

Appalachian Trail Community Program





How to Assist Local Communities in Becoming a Trail Community

PRESENTED BY
THE NANTAHALA HIKING CLUB FRANKLIN, NC
to the
MST Trail Town Conference
Thursday September 4, 2014

Presentation Outline

- Program Overview – Appalachian Trail
- How to help a Trail Town become a Trail Community
- Franklin, NC progress and success to date
- Future Actions in 2014 and beyond
- Highlights of Outreach

Program Overview

- Promote and Protect the AT
- Seek mutual benefit to the AT, its users and the local community
- ATCommunity Application has 4 Criteria
 - Establish an AT Community Committee (ATCC)
 - Conduct an Annual Event
 - Conduct Educational or Service Learning Project(s)
 - Support/protect the AT in land use planning

The Nantahala Hiking Club,
Franklin, NC used what became
a **12 Step** process that led to
Franklin's designation as an A.T.
Community

1. Organize the planning group for success

- Who will take the lead, set the agenda, be chairman, be secretary and define governance
- Grow capacity to support a new program in each interested organization
- Always be thinking about who should be a partner or stakeholder
- Develop a budget to support the effort

2. Coordinate with trail organization and local trail volunteers every step of the way

- New program developments
- Application deadline and approval process
- Lessons learned from pilot programs/ designated communities
- Recommendation for Advisory Committee membership (ATC's Criteria 1)
- Example applications

3. Talk to the local land manager(s) about the program and get their support

- Partnership (Trail Organization (MST), local trail volunteer organization and land owner(s)/manager(s))
- Owner(s)/manager(s) capability to support
- Impact on private and public lands

4. Collect local recreational usage data to highlight impact (positive and negative)

- Day Hikers
- Section Hikers
- Thru-hikers
- Campers
- Other user groups impacted (bikers, runners, etc.)

5. Talk about economic benefits and ecotourism

- Benefit local businesses
- Create jobs
- Increase local tax revenues
- Decrease local government expenditures
- Lower health care costs
- Promote local community
- Take advantage of free local resource (Public lands)

6. Go in with the position that the town can fulfill all application requirements

- Establish a committee to guide the program
- Involve the local school system
- Conduct an annual event or appreciation period annually
- Organize for trail protection

7. Talk to trail friendly businessmen (ATC Criteria 2)

- Explain the program and get their support
- Use them as leverage
- What ideas do they have for mutual benefit
- What support are they willing to provide
- What will they get out of the program

8. Seek out a supportive town official(s)

- Find/establish a champion
- Identify potential partners and stakeholders
- Identify potential critics and their issues
- Strategize program presentation to town leadership
- Discuss trail committee organization
- Discuss support for trail protection

9. Seek out a supportive County Commissioner(s)

- Find/establish a champion
- Identify potential supporters and stakeholders
- Identify potential critics and their issues
- Strategize program presentation to county leadership
- Discuss trail committee organization
- Discuss support for trail protection

10. Once town agrees to submit an application

- Develop a strategy for preparing a strong application
- Develop a time line for submission
- Recommend Advisory Committee membership (ATC Criteria 1)
- Identify influential people and supportive organizations
- Identify who to approach for support letters

11. Begin a Support campaign

- Conduct speaking engagements
- Seek application input (businessmen, school system, planning board, etc.)
- Look for volunteers to serve on the trail community committee
- Collect application letters of support
 - Town and County committees
 - Civic organizations
 - Business Groups, etc.

12. Develop a Press coverage strategy

- Learn who the press contacts are
- Know what meetings they usually cover
- Send out press releases for major events
- Provide copies of presentations and handouts
- Provide draft articles and photos

Franklin's Progress and Success to date



- ATCommunity Committee (ATCC) appointed Feb 09
- ATCommunity application submitted Feb 09
- Local business donates shelter Mar 09
- Franklin's new town logo includes AT "white blaze" Mar 09

Franklin's New Town Logo



Progress and Success cont.

- 5 local school teachers enroll in TTEC cohort 2009
- Franklin's First April Fool's Trail Days (AFTD) Event held Apr 09
- ATCC conducts review of First Trail Days event Apr 09
- ATCC briefed by TTEC teachers Aug 09
- ATCC conducts Visioning and Goals setting exercise Aug 09

Progress and Success cont.

- Detailed planning begins Sep 09 for:
 - Designation Event March 23, 2010
 - Second AFTD Event April 2-3, 2010
 - LNT Traveling Trainer Team to Participate in Trail Event (March 31-April 3)
 - County Library Develops AT Program Series “Walking with Spring” (March 22-April 1)



Walking with Spring

The Macon County Public Library
& Appalachian Trail Conservancy
present:



Documentary: America's Wild Spaces- Appalachian Trail

March 24th - 4:30p.m. & 7:00 p.m. - Library Meeting Room
National Geographic video highlighting the 2175 mile Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy Overview presented by
ATC Asheville and Harpers Ferry, WV

March 22nd - 7:00 p.m. - Library Meeting Room
Learn about the history of the Appalachian Trail and the role the Appalachian Trail Conservancy plays in protecting and maintaining the trail.

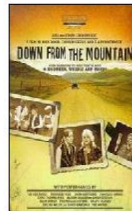


Hiking 101: Day hiking planning, equipment, and local hiking

March 25th - 7:00 p.m. - Library Meeting Room
Bill Van Horn from the Nantahala Hiking Club will present information on day hiking planning, equipment and local options for hiking.

