

ABSTRACT

Designing a Wilderness: The Legacy of Benton MacKaye and the Appalachian Trail

Amy Wolfgang, M.A.

Mentor: Stephen M. Sloan, Ph.D.

Forester and regional planner Benton MacKaye first published a plan for a long-distance hiking trail along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains in 1921. Ninety years later, MacKaye's greatest accomplishment is the Appalachian Trail, a footpath traversing over two-thousand miles through fourteen states. His plan incorporated both wilderness and social ideology, at times bordering on the radical. Central to all of MacKaye's ideology was that outdoor recreation should be accessible to as many Americans as possible. Undervalued for decades in the environmental community, interest in MacKaye's cohesive understanding of a "primeval" environment is growing. An examination of MacKaye's work establishes lasting influence through the history of the Appalachian Trail. Using MacKaye's writing as a basis for evaluating influence, two major events, the 1968 National Trails System Act and the 1984 delegation of power back to the Appalachian Trail Conference will be reevaluated to determine the legacy of Benton MacKaye.

Designing a Wilderness: The Legacy of Benton Mackaye and the Appalachian Trail

by

Amy Wolfgang, B.A.

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Approved by the Department of American Studies

Douglas R. Ferdon, Ph.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Thesis Committee

Stephen M. Sloan, Ph.D., Chairperson

Douglas R. Ferdon, Ph.D.

Sara Stone, Ph.D.

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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ABBREVIATIONS

MKA= Appalachian Trail Papers. Madeline K. Anthony Collection. Lumpkin County Library, Georgia.

MFP= MacKaye Family Papers. Manuscript ML-5, Series 21. Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire.

AT News = Appalachian Trailway News, Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Literature Review

Benton MacKaye (1879-1975) filled many roles in the ninety-six years of his life. MacKaye's childhood explorations in the rural town of Shirley Center, Massachusetts sparked a passionate lifelong interest in the natural environment. A forester by training, he soon broke away from the traditional boundaries of his field. However, there are characteristics of his career that make him an oddity in the world of environmental conservationists. Like many of his peers, Benton drifted from position to position within the federal government. He planned many projects in both the public and private arenas, all focused on an idea that continued through his multifaceted career: that humans and their environment could strike a mutually beneficial and above all *efficient* relationship with one another.¹ MacKaye spent his life promoting this gospel. The most successful project MacKaye ever put forth was the Appalachian Trail (AT), a two-thousand mile walking trail that stretches from Maine to Georgia and is still in use today.

MacKaye had a knack for promotion, and exhausted both his professional (from

¹Though trained as a forester, MacKaye moved to a number of federal agencies in his career, interspersed with periods of self-employment where he mainly wrote or served as a regional planning consultant. With the US Forest Service (1905-1918), MacKaye began to connect ideas of sustained yield principles with the challenges of community development. Feeling constrained by the mission of the USFS, MacKaye moved to the Department of Labor sometime in 1916, while still occasionally working with the USFS. In 1933 MacKaye prepared a report on ~~developing~~ the Navajo Reservations as a sphere of native Navajo culture, ~~for~~ the US Indian Service. Later, he found the most promise in the TVA (1934-1936), a project that, in his eyes, provided ample opportunity to put into practice his concept of regional planning. After returning to the U.S. Forest Service (1938-1941), he moved on to the Rural Electrification Administration (1942-1943). MacKaye retired from government service in 1945, but continued his private work; ~~Work Record of Benton MacKaye,~~ "MFP Series 21, Box 179, Folder 25.

work in the federal government) and personal (MacKaye identified as a socialist, especially in the early stages of the AT) connections in order to bring the project to fruition. Published in 1921, “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning” laid the groundwork for the Trail. The most striking feature of the plan, especially to modern readers, was his specification that a labor-oriented community be established adjacent to the Trail. A sustainable logging community solved common labor and conservation problems MacKaye identified in America. Conservation did not occupy MacKaye’s mind exclusively. According to him, projects like the Appalachian Trail not only provided much needed natural recreation areas for urban dwellers, but also an answer to the difficult labor problems of the early twentieth century. No matter what agency he found himself employed at, MacKaye’s programs always involved a social element. MacKaye intentionally made the structure of his trail plan loose and open to adaptation. It provided maps for the aforementioned labor camps (meant to provide sustainable employment, housing, and agricultural products for laborers), but also shelters for hikers, a system of approach trails connected to roads for ease of access, the call for an all-volunteer maintenance force, and a proposed map for the Trail route. Between the proposal in 1921 and the completion of primary construction in 1937, obstacles faced by the volunteers altered or clarified MacKaye’s loose guidelines.

Today, the Appalachian Trail welcomes millions of visitors every year. Only a few attempt a continuous hike of the entire trail, which stretches from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin, Maine. In order to protect the AT a consortium between the federal government (represented primarily by the National Park Service, but also the Forest Service), state and local governments, and private citizens (in the roles of

landowners or the army of thousands of volunteers coordinated by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy) monitor and promote the Trail every day. Through the various phases of stewardship on the Trail, humans have defined and redefined its purpose and larger meaning in American society.

Historians picture MacKaye as a man with a brilliant plan, but a man who lost most of his influence on the AT after construction first began. They tend to zero-in on MacKaye's more radical social plans, none of which translated very well from his vision, "An Appalachian Trail," to the final product. Is it possible, however, that MacKaye, a man who lived through an era of extreme transformation in the American landscape, could also have transformed his conception of the AT along with the physical Trail?

Measuring Benton MacKaye's influence by only one aspect of the plan for the Appalachian Trail gives a false sense that all of his ideas, save for the name, were abandoned during construction. It also allows the history of the Appalachian Trail to be warped into that of a mere "green space." It is, however, much more complicated. This literature review examines how historians have examined MacKaye's influence on the Appalachian Trail. Due to the small amount of secondary writing about MacKaye, other topics related to the study of the Appalachian Trail, and the treatment of the created "natural" environment will also be studied.

One of the best, and most exhaustive, biographies of Benton MacKaye is Larry Anderson's *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail*. Anderson's research creates a picture of MacKaye as an eccentric visionary. Anderson writes, "Benton MacKaye surmounted many personal and professional impediments during his resolutely unconventional American life, which was zestfully

pursued on a plane of extraordinary idealism, hope, and vision.”² MacKaye’s sporadic employment often pulled him away from applying all of his energy to trail work. But whether he was working with AT volunteers or with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, MacKaye had what Anderson calls a “seamless vocational identity.”³ This perfectly describes how MacKaye approached spreading his ideas. Boundaries did not exist between one project and the next, all were knitted together. This explains the comfort MacKaye found in regional planning, a practice which conceived of areas in larger units than cities or towns and planned development accordingly. Anderson views MacKaye’s influence as extending beyond the AT, and into a larger wilderness culture.

Paul Sutter examines the motivations behind and trajectory of Benton MacKaye's plans for the Appalachian Trail in his article “A Retreat from Profit: Colonization, the Appalachian Trail, and the Social Roots of Benton MacKaye's Wilderness Advocacy,” as well as a more in depth biography of MacKaye in his book, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*. MacKaye was a regional planner and forester in the first half of the twentieth century. His career made stops at the Labor department, the Forestry Service, and the Regional Planning Association of America. Sutter examines the transition from his radical early career to his later, more recreation-oriented ideology. He also focuses on one area that most writing on MacKaye ignores, his compelling plan for colonization along the Appalachian Trail corridor. More radical plans of colonization marked MacKaye's early career, and the AT was a chance to incorporate them into a popular project. He included the development of

²Larry Anderson, *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 369.

³Ibid., 215.

communities along the trail in his 1921 essay, “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning.”⁴ MacKaye intended some of the users of the trail to go beyond the recreation experience and to move themselves permanently to this rural setting and develop the land.

Sutter's article shows that MacKaye's idea for the Appalachian Trail did not appear from a distinctly recreational perspective. Today, the majority of Americans consider the AT as part of a larger recreational network that also includes National Parks. As originally planned, the Trail was one stop on the evolution of MacKaye's ideas about society and labor. He envisioned controlled settlements, supported primarily by agriculture and forestry work. The communities existed as an answer to what he saw as the failure of the land grab in the West and bloody labor conflicts. Of MacKaye's philosophical aim for the AT, Sutter writes, “But what MacKaye really hoped the AT would encourage was perspective, the essential link between mere recreation and a more thorough re-creation of modern living.”⁵ In the plan for the Appalachian Trail, as well as in his other writings, MacKaye hoped Americans would find their way back from an overly artificial (what he and colleague Lewis Mumford deemed “metropolitan”) life in urban areas dominated by the automobile.

In *Driven Wild*, Sutter explores more fully the impact the automobile had on the wilderness movement. He profiles four of the founders of the Wilderness society: Aldo Leopold, Robert Sterling Yard, Benton MacKaye, and Bob Marshall. Historians agree on MacKaye's significant role as the impetus for the Appalachian Trail. Responses to the

⁴Benton MacKaye, “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning,” (Reprinted in) *Hudson River Valley Review* 27, no. 1 (September 2010): 45-56.

⁵Paul Sutter, “Retreat from Profit: Colonization, the Appalachian Trail, and the Social Roots of Benton MacKaye's Wilderness Advocacy,” *Environmental History* 4, no. 4 (October 1999): 566.

legacy of MacKaye's plans in regards to the Trail differ, and most of their interpretations center around the failure of the radical social components of the proposal. What made MacKaye unique compared to others of his generation was that his conservation ideas were based not on wilderness or land, but revolved principally around people, in particular the American labor force.

Sutter's profile allows more room for MacKaye's influence to be determined, and he challenges previous assertions that MacKaye underestimated the power of his middle-class volunteers (a segment far removed from the working-class demographic his labor components aimed at).⁶ The author chose to start earlier than the 1921 publication of "An Appalachian Trail," a distinction that provides the reader with a more complete view of MacKaye's ideological trajectory. Sutter follows MacKaye's career from his graduation at Harvard's Forestry school in 1905, to an early career in Forestry, and eventually to the completion of the Appalachian Trail. He marks the 1921 publication of "An Appalachian Trail" as the peak of many of MacKaye's extreme social ideas. During the construction of the Trail MacKaye was still lobbying heavily to enact the labor components of his plan. *Driven Wild* poses the process of trail construction as the force that made MacKaye reevaluate colonization and labor camps as a feasible goal.

As the trail moved through its various stages of stewardship, so did MacKaye's philosophy. Sutter marks a sharp transition into wilderness advocacy as conflict over the trail arose, and an examination of MacKaye's writing during and after construction shows a drift to a wilderness-centered recreation experience, precipitated mainly by the boom of automobile ownership just before and immediately after World War II. In the first half of

⁶Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 155.

his career, Benton MacKaye was focused on enacting his colonization ideas within a government bureau. Later, when given the chance to promote the Trail, MacKaye placed colonization on the back burner in favor of more palatable recreational ideas. The completion of the AT marks a transition point in MacKaye's career. The AT was his first opportunity to put to test the social components he had developed. They were for the most part ignored or postponed in favor of the physical work of blazing the trail, and later on the political work of protecting and rerouting it. A changed dynamic between technology and natural resource project such as the AT, and the ensuing interpersonal conflicts within members of the Appalachian Trail Conference, moved MacKaye closer to advocating for wilderness preservation, as Paul Sutter illustrates in *Driven Wild*.

Recently, more authors have reserved a place for MacKaye as a contributor to an innovative environmental conception. Ben A. Minteer sees a connection between the ideology of MacKaye and Josiah Royce, a philosopher at Harvard University around the time MacKaye was a student. His article, "Wilderness and the wise province: Benton MacKaye's pragmatic vision," connects MacKaye not only to a larger environmental movement, but to a philosophy that continued beyond wilderness advocacy. Minteer writes, "All this speaks to the judgment that wilderness preservation for MacKaye was part of a larger intellectual vision that saw in landscape conservation not simply the means for protecting the natural environment from metropolitan insults, but a progressive tool for the reform of the moral and political community."⁷ Minteer credits MacKaye with the ability to encapsulate, over fifty years before the modern environmentalism movement, the dual social-environmental approach that environmentalists are embracing

⁷Ben A. Minteer, "Wilderness and the Wise Province: Benton MacKaye's Pragmatic Vision," *Philosophy & Geography* 4, no. 2, (2001): 200.

today.

Often the results of a public project can hold larger meaning for American culture. In his unpublished PhD dissertation Gerald Lowery Jr. examines the Appalachian Trail as an American cultural symbol. He sees in the trail both evolving views of wilderness in America as well as an inherent need for Americans to interact with “wild areas.” Lowery theorizes that when Americans reached the western terminus of the country, the frontier identity that they had formed needed to be expressed in a different way. This is similar to the “frontier thesis” put forth by Frederick Jackson Turner that connects the spirit of the American people with a constant movement to a new frontier. Lowery posits that outdoor recreation areas such as the Appalachian Trail provided a way for Americans to express this frontier heritage after Americans had explored and populated the land between each coast.⁸ This expression came not only in the use of the trail, but also in the trail-blazing process. Human contact with the land provided a psychological foundation for American identity. Lowery also discusses some of the obstacles created by the public-private stewardship dynamic. MacKaye promoted the cooperation between governments and private citizens, but modern partnerships with the National Park Service in the 1970s and 1980s put the Trail in a precarious position due to overdependence on the federal government. Unfortunately, funding for a project like the Appalachian Trail changes with the political administration that is in power.⁹ A stumbling point for the longevity of community participation in a project is the ebb and flow of support from one end of the partnership. Trail clubs involved in the maintenance of the AT often divided

⁸Gerald Lowery Jr., “Benton MacKaye's Appalachian Trail as a Cultural Symbol,” (Ph.D. Diss. Emory University, 1981), 108.

⁹Ibid., 139.

their time between several local trails. When the Appalachian Trail Conference courted new federal partnerships, some volunteers feared the government might overtake their role. Lowery sees more benefits than drawbacks in the Appalachian Trail. His conclusion is that projects such as the AT enhance the American identity, connect communities to a larger history, and encourage a sense of self-reliance in a community. All of which are compatible with MacKaye's vision.

Lowery's identification of an inherent need of Americans to seek wilderness experience raises questions about how Americans define the very idea of wilderness. Specific studies of recreation projects in rural areas add to the surface of this dialogue, but underneath all of the ideas about managing natural areas lay deeply entrenched ideas about what is "natural" or "wild" to humans. Concepts of wilderness influence how a population reacts to change in the landscape. Environmental historian William Cronon provided a challenge to the way that Americans interpreted the human role within the wilderness during the late twentieth century. Cronon states that the idea of a wilderness that is "untouched" by human hands cannot by definition exist. When the concept of wilderness is defined by a lack of human interaction, it also removes any responsibility humans might have to care for their environment. He states, "We thereby leave ourselves little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, *honorable* human place in nature might actually look like."¹⁰ Cronon's article works through the conflicting ideals of wilderness that Benton MacKaye himself confronted during his career. This resurgence of interest in how Americans define wilderness explains why authors have returned to MacKaye as an influential voice in the debate. An acceptance of humans as components

¹⁰William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 17.

of, rather than beings exempt from, the environment can lead to positive projects like the Appalachian Trail. Parks and trails build collective experiences that involve visitors, residents, and geographically close communities. In this way the Appalachian Trail relates well to Cronon's ideas of what wilderness is. He sees an inclusive place for humans in the wild, not as conquerors but as one link in an extensive natural system.

Recreational practices have evolved with changing social and political movements. In hindsight, techniques once thought of as benevolent might be exposed as wasteful or destructive. James Turner follows the transition in outdoor ethics from the Boy Scout inspired Woodcraft to the now widely accepted "Leave no Trace" policy. He uses this to "pry apart the modern wilderness ideal."¹¹ "Woodcraft" was a set of recreational outdoor skills especially popular with the Boy Scouts of America during the mid-twentieth century. It relied on skills that made heavy use of the natural surroundings. Killing live trees, creating large fires, and leaving waste behind were common impacts. Survival skills surmounted any ideas of preserving a natural area. "Leave No Trace" was adopted by hikers, backpackers, and eventually even the Boy Scouts in the late twentieth century. True to its name, it advocated that people tread lightly on trails and make an attempt to return the place to the state in which they found it. Impact was the main focus, rather than pure survivalist techniques. Turner concludes that the popularity of wilderness experiences depends on the ability of manufacturers to "repackage" the outdoor experience into something that appeals to current consumers. This contrasts with Gerald Lowery's thesis, in which he believes that the recreational wilderness experience appeals universally to the American character. Turner casts a negative tone on the

¹¹James M. Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America," *Environmental History* 7, no. 3 (2002): 462-484.

