Chair’s Corner

Welcome to the first Potomac Chapter newsletter of 2022! You’re going to see some changes to the newsletter this year. Most prominently — because it’s on page 1 — we’re going to change this column from the Chair’s Corner to “Meet Your Executive Committee”. I’ll start with myself.

I have spent most of my life in the DC area, with some time in Ohio, Wyoming, and Vermont. I’ve been fortunate to have always spent a lot of time outside: hiking, biking, camping, and skiing as a kid; doing research as a geology student in college, and for a short time working as geologist after college; and today enjoying hiking, biking, skiing, paddling, camping, snowshoeing, and backpacking as an adult.

I became familiar with AMC while spending vacations in the White Mountains of New Hampshire between 2004-2010. I finally joined AMC after spending several nights at AMC’s Medawisla Lodge & Cabins in 2011. My stay was prior to its renovation, and I can’t wait to see it again someday!

This year is my second year as Chair of the Potomac Chapter Executive Committee (ExComm). I spent the two years prior as Vice Chair and believe it or not - serving as Vice Chair was my introduction to the Chapter! While Vice Chair I also served, at various times, as acting Treasurer, acting Secretary, and acting Chair. And while Chair, I also served as acting Communications Chair for several months. I’ve worn a lot of ExComm hats, and learned so much about the great work that AMC does at the regional level, through the various chapters. I’ve also been fortunate enough to learn a lot about how other chapters function. I’m thrilled to report that we now have volunteers filling nearly every position on the ExComm.

But, of course, there’s always room for more volunteers to help.

In 2020 I became an AMC activity leader and have since led day hikes and backpacking trips. I also plan to become a paddling leader, as well as a bicycling leader, and I have a dream of combining these disciplines into one trip someday, perhaps with a packraft rather than a kayak or canoe.

Lately I’ve been doing a lot of urban hikes in Rock Creek Park with friends and neighbors, trying to do my part to introduce people to the park that’s in our backyard while enjoying breaks from my hectic days, spending much-needed time outside in the woods.

As always, if you have questions about the chapter, feel free to contact me: chair@amcpotomac.org. - Lisa Novins

Photo Courtesy of Deborah Ward, Canaan Valley, WV
Activities

Friday April 29 @4 pm - Monday May 2 @ 1pm **Featured Event: Interchapter Novice Backpacking Workshop for Adults with Overnight Backpack** [Register] and read about last year’s event in this issue of the newsletter: Novice Backpacking Workshop: 2021 Report. **Please help to promote this event and drive participation!**

Thursday March 3 @ 10 am - Sunday March 6 @ 2 pm **Macomb & Hough 3 Night Sled/Backpack in the Adirondacks.** Focus on safe wilderness winter camping and hiking skills. [Register]

Saturday March 12 @ 10 am to 2 pm **Leader Training Role Play Workshop.** An opportunity for those who have taken AMC online chapter leader training to complete the face-to-face role play exercises or for existing leaders to refresh their skills. [Register]

Sunday March 13 @10 am - 2 pm. **Circumnavigating the Baltimore Washington International Airport.** A 13-mile paved trail around the BWI Airport. [Register]

Friday March 25 @3 pm - Sunday March 27 @ 12 pm **Women's Early Spring Backpack at Sky Meadows.** Two-night women’s backpacking trip for women who want to push their 3-season gear with the security of an established campground. [Register]

Thursday February 17 @7 pm (online) - **Conservation Conversation - What's with the Maine Woods?** The AMC Maine Woods are a REALLY BIG DEAL! Join to learn more about the dark skies, trails, designated habitat, and camps. [Register]

Friday April 8 @7 pm - Sunday April 10 @2 pm **Biking & Exploring Caves of the C & O Canal.** Meet at the Antietam Creek Campsites for some biking (about 12 miles), cave exploring and car camping. There isn’t anything strenuous for this trip. [Register]

Watch our [Meetup page](https://www.meetup.com/amc-potomac), our [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/amc-potomac), and the [AMC Activities Database](https://www.amcpotomac.org) to find activities happening in person or online. You can search for regional activities (by chapter or state) or online activities (search #BeOnlineWithAMC).