Documentary: Down from the Mountain

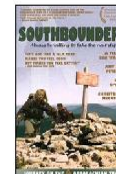
March 26th - 2:00 p.m. -
Library Meeting Room



Musio from John Hartford, Emmylou Harris, Alison Krauss, Gillian Welch, the Cox family, the venerable Ralph Stanley, and other traditional and alt-country artists gathered onstage in May 2000 at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium.

Movie: Southbounders

March 30th - 7:00 p.m. - Library Meeting Room
A young woman attempts a "thru-hike" of the Appalachian Trail, the 2,170 mile footpath wandering the length of the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Georgia.



Share Our Local Beauty

April 1st - 7:00 p.m. - Library Meeting Room

Come join Michael M. Rogers as he takes you on virtual hikes in the surrounding mountains. Experience the beauty through Nature Photography and music.



Leave No Trace

March 31st - 7:00 p.m. -
Library Meeting Room

Leave No Trace Awareness Workshop- Come join Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers, Kate Bullock and Tracy Howard, for a fun and educational evening. The workshop will teach you ways to minimize potential impacts on the environment on your next outdoor adventure. Learn about the Leave No Trace principles in a fun and interactive way. Open to all ages!

AT Community Banner Designed



Appalachian Trail Community Partner

Progress and Success cont.

- 3 county school teachers enroll in TTEC cohort 2010 March 2010
- AT Community Designation Event March
- 2nd April Fools Trail Days Event April
- 1st Thru-hiker survey conducted Mar – May 2010

Progress and Success cont.

- Chamber highlights AT and AT Community program in Visitor Guide Jan 2010
- Chamber advertises in AT Journeys March 2010
- Local school adopts shelter March 2010
- 3rd April Fools Trail Days Event April 2011
 - Event moves to center of town
 - Exhibit/Vendor participation doubles
- 4 local school teachers enroll in TTEC cohort 2011 March 2011

Progress and Success cont.

- 2nd Thru-hiker survey conducted Mar – May 2011
- Local group organizes First WNC – Outdoorathlon for September 2011
- Trail Days conducted 2012, 2013, and 2014
- “Home Grown” events increase

ATCommunity Committee Structure (11 members)

- Town of Franklin Alderman
- Town of Franklin Land Use Administrator
- Macon County Commissioner
- Macon County Planner
- U.S. Forest Service
- Nantahala Hiking Club

ATCommunity Committee Structure cont.

- Macon County Library
- Tourism Related Business (Motel)
- Main Street Program Coordinator
- Macon County School System
(Community relations)
- Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce

ATCC Vision/Goals

- Increase partner involvement
- Increase education and outreach initiatives
- AT contributes to sustainable economic development
- Grow the Franklin AT event into an Appreciation Period
 - 4 weeks and 5 weekends
 - From hiking to several outdoor recreational activities

ATCC brainstorming results

- Develop a local hiking guide
- Develop a hiker friendly map of down town
- Establish an information kiosk at Winding Stair Gap on US 64
- Establish a satellite AT Museum display
- Provide an AT display for local businesses
- Provide an AT information display for downtown square
- Provide outdoor related curriculum at local community college

ATCC brainstorming results cont.

- Develop sustainable ecotourism
- Recognize hiker friendly/ATCommunity business partners
- Grow the AT Celebration
- Market Franklin as an AT Community/Outdoor recreation destination
- Increase TTEC participation
- Increase AT use in public school curriculum

Future Actions

- Strengthen AT Community Committee organization (Community College and County Recreation department)
- Improve Franklin's page on the AT Community web site
- Continue to refine Franklin's AT Event
- Increase Chamber of Commerce involvement
- Influence school(s) curriculum

Future Actions cont.

- Improve AT crossings
 - Show distance to Franklin
 - Provide hiker crossing warning signs
 - Work with land manager on additional improvements
- Initiate County planning board AT protection action
- Involve community college in program

Future Actions cont.

- Participate in AT Communities' cross communication/mutual support
- Increase business participation in program
- In coordination with ATC recognize "A.T. Community Supporters"
- Develop fund raising initiatives to support ATC
- Put up Way Finding signage
- Coordinate with TDA and MSP

Highlights of Nantahala Hiking Club Outreach Spring 09 to Present





NHC constructed "Hiker Box" for local Franklin motels Spring 2009



NHC prepares Easter bags for Thru-Hikers April 09



Easter Thru-Hikers stop by NHC club house April 09

iking
Club
North Caroli



Ton & Mary Quigley

ACHIAN TRAIL



Franklin's April Fools Trail Days April 09

Gene Espy at NHC's Display



Tent Vender Display Trail Days April 09



Local Entertainment – Frog Town Five Trail Days April 09

Cartoogechaye Elementary 5th Grade Class
Map Orientation on AT Hike April 09





East Franklin Elementary 5th Grade Class on Siler Bald June 09



Pumpkin Fest NHC Display Oct 09



Franklin Christmas Parade Nov 2009



School Mini AT construction Dec 2009

School Mini AT Construction Dec 2009





LNT Traveling Trainer Team Spring 2010



Gene Espy at FAFTD April 2010



NHC Christmas parade 2010



Franklin AT Community signs go up March 2011



Franklin AT Community signs go up March 2011

National Park Ranger LNT presentation March 2011





Downtown Franklin FAFTD set up April 2011

Franklin Young Professionals at FAFTD April 2011





Trailer vender at FAFTD April 2011



National Park Ranger and USFS Smokey support FAFTD April 2011



Blue Ridge Outdoors support/sponsor FAFTD April 2011

NHC provides "Hiking 101" to support hiking field trip May 2011





Business Display Sample

Business Display Sample





Business Display Sample

Business Displays



Questions ? or Comments !

Contact information

Bill Van Horn

828-369-1983

wavh@dnet.net

