Meet Your Executive Committee: Peter

I grew up outside. My father had a huge garden, so I spent much of the year digging, planting, weeding, and harvesting the fruits and vegetables that fed our family for most of the year. Every morning, I delivered newspapers on my bike and watched the sun rise. Our house in Bloomfield, Connecticut backed up onto open space so I spent many weekends in the fields and woods exploring and marveling at nature’s beauty. I’ll never forget the sight of millions of fireflies lighting up the fields behind our house on warm summer nights.

My family loved to hike and paddle, so summer vacations were spent camping and day hiking in the White Mountains, which is where I first learned of AMC. My brother and I joined the Boy Scouts, which helped us learn outdoor skills, including winter camping on the Klondike Derby. As we grew older, we started backpacking and canoe camping and ventured further afield in the Whites as well as trips to Acadia, Katahdin, and the Adirondacks. We also cross-country skied behind our house and sailed our sunfish at my grandmother’s house in Tiverton, R.I. and on vacation in Cape Cod.

After college and graduate school in Chicago and Cleveland, I moved to the D.C. area, got married and settled down in Arlington, Virginia where I grow strawberries and tomatoes in my little garden plot. Our daughter grew up camping and hiking in Shenandoah National Park and when she was old enough, we joined AMC in 2007 to get the discount on the huts.

In 2019, with the threat of global climate change looming, I was searching for a way to make a difference. After attending a Potomac Chapter volunteer recruiting event, I signed on as Membership Chair. Since then, I have also served as Conservation Chair, Diversity Equity and Inclusion rep., and this is my second year as Vice Chair. It has been such a joy to work with Lisa Novins and all the other amazing AMC volunteers and staff who do such great work.

In Spring of 2020, I was excited to complete my last qualifying hike to become a hike leader, only to have COVID shut everything down. Fortunately, AMC pivoted to online training and activities and I was able to start training to become a paddling leader thanks to the NY/NJ chapter. I hope to become a backpacking and bike leader as well soon. As we emerge from the pandemic, it is an exciting time for the chapter as we are training a new group of activity leaders and have had many new volunteers step up to help out with Chapter management.

Looking forward, I am struck by how much need there is in our communities and in our world. I can’t tell you how many young people I have met who tell me that they love to hike, camp, rock climb, etc. but can’t seem to connect with others who share their interests. On the conservation side, it seems there is a constant drumbeat of bad news as temperatures increase, storms strengthen, ice sheets melt, and bird and animal populations drop. It can all be a bit overwhelming.

I try to focus on the little things. I recently dug up my front yard and planted milkweed and other native plants to provide food for insects and birds. I bike to work. In March, I led a hike where only one person showed up, but she is now training to be a hike leader for the chapter. The little things we do individually can make a big difference collectively. So, I encourage everyone to step up and join the fun. You can do as little or as much as you want, and you will meet great people and learn a lot along the way. Thank you all for your support of AMC and for all the little things you do to make the world a better place. I look forward to being outdoors with you soon.

Happy Trails,
Peter Mason, Vice Chair AMC Potomac Chapter
vicechair@amcpotomac.org
Activities

Saturday May 7 @ 9:30 am - Sunday May 8 @ 2 pm **AT to Raccoon Run Backpacking Trip** Short overnight 10.5-mile backpacking trip at Caledonia State Park (Southeastern Pennsylvania)  [Register]

Saturday May 14 @ 2 pm - Monday May 16 @ 2 pm **Dolly Sods Wilderness Novice Backpacking Trip** A follow-up activity for AMC Novice Backpacking Workshop participants. Three-day, two-night backpacking through wonderful Dolly Sods Wilderness (Dolly Sods, WV)  [Register]

Saturday May 21 @ 10 am - 1pm. **Leave-No-Trace Community Education @ Skymeadows State Park.** See next page for further details and information on how to get involved!

Saturday June 11 @ 11am. **Round Hill Appalachian Trail Festival.** Come out and help us represent the AMC in Round Hill, VA and to support an amazing community-organized event! More information available on the next page.