Because we’re keeping group size small and our creative leaders are offering interesting excursions, activities are filling up quickly. Keep an eye on the [Activities Database](https://www.amcpotomac.org) for open activities and don’t hesitate to sign up for waitlists - plans change!

Future Activities

Leader Carey Butler is planning two backpacking trips in the April/May timeframe with more to follow in June through September. These will be posted in the AMC Database in the coming weeks:

- **April 8-10; Backpacking in the Otter Creek Wilderness (WV) in search of spring wildflowers and wild ramps.**
- **Moderate difficulty, 12-15 miles, beginner backpacking skills required.**
- **May 14-16; Backpacking in the Dolly Sods Wilderness featuring a total lunar eclipse on May 15 (if the weather cooperates).** Moderate difficulty, 12-15 miles. Well suited for graduates of the AMC Backpacking Workshop.

Visit us online at [www.amcpotomac.org](http://www.amcpotomac.org)

**Executive Committee**

**Officers**

Chapter Chair: Lisa Novins, chair@amcpotomac.org
Chapter Vice Chair: Peter Mason, vicechair@amcpotomac.org
Chapter Treasurer: Rich Batiuk, treasurer@amcpotomac.org
Chapter Secretary: Deborah Ward, secretary@amcpotomac.org

**Committee Chairs**

Conservation: Kathy Campbell, conservation@amcpotomac.org
Membership: Peter Mason, membership@amcpotomac.org
Excursions: David Mong, excursions@amcpotomac.org
Leadership: Bryna Selig, leadership@amcpotomac.org
Young Members: Dushyant Chaudhari, youngmembers@amcpotomac.org
Communications: John Pacovich, communications@amcpotomac.org

**At-Large Members**

Kate Ratcliffe: atlargemember1@amcpotomac.org
Kate Lawrence: atlargemember2@amcpotomac.org
Laura Falender: atlargemember3@amcpotomac.org

**Editors**

Rachel Sohmer & Deborah Ward

Hike, raft, bike and more, visiting many stunning waterfalls and scenic vistas on dozens of activities led by trained AMC volunteers. Just arrive and enjoy the activities and camaraderie. Everything’s provided: tents, hearty, delicious meals prepared by our staff, local transportation and a free shuttle from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

**July 16 through August 13.** Plan to attend for one week or two. Details and registration are on our website. Camp filled by early February last year, so don’t miss out! Sign up early for the week(s) you want!

| Week 1: July 16 — July 23 | Week 2: July 23 — July 30 |
| Week 3: July 30 — Aug. 6 | Week 4: Aug. 6 — Aug. 13 |

**Cost per person per week:** AMC Member $1275; Non-member $1525

The general application window for August Camp 2022 is January 3-12, 2022. Acceptance will be made based on a random lottery system, but applications will continue to be accepted until Camp is full and a substantial waitlist is generated. Visit our website www.augustcamp.org for additional information.

**Questions? Ask Lois Rothenberger at ACregistrar@comcast.net**

Photos by Jim Borowski, August Camp 2013

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Novice Backpacking Workshop: 2021 Report

By Will Schaefer, AMC Potomac Chapter Leader

The annual Novice Backpacking Workshop, which will take place at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia, has a little something for anyone seeking to build their comfort level, skills repertoire, and essentials list for a night or nights out on a trail. The clinic starts with two nights camping not far from our vehicles, so attendees can set up camp with as much help as needed, and with some comforts typically left behind when backpacking. Think ice chest (no booze, but yes, fresh milk). Running water. Toilets. Even Showers. In this comfortable venue, trip leaders cover skill lessons and equipment demonstrations that will be put to use the third night, which we'll spend out on the trail. In our May 2021 edition of the workshop, lessons we covered included:

- clothing and footwear essentials,
- choosing a campsite,
- shelters and sleep systems,
- meal planning and cooking.

