



MRATC Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club
P.O.Box 789 Damascus VA 24236-3101

MEETING April 10 2019 Abingdon Library, Abingdon, VA

Minutes were recorded and written by Mary Davis, MRATC Secretary

16 ATTENDEES: Anne Maio, Mary Davis, Gerry Davis, George Kilgore, David Hatcher, George Dickert, Ron Bobko, Edie Bobko, Sharon Trumbley, Beth Minnick, Eleanore Grassilli, Whitney Peters, Isaac Peters, Doug Levin. Jim Warden, Marcie Holland.

Meeting was called to order by Anne Maio at 7:01pm. Feb. 23, and the February 2019 annual meeting minutes were distributed and approved.

Treasurers Report: \$6999.78 cash; Dickey Gap grant of \$1300 has \$558.75 expended, leaving a balance of \$741.25; Hardcore grant of \$1400 plus donation of \$250 remains untouched to date.

RPC/Southern Partnership Meeting - Gerry Davis reported on the significant discussion items of the SPC meeting. There was discussion on Volunteer Service Agreements and safety related to volunteer service. There is a new park ranger on the trail. He has a big portion of Virginia and parts of the BRP. There is concern about the very high impact usage areas along the trail. Also, discussion about the various bear problems and the possibility of requiring all overnight hikers to carry bear cannisters. In general, if there is to be a requirement, it would be the hard cannister and not a soft sack. Other discussion on safety was to do with an incident that occurred with a trail maintainer who didn't return on time. His family called ems, and individual was found with hypothermia related issues but otherwise okay. This sparked discussion maintainers leaving a plan and proper responsibility and readiness.

Gerry informed members what Southern Partnership committee and Regional Partnership committees do. Also, what the VSA (Volunteer Service Agreement) and MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) are. These two documents govern what we can do, and what we are expected to do on the AT. Gerry indicated he would encourage a second person to be able to come to future RPC or SPC meetings.

Steering Committee Reports

•**Trails** Doug Levin - Trail Monitors should have someone they can communicate their plan when they are on and off the trail. Anne Maio asked if we should have a club designee for this? Gerry Davis suggested it should be more of a individual thing for monitors as it could be a family member or friend instead of a club member. Jim Warden mentioned everyone should know how to dress and prepare. We should be aware of what the weather conditions are and be prepared. Ron Bobko asked if we could use the mratcinfo email to put basic start and return time for those going to work on trail. Doug asked if member volunteers who know the trail monitor sections well, could be available as a contact persons if someone is missing. We dissused a need to have the direct 911 number for each of the trail sections. Anne asked for volunteers to work on how we should more formally structure a plan for safety and a contact list. Gerry Davis, Doug Levin and David Hatcher will work on this. We may need to spend more time on this topic at our July meeting.

- The bog bridge south of Dickey Gap will need to be replaced to make it more safe. Preparations were being made for this bridge before Stephen Hmurciak left. Doug is now in touch with Evan Blevins from the USFS. Evan is supportive and has indicated there is space at Sugar Grove for pre-construction. This will be a group project. We have money from ATC for this. As we get more info, it will be sent out. We may wait til the fall for the project. Mary Davis indicated this would be a great project for E&H in the fall and Doug would like to refrain from work during thru hiker season.
- The Comers Creek Falls bridge is a much more substantial bridge. There is something wrong with it structurally. Contacts are being made for an engineer to review this structure.
- The club purchased a new chainsaw. David Hatcher purchased a 20in saw. We are looking to replace some other tools as well. Discussion on digging tools. If someone has a wish, please bring it up to Doug Levin.
- Gerry Davis spoke on safety for everything we do on the trail. A hike leader is responsible as much as the work leader for trail maintenance. Expect to hear more about the Management Zone Matrix from ATC, as we may have to work within that structure in the future. Anne Maio talked about visitor use management item.

•**Outreach** Whitney Peters - Abingdon Earth Day event April 13, 9am-1pm. We have enough people signed up but anyone is welcome to come hang out. We need help for April 27th for the Virginia Creeper Trail Festival from 12pm-5pm and for set-up prior.

•**Recreational Activities** Sharon Trumbley - We are continuing to do hikes and working on food for the Konnarock crew pot luck and the Hardcore effort. Sharon passed around sign-up sheets for Hardcore. Sharon will send out a reminder to those indicating a willingness to help.

•**Natural Resources** Anne Maio spoke for Carol Broderson. Carol wants members to take note of the rare plant hikes on the upcoming events. Any questions contact Carol Broderson carol@ls.net

Report from Barry Garten, MRNRA (Anne Maio) Stephen Hmurciak has left USFS. Barry says we should have a 120 day recreation manager. Hopefully, they will fill the position by mid July. He hopes to have an assistant for Evan Blevins before October.

Konnarock Crew Project 2019 - Working between Thomas Knob and Rhodedendron Gap. They will be arriving May 1-5. They have asked us to guard their campsite while working. They will need us May 1-4. Please sign up. Pot Luck is Sunday May 5th at Sugar Grove. Please sign-up and bring a sidedish. Base camp is providing salad, desserts and beverages.

Update on Hardcore - May 19-21. Wilburn Ridge Trail rehab. Ron stated we have 36 spots for transportation. Ron asked for any additional volunteers and anyone who wants a definite preference for North or South driving on Tuesday. Our volunteers will cover Parisburg- North and the Bridge at Irwin - South. Ron Bobko has a calendar layout and master list of volunteers. Ron inquired about a land-line at the Ranger station for communication. The crew leader will have a Forest Service radio. Other Hardcore logistics were discussed.

Info from Grayson Highlands State Park - Marcie Holland - Working with USFS on some trail improvements towards Scales. They are in the process of doing an inventory on the trails in GHSP. In October overnight backpackers will need to make reservations for the overnight backpackers lot. Spots will be limited to 42. There will be no overnight parking along the road. GHSP friends will be setting up a tent for some interpretive information and questions.

Task Coordinators

•**Time Keeper**, Ron Bobko- Ron indicated he keeps all the reports. Anne indicated they should be kept for a year.

VSA - Anne passed out copy of the VSA to discuss. We will also get an additional document in the future from NPS. Anne introduced and recorded the agreed upon changes. The final copy will go to Gerry Davis, RPC rep, to sign on behalf of the club and send to Barry at MRNRA.

•Anne Maio went through some of the items on the VSA

- changes are in red on VSA draft document. Appendix 1 Commulative Volunteer Service Description, was reviewed and discussed. Jim asked to define proper safety equipment. Anne added the other club activities in this appendix. Other sections and special provisions were reviewed including appendix 2 & 3. Discussions included, safety and how to use tools and personal physical condition required. Travel time to and from work site is not covered by the VSA. **The club voted to sign the document. Sharon Trumbley made a motion to approve the draft and George Kilgore seconded. It was unanimously approved by members present.**
- Anne about any changes for our next meeting for July 10 @ 7pm. None were requested.

The meeting was adjourned.