“packaging” of the nature experience. This mostly follows Cronon’s thesis, asserting that a large corporation controlling the image of the hiking experience distorts our perceptions of the wilderness. This marketing of the wilderness seems to be counterintuitive to the escape from commercialism that planners like Benton MacKaye saw for his project, the Appalachian Trail. Turner traces the rise of popularity in backpacking after World War II and the challenges that arose from that, mainly how to protect the wilderness from the backpackers themselves.”¹² Conflicting land-use attitudes reflect trends in wilderness recreation. Barraging visitors with rules about what can and cannot be done on the trail undermines the idea of an “open space.” In order to keep an area safe and accessible, however, it is often necessary to limit visitors or activities. The public-private cooperation enables those overseeing an area to determine what is most valuable in a particular time. Turner's article examines how each party defined the wilderness and its use. This definition of “wilderness” relates to the struggle to define the AT as purely recreational, or a project intended for deeper purpose.

Historians who find little evidence of Benton MacKaye’s influence often cite the failure of his colonization schemes to appear on the Appalachian Trail. Ronald Foresta examines the forces that moved the AT away from MacKaye’s original ideas and towards a recreational purpose. Middle-class volunteers, according to Foresta, took hold of the project and steered it towards pure recreation. He writes, “Although MacKaye envisioned the trail as a cooperative endeavor of working people, guided perhaps by social reformers, the project became avocational for professionals who were assisted by managers of public lands. That appropriation of leadership was crucial in determining the

¹²Ibid., 468.

character of the trail”¹³ But Paul Sutter counters Foresta’s attack by stating, “[MacKaye] clearly understood that relying on a middle-class recreational constituency for support would be both necessary and dangerous.”¹⁴ MacKaye’s acceptance of the middle-class volunteers and awareness of the conflict that might arise, points to another possibility, that perhaps it was not the professionals on leisure time that ran away with MacKaye’s mission for AT. The scope of such a project, and the number of persons involved, assured that MacKaye almost never had the last word about the AT. The Trail plan put forth by MacKaye included a discussion of a decentralized power, so that no one person would have to be (or could rise to be) over the entire operation. Had he wanted to, MacKaye could have placed himself in such a position that the social aspects of the AT would have been prominent. In that case, the project surely would never have been realized.

Forests are the driving force behind the economic lifeblood of many areas. Past logging efforts have stripped entire mountains of their trees. An equally aggressive environmental movement has sought to save *every* tree. Both sides inevitably fight against one another in order to protect what they feel is integral to their way of life. Because natural areas provide resources that power the economic engine, private corporations often add another dimension to the public-private endeavor. William Dietrich's *The Final Forest: The Battle for the Last Great Trees of the Pacific Northwest* chronicles a community of loggers battling “outsiders” that challenge their view of what the wilderness existed for. *The Final Forest* presents a conflict that involved multiple parties. Conflict centered on old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest, and the humans

¹³Ronald Foresta, “Transformation of the Appalachian Trail,” *Geographical Review* 77, no. 7 (1987): 80.

¹⁴Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 155.

(as well as an endangered owl) who called those forests home. Loggers, environmentalists, and tourists all vied for their competing interests in the forest. This area of old growth forests seemed to touch on some of the ideas MacKaye put forth. It supported local laborers (albeit employed by a private company), enticed serious environmentalists, as well as casual recreationalists. In the case of the forest, however, conflicting interests still rose up. The AT, as a completely planned project, experienced this conflict early, and thus saw some of its possible uses pushed to the wayside. Dietrich accurately portrays the competing interests that surround a natural area. In these cases, often an acceptable solution cannot be found.¹⁵ Dietrich does demonstrate that conserving an area involves intricate relationships that can require unorthodox problem solving methods.

In his examination of public relations in the Jefferson National Forest, Will Sarvis reveals the challenges involved in managing natural areas when private citizens become involved. The Forest Service walked a tightrope between promoting official goals, while maintaining positive relationships with the community. He explains, “The idea was education and interaction. The Forest Service wanted rangers to diffuse knowledge of forestry, diplomatically interpret official government policy under local conditions, and generally perform official duties with a pervasive sense of goodwill.”¹⁶ Local people were used as much as possible in the forest duties, similar to the all-volunteer maintenance staff that the Appalachian Trail uses. The author also identified three

¹⁵William Dietrich, *The Final Forest: the Battle for the Last Great Trees of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Penguin, 1992).

¹⁶Ibid., 172.

periods in the history of the Jefferson National Forest. The first was the period of commercial logging that occurred during the establishment of the Weeks Act. The second was a period where the Forest Service was acquiring lands that were to be included in the project and establishing recreation areas. Finally there was a period marked by local, state, and federal governments learning to cooperate. A similar set of phases occurred with the Appalachian Trail, coinciding with the stewardship on the Trail. Originally, the trail was blazed and maintained by an all-volunteer force marked by informal land agreements between hiking clubs and landowners. After the enactment of the National Trails System Act in 1968, and the subsequent naming of the AT as a national scenic trail, overall leadership then shifted to the National Park Service. During this period the federal government, with the help of legions of volunteers involved on the trail, set about obtaining lands for an Appalachian Trail corridor. The corridor served as a “buffer zone” for protection of the trail as well as the hikers on it. Finally, in 1984 the National Park Service delegated the day-to-day operations of the trail to the Appalachian Trail Conference.¹⁷ Sarvis concludes his article by stating that maintaining community relationships as the community changes is a continuous challenge. The Jefferson National Forest faced conflict with residents already established on or near their lands. Appalachian Trail officials faced similar conflicts with residents who did not wish to have a Trail pass through their lands. MacKaye’s labor community population was to consist of urban people who relocated out to the AT. The community that did grow around the AT consisted of landowners, visitors, volunteers, and government officials. This community did not fit the definition of MacKaye’s labor schemes, but filled, at least

¹⁷“Trail Years: A History of the Appalachian Trail Conference,” ed. Robert A. Rubin, *Appalachian Trailway News* (Harper's Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, July 2000), 50.

partially, his outline for a dynamic community centered on the Appalachian Trail.

After initial construction of the AT, the automobile-obsessed American culture immediately put pressure on the managers of the Trail. In Shenandoah National Park the AT traversed a significant portion of the ridgeline. MacKaye fought vehemently for the ridgeline trail, as far away from automobile and “metropolitan” noise as possible. Despite his protests, members of the Appalachian Trail Conference chose to accept the National Park Service’s offer to reroute the AT in order to construct a skyline drive. Later, similar projects like the Blue Ridge Parkway would also displace the AT, at times forcing hikers to walk along roadsides. Hardly the primal wilderness experience MacKaye had hoped for. Diane K. Gentry celebrated the integral role the Blue Ridge community had in building the parkway with these words, “It’s time to celebrate this scenic engineering miracle through the words of the local people”¹⁸ “I am a Part of the Parkway, and the Parkway is a Part of Me,” includes interviews from residents that exalt the improvement that the parkway brought. The battle over the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the project that eventually won, showcases the decision-making process that a community must go through. The AT, as a hiking trail, brought travelers through, but in a much lower volume. Tourists with cars arrived in much larger volumes and with plans to spend more money in the area after the completion of the parkway. The tourism industry was not specifically built around a highway, but the highway gave the community a chance to showcase the beauty of their environment to visitors. For those seeking to preserve the environment, a highway constructed through these rural areas was disastrous. “I am a

¹⁸Diane K. Gentry, “I am a Part of the Parkway, and the Parkway is a Part of Me.” In *Blue Ridge Parkway Agent of Transition: Proceedings of the Blue Ridge Parkway Golden Anniversary Conference*, ed. Steven M. Beatty and Barry M. Buxton (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1986), 99.

Part of the Parkway” shows only those responses that see the parkway in a favorable light. MacKaye and Lewis Mumford wrote often about the destructive power of unchecked automobile “slums.” The parkway is unique in that it was constructed around letting travelers see the area, rather than an indiscriminate highway project that was more concerned with connecting automobiles from point A to point B. Had they blocked the parkway from being built, it is possible that a highway plan less adaptive to the area would have come through years later.

While there is a significant amount of research on National Parks or Forests, projects like the Appalachian Trail are understudied. This fosters a false image that certain projects like the Trail exist independently of the areas they exist in, which is not true. It is also significant to add that although the reviewed literature shared many conclusions about the public-private relationship, it is necessary to acknowledge that attitudes toward public works can evolve over time.

In “The People's Path: Conflict and Cooperation in the Acquisition of the Appalachian Trail” Sarah Mittlefehldt explains the process that the National Park Service went through to purchase the lands for the Appalachian Trail corridor and how the unique partnerships that evolved from this process serve as a model for policy in the twenty-first century. She also studies the power struggle that arose in response to the acquisition of lands. Alliances formed between public and private groups not only in support of the Appalachian Trail corridor, but also in opposition to it. The NPS developed models for establishing new parks on those in the loosely inhabited western states. When the public pushed for more recreation areas in the eastern states, the federal government faced a

more challenging task.¹⁹ Though many trail advocates pursued the involvement of the federal government, many became uneasy about the tactics used to gain lands. Landowners as well framed the conflict as one with “big government.” The local volunteer component was lost in translation as the government scrambled to purchase lands. Easements enabled the trail to pass through a piece of land without the National Park Service or the Appalachian Trail Conservancy actually owning title to that land. “Coordinators...were able to gain local support for the project by demonstrating genuine concern for landowners' ideas and opinions and framing the program as a community-based initiative rather than a federal mandate.”²⁰ Here the Appalachian Trail echoes the relationship dynamic Will Sarvis previously wrote about. How the authority structure approaches a community has everything to do with how the community will react, as has been shown in Mittlefehldt and Sarvis' research. Mittlefehldt concludes with the idea that framing a project in terms that are coherent to a community's values can sustain the project even when federal support is in question.²¹ Again, the community element of the AT is emphasized, and while MacKaye is not directly invoked, his presence can be found. MacKaye remained adamant that volunteers be a central component of the AT leadership structure. When President Reagan withdrew much of the financial support for the Trail in the 1980s, volunteers provided a safety net of money and manpower that left the AT relatively stable.

Mittlefehldt continues her research with a deeper exploration of the public-private

¹⁹Sarah Mittlefehldt, “The People's Path: Conflict and Cooperation in the Acquisition of the Appalachian Trail” *Environmental History* 15 (October 2010): 650.

²⁰Ibid., 656.

²¹Ibid., 661.

dynamic on the trail in her unpublished PhD dissertation –The Tangled Roots of the Appalachian Trail: A Social and Environmental History.” Mittlefehldt hiked the entire Trail, stopping to do interviews and visit each archive. Her work provides an excellent survey of the primary materials about the AT, as well as valuable oral histories from volunteers and professionals. She characterizes the Trail as –A large scale exercise of state-based conservation as well as an example of grassroots social action,”²² two classifications that fit neatly into Benton MacKaye’s vision. The author identifies a unique dynamic that developed around stewardship of the Trail when the definitions of –amateur” and –professional” became blurred. The self-trained volunteers on the Trail assumed –professional” roles and provided a rich source of information when it came time to forge partnerships with the federal government. In this sense, Mittlefehldt feels that these amateur –experts” had more power in crafting the expression of the Trail than the environmental experts brought in by the National Park Service. The idea of amateur experts as a powerful force on the trail challenges Foresta’s interpretation that the middle-class professionals who supported MacKaye somehow obscured his vision of a project open to the masses. She argues, –the current AT project has come to embody some of the central tenants in Benton MacKaye’s initial proposal.”²³ Recently, historians such as Mittlefehldt interpret Benton MacKaye’s role as more nuanced and long lasting than previously thought.

Service Living: Building Community through Public Parks and Recreation

includes a biography of Benton MacKaye. Much like Sutter’s work, this piece inserts

²²Sarah Mittlefehldt, –The Tangled Roots of the Appalachian Trail: A Social and Environmental History” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 2008), 4.

²³Ibid., 28.

MacKaye into the discussion about prominent progressive figures. The author emphasizes the social components of MacKaye's ideology. He is depicted as a person who not only fought tirelessly even for plans that never came to fruition, but one who lived the idea of life that he espoused so passionately. The idea of "Service Living" gave a term to the ideas that MacKaye espoused. The Appalachian Trail was not only a recreation or labor opportunity, it encompassed both. The plan was such that those seeking pure recreation would find it. For those that sought something deeper, recreation provided the vessel through which individuals connected to a deeper meaning.

Service Learning establishes MacKaye as a unique breed of progressive. The authors do admit that the conflict between Appalachian Trail Conference chair Myron Avery and MacKaye marked the dropping off point of MacKaye's influence. Indeed, after the dramatic fallout over a skyline drive displacing the AT, MacKaye backed off from involvement with the ATC until after Avery's death in 1953. The two figures of Avery and MacKaye represent the dual purposes of the Trail, with many historians crediting Avery for much of the modern image of the AT. The authors conclude with the idea that after MacKaye's reentry to the ATC, his influence picked up again. Furthermore, the authors finish with the thought that MacKaye himself would be pleased with the direction the modern AT has taken. The process of blazing the Appalachian Trail moved MacKaye to transform his more radical ideas in response to a changing culture.

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail: A Time to be Bold is an administrative history of the now defunct Appalachian National Scenic Trail Advisory Council (ANSTAC) that was created after the AT was designated a National Scenic Trail in 1968 and dispersed after the National Park Service delegated power back to the Appalachian

Trail Conference in 1984. The author, Ronald Foresta was the chairman of the ANSTAC and recounts the difficulties in managing the AT after it became a National Scenic Trail, and fell under the stewardship of the National Park Service. He pays little attention to MacKaye's ideas, and expectedly so places a heavy emphasis on the Federal administration leading the trail. The compilation of interviews and meeting minutes used creates a dynamic portrait of what the various organization around the Trail dealt with in the mid-to late twentieth century. While it includes very little acknowledgement of Benton MacKaye's influence, Dr. Foster provides a detailed look at the complicated relationships required to run the trail. The "behind the scenes" of a natural area that contradicts the vision of an organic trail that simply appeared for the public to use. Foresta concludes, "No one entity has ever had the full capacity to accomplish the Trail protection job by itself."²⁴ The AT is, and was from Benton MacKaye's conception on, a dynamic place where a variety of people gather to express their ideas about wilderness and community.

Benton MacKaye was able to see the designation of his greatest achievement, the Appalachian Trail, as a National Scenic Trail. Since his death the AT has come back under the primary guidance of the ATC, now called the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. The term Conservancy was chosen to better reflect the mission of the ATC in the twenty-first century. On the ATC's website, visitors can find a declaration of "Who We Are" that states,

Our vision is to connect the human spirit with nature – preserving the delicate majesty of the Trail as a haven for all to enjoy. We are committed to nurture and protect this sacred space through education and inspiration. We strive to create an

²⁴Charles H.W. Foster, *The Appalachian National Scenic Trail: A Time to be Bold* (Harper's Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1987), 144.

ever-expanding community of doers and dreamers, and work to ensure that tomorrow's generations will experience the same mesmerizing beauty we behold today.²⁵

The mission of the AT today is centered on recreation. And it is clear that Benton MacKaye's dreams for a sustainable labor community never came to fruition. Despite past interpretations that MacKaye is all but lost in the modern-day trail, a survey of the literature shows that he was a man who thought that the natural environment, apart from labor schemes, had a profound impact on the human race. Humans also needed a place to return to a truly "primeval" environment to recuperate, work, and yes, even recreate! A more thoughtful study of the forces that shaped Benton MacKaye and the Appalachian Trail will find that after he formed his plan for a long-distance walking trail on paper, he was changed by the forces that molded the Appalachian Trail

²⁵Appalachian Trail Conservancy, "Appalachian Trail Conservancy- Who We Are," <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/who-we-are> (accessed December 10, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO

–Speak softly and carry a big map”

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the
woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public
road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself

—Walt Whitman, –Song of Myself”

In the 1930s, Benton MacKaye guided members of the Appalachian Trail Conference to, –Speak softly, and carry a big map” a play on a phrase, –Walk softly, and carry a big stick” earlier attributed to Theodore Roosevelt. This proclamation, intended to rally supporters of the new Appalachian Trail, concisely communicates the evolving relationship between MacKaye and the other stewards of the Trail. What remains today is a reflection of Benton MacKaye’s ideological trajectory. MacKaye created his greatest project, the Appalachian Trail (AT), during a dynamic period in American environmental and social history. Although unique in his synthesis of environmental and social solutions, MacKaye was not immune to the influences of American society. He changed in response to new threats, embraced new technology, and altered the mission of the AT.