Friday June 24 @ 3pm - Sunday June 26 @ 12 pm **Roaring Plains West Wilderness Backpacking.** Two-night backpack with 10-12 miles covered in an area adjacent to the Dolly Sods Wilderness.  (Laneville, WV)  [Register]

Future Activities

Thursday October 13 - Sunday October 26. **Second Annual Potomac Chapter Weekend Gathering @ Rocky Gap State Park.** This year we will be camping at Rocky Gap State Park. Registration to open later this spring - stay tuned! For more information on Rocky Gap State Park, click [here](#).

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

Editors

Rachel Sohmer & Deborah Ward

Looking for More Activities?

Didn’t find anything here that piques your interest? Stay up-to-date with our latest chapter offerings as well as those of the greater Appalachian Mountain Club by visiting the online Activities Database [here](#).

Rocky Gap State Park, Photo Courtesy of MD Dept of Nature Resources
Call for Volunteers: Community Leave-No-Trace Education at Sky Meadows State Park on May 21, 2022.

For nearly 150 years, AMC has encouraged safe and responsible enjoyment of the outdoors. Since 1999, AMC has been a provider of Leave No Trace education programs, designed by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics in Boulder, Colorado, to limit the impact outdoor recreation often has on natural spaces. According to Alex Delucia, Leave No Trace programs manager for AMC, overuse of popular trails leads to erosion and the destruction of delicate plant life. And when hikers and campers fail to carry out their trash, they can disturb an area’s ecosystem. You can learn more about AMC’s commitment to Leave No Trace here on AMC’s web page.

On Saturday, May 21, the Potomac Chapter will engage with hikers and other visitors to Sky Meadows State Park in Virginia to encourage everyone to protect and preserve the environment. Our volunteers will be on hand from 10AM to 1PM distributing Leave No Trace materials.

Interested in volunteering with us? Please reach out to Kathy Campbell, Conservation Chair, at Conservation@amcpotomac.org.

Photo courtesy of VA Dept of Conservation & Recreation

About Sky Meadows Park: Sky Meadows Park has scenic views, woodlands and rolling pastures, and boasts 22 miles of hiking trails, 9 miles of bike trails and Appalachian Trail access. Nature and history programs are offered year-round. Hiking, picnicking, fishing and camping for families and groups are favorite activities. The park sits on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge Mountains and is designated as an International Dark Sky Park. Sky Meadows is less than two miles south of Paris, Va., via U.S. Route 50 to Route 17 South; or seven miles north of I-66, Exit 23 on Route 17 North. The park's main entrance is on State Route 710, about 45 minutes’ drive from Northern Virginia, one hour from D.C., and two hours from Roanoke. Sky Meadows opens daily from 8 a.m. to dusk. Parking is $10 on the weekend. Click here for the park's trail guide or download the geo-referenced map for this park.

Round Hill Appalachian Trail Festival in Round Hill, Virginia, on June 11, 2022.

On Saturday June 11, the Potomac Chapter will join other hiking and trail conservancy clubs at the annual Round Hill AT Festival in Virginia, where we will celebrate the natural beauty of the Appalachian Trail and learn more about ways to protect it. The Chapter will sponsor a display about hiking and trail conservancy. Our volunteers will promote AMC membership, distribute literature, and explain ongoing activities within our local chapter and AMC at large.

Photo courtesy of Round Hill Outdoors

About the Round Hill AT Festival: The B Chord Brewing Company will host the festival on its grounds at 34266 Williams Gap Rd, Round Hill, VA. Artisans/vendors, food trucks, scavenger hunt, silent auction, raffle, pony rides, hiking and environmental displays, Big Country Amusements slide will be on hand throughout the day. Trail and conservation workshops begin at 11AM. You can learn more about the festival’s schedule of speakers and events here.