We also demonstrated ways to pack, practiced Leave-No-Trace principles, hung bear bags and placed bear canisters, sourced and treated water, and practiced stream crossing technique. Along the way, many saw animal footprints and owl pellets, deer and woodpeckers, planets and meteors in the night sky, rhododendron and trillium flowers on the wooded mountainside, a bald eagle, and, for some lucky campers, mama black bear and cub (though with proper food storage techniques, not in camp!).

The venue is the Summit Bechtel Reserve, a Boy Scouts of America outdoor jamboree center on 10,600 mountaingous acres. It is adjacent to the 70,000 acre New River Gorge National Park. The reserve is built for various scouting adventures, and, while our clinic navigates still wild country, the infrastructure on the expansive reserve, including trailheads with maps, pavilions, marked trails, backcountry camping sites, and access roads provides an accessible wilderness in which to learn.

An unexpected lesson occurred in my group. While approaching the mountaintop campsite for our third night I spotted large mammalian footprints, clearly an even-toed ungulate (the order that includes deer or pig families), and I was excited to possibly see wild elk! Elk are being reintroduced in this area. Much to my delight, the next morning I spotted the lone animal, grazing near the edge of our clearing. She was dark, almost all black, most certainly not an elk, but an exceedingly not rare West Virginian wandering black cow involved with chapter management. There are both virtual and in-person opportunities. Current openings include:

- Love introducing people to the outdoors? Become a trip leader! Contact leadership@amcpotomac.org for leadership training requirements and upcoming opportunities. Upcoming opportunities to begin your leadership training are listed in the Activities Database, some highlights include:
  - Virtual Training with NY-North Jersey. February 27.
- All of the above training opportunities require additional steps to become a leader! Contact leadership@amcpotomac.org for more information,
- Enjoy learning about new topics and bringing people together? The Chapter is looking for a coordinator for our new monthly virtual programs. Contact chair@amcpotomac.org
- Are you a storyteller or photographer or both? We need a few more speakers/presenters for our upcoming virtual programs. Have you had an outdoor or conservation adventure you enjoy sharing? We’d love to hear about it! Contact chair@amcpotomac.org

We also have openings with our Executive Committee:

- Family Outings Committee Chair - The Family Outings Committee organizes events for families with children that are designed to introduce parents and children to the outdoors and facilitate their getting involved in outdoor activities and conservation. You must be a member of AMC and over the age of 18 to serve as a committee chair. If you would like more information, please email the PC Chair at chair@amcpotomac.org
- Communications Committee volunteers – Our communications committee is hard at work on our website, newsletter, social media, Meetup, and all regular member and public facing communications. If you would like more information about helping out, please contact the PC Communications Chair at communications@amcpotomac.org
- Young Members Committee volunteers - Are you an AMC member in your 20s or 30s. Our Young Members Committee is looking for volunteers to train as leaders and to help organize events. For more information contact leadership@amcpotomac.org or YoungMembers@amcpotomac.org.

Would you like additional information about any of these areas? Please contact Lisa Novins at chair@amcpotomac.org or Peter Mason at vicechair@amcpotomac.org
Announcements

We are starting a Book Club!

The Potomac Chapter is going to start a semi-regular book club! We’re going to be reading and discussing books about outdoor leadership and experiences as well as conservation topics. If you have a book that you would love to read and discuss, or if you would like to host or attend a book club meeting, please contact our chapter chair Lisa Novins @ chair@amcpotomac.org.

SNP Lewis Mountain Project: Call for Stories

Shenandoah National Park is seeking stories from former visitors and/or their family members who recreoted at Lewis Mountain (Lodge, Picnic Grounds, and Campground in Shenandoah) between the years of 1939 and 1970 to develop an online interactive curriculum and interpretive materials for the preservation of the area’s history.

Lewis Mountain was historically designed as a segregated recreational area in the Park for African American visitors. Despite being sanctioned as federal lands, Shenandoah National Park deferred to Virginia laws and customs when implementing park policies. After opening in 1939, Lewis Mountain facilities operated on the “separate but equal” principle until 1950 when the Park fully integrated.