A study of his writings and life during the first phase of Trail construction illustrates this responsive journey.

Benton MacKaye graduated from Harvard's Forestry program in 1905. He accepted his first position with the federal government at the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). During this time, MacKaye began formulating radical colonization ideas as an answer to labor conflict. While traveling around the Pacific Northwest, MacKaye experienced firsthand the interaction of public and private lands, a patchwork unlike what the forests of New England possessed. He visited Everett, Washington days after the 1916 "Bloody Sunday" conflict between IWW representatives and local Snohomish County sawmill workers.¹ Witnessing the struggles of workers in Everett propelled MacKaye further into his development of sustainable labor. MacKaye found little receptiveness to his ideas regarding the natural environment and humans at the USFS, and even less in colonization schemes. In 1918, he moved to what he hoped would be a receptive environment in the Labor Department. Throughout his tenure at both agencies, MacKaye always sought to connect the missions of the two with his plans for sustainable communities based on natural resources. Radical labor ideology dominated the first period of Benton MacKaye's life and career. His tenure at the Forest Service and Labor Department, a powerful experience in the Pacific Northwest lumber camps, and a stint in a Washington, D.C. socialist communal living experiment called "Hell House"² dominated MacKaye's

¹Larry Anderson, Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail: 103-106; William J. Williams, "Bloody Sunday Revisited" The Pacific Northwest Quarterly 71, no 2 (1980), 50-62.

²Anderson, 124-27; "Hell House" was a cooperative house that MacKaye and his wife Betty shared with economist Stuart Chase, as well as a few activist friends. The name was a play on Jane Addams' "Hull House."

early career. These experiences followed Benton MacKaye into his later writings, including the plan for the AT.

The 1911 Weeks Act allowed Congress to establish national forests in the eastern part of the United States. Prior to this act, individual states protected their forests by creating state reserves. Federal foresters like Gifford Pinchot identified forests as a way to protect and promote federal and state cooperation. Under the Weeks Act, Congress agreed only to protect those lands involved in the protection of watersheds and streams.³ While at the US Forest Service, MacKaye wrote an essay detailing his thoughts about the use of publicly held forests. Published in a New York forestry journal, “Recreational Possibilities of Public Forests” emphatically promoted the use of public forests as recreational spaces for the public. The government, MacKaye felt, would not support the sequestering of lands for the singular purpose of recreation. He even quoted Congressman Joseph Cannon as stating, “I do not believe in buying scenery.”⁴ In 1916, MacKaye rehearsed many of the ideas that would appear later in his plan for the Appalachian Trail. Lands protected under the Weeks Act also provided the possibility of large recreational areas for Americans. He even proposed stringing together many units of the USFS to create a recreational band that, transposed over a map of his 1921 AT proposal, coincided with what would later become the Trail.⁵ This 1916 article emphasized the recreational aspects of wilderness areas in addition to their utilitarian use.

³U.S. House, H.R. 11798. 61st Cong., 1st sess., 1909.

⁴“Uncle Joe” Cannon as quoted in, Benton MacKaye, “Recreational Possibilities of Public Forests” *Journal of the New York State Forestry Association* 3, Nos. 2, 3, 4 (1916): 5. Joseph “Uncle Joe” Cannon is also quoted as saying. “Not one cent for scenery” in U.S. Forest Service History, “Passing the Weeks Act.” <http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Policy/WeeksAct/PassingAct.aspx> (accessed 24 December 2011).

⁵Benton MacKaye, “Recreational Possibilities of Public Forests,” *Journal of the New York State Forestry Association* 3, Nos. 2,3,4 (October 1916) : 10.

In regards to the Appalachian Trail, MacKaye is not always credited with its status as a large-scale recreation area. This is due to an over-blown reading of some of his more grand ideas about colonization on the AT.

It is often purported that middle-class volunteers left a more visible presence on the AT than MacKaye. In support of this historians often posit that MacKaye worked in a more cerebral, rather than physical, context that limited the extent of his influence. The process of carrying out his ideas was less of a concern to him. Some have even gone as far to say that MacKaye was disconnected from the outdoor culture community, his references to men like Lewis Mumford rather than influential trail-builders such as Lewis P. Taylor signifies an ignorance to the boom of trail building that happened around the proposal of the Appalachian Trail in the first decades of the twentieth century.

MacKaye's habit of including the opinions of close friends like Mumford into his writing says more about the type of social circle he orbited than a lack of information about trails. In fact, "Recreational Possibilities of Public Forests" includes mentions of two very influential groups in the eastern hiking scene, the Green Mountain Club (GMC) and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).⁶ These groups, among others, transitioned hiking trails from a pre-automobile "loop" style of trail to a linear form that facilitated the creation of long distance trails.⁷ Throughout his life, MacKaye often moved through different circles, not entirely belonging to any specific one. It is not surprising that he

⁶Lara and Guy Waterman, "Early Founders of the Appalachian Trail: Ancestors to Benton MacKaye's Dream," *Appalachian Trailway News* 46, No 4, (Sept/Oct 1985); 7-11. The Watermans, while attributing a more lasting MacKaye influence on the AT, find it peculiar that an outsider like MacKaye, who had no personal friends inside prominent hiking circles, created the idea for a long-distance trail; MacKaye mentions both the GMC and AMC in MacKaye, "Recreational Possibilities of Public Forests": 10.

⁷For an expansive work on the history of trails, see: Lara and Guy Waterman, *Forest and Crag: A History of Hiking, Trail Blazing, and Adventure in the Northeast Mountains*, (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club,) 1989.

was not completely invested into the physicality of eastern hiking clubs. MacKaye's conception of both the linking of public forests into a belt in 1916, his familiarity with prominent hiking clubs, as well as the linear form of the AT plan in 1921, shows proof that MacKaye was not as much of an outsider as was proposed.

The suicide of his wife, Betty in the spring of 1921 sent MacKaye into a spin. This traumatic event, combined with the first "Red Scare" appears to have changed his focus. In the same year, MacKaye published an essay made up of several previous Labor Department memos.⁸ The final essay appeared for the first time in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. Subsequent publishers distributed copies to promote the establishment of the trail. A review of Benton MacKaye's writing immediately before and after the proposal of the Appalachian Trail shows the course of his ideas mirrors closely changes in the stewardship dynamics on the Trail. His ideological basis for the AT persists longer in the practice of the trail than is often acknowledged. Having tested the reception of his plans at various government agencies, MacKaye attempted a different angle with the plan for the AT. The sections of the Trail composed a patchwork of state, federal, and private ownership. Later on, when a more cohesive stewardship strategy was needed, MacKaye considered that the length of the Trail be designated public lands, an idea first found in his article on public forests

MacKaye began his trail plan by discussing the potential power that leisure time held. A new amount of efficiency in work provided the American workforce with larger amounts of leisure time. However, MacKaye felt the concept of efficiency was not being

⁸For letters regarding Betty's suicide, see personal letters to MacKaye, May 6/7, 1921, MFP, Series 21, Box 165, Folder 3; Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 155.

applied to time outside of the workplace. He admonished, “We have neglected to improve the leisure which should be ours as a result of replacing stone and bronze with iron and steam.”⁹ Greater mobility, combined with increased off-time, generated a need for recreational opportunities outside the city. Parks, forests, and camp grounds became “splendid” examples of wilderness recreation managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service. While MacKaye admired the National Parks, he wanted to provide accessible natural areas regardless of a person’s social status. The distance between western national parks and centers of population in the Northeast prevented many laborers with newly increased leisure time from visiting. Wealthier Americans spent their money on excursions out West, but the Appalachian Trail plan provided a more convenient option. The proximity of the proposed trail to the eastern centers of urban life enabled more people to visit. He theorized that if a small portion of people focused their free time on one pursuit (in this case, outdoor life); the foundation to maintain vast leisure areas could be created.¹⁰ These volunteer networks, when organized around the AT, created the basis for the community element of MacKaye’s plan.

MacKaye sought to extend community beyond a loose association of volunteers. He shied away from illustrating concrete plans for certain aspects of the trail, and the social dynamic is one. It is clear he intended for the community activities around the Trail to grow into a larger labor movement. “Its purpose is to establish a base for a more extensive and systematic development of outdoor community life. It is a project in

⁹Benton MacKaye, “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning” in *The Appalachian Trail Reader*, ed David Emblidge (New York: Oxford University Press), 1996, 48.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 49.

housing and community architecture.”¹¹ This set the tone for the rest of MacKaye’s plan. It is also the area of his plan that is often cited as his failure to assert influence.

Benton MacKaye outlined four characteristics in “An Appalachian Trail.” The first two are clearly visible in the modern iteration of the Trail. The final two have no direct manifestation, but evolved over time, even as MacKaye actively involved himself in the Trail. First, he formed the basis for the physical work of building the trail. This was not a completely new endeavor, as MacKaye was very familiar with the networks of trails (and their attached hiking club communities) in New England. The original plan was to extend roughly from Mt. Washington in Maine to Mt. Mitchell in Georgia. Using the Long Trail as a template, shelters to house hikers and to facilitate cooking would be prepared by the volunteers. Partnerships with federal, state, and local officials, along with the aforementioned hiking clubs comprised the power structure that oversaw the Trail. Again, MacKaye wrote vaguely and left the details of power dynamics out of his essay. The third part of the plan, “Community Camps” fulfilled the author’s desire to integrate labor, community, and nature. The communities, according to MacKaye’s vision, would provide permanent private homes adjacent to the Trail, and should run on a non-profit basis. MacKaye was equally suspicious of real estate development and metropolitanism. “Food and Farm Camps” would serve the communities, as well as provide employment. The camp community is a sanctuary and a refuge from the scramble of every-day worldly commercial life. It is in essence a retreat from profit...An

¹¹Ibid., 53.

Appalachian Trail, with its camps, communities, and spheres of influence along the skyline, should, with reasonably good management, accomplish these achievements.¹² The off-trail communities' mission was to provide a home and employment to the wave of urbanites exiting the cities. Agricultural and forest systems provided a way for the communities to be self-sufficient. Educational programs set up by the community camps provided a chance for urban visitors to be reacquainted with the primeval environment. Historians use the ineffectiveness of the "Community Camps" and "Food and Farm Camps" sections of the proposal to argue MacKaye's lack of influence on the modern Trail. An examination of the articles outside of "An Appalachian Trail" illustrates how MacKaye, acting against threats to the natural environment, eventually emphasized some elements of the Appalachian Trail over others. Fearing any one person presiding over the entire trail, MacKaye did not over assert himself, and thus the legacy of the Trail is a mixture of communal ideologies of trail workers and a response to the encroaching threat of the automobile.

After the publication of "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning," MacKaye immediately began promoting his project. The idea of a long distance trail was not the most radical part of his plan. The Long Trail in Vermont began construction in 1910, and was the first long-distance trail in the United States. Hiking clubs around the North East showed support for MacKaye's ambitious plan. Despite initial waves of support, in a letter to friend and urban planner, Clarence Stein, MacKaye worried about instituting the whole of his plan as early as December of 1921, "My impression from attending the meeting of the Conference is that it will be comparatively simple to push on

¹²Ibid., 56.

the trail portion of our program. The main problem will be how to handle the community feature.”¹³ Even prior to the start of construction, MacKaye acknowledged the challenges of instituting his more radical ideas.

The official history of the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC) put forth three reasons why MacKaye’s plan, rather than scores of others for long distance trails, managed to succeed. The plan was grand enough to inspire, but vague enough to leave room for trail builders to adapt to circumstances on the trail. While not as driven by self-promotion as his peers, MacKaye began promoting the trail immediately, and exploited his vast professional network. Finally, the basis for both the recreational and social elements of the trail capitalized on movements already afoot, particularly long-distance trails in New England, and cooperative communities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.¹⁴ The ATC was formed in 1925 in order to manage the construction of the Appalachian Trail. MacKaye composed a constitution that instated an executive committee. The diverse executive committee included employees of the U.S. Forest Service, the Regional Planning Association of America, of which he was a founding member, and the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation.¹⁵ MacKaye’s heavy involvement in the Conference and its early composition point towards a comfort in his non-authoritative role. The ATC describes his role as “mostly inspirational” during this period.¹⁶

¹³(MacKaye to Stein, December 11, 1921, BMKP, Box 165 as quoted in Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild*)

¹⁴“Trail Years: A History of the Appalachian Trail Conference” ed Robert A Rubin, *Appalachian Trailway News*, July 2000, 6.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 8.

In a paper delivered before the New England Trail Conference on January 21, 1927, MacKaye tried to clarify a phrase he often used in relation to the AT, "outdoor culture.—He grappled with how recreation and outdoor culture fit into the framework for the Appalachian Trail. His definition of outdoor culture spread far beyond the confines of mere recreation, "It is a special kind of ability: the ability to visualize a happier state of affairs than the average humdrum of the regulation world. But in order to make the matter clearer I shall use a worse term yet: 'Utopia'." ¹⁷ While in his AT proposal he appealed to activists, here he expanded to a more universal American character. The utopia that MacKaye imagined was not a fantasy, but a concrete idea able to be realized. Unmanaged metropolitanism posed the greatest threat to this utopian vision. Readers faced a choice: buy into an over-the-top Peter Pan fairytale, or strike out as a pragmatic Ferdinand Magellan. After reading the essay, MacKaye's friend Lewis Mumford cautioned him not to push his readers into a nostalgic interpretation of the past, "What we look for, as an alternative to metropolitanism, is not a revivalism of the old; it is a fresh growth of something new." MacKaye assured Mumford that he was aware of the mission. He replied, "[T]he indigenous is that which is *permanent* rather than that which is *past*." ¹⁸ The idea of an indigenous environment being a permanent fixture altered concepts of "turning back time" to a world untouched by humans. MacKaye's ideas are decidedly progressive, rather than nostalgic. Using a similar device to Walt Whitman's floating travel over America, or MacKaye's own Bunyon-esque giant traversing the ridgeline in "An Appalachian Trail," he guides his audience over the landscape of

¹⁷Benton MacKaye, "Outdoor Culture: The Philosophy of Through Trails" (paper presented before the New England Trail Conference, Boston, January 27, 1927), 1.

¹⁸Mumford to MacKaye July 25, 1927 and MacKaye to Mumford July 30, 1927. Benton MacKaye Papers Box 166. As quoted in Paul Sutter Driven Wild: 291 no 67).

Appalachia once more. Americans, he thought, needed to rediscover their primeval landscapes, and thus their primeval selves. –The regional planner, like the architect and the engineer, is a visualizer. His plan is to form a picture,- a picture of possibilities...Man’s greatness lies in *revealing* what this plan may be. Planning is revelation.”¹⁹ The regional planner (in other words, MacKaye) is uniquely equipped to assist in the revelation of this greatness. Later, he returned to a discussion of efficiency. –Thus may we evolve (so far as geographic problems go) an efficient and labor-saving method of existing on our planet.”²⁰ Broadly, this efficiency applied to all Americans. But MacKaye was also appealing to his fellow professionals. He was speaking in this case of the professionals involved in regional planning (engineers, foresters, agriculturists, industrial engineers) all roles that MacKaye at least attempted in his long career, and clearly felt qualified to discuss. This group held the potential to define the new primeval, or the –American Barbarism” he later advocated.

Benton MacKaye came closest to defining both outdoor culture and a purpose for the Appalachian Trail in his discussion of the environment. He writes, –It is part geography and part folks; it is terrestrial and it is human; it goes by the name *environment*.”²¹ He also touched on the collective impact the environment can have, –environment indeed is a sort of *common mind*, -- the least common denominator of our inner lives.”²² His purpose for outdoor culture, and specifically the AT, was to nurture the common mind. The encroachment of urban environments into the countryside resulted

¹⁹Benton MacKaye, –Outdoor Culture” 2-3.

²⁰Ibid., 3.

²¹.Ibid.,3.

