management plan and guided management of 40 miles of the Appalachian Trail
- Led work trips for construction and maintenance of trail sections
- Participated in local National Forest planning process and local environmental protection efforts

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES:

Outstanding Senior, College of Arts and Sciences, Virginia Tech, 1997
Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society, 1997
Sigma Tau Delta National English Honor Society, 1997
Who's Who in American Universities, 1997
President, Outing Club of Virginia Tech, 1996-1998
Wilderness First Responder and CPR certified
Eagle Scout