The story of Lewis Mountain is an important piece of Shenandoah’s history. If you have any pictures, memories, or stories, please contact NPSLewis_FRD@loc.gov. You can also read more on the Shenandoah National Park Facebook Page or watch a video or Ranger Claire Comer speaking to the AMC Potomac Chapter.

Readers Respond

Thank you to Valerie Matthews for her feedback and helpful tips on the Fall 2021 article “Boot Failure” (Issue @#2021-04)

“I was sorry to read in the Fall 2021 Chapter Newsletter about Eric Pavlak’s sad experience with detached boot soles. There are boots that can be resoled. An article at https://sectionhiker.com/can-you-resole-hiking-boots/, dated March 2021, lists about 20 models that are designed to be resoled.

I have Asolo boots whose soles became delaminated during a day hike in the Grand Canyon two years ago; fortunately I had sneakers with me, so I was able to enjoy the rest of the trip! Asolo offers a resoling service (in Italy) and a web search turns up several repair shops in the US that resole Asolo as well as other brands of boots. I sent mine to Resole Patrol in North Carolina and am happy with the result.”
Places to Paddle: Recommended Guides Books

So here in the mid-Atlantic region we are truly blessed with lots of opportunities for paddling—canoes, kayaks, and stand up paddleboards—from whitewater adventures to lazy rivers to seemingly endless tidal creeks and embayments. With so many choices, where do you start to figure out where to take your next paddling trip, be it for several hours or multiple days? I recommend you start with consulting one of the many excellent paddling guides available to us for our Potomac Chapter region. The following are a series of books from my ‘paddling library’ at home which have provided our family with the opportunity to greatly expand our paddling horizons and access new waters we would have not thought of otherwise.

AMC’s Quiet Water Mid-Atlantic is a great book to start with besides the fact that it’s an AMC guidebook and the front cover photo includes our very own Justin Bailey, the AMC Volunteer Relations Manager, based in NY, who works with the southern half of AMC. (Note, Justin is paddling a Old Town canoe and not his favorite SUP!) It covers paddling trips from southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, through Maryland and Delaware and down into eastern Virginia. As the title implies, the waters described in this book are flat waters. You will find in-depth descriptions of each waterbody along with detailed maps showing entry points and things to look out for during your trip.

Next is Maryland and Delaware Canoe Trails, the book that was originally published decades ago before paddling, particularly kayaking, became very popular. This is still one of my favorite books as it truly introduced Susan and I to canoeing around Maryland and Delaware many, many years ago yet I still consult this book today for planning additional paddling adventures. Edward Gertler does a great job in describing each paddle and the opportunities and possible obstacles along the way, particularly in those Eastern Shore creeks and rivers.

Moving north into Pennsylvania, Edward Gertler published Keystone Canoeing, a paddling guide to the eastern side of the state. Like he did with his Maryland and Delaware volume, he does with documenting the significant numbers of rivers available to us here in the mid-Atlantic region up in Pennsylvania. What I have found to be the best parts of this book are the maps of each river and stream along with the detailed information on river mileages between the various bridges and access points. This information is invaluable in planning your trip given how much time you have to spend on the water (and knowing where you are on the river).

The Falcon Guides series is well known for their hiking books, but they have also published some excellent paddling guides including Paddling Maryland and Washington DC. This books packs 50 paddling destinations into its 255 pages, with about three quarters of these recommended trips being to paddle tidal waters and the remaining targeting lakes, reservoirs and free-flowing rivers. The maps provided with each trip include not only all the access points, but a dashed line showing the author’s recommended route on the waterbody of focus. Backed up by very informative narrative, this book makes you want to explore a new piece of water every week!