²²Ibid., 4.

from a lack of control. “The city’s outward movements may be likened to a glacier. It is spreading, unthinking, ruthless.”²³ Despite MacKaye’s clear disapproval for the state of urban areas, he should not be characterized as anti-urban. City, country, and wild areas all had a place and a specific purpose in MacKaye’s regional vision. The Appalachian Trail, substantial in size as it was, became part of a larger vision that was first put forth in the 1921 plan, and then articulated in “Outdoor Culture” in 1927. He strove for discipline and efficiency in the whole environment. “The effect of an unbalanced industrial life, it is the cause of an unbalanced recreational life. For its hectic influence widens the breach between normal work and play by segregating the worst elements in each.”²⁴ It is clear from the previous essay, as well as “Outdoor Culture,” that MacKaye integrated a large space for recreation in his plan. However, his vision of recreation differed from just the pursuit of popular pastimes. He questioned the “Lollipopedness” of society, or the unbalanced pursuit of shallow leisure activities, another symptom of metropolitanism.

MacKaye deemed the rejection of metropolitanism and the embrace of an outdoor culture “American Barbarism.” He contrasted the puritans of New England with the Barbarians who invaded the Roman Empire, “As with water pressure so with soul pressure: its ‘hydraulics’ are the same. The Puritan would build a dam; but the Barbarian would build a sluiceway.”²⁵ Puritans stood as an example of over-civilization, but the choice of the Barbarian, rather than the Whitman-type giant, depicts an aggressive shift in MacKaye’s writing, “our Barbarian sees in the mountain summit the strategic point from

²³Ibid., 5.

²⁴Ibid., 5.

²⁵MacKaye, “Outdoor Culture,” 6.

which to resoundly kick said Civilizee and to open war on the further encroachment of his mechanized Utopia.”²⁶ The plan to prevent the spread of a ~~me~~“mechanized Utopia” included the Appalachian Trail. The projects Benton MacKaye envisioned took many forms, but all acted as barriers against sprawl. There appear to be threads of MacKaye’s later wilderness ideas in the 1928 essay, ~~H~~“It matters little whether the various sections be State lands or Federal, or whether you spell them Park‘ or Forest‘ ... The main thing is to capture these areas and to hold them from further inroads of metropolitanism.”²⁷ The writings up to and including ~~O~~“Outdoor Culture” show a gradual shift from colonization towards wilderness recreation. Continuous bands of trails meant a constant check on cities. MacKaye envisioned a continuous two-thousand mile blockade against the jazz, the hotdog stands, and the oozing industrialism of city life.²⁸

Two years later, MacKaye articulated similar ideas in ~~W~~“Wilderness Ways.” The wilderness way, as MacKaye defined, provided a belt of ~~o~~“open spaces leading from somewhere to somewhere...dedicated to some conservation use.”²⁹ Similar to the components of ~~A~~“An Appalachian Trail” and ~~O~~“Outdoor Culture,” wilderness ways pursued the format of an unbroken piece of land that both conserved the environment and provided a convenient recreational space. Protected bands of accessible wilderness consistently appear in MacKaye’s writing. He also takes a stand on the practice of banning humans from areas of land, ~~O~~“One thing, therefore, that we might do would be to

²⁶Ibid., 7.

²⁷Ibid., 7.

²⁸MacKaye held a special dislike for Jazz music, the sound of which he associated with the cacophony of city life. Both MacKaye and Lewis Mumford have used the hot dog stand (or cart) as a signifier of encroaching highways and automobile slums.

²⁹Benton MacKaye, ~~W~~“Wilderness Ways” *Landscape Architecture* 19, no 4, (1929): 237.

render the primeval environment inaccessible; put up ‘no trespassing’ signs and see to it that not an ounce of human contact—or of human enjoyment—ever be forthcoming from our primeval resources. This would be a complete solution, as complete as suicide.”³⁰

“Wilderness Ways” extended the Appalachian Trail vision further, provided a model for future projects like the AT, and defined the “primal” desires of man as a desire to travel a linear, rather than circular, path. Here, MacKaye connected the psychological yearnings of man to real trends in hiking culture. On the business of jobs, MacKaye made a departure from the elaborate plans of the AT. “Occupation,” in this essay, meant simply to provide something productive for those using the wilderness way to do. “Walking aimlessly about is usually not enough,” he posits.³¹ MacKaye never moves further than to provide a plan for efficient use of vacation time. Wilderness ways, by their design, provided an environment in which men and women satisfied this linear desire. MacKaye conjures Walt Whitman again, this time by name, to define the human need for wilderness experience, the “call of the road.”³² He likens the process of relearning the primeval environment to a child learning their alphabet. Throughout MacKaye’s writings, he uses this analogy to highlight the widening gulf between man and his natural environment, created by the intrusion of urban life.

In addition to outlining a replicated plan of the AT, MacKaye provides an argument for the meandering, winding trail format that he preferred. He argued, “We

³⁰Ibid., 240.

³¹Ibid., 241.

³²MacKaye, “Wilderness Ways” 243; “call of the road” is a reference to Walt Whitman’s poem “Song of the Open Road” published in *Leaves of Grass*.

want a land to wander in and not merely a dotted line to tread.”³³ Later arguments between MacKaye and a high-ranking volunteer, Myron Avery, centered on this very idea. Avery favored a route that expedited construction, but bypassed the ridgeline at certain points. MacKaye fought hard for a truly “primeval” trail that avoided roads at all costs, and traversed over ridgelines whenever possible. This argument defined the first phase of Appalachian Trail history.

As the trail neared its first decade of construction, MacKaye reexamined his intentions in “The Appalachian Trail: A Guide to the Study of Nature.” This article appeared just five years before the official completion of the Trail in 1937. By 1932, approximately fourteen-hundred miles of the trail had been completed. MacKaye’s 1921 plan insisted that completed sections of trail open immediately to the public.³⁴ Thus by the time this article was published, many hikers had already begun to use the AT. “The Appalachian Trail: A Guide to the Study of Nature” exhibits the most dramatic shift in his priorities regarding the Trail. MacKaye delves deeper into the scientific side of the AT, and his former career as a forester shines brightly in this writing. However, his regional planning ideas of harmony and balance still prevail. The Appalachian environment is characterized as “primeval,” a collection of all living things except human beings. Humans, MacKaye reminds us, have severed connections with their primeval environment, and built themselves a metropolis. As an environment equipped with new and old geological features, and primeval forests, the Appalachian Trail was ready to

³³MacKaye, “Wilderness Ways” 243.

³⁴Benton MacKaye, “The Appalachian Trail: A Guide to the Study of Nature” *Scientific Monthly* 34, no 4 (1932): 330.

teach humans, ~~h~~ow to read the story of the earth.”³⁵ He goes on to say, ~~T~~o know America we must know human history, and to know humanity we must know forest history.”³⁶ This 1932 article highlighted the educational opportunities present in the AT and promoted a familiar goal from ~~A~~n Appalachian Trail.” The goal stated in 1921 was to develop outdoor cultural life and systematic development of outdoor community life. It was a ~~p~~roject in housing and community architecture,” the 1932 article articulates a labor culture over recreational community, ~~T~~he Appalachian Trail indeed is conceived as the backbone of a super reservation and primeval recreation ground covering the length (and width) of the Appalachian range itself, *its ultimate purpose being to extend acquaintance with the scenery and serve as a guide to the understanding of nature.*³⁷ Rather than a departure from his original plan for the Trail, this statement signified a clear shift to wilderness over colonization.

Paul Sutter sees MacKaye’s shift as a response to the growing threat of the automobile to wilderness areas. The Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park posed an immediate threat to MacKaye’s vision for the trail.³⁸ The period of construction moved MacKaye further along in his journey towards a recreational vision. All of the volunteers on the AT did not accept MacKaye’s plans, even for the wilderness aspects of the Trail. Unfortunately, his biggest opponent was a man who would help blaze the trail, Appalachian Trail Conference president Myron Avery. Skyline roads posed a real threat to the private pieces of the trail that connected National Park to National Park. ~~A~~n

³⁵MacKaye, ~~G~~uide to the Study” 330.

³⁶Ibid., 330.

³⁷Ibid., 331; emphasis added.

³⁸Paul Sutter, 179.

Appalachian Trail,” while never directly addressing the automobile emphasizes those private lands should form “reservations” in between units of the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, thereby linking the entire trail together. Again the idea of a chain of lands appears. As a former employee of the Forest Service, and a lifelong civil servant, MacKaye encouraged public ownership of the length of the AT. In his 1951 report to the ATC, chairman Myron Avery complained of the difficulty that knitting together privately and publicly owned lands gave AT organizers. He suggested that volunteers soften to the idea of government protection in order to keep the Trail running.³⁹ The complex nature of the AT occasionally undermined its cohesion.

In 1940, MacKaye published “Defense Time Conservation,” an article that suggested Americans take advantage of the preparations for war by encouraging democracy and conservation. Calling on his background as a regional planner, MacKaye envisioned, “a scattering of industry, of folks, of government” that would create distinct regions working towards national war preparations. This is another point where MacKaye fulfills what biographer Larry Anderson’s calls his “seamless vocational identity.”⁴⁰ MacKaye’s article incorporated his ideology into war preparations, placing the efficient management of flood plains and the larger environmental region on par with supply manufacture.

The pieces of writing above clearly identify an ideological trajectory that brought MacKaye from the more radical colonization schemes of the AT proposal, to a reactionary stance against metropolitanism and the automobile, and finally to a vision of

³⁹“Trail Years,” 15.

⁴⁰Larry Anderson, 215.

the Appalachian Trail as a tool for understanding the primeval environment, and resisting the careless flood of urbanism. Even prior to the completion of the Trail in 1937, Benton MacKaye had adapted his ideology to fit the needs of the country, as he saw them. Ronald Foresta challenged MacKaye's continued influence on the Appalachian Trail by claiming that middle-class professionals had hijacked the project from him. "By 1921 circumstances no longer allowed such an ambitious or direct assault on modern industrial society. Stripped of its reformist goals and placed in a different ideological context, the trail had great appeal for... the modern professionals whose fortunes were based on the metropolitanism and the industrialism that MacKaye so disliked."⁴¹ Considering the above discussion of MacKaye's movement away from (but not rejection of) his more radical plans, it is difficult to accept Foresta's criticism. Benton MacKaye was aware that each group should be appealed to, and for different reasons. Paul Sutter counters Foresta's argument with the statement that "He clearly understood that relying on a middle-class recreational constituency for support would be both necessary and dangerous."⁴² While MacKaye himself lived most of his life near poverty, he relied heavily on influential professional friends for support, financial and otherwise. It is also hard to believe that MacKaye did not recognize the socio-economic station of most of his volunteers. More accurate than accusing MacKaye of abandoning his ideas would be to say that middle-class influence and the threat of the automobile played equal roles in MacKaye's movement from socialism to wilderness.

⁴¹Ronald Foresta, "Transformation of the Appalachian Trail" *Geographical Review* 77, no1 (1987):78.

⁴²Paul Sutter, 155.

The introduction to a reprinted copy of “An Appalachian Trail” awkwardly positions MacKaye as a lasting influence on the AT. The author explains, “the project became in subsequent decades far bigger and more bureaucratically complex than he imagined it ever could, his guiding spirit and enthusiasm are still cited as the AT’s wellsprings of foresight and commitment.”⁴³ As mentioned earlier, the ATC characterized MacKaye’s role as “inspirational.” The above study of his evolution portrays a man willing to change with the needs and circumstances of his project.

MacKaye’s education in Forestry, and dramatic early experiences with the violence of labor movements contributed to his early radical ideology. But the encroaching automobile, and all the challenges that came with it, moved him away from ideas of colonization and towards wilderness advocacy. The Appalachian Trail was envisioned and executed in a tumultuous time. Only years after the completion of the AT, American automobile culture was in full swing. By the 1950s, suburban housing followed the automobile into the countryside. This prompted the creation of open space movements that echoed MacKaye’s sentiments of the natural recreation experience as integral to the American character.⁴⁴

MacKaye was forced to compromise parts of his vision for the Appalachian Trail. His delegation of authority to the hiking clubs removed some of his influence, but enriched the trail with another type of community. The construction of the Appalachian Trail provided the project with necessary flexibility to respond to challenges. Had

⁴³David Emblidge introduction to “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning” in *The Appalachian Trail Reader*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 47.

⁴⁴For suburbanization and the automobile, see: Adam Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 123-127.

MacKaye stubbornly favored his colonization schemes over the promotion of wilderness areas on the Trail, his greatest achievement would not have been realized. The previously discussed materials all point to a man who was strong in his beliefs, but willing to compromise in order to attain more readily achievable goals.

Commenting on the relationship between elites and environmental movements, Samuel P. Hayes writes, “Loyalty to these professional ideals, not close association with the grass-roots public, set the tone” of early conservation.⁴⁵ Despite his close affiliation with the middle-class professionals who galvanized the AT movement, Benton MacKaye sought to bridge this gap. He based his early ideas on solving working-class urban problems with the efficient use of natural resources. But MacKaye’s ideas strived for more than efficiency on paper. Fundamentally, he conceived of humans and the natural world as one and the same. These thoughts echoed not only Whitman’s epic “Song of Myself” but the writings of transcendentalists Thoreau and Emerson. MacKaye straddled two worlds in the face of oncoming technological change that had immediate impacts on human life. He embraced even his biggest threat, the automobile, as a necessary aid to exposing urban Americans to the true primeval environment. Almost everything; cars, roads, cities, suburbs, upper- and lower-classes, could be accommodated into MacKaye’s vision. And only with thorough and efficient planning would this goal be accomplished. The utter *lack* of planning involved in suburban sprawl pushed MacKaye to change his priorities, the AT included. That the Appalachian Trail still exists today is a testament to MacKaye’s ability to tap into the tastes of Americans, and his choice to adapt to current

⁴⁵Samuel P. Hayes, “Conservation as Efficiency,” in *The American Environment: Readings in The History of Conservation*, ed. Roderick Nash, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1968), 85.

needs. The argument that MacKaye ceded his interests after his middle-class volunteers ran away with the project is, at least partially, true. But had MacKaye's project actually, as some historians assert, been taken from his hands, he could have removed himself entirely from the promotion of the AT. Indeed, he had the opportunity to turn *against* the Appalachian Trail. His continued involvement with the Trail (even if only peripherally during the Avery years) until his death is evidence that MacKaye supported, and even contributed to, the change in direction the AT took after "An Appalachian Trail" in the early twenties.

In the 1960s, the ATC decided that in order to protect the Trail efficiently, greater involvement on the federal level was needed. The 1968 National Trails System Act changed the trajectory of Appalachian Trail stewardship once again. All of this was done in response to changes in the American environment. Benton MacKaye's ideas did not exist in a static environment. The sheer variety of positions he occupied during his life suggest that he was open to following various avenues to promote his projects. Though the AT is not dotted with timber camps like he envisioned, MacKaye's influence on the AT is still prominent. Walt Whitman wrote, "Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you / You must travel it for yourself." As MacKaye traversed the path of realizing one of his most grand plans in regional planning, he was changed by the road he traversed.

CHAPTER THREE

American Barbarism: Courting Federal Partners on the Appalachian Trail

Informal agreements forged between landowners and Appalachian Trail

Conference members protected much of the Trail's private land in the first half of the twentieth century. Facilitated by common goals, the ATC, National Park Service, and US Forest Service drafted agreements to co-manage areas of the Trail that crossed public land. In the first period of Appalachian Trail history (between MacKaye's 1921 proposal and the end of World War II), workers blazed the physical trail and organized a host of cooperative agreements. This interwoven network of local and state, volunteer and professional became the hallmark of the Appalachian Trail project. A community in its fledgling stage, Trail advocates also faced immense challenges in the second half of the twentieth century. The impact of neglect during World War II, a population boom thereafter, and America's firmly entrenched reliance on technology all posed great threats to the "trail of all trails." In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson expressed the importance of the Appalachian Trail to Americans, "In the back country we need to copy the great Appalachian Trail in all parts of America."¹ Johnson delivered his speech at another transitional point in American history. Post-war prosperity enabled many more Americans to own vehicles and suburban housing. In 1965, the country felt the impact of years of environmental abuse. President Johnson, sensing a need for both environmental

¹Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty" 8 February 1965, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650208.asp>, (Accessed 30 January 2012).

and recreational protections, initiated a plan to correct some of the abuse. In language startlingly similar to MacKaye's decades earlier, Johnson encouraged his audience to look beyond the material success of the country, and into its natural beauty. He proclaimed, "Beauty is not an easy thing to measure. It does not show up in the gross national product, in a weekly pay check, or in profit and loss statements...Therefore it is one of the most important components of our true national income, not to be left out simply because statisticians cannot calculate its worth." Johnson's sentiment was not part of the minority. The ATC recorded significant rises in both memberships and thru-hikes in the 1960s. Increased concern about their natural environment prompted many Americans to strike out and experience nature for themselves. This declaration signified how far the reputation of the AT, a project assembled by a jumble of volunteer outdoor enthusiasts, progressed since its humble beginnings in 1937. In 1968, the National Park Service designated the Appalachian Trail as the first Scenic Trail under President Johnson's National Scenic Trail Act

A 1962 federal report, "Outdoor Recreation for America" lauded the work of private citizens in establishing the Appalachian Trail, and recommended the government replicate a similar system by establishing a volunteer workforce.² At the same time President Johnson held the AT as a preeminent example, the Appalachian Trail began to buckle under years of assault. During the Second World War, men and women previously engaged in AT work moved their attention to supporting the war. As soldiers returned home from combat, they sought out wilderness recreation. This renewed interest in the outdoors, coupled with the mid-century baby boom, drove record numbers of Americans

²Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, "Outdoor Recreation for America: A Report to the President and to the Congress," (Washington, DC: 1962),162-63.

to the Appalachian Trail. With new cooperative agreements and fresh volunteers, Myron Avery and the ATC set about repairing the neglected AT.³ After this period, interest in outdoor recreation only grew. Population centers on the Eastern seaboard began to shift. As the population grew, families moved away from cities and rural areas into suburbs. This migration changed the dynamic of rural and small town America. The influx of population into rural areas brought new threats to the AT. In response to new challenges, Appalachian Trail supporters lobbied for more federal protection. Even though the ATC declared the Appalachian Trail completed in 1937, the immense challenge of preserving a long distance hiking trail in the midst of a modern industrialized country challenged MacKaye's basis for the AT.

Experienced federal employees Benton MacKaye and Myron Avery encouraged federal cooperation with the AT⁴, and trusted their Trail in the hands of the government, with no fear of harm to the volunteer character that distinguished the AT. Each man had his own ideal level of government involvement. An aggressive promoter, Avery and his supporters dominated the period of trail history after initial completion and served as a foil for MacKaye's intellectual appeals. During this period, MacKaye actively supported the AT, but a rift between Avery and MacKaye over how to court federal involvement moved MacKaye to the supportive role he is often characterized as having now. It is not clear that MacKaye was “pushed out” of the ATC, but he clearly felt the need to distance

³“Frail Years,” 12-13.

⁴In MacKaye's long career he held positions with the USFS, TVA, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Rural Electrification Administration, among others. He also helped found the Regional Planning Association of America and the Wilderness Society. Avery served with the U.S. Navy during WWI and WWII, and worked with the Federal Maritime Commission as a lawyer thereafter. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club provides an informal biography of Avery's life with the organization. “Myron Avery: Portrait of a President,” The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club- History, <http://www.patc.us/history/archive/avery.html> (Accessed 1 February 2012.)

himself from Avery.⁵ The conflict of ideals is exemplified in a series of letters between Avery, Arno C. Cammerer (then Director of the National Park Service), and MacKaye, over proposed Trail placement within the Skyline Drive right-of-way. Cammerer and Avery discussed keeping the Trail in the right of way, while widening and grading the Trail to also accommodate bicycles. Avery writes to Cammerer to negotiate placing the AT within the highway's right-of-way, saying, “I believe this is a very practical proposal, quite free from any *visionary or impracticable aspect*.”⁶ An incensed visionary, Benton MacKaye interrupted Avery and Cammerer after obtaining copies of the letters between the two men. To Cammerer, he writes, “This may or may not appeal to the bicyclists of the country but it is a far cry from the conception of the Appalachian Trail.” Addressing the error of his partner, Myron Avery's agreement to a bicycle path, MacKaye continues, “As to the proposals, therefore, made by you and Myron I would revise them in two ways: (1) cut out the bicycle; (2) make a *real wilderness footpath on a separate (and remote) right-of-way*.”⁷ These two men clearly exemplify the dual nature of the Appalachian Trail. Avery saw a very finite, physical end to trail construction. He was very willing to compromise in order to construct the trail in a timely and low-conflict manner. MacKaye envisioned the social utility of the AT as always expanding, stating, “The Appalachian Trail is not an end within itself.”⁸ The increase of suburban

⁵“Frail Years,” 11; Sutter, 184-85; MacKaye retired from public service in 1945, but remained a loyal supporter of the AT by composing letters to biannual ATC meetings and writing about the Trail for various publications. He returned to ATC activities after Avery's 1952 death.

⁶Myron Avery to Arno C. Cammerer, 27 November 1933, MKA papers, Series 21, Box 166, Folder 15, Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College, emphasis added; Considering MacKaye is often viewed as the “*inspirational*” head of the AT, Avery's comment seems directed at him.

⁷Benton MacKaye to Arno C. Cammerer, 30 December 1933, MFP Series 21, Box 166, Folder 15; emphasis added.

⁸—Remarks by Benton MacKaye, delegate from the Regional Planning Association of America, and

populations (as well as the proliferation of automobiles) directly competed for land with the AT. Avery's legal experience, coupled with his straight-forward personality, provided the thrust that the AT needed for post-WWII recuperation. In addition to holding a post at the ATC, Avery also served as the president for the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), based in Washington, DC. Though the ATC originally resided in the nation's capital, the PATC was considered the federal arm of the Appalachian Trail clubs.⁹

With more Americans retreating to areas MacKaye deemed the last refuge of the "American Barbarian" in the 1920s, protection of the AT became the utmost priority for the Appalachian Trail Conference. In this way, MacKaye failed to anticipate the reach of the slowly moving "metropolitan glacier" he spoke of in "Outdoor Culture."¹⁰ Before Trail completion, MacKaye even writes, "Ultimately the hiker is as much entitled to his appropriate highway as the automobilist is to his." He hoped support for the AT would overcome support for highways in areas of conflict.¹¹ The ridges of the Appalachian Mountains, once the domain of the carefree tramper, became desirable for both scenic roadways and weekend retreat real-estate. Suburbs as well began spilling over into rural towns. A volunteer from Georgia remarked on the transformation, "It changed from wilderness to a pathway through chicken houses and the litter left by motorists," whereas in the early days of the Trail, "there was only one paved road in all of the north Georgia

author of the project for an Appalachian Trail," MFP, Series 21, Box 177, Folder 38, Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College, 5.

⁹The ATC remained at their DC headquarters until the 1980s, when the federal government, in the process of acquiring lands for the AT, purchased a building in Harper's Ferry, WV (an unofficial half-way point of the AT). The ATC remains in West Virginia.

¹⁰Benton MacKaye, "Outdoor Culture: The Philosophy of Through Trails" (paper presented before the New England Trail Conference, Boston, January 27, 1927), 1.

¹¹Benton MacKaye, "Progress Toward the Appalachian Trail," MFP, Series 21, Box 177, Folder 25, Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College, 2.

mountains.”¹² On the surface, this “evacuation” from the cities evoked what MacKaye called for in his essays. In fact, it was the exact opposite. Despite the work of regional and urban planners like MacKaye, Clarence Stein, and Lewis Mumford in the early half of the twentieth-century, the movement to develop American cities in a thoughtful and pragmatic manner fell apart amidst a post-war rush for cheap housing.¹³ One sticking point in MacKaye's ideology, supported heavily by the philosophy of regional planning, was a reliance on carefully executed plans. This tactic required more cooperation between all levels of government than was feasible. MacKaye and Mumford cautioned against unchecked urban growth. In the 1960s, America faced the results of exactly what planners warned of years earlier.¹⁴

As the organizational head of the Trail, the ATC published a newsletter, *Appalachian Trailway News*, in order to keep members abreast of trail happenings. In the years approaching the Scenic Trails Act, this newsletter became indispensable as a tool to unite the entire AT community, and dispel fears about pending federal partnership. In a letter to his constituency, ATC chairman Myron Avery asked members to look beyond the

¹²Barbara Deane, “The Appalachian Trail Ends in Georgia,” *Georgia Magazine* (June/July 1963), 23, MKA 3.1.6, Dahlonega Public Library.

¹³Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005). Gottlieb's history gives equal time in the saga of environmentalism to unusual characters like MacKaye, as well as standards such as Aldo Leopold.

¹⁴MacKaye and Mumford co-wrote a piece about managing the growth of highways and suburbs, “Townless Highways for the Motorist: A Proposal for the Automobile Age.” *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 163, No 975 (Aug 1935); 347-356; Mumford's most recognizable work is *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961), and a later companion collection of essays targeting American cities, *The Highway and the City*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World: 1963). New Urbanist Jane Jacobs continued the conversation MacKaye, Mumford, and others began earlier with her landmark work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) that critiqued urban renewal policies and sought to go beyond the contemporary paradigm of planning. New Urbanism rose to prominence in the 1980s, and resurrected many earlier planning conceptions such as: walkable neighborhoods, mixed income housing, and public spaces shaped by the culture and geography of the area they are in. The resurgence of new urban ideology in the late 20th and early 21st centuries provides an explanation for a renewed interest in Benton MacKaye during the same period.

daily care of the AT, and that, providing for the future of the Trail seemed to be of paramount importance.”¹⁵ Despite the cooperative agreement with the NPS and USFS, Avery wondered if the AT could ever achieve full protection.¹⁶ Regardless, he urged members that full protection was an ultimate goal. Obstacles in front of that goal highlighted benefits of federal cooperation. The AT, Avery suggested, confronted even the most vigorous volunteers with, too large an area to be cared for by small organizations, and a failure perhaps to appreciate what ‘standard Appalachian Trail’ means in the way of marking and maintenance.”¹⁷ Local clubs often created their own signage and style of Trail construction. This led to inconsistent markings along the Trail which often confused hikers. A lack of constricting leadership allowed clubs to respond to local needs, but also prevented the flow of information that standardized practices. The army of leisure volunteers MacKaye envisioned building and caring for the AT needed more coordination. The “local flavor” that distinguished the Appalachian Trail also produced a patchwork appearance that confused hikers. Improperly marked or unmarked passages created potentially dangerous hiking conditions. In a testimony for the Scenic Trails Act, Assistant Executive Director of the Wilderness Society Michael Nadel proposed that a true partnership between Federal, State, and private organizations provided a chance to: “bring head, heart, and feet together,” on the Appalachian Trail.¹⁸

Later in his message to ATC members, Chairman Avery sought to clarify the wilderness dimension of the AT. He wrote, “Too often there has been confusion between

¹⁵*Appalachian Trailway News* 1, No 1 (Jan 1939): 7.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷*Appalachian Trailway News* 1, No 1 (Jan 1939), 7.

¹⁸Senate Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *The Appalachian Trail*, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, S. Hrg. 622, 45.

the wilderness surroundings of the trail and the character of the trail itself. The trail should be in the wilderness but an open, marked route through the wilderness where one may travel with a degree of assurance, deriving as he may the benefits of his journey.”¹⁹ NPS policy regarding the public land sections of the Trail provided a way to retain both the wilderness and human elements of the AT. The NPS banned vehicles, horses, and bicycles from the AT; an extension of normal Park policy, and a move that stood in stark contrast to the miles of highways constructed at the same time.

Appalachian Trailway News also provided an outlet beyond local clubs where hikers could issue complaints, offer encouragement, and report on their own section of the AT. A hiker from Maryland, Sterling W. Edwards brought to light an interesting conflict in the hiking community: the recreational hiker vs. the wilderness expert. Having been lost on the Trail due to insufficient markings, Edwards wrote to the ATC to complain. The community must have responded, because he later writes, “I fear that my comments may have started up some inquiries as to my ancestry and I am still smarting under the charge that I am no woodsman because I could not follow two miles of trail where the marking had been obliterated. *I do not profess to be a woodsman. I am a trail traveler and I expect to be able to follow a trail when it is described in the guidebook.*”²⁰ The appearance of a hierarchy of “woodsman” and “trail traveler” brings up another element MacKaye's plan did not cover. Competition between the AT and external forces defined the story of the Appalachian Trail. However, an internal competition between hikers threatened the stability of the volunteer community. The community element

¹⁹*Appalachian Trailway News* 1, No 1, (Jan 1939): 7.

²⁰“Dec 1, 1938 letter to Myron Avery,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 1, No 1 (Jan 1939): 8. ; emphasis added.

MacKaye hoped for coalesced in a way, but the diverse constituency invited conflict. Whether the charge came from within the AT community, the larger trail community, or an outside source, it is clear that the increase in visitors to the AT brought conflict. The democratic American trail Benton MacKaye crafted ensured a variety of users would be drawn to the Trail. The community invested in the AT through physical work and the enjoyment of hiking, was not exempt from conflict over the “proper” way to experience wilderness.

There existed throughout the history of the AT a tension between the accessibility of the trail and a pristine wilderness experience. Hikers moved onto public roadways risked their own safety and diminished the aesthetic experience. This became increasingly true as small local roads grew into larger highways during the second half of the twentieth-century. Trail advocates frequently worked to avoid roadside relocations, but the years approaching the National Trails System Act saw the ATC embracing the accessibility the automobile provided. Writing to the ATC constituency in May 1964, Chairman Edward Garvey emphasized the need for more visible AT signage along highways.²¹ Many visitors to the Trail visited for short hikes, lasting anywhere from a few hours to a few days. Often hikers parked one vehicle at the beginning of the hike, and another at the other end. This pattern emphasized the linear style of hiking that became popular around the creation of the AT. Rather than a loop-style of trail, a form popular before the omnipresence of the automobile, Benton MacKaye’s extensive linear trail became a signifier of the symbiotic relationship between technology and nature. Even with the cooperation of highway departments, many hikers sought out as pure a

²¹Edward Garvey, “Highway Signs,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 25, No 2(May 1964): 20.

wilderness experience as they could find. The mother of a hiker contacted the Dahlonega, Georgia, Chamber of Commerce for more information about the AT route. She said her son hiked an alternate route in Georgia. He, ~~started~~ at Cane Creek Gap instead of Springer Mt. He said too much of Springer to Cane Creek was along the road and they wanted all wilderness.”²² Automobiles democratized the Appalachian Trail, just as MacKaye had envisioned. MacKaye could not have anticipated what a pervasive force the automobile would become in American culture. This pushed more Americans towards the trail, but many hikers had to creatively redesign the route in order to avoid roadways.

Early in AT history, single-trip hikes traversing the length of the AT, or ~~thru-~~hikes,” were uncommon, and considered to be an unpleasant way to experience the Trail. In 1939, thru-hikes tended to be viewed as ~~stunt~~ hikes,” but the ATC identified an approaching trend, ~~Probably~~ at some time in the not too distant future, some traveler will cover the entire route in record time. This, however, will probably afford little pleasure or little of the real rewards of the route.”²³ This feeling highlighted another conflict between the short leisurely hikes that took place for the majority of AT history, and a new push for physical challenges. In May of 1964, the *Appalachian Trailway News* recorded two new ~~Whole~~ Trail Traverses,” one taking approximately fourteen years. Improvements in equipment technology allowed hikers to cover longer distances in relative comfort.²⁴ It

²²Letter from Mrs. J.D. Anthony to Mr. Henry B. Morris, 30 MAY 1960, Madeline K. Anthony Collection, Series 3, Box 1, Folder 6, Lumpkin County Library, Georgia; the original southern terminus of the AT was relocated from Mt Oglethorpe to Springer Mt in 1959; *Appalachian Trailway News* 48, No. 3, (July/August 1987), 9; Photograph, MKA Series 3, Box 1, Folder 6.

²³~~Appalachian Trail Records,~~” *Appalachian Trailway News* 1, No1, (Jan 1939), 10.

²⁴As synthetic materials replaced bulky, often repurposed military gear, hikers covered longer and longer distances. The ultra-light backpacking trend hit in the late 1960s and early 1970s, around the same

would take more time for the AT to experience the rush of popularity in the thru-hike category. For the period of time before the thru-hike boom, the ATC needed to adapt to increased local usage.