In 30 Kayaking Tours within One Hour of Washington DC, you will find some overlap with the prior book, but with more trips to waterways in northern Virginia and down towards Fredericksburg. Although the title of the book focused on kayaking, almost all the trips can be accomplished safely in a canoe and many with a stand-up paddle board. The author provides detailed descriptions of the recommended routes for each waterbody along with almost a page either on the history of the site or interesting facts about the area.
And finally, for those interested in sea kayaking, I highly recommend two books with trips devoted to Sea Kayaking Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay and Sea Kayaking Virginia’s Chesapeake Bay. The maps literally map out your entire route and the narrative describes the likely conditions you may encounter during which parts of your trip (e.g., winds, wave, tidal currents). There’s a good mix of more enclosed tidal rivers, creeks and embayments as well as more open water trips contained in both books.

I will admit my paddling library focuses a lot on Chesapeake Bay and paddling within a couple hours of the Bay. Living in Annapolis, Maryland certainly has positioned us to take full advantage of over 10,000 miles of shoreline offered by Chesapeake Bay and its many tidal river, creeks and embayments. But I am equally happy to be floating down the South Fork Shenandoah River or running some Class II rapids on the Upper James River down in Virginia or fly casting out of my canoe on the Junita River up on Pennsylvania!

There are wonderful guidebooks available to match your paddling interests and there is A LOT of water to be paddled. As the Potomac Chapter re-builds its paddling program, please look for more paddling trips to sign up for in the coming year. Even better, reach out to me and let me know if you are interested in becoming a certified paddling leader so others can enjoy the wonderful array of waters just waiting to be explored. We will certify you based on your current skill level and the waters on which you are most comfortable leading trips.

Rich Batiuk
Potomac Chapter’s Paddling Committee Chair
AMC Certified Paddling Leader
richbatiuk@gmail.com

Photo Courtesy of @pexels on Pixabay
Do You Know the Code?

By Peter Mason, Vice Chair

In 2018, AMC updated its Code of Conduct (“the Code”) to better reflect the organization’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The Code is meant to help guide and inspire behavior that creates a welcoming community.

The Code applies across the AMC community, including employees, volunteer leaders, members, program participants, guests, and visitors. It applies to interactions that take place across our operations, including on trips, programs and trainings; at AMC owned or operated facilities, in meetings whether in person or online, and in written and oral communications. In other words, this code applies in every area of AMC – whether inside, outside, or online.

The heart of the Code is the Standards of Conduct which are as follows:

“In every context, the people of AMC will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with AMC’s mission and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) values and in a way which is not detrimental to AMC, its members, the public or staff, and which will provide the highest level of enjoyment in the activities and other events sponsored by AMC. With this in mind, individuals will:

- Uphold a community built on mutual trust, integrity, and dignity for all, where issues are addressed in a respectful and inclusive manner. Involve staff and volunteer leadership as appropriate.
- Conduct and participate in AMC sponsored activities while prioritizing personal and group safety and minimizing the associated risks
- Respect the outdoors and the many ways people connect with one another and with natural places
- Remain free from conflicts of interest
- Follow all policies/rules as applicable, internal or external
- Represent the AMC and its mission in a positive, professional, and respectful manner

We encourage the involvement of all people in our mission and activities through membership, program participation, facility visitation, and volunteerism. Our goal is to be a community which values kindness, and is comfortable, inviting, and accessible for people with a broad range of identities and backgrounds.”

If you see or experience something that you think may not align with the Code of Conduct, please send a report to AMC through:

- Email: CodeofConduct@outdoors.org
- Regular mail: AMC, Attention: Code of Conduct, 10 City Square, Boston, MA 02129
- Phone: 617/391-6626

This information helps improve our training and our understanding of where AMC needs to improve. We follow up as needed, we work to create positive outcomes for all involved by taking a coaching and mentoring approach.

We encourage everyone to familiarize themselves with the Code and to abide by it in all things AMC. For the full text of the Code of Conduct, click here: https://cdn.outdoors.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/14153517/DEI-Guide_Final.pdf

Photo Courtesy of @chulmin1700 on Pixabay
Off The Beaten Path

By Lisa Novins, AMC Potomac Chapter Chair

This section will be a regular feature in Chapter Newsletters - please share your local “not-hot” spots: communications@amcpotomac.org.