By the mid-1960s, the ATC fully promoted federal partnership. A bill was introduced to establish a network of trails in America. In a hearing for Senate bill 622 in 1965, Secretary of the Appalachian Trail Conference Edward B. Garvey described a delicate situation on the Appalachian Trail, “It is my sincere belief that legislation is needed and needed soon if we are to preserve the Appalachian Trail in anything like the wilderness trail that was conceived by its author Benton MacKaye.”²⁵ The act provided reinforcement of many private-federal relationships already in place, and would expand the ability, financially, of the ATC and NPS to acquire lands. Secretary of the Department of the Interior Udall confirmed, “Enactment of S. 622 would give statutory recognition to an objective this Department has long supported administratively.”²⁶ Cooperative agreements existed in thirteen of the fourteen states the trail passed through, all established voluntarily, the earliest of which occurring in 1938. Both Secretary Udall and ATC chairman Garvey affirmed this longstanding tradition. Garvey also joined the chorus of voices recognizing the pressing need to protect AT lands, “From reports reaching the conference, it becomes painfully clear that unless some type of protection is provided quickly, we will soon lose substantial pieces of the trail.”²⁷ Due to competition

time AT thru-hike figures exploded. Periodicals like *Backpacker Magazine*, whose first issue appeared in 1973, provided gear reviews and contributions to the ever-popular hiking narrative genre.

²⁵Senate Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *The Appalachian Trail*, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, S. Hrg. 622, 31

²⁶Ibid., 3; The NPS often used cooperative agreements to delineate specific roles and responsibilities of private and public entities.

²⁷Ibid., 31.

for scenic, rural land, pieces of the trail on private land became the most endangered. As land speculation increased, the informal, handshake agreements that marked early negotiations on the AT disintegrated. Landowners opted to sell property that contained portions of the Trail in order to gain a profit. Loss of crucial land agreements forced conference members to reroute the Trail. “Frequently, when these relocations become necessary, the only feasible route left is a road-- and so another stretch of the trail leaves a forested area and becomes a road trail.”²⁸ AT advocates did not oppose all access to roads, but as commercial and residential development hemmed in, the AT had nowhere else to go.

Irrefutable proof in support of partnership existed. Still, some trail advocates feared the worst. ATC Secretary Garvey states, “The fear has been expressed -- even by our own members- that if S. 622 becomes law, the Federal Government will assume complete responsibility for the trail, and the role of the trail clubs will rapidly diminish.” The ATC used its newsletter as a public relations tool aimed at clarifying the bill, and ensuring a commitment to the prominent role of volunteers. Garvey goes on to say, “I personally do not share that fear. There is ample evidence accumulated since the trail was completed that the Federal and State governmental agencies desire that maintenance and administration of the trail be a cooperative endeavor.”²⁹ Prior to the hearings for S. 622, Garvey met with the Director of the NPS in order to clarify. The director assured him that the NPS wanted trail organizations to remain as active as possible.³⁰ Garvey

²⁸Senate Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *The Appalachian Trail*, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, S. Hrg. 622, 30.

²⁹Ibid., 31.

³⁰Ibid., 31.

reiterated that ~~It~~ is the local participation that gives flavor to the Appalachian Trail and makes it different from other foot trails.”³¹ Hiker Richard A. Hudson, despite his previous run-ins with unhappy hikers, echoed Garvey’s sentiment by saying, ~~You~~ appreciate the Trail more when you know what work it is to keep it in good order.”³² The concept of a community working towards fulfillment through labor in a sustainable project directly reflects central MacKaye ideology.

As the hearing continued, testimony brought to light much of the foundation MacKaye planted for the AT. Harry Ness, representing a trail organization covering New York and New Jersey, a chapter of the Sierra Club, and the National Committee for Trail Protection, testified, ~~The~~ Appalachian Trail is truly representative of the American tradition. It was conceived, built, and is maintained by volunteer workers who enjoy the natural environment through which much of the trail passes and who believe they are performing a true public service by their efforts.”³³ MacKaye insisted that trails be close to eastern centers of population in order to provide access for more Americans.³⁴ In the face of incompatible development, this location made the AT vulnerable. Creeping urbanization, a great fear of MacKaye’s, began to encroach on the AT. Ness represented a portion of the Trail that ran extremely close to urban population centers of the East. He described recent rerouting of significant portions of the New York-New Jersey trail onto public roads and how this compromised the overall vision for the AT. ~~The~~ criteria for the Trail,” he states, ~~were~~ areas of high scenic value, remoteness from sights or sounds

³¹Ibid., 31.

³²~~D~~amascus to the Smokies,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 29, No. 3, (Sep1968): 34.

³³S. Hrg. 622, 32.

³⁴MacKaye, ~~A~~ Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning,” *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 9, (October 1921): 325-330.

of civilization, reasonable ease of travel and of future maintenance, and finally a route at least as desirable as the present one.”³⁵ When relocations became necessary, it is clear trail advocates fought for a new route that would sustain AT ideals. A lack of available land pushed the trail onto roads, and timing was everything. While Ness hiked a portion of the AT, he encountered an area being bulldozed per a developer request. Days later, the federal processes officially acquired the lands, not knowing of the clearing.³⁶ Situations such as the one Ness found, where a matter of days could have protected the land, provided a strong argument for quick action on behalf of the Trail.

In areas the trail snaked in and out of National Forests, small portions outside of US Forest Service jurisdiction remained open to attacks by developers and competing federal interests.³⁷ Public roads, private development, and the Appalachian Trail all existed in close proximity to one another, creating a “commercial squeeze” in some areas. Trail advocates attempted to avoid road crossings as much as possible, but in the cases of unavoidable road travel, the suggested solution became pedestrian under- or overpasses.³⁸ A year earlier, in 1964, trail clubs in Georgia reported a successful negotiation between proponents of an extension on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Georgia and trail advocates. *AT News* reported, “From many standpoints, it is regrettable that there is to be a Parkway in the north Georgia mountains. However, at least The Appalachian Trail will still be a primitive trail through forests and mountains a mile or more away from sight or sound of

³⁵“Georgia Trail—Parkway Conflict Resolved,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 25, No. 2, (May 1964): 23.

³⁶S.Hrg. 622, 34.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 34.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 35.

the Parkway except in the two places where it will approach to cross it through an underpass.”³⁹

Along with the threats from public roads, migration of population into rural areas threatened to permanently block access. Demand for ridgeline development drove prices higher than a private organization could handle. As well, many clubs did not have the legal resources to research complex land agreements with new landowners.⁴⁰ The Scenic Trails Act allowed the NPS to use money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to purchase land or easements, allowing the Trail and corridor to safely pass through private land. Spencer Smith testified, “The encroachments ... are really the crux of what we are talking about, and this is an effort to preserve the trail in its primitive state.” Preservation of the trail also limited the type of development allowed near the AT, a power that grew as the government passed, and then amended the Act to include protective corridors around the Trail. Full federal cooperation increased the power of the ATC to acquire lands, the main reason for the intrusion of roads and private development on the AT. Senator Nelson, a major supporter of the bill in Congress specified, “The objective of the bill is to authorize acquisition at any place along the trail where it is necessary to prevent an encroachment...otherwise I don’t think the bill accomplishes anywhere near the objective we have in mind.”⁴¹ ATC representatives made it clear to the Congress that the organization did not expect or want the government to act in a leadership capacity, “We have turned to the Federal Government for protection out of despair more than any desire

³⁹“GEORGIA TRAIL—PARKWAY CONFLICT RESOLVED,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 25, No. 2, (May 1964): 23.

⁴⁰S.Hrg. 622, 37.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 42.

to centralize something.”⁴² Trail advocates finally tired of the constant negotiation and labor of rerouting the AT. Relocation could close a section of trail for months while volunteers scouted, mapped, and blazed new trail; even more time might pass before hikers recognized the new route. Michael Nadel, the assistant executive director of the Wilderness Society, which Benton MacKaye helped establish, quotes MacKaye on the subject of relocations, “Relocation repeated would take energy. The same energy devoted to controlling causes would seem in the long run better to attain our ultimate objectives.”⁴³

President Johnson spoke to Congress about natural beauty in America, and the threats confronting it. In language echoing Benton MacKaye, Johnson lamented, “people move out from the city to get closer to nature only to find that nature has moved farther from them.” Johnson confronted a more complicated racial atmosphere than MacKaye and his peers did earlier, but when Johnson said, “It means not just easy physical access, but equal access for rich and poor, Negro and white, city dweller and farmer,”⁴⁴ he not only reached back to MacKaye, but beyond to the American foundation. Fifty years after MacKaye provided a plan for the “Recreational Possibilities of Public Forests,” President Johnson reiterated a central element of MacKaye's life and work: That the immeasurable benefit of physical interaction with a wilderness area is equal to any gross domestic product, and should be accessible to any American who wants it. MacKaye wrote in 1915, “If then ... the problem of play and recreation in the nation's life ranks as equal in

⁴²Ibid., 43.

⁴³Benton MacKaye, as quoted in, S. Hrg. 622, 45.

⁴⁴Lyndon B. Johnson, “Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty—8 FEB 1965, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650208.asp> (accessed 30 January 2012).

importance as the problem of work and commerce, it is necessary to provide public opportunity to this end.” In a direct connection to Johnson's speech, he goes on to say that ~~not~~ only those few of the people who can 'afford it,' but especially those who cannot afford it.”⁴⁵

On October 2, 1968, President Johnson signed the National Trails System Act. It provided for a variety of walking trails located ~~primarily~~, near the urban areas of the Nation.”⁴⁶ The threats previously discussed necessitated a direct and official act from the Federal government to protect and establish these trails. Based on the model of the Appalachian Trail, the act established three types of trails: National recreation trails, National scenic trails, and connecting or side trails. The Appalachian Trail on the East Coast and the Pacific Crest Trail on the West Coast became the first National Scenic Trails. National Scenic Trails could only be designated by Act of Congress. During the long process of courting federal protection, workers prepared a map of the length of the Trail, marked with private, state, and federal ownerships.⁴⁷ The advisory council established for the Appalachian Trail represented the ATC, government bodies, and the localities through which the Trail passed. Proactive ATC negotiations secured a prominent role in the new power structure. Previous agreements negotiated between the trail clubs, highway officials, state and federal agencies took place on a horizontal basis. After the passage of the Act, the AT power structure, headed by the federal government, took on a very different appearance, at least outwardly.

⁴⁵Benton MacKaye, ”Recreational Possibilities of Public Forests,—*Journal of the New York State Forestry Association* 3, Nos. 2, 3, 4 (October 1916): 5.

⁴⁶The National Trails System Act, Pub. L. No 111-11, Sec 2. a. i.

⁴⁷National Trail System Act, Sec 5.a. 1: mention is made of the maps titled ”Nationwide System of Trails, Proposed Appalachian Trail, NST-AT-101-May 1967. A color coded copy of the map is included in S.Hrg. 622.

The act gave state and local governments two years to acquire rights-of-way, or to purchase non-federal or state lands illustrated in the AT plan map. After that period of time, the Federal government possessed the ability to step in and finish the acquisition process.⁴⁸ The Act authorized five million dollars for the Appalachian Trail to acquire land or interest in land.⁴⁹ Passage of the bill came just in time. In 1968, after running into five thru-hikers on his trip, Richard Hudson exclaimed, “Good grief, I thought, it’s getting to be what TRAILWAY NEWS called congestion, with all the end-to-enders”⁵⁰ In the 1940s, the Appalachian Trail Conference recorded only four hikes of the full length of the AT. But by the 1970s, almost eight hundred hikers traversed the entire Trail. From mid-century on, figures rose steeply.⁵¹

The landmark Scenic Trail Act of 1968 gave the AT official recognition by the federal government. However, they had entered into an agreement that left the organization at the whim, financially, of Congress, in order to accomplish their goal of creating a buffer zone around the trail to protect its wilderness characteristics. Congress made further amendments to the 1968 Act ten years later in 1978. Changes made primarily eased the AT acquisition process, one which was proving to be slow and frustrating. Given only two years to complete the acquisition process, many states lacked the money and motivation needed to provide a trail corridor. The original Act allowed states a set amount of time to acquire lands, after which the Federal government

⁴⁸Scenic Trail Act, Sec. 7.e.

⁴⁹Scenic Trail Act, Sec 7.g.

⁵⁰“Damascus to the Smokies,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 29, No 3, (Sept 68): 33.

⁵¹ATC, “2000 Milers,” <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/about-the-trail/2000-milers>, (accessed 1 February 2010); The ATC recorded 37 thru-hikes from 1960-69; 780 from '70-'79; 1,415 from '80 to '89; and 3,287 from '90 to '99. Thru-hikes are recorded in the year of completion. A corresponding rise in the nonfiction hiking narrative genre of is found in the decades that also have spikes in thru-hikes.

intervened. This section proved to be somewhat in line with MacKaye's conception of the State-Federal relationship. MacKaye wrote in 1940, "Let the Federal Government give aid and have some guiding hand, but place authority and responsibility, as far as possible, in the state (or states) which constitute the region."⁵² The ATC and NPS worked toward finding their own equilibrium for the next twenty years. States unable to acquire a protective corridor left the AT in a precarious situation, one which necessitated more intervention by the Federal government. Ten years after the Scenic Trail Act was enacted, amendments granted even more power to the NPS. The advisory council received authorization for five more years, and thirty million dollars over each of the following three years contributed to finishing trail acquisitions. It also extended the condemnation power of the NPS from twenty-five acres in any mile, to one hundred and twenty-five acres in a mile. Opinions on the extension of condemnation powers varied. Robert Herbst writes in support of corridor expansion, "The existing 25 acre per mile limitation on use of the power of eminent domain makes acquisition of a corridor wide enough to protect the essential Trail environment very difficult."⁵³ New acreage rules extended the corridor area from two hundred feet to a median of one thousand feet. Supporters of the increased power claimed that a two-hundred-foot corridor did little to protect the AT from developments built flush with the corridor boundary.⁵⁴ Opponents felt that even the rumor of condemnation sent small landowners running, "In particular they are disturbed by the substantially widened right-of-way this bill would authorize to

⁵²Benton MacKaye, "Defense Time' Conservation," *The Planners' Journal* 6, no 3, (July 1940): 72.

⁵³Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, *Appalachian Trail Amendments*, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 1977, S. Hrg. 2066, 11.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 12.

be acquired by exercise of the power of eminent domain. We all realize the problem that arises in the average mind of the landowner when eminent domain is suggested.”⁵⁵ The feeling of some landowners was that condemnation decreased their ability to negotiate with the government. —This legislation is interpreted as a means of hurrying them up, of pushing them into decisions which they do not feel that they are ready to make.”⁵⁶ In order to maintain negotiations taking place during the amendment process, supporters tried to clarify that the corridor could be flexible, allowing for up to one thousand feet.⁵⁷ While drafting the Act, the ATC did not anticipate that a two hundred foot corridor would prevent acquisition. Senator Mathias, a supporter of the amendments, specified, —This limitation has resulted in title problems, partial land takings and excessive land speculation on property abutting the Trail. It has resulted in incompatible development within sight and earshot of the Trail.”⁵⁸ After the 1978 amendments, the NPS began to extensively acquire the new corridor.

The decades after World War II became a period of dynamic change for the Appalachian Trail. Huge threats to the continuity of the AT forced ATC members to expand existing relationships with the federal government, resulting in the AT's designation as a National Scenic Trail. But the challenges did not manifest only in physical ways. Debates over the role of government on the Trail split the AT's two most prominent leaders, Myron Avery and Benton MacKaye. The two men came to symbolize

⁵⁵Ibid., 14.

⁵⁶Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, *Appalachian Trail Amendments*, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 1977, S. Hrg. 2066, 16.

⁵⁷Ibid., 18.

⁵⁸Ibid., 19.

the dual nature of the AT. Myron Avery's practical attitude towards management of the Trail provided the physical space in which MacKaye's ideas flourished. The AT needed both of the components these men brought in order to survive. It was MacKaye's ideas, manifested in the Appalachian Trail, which made the AT a project unique from others. The cultivation of personal relationships between Appalachian Trail workers dominated the first phase of Trail history, and is marked by a dominance of Benton MacKaye's ideology. As new threats challenged MacKaye's framework for the AT, Myron Avery and federal partnership dominated the second period of Trail history. Federal protection changed the dynamic of the AT once again. The third period of Trail history found the ATC struggling to define their role in the public-private dynamic. Documents in the 1960s and 1970s expounded the volunteer atmosphere while crafting policy that increased the power of the federal government in the daily operations of the AT.

Legislation promoted by Lyndon B. Johnson ushered in an era of environmental regulation and the promotion of wilderness projects. After Johnson's term ended, succeeding presidents continued the same pattern in the "environmental decade." Increased governmental involvement on the Appalachian Trail solved many of the problems associated with land protection. Federal involvement also moved the base of power away from Benton MacKaye's citizen ideal, and towards public domination. The ATC struggled to define its new role in this relationship. While designation as a Scenic Trail advanced many of MacKaye's goals (including full protection of the Trail), it also dismantled the very core of his plan.