If you’ve tried to secure a last-minute camping spot or head out for a day hike on the weekend, you know that use of outdoor spaces has increased tremendously in the past two years. The packed parking lots, the overflowing trash cans, the fully booked campgrounds, not to mention litter and human waste, overcrowding and damaged trails are all signs of this increase in use. This article paints a dire picture of public lands in the western United States in early summer of 2021.

While all this expanded use can present problems for our public spaces, it also presents opportunities. Getting more people outside, appreciating and enjoying the outdoors, is a great thing. AMC’s mission encourages people “to experience, learn more, and appreciate the outdoors knowing that your participation supports the conservation and stewardship of the natural world around you.” We know that being outdoors has wide-ranging health benefits, including both physical and mental, and it is fun! Plus, fostering a love and appreciation for the outdoors encourages its protection and stewardship, which is important for all of us. As AMC’s mission also states that we “envision a world where our natural resources are healthy, loved, and always protected, and where the outdoors occupies a place of central importance in every person’s life.” But we must all understand how to recreate responsibly. And it is everyone’s responsibility to learn how do so and share that knowledge.

The Chapter has tried to do our part to educate about recreating responsibly by training our leaders in safety, inclusivity, and conservation; by training leaders and participants in Leave No Trace Principles; and by signing up to help on the ground as Wilderness Stewards and Leave No Trace Trainers. But ensuring the well-being of our shared resources is everyone’s responsibility. What else can we all do?

Get outside, be a positive example, and talk to friends and family about how to responsibly use our outdoor spaces. We can all familiarize ourselves with the Seven Principles of Leave No Trace and do our best to apply them when we’re enjoying the outdoors. Try to recognize overuse and avoid add complicating any damage. See a full trash can? Take your own trash home rather than adding to the litter. Or, better yet, bring a trash bag and be prepared to clean up while you walk! Come across a big puddle on the trail? Walk right through rather than widening the trail. Arrive to a full parking lot? Find a different trail rather than squeezing your car onto the shoulder.

We can also all explore some of our less popular parks and trails. There’s so much space to explore out there! With that in mind, the Chapter newsletter is starting to feature “second favorite sites” which will be recommendations of wonderful places to hike, bike, or paddle but may not be as popular or well-known as sites like the Billy Goat Trail, Old Rag,* Wakefield, the Piedmont Overlook Trail, or Sugarloaf Mountain.

This first of our “second favorite sites” is a hike on the Eagle Spur Trail in Virginia’s popular Mason Neck State Park, but it’s not along the water which makes it less appealing to many visitors. But it’s a lovely walk in the woods, and at the turn-around point there are great views over Kane’s Creek with wonderful birdwatching. The last time I was there I saw bald eagles, osprey, and herons, to name a few. The hike is about 1.5 miles each way. If you want to add mileage after you return to the parking lot, you can add the Dogue Trail loop (just under 1 mile) and the Meadow View Trail out and back (1 mile each way) for a total of ~6 miles. The Meadow View Trail also ends at a viewpoint. These are all nice trails in a part of the park than is less used than the area adjacent to the visitors’ center and along the Belmont Bay.

The Eagle Spur Trail, Dogue Trail, and Meadow View Trail all start from the first parking lot on the left after you pass the entry station. The Eagle Spur Trail begins on the opposite side of the road from the parking lot. The Dogue Trail starts at the parking lot and connects to the Meadow View Trail. The details with mileages, connections, and blaze colors are all on the park map. I recommend familiarizing yourself with the map and blaze colors before you go and always take a map, which are available at the entry booth. Mason Neck State Park has an entry fee of $10/passenger vehicle.

For further reading, here are a few articles more from the last year about overcrowding and overuse at locations around the country and in our region.

* On March 1, 2022, Shenandoah National Park will be beginning new pilot project for Old Rag, which will require visitors to obtain an Old Rag-specific day-use ticket in advance. The pilot project, designed to improve visitor experience and protect resources, will last for one year. There will be 800 tickets available for each day.

Photo courtesy of @alyssasieb on Nappy.co

amcpotomac.org

meetup.com/amc-potomac