CHAPTER FOUR

Full Circle

The creation of the ATC was one of two pivotal events in the history of the trail; the other was the signing of the National Trails System Act in 1968. The first provided a parent organization for clubs whose members work at maintaining the trail; the second provided federal protection for it. Achieving this protected status is the result of the enthusiasm and concern of a host of hikers during half a century. Perhaps it is unrivaled by any other single feat in the development of American outdoor recreation.

—Benton MacKaye, Introduction to *Appalachian Trail*

Sixty-three years after the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* published his plan for a multi-state hiking trail, Appalachian Trail Conference and National Park Service officials gathered at that organization's headquarters. The representatives signed a delegation of authority agreement that transferred a large portion of the federal duties to the volunteer base of the ATC.¹ Benton MacKaye died in 1975, but had he lived to see the delegation of authority from the NPS to the ATC, he might have considered this the third significant event in Trail history. The delegation of authority consisted of about thirty-thousand acres along two-hundred and fifty miles of NPS and USFS acquired lands. Delegation symbolically passed on management of the whole Appalachian Trail back to the ATC.² This agreement, signed at the organization which first published MacKaye's Trail plan, returned his Appalachian Trail to its original home, physically and ideologically.

¹—January 26, 1984,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 45, no.1 (March/April 1984): 7.

²—The January 26th Ceremony,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 45, no. 1, (March/April 1984): 7.

In 1969, Lyndon B. Johnson signed an Act that designated the AT as a National Scenic Trail. The National Scenic Trails Act initiated heavy federal involvement in the daily operations of the Trail, in particular the acquisition of a protective corridor. The ~~decade~~ "decade of the environment," generally defined as 1969-1979, actually began in the mid-1960s with a string of legislation from President Lyndon B. Johnson. This legislation ushered in an era of sweeping environmental regulations in the 1970s. Johnson's policies split between beautification or recreation projects (The Highway Beautification Act of 1965 and the National Park Foundation of 1967) and regulation (The Clean Air Act of 1963 and the Water Quality Act of 1965). The environmental movement of the 1970s focused less on recreation and moved resources to regulation and conservation. Concerns over contaminated waterways and air pollution overshadowed projects like the National Parks. During the early twentieth-century, Benton MacKaye worried about the impact of urbanization in America. By the 1970s unchecked industrialization resulted in the gross abuse of natural resources.

Presidential administrations following Johnson continued his precedent with their own legislation. President Richard Nixon passed the Coastal Zone Management Plan, broadened protection of threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, and signed the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (a piece of legislation initiated by Johnson), which created the Environmental Protection Agency. Following Nixon, President Gerald Ford passed the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974, The Toxic Substances Control Act in 1976, and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980. The latter was an exception to the flood of regulatory legislation of the 1970s. Reaching back to the turn-of-the-century conservation, the Act protected more than one hundred

million acres of land in Alaska to serve as wildlife refuge, parks, and wilderness.³

Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, a driving force behind critical Appalachian Trail legislation, organized the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. Legislation sought to control industrial impact and programming like Earth Day promoted awareness of individual environmental impacts. The amount of legislation also complicated industrial operations.

In 1980, President Ronald Reagan reversed the seemingly never-ending tide of environmental policy. Reagan-era policy sought to deregulate many of the industries the “environmental decade” policy controlled. The administration put forth two tactics that impacted the Trail directly: Budget cuts to save government money in a time of recession, and reversal of government regulation in order to allow businesses to flourish. Over the fifteen years since Johnson initiated environmental reform, businesses and corporations faced new guidelines at every turn. Occupational Safety and Health Administration guidelines broadened the definition of environmental harm by incorporating the workplace into an industry's environmental impact.⁴ President Reagan's rollback of Interior Department funds came during the tail-end of Appalachian Trail corridor acquisitions. Despite its timing, a sudden lack of funding jeopardized key acquisitions. Operating on an assumed budget for the next year, the NPS entered into land agreements and continued with condemnation hearings. After budget cuts reduced the NPS budget in 1984, the Director of the NPS issued a memo to regional directors and project managers on the AT to cease negotiations in new cases. In the midst of discussions, the NPS did

³Table 1-1, “Major Federal Environmental Legislation, 1969-1980,” Introduction to *Environmental Policy in the 1980s*, ed. Norman J. Vig and Michael E. Kraft, (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc, 1984), 10-13.

⁴Started by LBJ and passed by Nixon, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) was created in 1970, chiefly over concerns for the health of workers exposed over long periods of time to toxic chemicals in the work environment.

not foresee being able to pay for the land in process with the budget cuts. Despite the dramatic changes, the Director anticipated a return to a normal budget in the following years.⁵ Funding for the next several years continued to fall short of necessary amounts.

Amendments to the Scenic Trails Act sought to speed up the land acquisition process. The original Act gave state and local governments two years to acquire lands, after which the federal government would take over the process, if necessary. By the time amendments were proposed, the federal arm of the AT partnership conducted a large amount of acquisitions. However, Charles H.W. Foster, who served on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Advisory Council (ANSTAC), blames the slow acquisition process not on the states, but on the fact that the AT was ~~never~~ a priority undertaking for the National Park Service.” He portrays the AT management council as unstable prior to the 1978 amendments. The variety of organizations that occupied spots on the Council struggled to define common goals.⁶ Amendments authorized an increase in funding, reconstituted the ANSTAC, and increased eminent domain powers. The new prospect of dealing exclusively with the federal government, rather than local trail clubs, in land agreements made many landowners uncomfortable. Tense community relationships and impending budget cuts caused the ATC to consider what the role of the federal government should be in the coming years. Executive Director of the ATC Larry Van Meter writes, “[The idea of broader ATC responsibility] rose to prominence in 1982 as the Trail community began to wrestle seriously with the task of managing rapidly

⁵Memorandum to Regional Directors and Project Manager, Appalachian Trail, 20 June 1982, 46

⁶Foster, 32.

expanding NPS acreage along the A.T.”⁷ The NPS, when adequately funded, possessed the necessary power to maintain its sections of the AT. An overall vision for the Trail did not translate to the federal power dynamic, and Trail advocates struggled with growing pains.

National Park Service Director Russell Dickenson transferred responsibility of federally owned AT land in eight of fourteen states on January 26, 1984. *AT News* reported, “The transaction represents the largest single delegation of management responsibility for public lands from the Park Service to a private organization.”⁸ The National Trails System Act allowed for the NPS to delegate degrees of responsibility to other organizations.⁹ After the 1978 amendments that gave the NPS more power and money to acquire land, acquisitions sped up dramatically. Transferred holdings included land acquired since the 1968 Act by the NPS. Dave Richie, AT program director for the NPS, commented “I’m optimistic the Trail can be managed as well and potentially better by the ATC than by governmental units.”¹⁰ He spoke candidly about the gap that occurred between plan and practice in the NPS, a situation common in federal government management. Arthur W. Brownwell Chairman of the ANSTAC, provided insight into what the NPS gained from working with the ATC. He explains, “The realization that volunteers can do a job equal to if not better than a federal agency can

⁷Larry Van Meter, “National Park Service Delegates Management Responsibility to Appalachian Trail Conference,” *AT News* 45, no 1, (March/April 1984), 5.

⁸*Ibid.*, 5.

⁹*National Trails System Act*, Sec 7.1.

¹⁰Dave Richie, as quoted in, “Dave Richie: ‘AT Strengths Make It Natural for New Role’” by Judy Jenner, *AT News* 45, no. 1,(March/April 1984): 10.

have a great significance on many of the Park Service's management responsibilities.”¹¹ An *AT News* article pointed out that the new model for stewardship that the delegation of authority created had potential beyond the Appalachian Trail, and into the thousands of projects managed by the National Park Service. ATC Secretary Thurston Griggs spoke about the place of volunteers in the public-private dynamic; saying, “In delegating responsibility for the Trail, the government is preserving the kind of Trail that the volunteers built and want. It is not simply buying land; it is supporting the traditions that go with it. This sets a model of shared concern for conservation of our earthly heritage.”¹² Griggs' testimonial suggests that public agencies are often ill-equipped to uphold the vision of a project rooted in private volunteer efforts. The very reason why the ATC courted federal involvement, to put to use the overarching power the NPS wielded, actually limited the leadership capacity of the NPS. The period surrounding delegation reversed the power arrangement established with the Scenic Trails Act and its subsequent amendments. Elevation of private power over federal returned the structure of AT stewardship to a dynamic more in line with Benton MacKaye's original plan of a large volunteer base assisted by federal, state, and local governments. Both MacKaye and Avery promoted federal partnership, a decision that led to early cooperative agreements, and eventually heavy federal involvement. However, the evaluation of MacKaye's writing, coupled with the self-perception of AT volunteers, illustrates that the federal dominant model was not cohesive with the history and long-term goals of the private AT.

¹¹Arthur W. Brownwell, “On the Record,” *AT News* 45, no. 1 (March/April 1984): 6.

¹²Larry Van Meter, “National Park Service Delegates Management,” *AT News* 45, no. 1, (March/April 1984): 6.

The Scenic Trails Act placed most of the work of land acquisition onto the federal end of the AT partnership. This transfer of power freed up the ATC and its volunteers to pursue other goals previously overshadowed by protection needs. The decreased responsibility of the ATC also left the organization wondering at times what exactly its role in the relationship was.¹³ Through the 1970s and 1980s, the ATC sought to standardize trail and shelter construction, provide proper Trail signage, and to extend the network of relationships in the community. They instituted a “humanizing” campaign that repaired any bruised relationships and overall sought to expand awareness about the Trail.¹⁴ The “environmental decade” increased American awareness of crucial environmental practices. At the same time, social historians explored a multitude of human perspectives in their work. On the Appalachian Trail, organizers sought to marry environmental concern and an expanded definition of community, uniting their project with a larger American environmental movement.

The ATC published many of the materials about the Trail, including a member manual, Trail construction guide, and promotional materials about the AT. They continued to publish much of the material related to the Trail, and in doing so refined the outward image of the Appalachian Trail while standardizing practices within the hiking community. David Startzell, executive director of the ATC, welcomed new members to the organization with a simple statement of their mission, “The simple fact is, a well-informed and highly motivated membership is our best insurance for the future success of

¹³“Trail Years,”: 58.

¹⁴Foresta, 143.

the Appalachian Trail project.”¹⁵ As one of the first truly long-distance trails in America, the challenges of maintaining the AT provided a framework from which other trails could pattern themselves.¹⁶

The decentralization of decision-making processes within the AT structure prepared the private components for cuts in funding and eventual delegation of power. It also let local clubs respond to local dynamics, outside of pressure from an out-of touch federal overseer. ATC-issued regulation pushed for cohesive results rather than enforcing minute regulation. Considering the variety of cultural and geographical landscapes the AT passed through, the decision to leave the trail maintenance process in control of local groups rather than to hold rigid guidelines, provided continuity with Benton MacKaye's ideas. Not only did the Appalachian Trail Comprehensive Plan support the tradition of a volunteer workforce, it sought to expand community involvement. Educational programs taught hikers how to care for the AT, and prevented irreversible damage to the AT, the impetus for many relocations. The 1981 management plan stated, “Incompatible activities will be controlled by educational efforts and, failing this, by enforcement of laws and Trail regulations.”¹⁷ “An Appalachian Trail,” promoted an educational cause not unlike the program adopted in the 1980s. MacKaye's original plan included education to instill ethical land use in the area of the AT. The program in the 1980s promoted the

¹⁵*Appalachian Trail Conference Member Handbook*, 13th edition (Harpers Ferry, WV: The Appalachian Trail Conference, Inc., 1988), iv.

¹⁶Charles A. Flink, Kristine Olka, and Robert M. Searns, *Trails for the Twenty-First Century: Planning, Design, and Management of Multi-Use Trails*, (Washington DC: Island Press, 2001) consolidates much of the trial and error experience of early trail blazers into a guide. It provides guidelines on everything from community involvement, to sources of funding, to actual trail construction.

¹⁷AT Comprehensive Plan, (1981), 7.

“leave no trace” outdoor ethic, a practice that is still considered standard policy for outdoor recreation projects.¹⁸ New plans also emphasized opportunities to teach the community about more than hiking. In the late 1960s, Trail supporters enlisted the AT as a tool in education. One worker wrote to *AT News*, “If a kid can drink spring water and camp out and cut dead trees for firewood, and take home leaves and plants and rocks instead of just having things shown to him, I think he’ll be able to make a much better connection with a world that isn’t all concrete and glass and ‘no trespassing’ signs.”¹⁹ Volunteers created programming that sought to reconcile the disconnection between humans and their environment, a central idea in all of Benton MacKaye’s writing.

In 1981, prior to the delegation of authority, the NPS and ATC crafted guidelines for Trail management. Three years before delegation of authority, the two largest management organizations created a plan that began the transfer of power from federal to state and local levels. Official delegation in 1984 reinforced the overarching management plan put forth in 1981. Local management plans provided the foundation for administration. Shortly after delegation, Larry Van Meter writes, “Each club, in consultation with ATC and local agency partners, puts together a plan which outlines procedures for managing the A.T.”²⁰ NPS project manager Dave Richie commented on the ability of the Trail community to adapt their management policy, stating, “The Appalachian Trail has always been in the forefront of hiking trail development and management. Its hallmark is the enthusiasm of the entire Trail Community – volunteers,

¹⁸The Center for Outdoor Ethics “Believes that education is the best means to protect natural lands from recreational impacts while helping maintain access for recreation and enjoyment,” <http://www.lnt.org/aboutUs/index.php>, (accessed 1 February 2012).

¹⁹“Trails for the Handicapped,” *Appalachian Trailway News* 29, no. 3, (September 1968): 42.

²⁰Larry Van Meter, “Park Service Delegates Responsibility to Appalachian Trail Conference,” *AT News* 45, no. 1, (March/April 1984): 8.

staff, and government partners.”²¹ He goes on to commend the creativity surrounding the Trail, “The A.T. offers a way for people to add their own ideas ... and, using the Trail as a basis, they can be experimental, open to innovation.”²² This ability to innovate was not always available to NPS officials who worked within a constraining framework.

Van Meter identifies that “the spirit of the Trail – what Benton MacKaye called its ‘soul’ – is volunteerism.”²³ The comprehensive plan developed just before the delegation of authority reiterated this principle. The plan reads, “The management system will preserve and strengthen the role of the volunteer, in which rests the ‘soul’ of the Appalachian Trail.” The management philosophy, prepared by the NPS, USFS and ATC emphasized the role of the volunteer in establishing positive cooperative relationships not only within the ATC community, but beyond into local communities.²⁴ In fact, the plan defined the “Appalachian Trail Community” as, “A broad term including all those with an interest in or relationship to the Appalachian Trail: hikers, volunteers, landowners, federal and state agency personnel, local officials, and citizens of the towns through which the Trail passes.”²⁵ This report illustrates a shift back to a heavy reliance on the ground-level units of AT management. This shift was due in part to unsteady financial support from Washington, and an admission by the NPS of the gap that often occurred between policy and action.²⁶

²¹ “Dave Richie,” 8.

²² Ibid., 10.

²³ Larry Van Meter, “National Park Service Delegates,” *AT News* 45, no. 1, (March/April 1984): 6.

²⁴ Appalachian Trail Comprehensive Plan, (1981), 5.

²⁵ Appalachian Trail Comprehensive Plan, (1981), 1.

²⁶ Judy Jenner, “Dave Richie,” *AT News* 45, no. 1, (March/April 1984): 10.

Delegation of authority did not sever ties with the federal government. After the agreement, NPS officials took a subordinate role, and the ATC depended on the federal government for some funding. In 1986, *AT News* reported that Trail advocates should not expect funding for the next fiscal year in regards to land acquisition.²⁷ The job of future protection rested in the hands of the private and state organizations along the AT. Sensing this, the ATC began acquiring funds from publishing, memberships, and donations, prior to the delegation of authority. These funds provided a cushion for ATC staff operations, as well as a source of funding for private protection outside the scope of NPS or USFS activities.²⁸ The 1981 comprehensive plan positioned the volunteer, as well as the larger AT community, as the basis for AT stability. The plan explains,

It is clear that long-term protection of the Appalachian Trail rests not so much with acquiring tracts of wild land as with the relationships which are established with national forests and parks, state and local agencies, and the people who own land or reside along the Trail. The Trail values to be perpetuated include more than a narrow footpath, and the scheme for protecting these values must thus be broader than simple ownership of land.²⁹

Despite an increase in funding due to blocking tactics used by Congress, at the end of the Reagan administration cash flow to the Department of the Interior continued to slow. Between the Carter and Reagan administrations, projected budgets for natural resource and environmental programs declined by thirty-two percent.³⁰ Trail advocates confronted instability due to organizational reliance on the federal government. The Conference's

²⁷*AT News* 47, no. 2 (May/June 1986): 7.

²⁸The ATC fund allowed the organization to act in a timely manner when it came to acquisitions. Bypassing the red tape of the federal acquisition process allowed the organization to extend beyond the 1,000 ft corridor in some areas, and to continue acquisition efforts in fiscal years when the AT received no federal funding.

²⁹Appalachian Trail Comprehensive Plan, (1981), 27.

³⁰Robert V Bartlett, "The Budgetary Process and Environmental Policy," in *Environmental Policy in the 1980s*, ed. Norman J. Vig and Michael V. Kraft (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc, 1984), 127.

push for federal partnership coincided with the popularity of environmental regulation in the “environmental decade.” The AT benefitted from receptive presidents and legislators during this period as well. The economic crunch of the 1980s coupled with a decidedly unreceptive President could have put the future of the AT in limbo. However, the relative financial stability of the previous decade gave the ATC freedom to create a financial cushion which in turn allowed the organization to respond to unpredictable budgets. Promoted by a major National Geographic article in February 1987 and a boom in thru-hikes, ATC membership grew during the 1970s and 1980s.³¹ A fund established to hold ATC collected monies allowed the ATC to go beyond the acquisition limits of the federal government. In some areas, this expanded corridor protected the variety of scenery AT hikers experienced.³² Private acquisitions, while connected to the AT experience, also expanded the mission of the ATC into a larger conservation movement. Acknowledging that threats to the larger environment in the form of development or pollution impacted the expanded AT community, the ATC protected land that might not be traversed by hikers, but was significant to the overall vision of the community.

The federal government filled a pivotal role in AT history. The very patchwork fabric that gave the Trail its unique character actually prevented organizations from working as a unified whole. Filling the role as temporary co-leader, the NPS enabled the ATC to systematize trail practices and create new standards for a uniform corridor. For the volunteers and employees involved, the Appalachian Trail was a never-ending project. The Trail required almost daily maintenance, but hasty land agreements during the period

³¹*Trail Years*, 51.

³²*Trail Years*, 61-63.

of acquisition created new work. The push for protection hurried by federally mandated timelines protected much of the AT from development in the sixteen years of strong, full-time, federal government involvement (1968-1984). The fast pace and heated conditions also led to less-than-satisfactory contracts. In Vermont, agreements for shared use of an area that included Pico Peak, a popular ski area, produced less than satisfying results for all of the parties involved. According to an Environmental Impact Statement, Kilington-Pico Peak agreements allowed for both the AT and a Ski resort development in the same area. Provisions allowed Kilington to construct a ski lift, as well as continue development within the easement. Such incongruent activities within the easement created conflict between the parties involved.³³ In the mid-1980s, AT managers, dissatisfied with the lack of Trail protection in the original agreement, returned to negotiations with the ski resort. This agreement, and the lack of foresight into the problems a ski trail overlapping a hiking trail might present, showed that protection on paper did not always equal protection in reality. A variety of environmental, trail, and local groups became involved in the debate over the Kilington lands. This ended in mediation between twenty-one parties, including the Sierra Club, ATC, and NPS. Controversy centered on the “proper” use of the lands, and whether the AT or ski resort should be on the land at all. The Trail's unique status as both a recreation and wilderness project often placed it in a grey area, unacceptable as a wilderness preservation or outdoor recreation project. Most of the legislation in the “environmental decade” focused on air and water quality, but the debate at Kilington over whether or not a Trail constituted a legitimate part of “wilderness” signified a larger debate happening in the

³³Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Apalachian Trail Kilington-Pico Peak, Vermont,” *EIS Newsletter* (Harpers Ferry, WV: 1991), 2.

environmental community. Outside of the Appalachian Trail, the discussion manifested itself in debates over the conceptualization of the whole environment, and whether humans and technology occupied a legitimate place in that environment.

Delegation of power from the NPS to the ATC marked a turning point in AT history. Having exhausted the benefits of federal-dominant cooperation, the AT confronted a lack of funding and uncertain future if agreements continued in the current form. Over and over, documents emphasized the power of the Appalachian Trail's volunteer workforce. Federal partnerships overwhelmed this crucial component. As the Reagan administration tightened its belt, the parties involved in the stewardship of the AT reexamined their dynamic. Community education became a high priority for the ATC as the organization expanded its conception of community to include both hikers and local residents. This idea of education taught the public a land ethic that blurred the hiker/resident line, and invested each group in one common goal. Likewise, hikers learned how to share the positives of outdoor recreation with people encountered around the Trail. An increase in thru-hikes developed a new focus on the AT as one large community, comprised of various local communities. Thru-hikers filled the role as ambassadors for the AT, and their narratives publicized the AT as more than a hiking trail. Advances in transportation allowed hikers from around the world to thru-hike the AT, and expanded the community in infinite directions.

As the 1980s progressed, more and more power shifted from the federal arm back to the ATC, and from there on to volunteers. This new form of power distribution returned to the ideological basis of the Appalachian Trail. MacKaye's plan positioned the ordinary citizen as the central unit of the AT. From a group of volunteers, he believed the

primeval movement would spread. From the 1978 amendments of the Trails Act forward, documents show a steady progression in favor of federal decentralization. After the delegation of authority, the Secretary of the Interior remained as the overseer of the Appalachian Trail. The Department of the Interior took on a passive role, only intervening in daily operations when necessary. Sometimes deemed the “Anonymous Trail” for the leagues of uncompensated volunteers who work on the Trail every day, the AT found equilibrium when it returned to its base, rather than being administered by the NPS.³⁴

After the 1984 delegation of authority, many state and local authorities signed similar delegation agreements with the ATC.³⁵ Delegation agreements did not sever ties to the organization transferring power. Rather, the delegation of authority helped to achieve the major mission of the ATC during this period: to organize the various entities involved in Trail stewardship around the protection of the AT. The temporary alleviation of managerial duties allowed the ATC to consolidate and refine the techniques used to communicate its vision for the Trail. As technology changed American culture, the AT community responded with reevaluation, and occasionally reorganization. The structure (or lack thereof) of power in the AT community allowed what Dave Richie called, “innovation,” in the management of the Trail. Without this long-established innovative spirit, the AT could not have adapted as well as it did to political tides.

A few years before his death, Benton MacKaye wrote to the ATC constituency, still expounding on the central element of his 1921 plan. He writes, “You have turned

³⁴ “The Anonymous Trail,” *AT News* 48, No. 3, (July/August 1987): 9.

³⁵ “Virginia delegates responsibility to ATC and clubs,” *AT News* 48, no 3, (July/August 1987): 4; In 2004 the NPS and ATC signed a similar agreement to the '84 version, delegating more land and reaffirming the cooperative partnership.

dream into fact – a program on paper into an institution on feet.” Tying many of his early writings to the progress of the AT, he goes on to say, “You have preserved a portion of primeval America. In thus preserving her natural history you have made history.”³⁶ If originators had a say in their own legacy, MacKaye would credit himself only as the impetus for a movement. He later writes to the Conference, “I am often asked whether the 'Project in Regional Planning' which I proposed in 1921 has met with my expectations... Yes, it has gone far beyond, and this with slight credit to me. I placed match to the fuse and the folks did the rest.”³⁷ By elevating the groups of AT supporters to the status as true innovators, MacKaye confirmed all of his previous hopes and plans for his project. Benton MacKaye never dominated the AT project. His ideas provided a unique foundation for a social and recreational venture which grew, for a time, beyond his framework and then came full circle to his original ideas as a forester-philosopher. MacKaye closed his letter by endorsing the life improving benefit of a simple tramp in the woods. He concludes, “And so here we are again...to hit the Trail for a life worth living.”³⁸

³⁶“Message From Benton MacKaye to the Appalachian Trail Conference,” 15 June 1972, MFP Series 21, Box 159, Folder 19.

³⁸Benton MacKaye to Appalachian Trail Conference, 21 June 1975, MFP Series 21, Box 182, Folder 68.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The 1984 delegation of authority returned the Appalachian Trail to a power dynamic more reflective of Benton MacKaye's original plan in, "An Appalachian Trail." MacKaye's ideas were not always specific, but he provided a plan with enough flexibility to adapt, and at times anticipate the challenges of a modern preservation project. MacKaye trusted that a committed group of volunteers, when based around a valuable natural resource, would flourish. The Appalachian Trail plan created a natural resource project congruent with, not opposed to, a growing America. This was the core of "An Appalachian Trail," as well as all of MacKaye's work. By the end of his ninety-six years, Benton MacKaye had lived through both World Wars, the rise of the automobile and immense environmental change. Ideas crafted in the 1920s survived due in no small part to his ability to respond and shape his ideology to the new challenges of modernity. In one of his last pieces of writing, MacKaye reflected on his life's project, "I am encouraged by the knowledge that there are millions in America who care about wilderness and mountains; who go for strength to Mother Earth; who defend her domain and seek her secrets."¹

Too focused of a judgment often portrays MacKaye as having little influence on the modern Trail. Ronald Foresta provides the most extreme opinion in this category, concluding that MacKaye lost his influence to a group of middle class professionals who

¹Benton MacKaye, foreword to *The Appalachian Trail* by Ronald M. Fisher, (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1972), 5.

controlled the legacy of the Trail from then on. But a lack of discussion also speaks volumes. Often credited by Trail supporters as the inspirational start of the project, little is said about how MacKaye's ideas shaped and molded the history of the AT. Official ATC materials offer a moving portrait of a visionary, but provide an unsatisfying look at MacKaye and the Trail. A reevaluation of his work provides ample evidence that connects MacKaye with the modern Appalachian Trail as well as the larger environmental movement. Contrary to accusations of his decreased influence after initial construction, MacKaye's plan created a base on which his influence continued even without direct involvement. He conceived the project in such a way that groups of volunteer citizens, rather than himself, comprised the main leading body of the Trail. MacKaye's writing established a basis for continued influence, and several key events in the history of the Appalachian Trail either challenged or reaffirmed this influence.

After initial construction of the AT finished in 1937, the ATC and its volunteer workforce comprised the largest management body on the Trail. National Park Service and US Forest Service agreements created a precedent for federal partnerships, but functioned in a background capacity. Informal handshake agreements between local AT volunteers and residents created the democratic heart of the first period of Trail history. Americans returning after World War II pursued outdoor recreation and their own piece of the "American Dream," including suburban housing and affordable vehicles. On the surface, increased popularity of hiking trails like the AT supported MacKaye's mission as an accessible wilderness area. However, the creep of urbanization combined with intense Trail use deteriorated the wilderness quality of many parts of the Trail. Mid-century, the extreme threats to the Trail prompted a swing from a largely volunteer effort to a

substantial incorporation of federal agencies. These agencies provided their expertise and funding, but changed the public-private dynamic on the AT. While MacKaye never clearly defined a leader for the Trail, his writing both about the AT as well as outside projects placed an emphasis on letting the people whom the Trail was designed for hold most management duties. This process of citizen involvement created one half of the enrichment MacKaye intended.

The Appalachian Trail transformed many local communities as well. Conflict over land forced residents to evaluate priorities regarding their natural and built environment. Location served as both an advantage and a danger to the AT. A wilderness Trail neighboring on the largest urban centers of the Northeast provided the access MacKaye saw as integral to the Trail. As urban and suburban areas grew, the wilderness quality of the AT deteriorated. New strategies were needed to protect the AT. This led to the National Scenic Trails Act in 1968, an official partnership between the AT and the Department of the Interior. The Act moved overall leadership to the NPS, something that compromised the volunteer roots of the Trail. It did, however, increase the acreage of protected land around the AT. Prompted by the increase, the ATC began to acquire lands outside of federal limits to protect a larger environment around the Trail. After delegation of authority transferred management responsibility to the ATC in 1984, the Conference adopted a fully integrated vision of a Trail community. Both the expansion of the corridor into surrounding countryside and a cohesive vision of the variety of publics invested in the Appalachian Trail point back to MacKaye's vision.

Some aspects of MacKaye's plan have been lost. His idea for a local labor structure occupied by former urban dwellers and based around the Appalachian Trail

never materialized. As well, the AT still contends with an image of being merely recreational. While thru-hike narratives often provide profound insight into a hiker's AT experience, the "extreme" nature of a whole-trail traverse conflicts with the reflective nature of MacKaye's plan. Today, thru-hikers create the most prominent image of the Appalachian Trail. Though the migration from urban areas to AT labor camps never happened, there is something to be said for almost thirteen-thousand people (even more if uncompleted thru-hikes are accounted for), leaving their modern lives for months at a time to hike the Appalachian Trail. This journey, some might say a pilgrimage, creates a kind of temporary migration. Most thru-hike narratives describe the experience as highly transformative.

Beyond the Appalachian Trail, establishment of Benton MacKaye's lasting influence places him not only in previous lists of environmental forefathers, but also in the modern conception of hybrid landscapes in environmental history. Part of why MacKaye seemed so elusive to environmentalists is that he embraced both wilderness and technology as essential components to modern life. Environmentalists following a "pristine" wilderness concept saw wild land having very little to do with humans. This produced an artificial view of the environment. MacKaye's early acceptance of technology pointed toward the integrative perception that is embraced currently. The unique dynamic on the Appalachian Trail influenced future National Park Service approaches, moving focus to volunteer support of Parks. Dave Richie, NPS project manager of the AT, states, "The Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conference altered my

conception about how things could be done.”² The ATC stands as the head of AT management, but it is really an organizational head for the thousands of volunteers who work on the Trail every year. In 2005, the Appalachian Trail Conference changed its name to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. This change reflected the new, larger mission of the ATC to conserve not only the AT, but the unique landscapes associated with it. Over and over again historians, trail advocates, and public employees have emphasized that the casual, volunteer base of the AT is exactly what ensures not only its survival, but the flourishing of a unique community.

Often called the “~~t~~rail of all trails,” or the “~~a~~nonymous trail,” presidents and citizens alike have looked to the AT as an inspirational model for how to manage large-scale public projects. It is telling that the AT is rooted firmly in a citizen volunteer force which conducted not only the blood and sweat work of blazing and maintaining the AT, but also lobbied on behalf of it and raised money for its protection. In the last decade, interest in MacKaye as a figure has grown. Authors are now looking beyond the confines of the Appalachian Trail into the larger significance of his regional vision, an ideology still relevant to Benton MacKaye's inspirational framework surrounding two-thousand miles from Maine to Georgia.

²Judy Jenner, “Dave Richie: ‘ATC Strengths Make It Natural For New Role,’” *AT News* 45, no 1, (March April 1984): 10.

APPENDIX

APPALACHIAN TRAIL TIMELINE

- 1905-Benton MacKaye is the first graduate from Harvard's Forestry School
- 1910- Construction on the Long Trail, America's oldest long-distance trail, begins
- 1921- "An Appalachian Trail" is published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*
- 1922- Construction of the Trail begins in Bear Mountain Park, NY.
- 1925- The Appalachian Trail Conference is created.
- 1937- AT (From Mt. Ogelthorpe in Georgia to Kathadin, 2,025 miles) completed.
- 1938-Congress authorizes construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway, which displaces 120 miles of Trail.
- 1939- *Appalachian Trailway News*, the official ATC newsletter, is created.
- 1941-1948- ATC annual meetings suspended due to WWII.
- 1945- Pennsylvania representative Daniel K. Hoch proposes legislation to establish a nation-wide system of trails. It does not succeed.
- 1948- Earl Schaffer completes one uninterrupted hike of the AT. It takes him four months to complete.
- 1952- Former ATC chairman Myron Avery dies.
- 1958- Southern Terminus of the AT is moved from Mt. Oglethorpe to Springer Mt.
- 1965- Hearings begin on a bill to protect the AT and establish a system of trails; LBJ delivers special message to Congress on conservation.
- 1968- National Trails System Act passed. (President Johnson)
- 1972- ATC headquarters relocates from Washington, D.C. to Harpers Ferry, WV.
- 1975- Benton MacKaye dies at the age of 96.
- 1978- "Appalachian Trail Amendments" passed. Budget increased to \$90 million under President Jimmy Carter.
- 1984-NPS delegates responsibility to ATC. (President Ronald Reagan)

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