TrailsFest 2022

Save the date - June 4th is national trails day! National trails day is a day of celebration and advocacy of trail service. AMC is celebrating national trails day all month long in June. For more information, visit the activities database.
Bicycling - Easy Local Tours

By Leslie Tierstein, AMC Member

Many people took up or resumed bicycling during the pandemic. Now, hopefully, some of those new bicyclists will extend their range and do some exploring by bicycle. The Potomac region is a great place to do that. You can pick out attractions within the city and usually (usually!) get there via bike paths, on-road bike lanes, or low-traffic streets. There is also an extensive network of trails. For example, new bicyclists discovered the W&OD Trail, the Mount Vernon Trail, and the Capital Crescent Trail, and have been using them for recreational rides as well as, increasingly, commuting. But those are only the most popular. My personal favorite of trails within the city is the Sligo Creek Trail, which happens to run right by the Kemp Mill Shopping Center, the location of one of my favorite supermarkets as well as an excellent deli and pizza place.

As bicyclists get more experienced and familiar with their bicycles, they may want to try more extended tours. An easy place to start is with an overnight tour, not camping, but spending the night indoors. Your bicycle will still have to carry a change of clothes and toiletries (as well as the usual bicycle repair stuff), but it's an easier start than trying camping on your first tour. (There are various ways to carry gear on a bicycle, to be discussed in another article.)

One such tour goes to Loudoun county VA on the W&OD Trail. You can take the trail from Milepost 0 (in Arlington) to its end in Purcellville, Milepost 45, or stop a few miles before that in Leesburg (more sleep options in Leesburg). The terrain is (mostly gentle), some of the trail is sheltered by woods, but suburbia is encroaching. Definitely worth a trip, especially for beginners, since there are many facilities, including convenience stores and bicycle shops, along the way, and even some bail out points with public transportation back to DC, if needed (but not past Herndon).

A 2-day tour that I love is a bit farther afield, which is probably one reason I love it. There is a bike trail that runs from Hunt Valley MD (a suburb northwest of Baltimore) to York PA. This is a rail-trail conversion. The MD portion of the trail originally named after the railroad, the NCR (North Central Railroad), but is now named the Torrey C Brown Trail. The PA portion is the York County Heritage Trail. The trail goes through Gunpowder Falls State on the Maryland side. The highest elevation on the trail is almost smack dab on the Mason Dixon line, so whichever direction you're going, there's a slight uphill for the first half of the ride and a slight downhill on the second half. In the first part of the 20th century, when the passenger trains were still running, this area used to be a vacation destination (!!!), so you will see grand hotels. You will also see some commercial buildings, some dating back to the 19th century.

One of my favorite places is Hanover Junction, where the trail office/museum is. It’s Hanover “Junction” because another rail line used to go through there. Abraham Lincoln took the train from DC to Gettysburg to give the Gettysburg Address and stopped at Hanover Junction on the way.

The city of York is a good destination for an overnight. I didn’t know before my first visit that it was the capital of the US in 1777-1778! Enjoy dinner and breakfast at a local restaurant, take a walk downtown to visit the historic sites, then head back to the trail. In the city and along the trail, you will see many intriguing public art works.

There are a few rest stops spread out on the trail but bring some snacks and water. You can stop at one of the picnic areas or benches along the trail. Enjoy the ride through the woods. The trail is not paved, but it's fairly smooth dirt, especially in Pennsylvania.
SNP Lewis Mountain Project: Call for Stories

Shenandoah National Park is seeking stories from former visitors and/or their family members who recreated 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.

Are YOU Ready to Get Involved?

The Potomac Chapter is always seeking volunteer activity leaders and volunteers who are interested in becoming 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.
- 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

amcpotomac.org
meetup.com/amc-potomac

Path to Volunteer Leadership

By David Mong, Excursions Chair

Most of AMC’s outdoor activities are led by trained volunteer leaders. We take pride in offering an array of outdoor leadership learning opportunities so that our leaders have skills appropriate for the events they lead. We encourage our members to become trained leaders in the outdoors activities they love so they can share their favorite places and experiences with others. Most training and instruction programs are led by volunteer trainers and leaders generally follow the same path to leadership.

Path to Leadership:

The path to leadership will teach what you need to know to feel comfortable as a leader so that you can take groups on fun outdoor activities.

1. Successful Completion of an AMC Leadership Training Course
   1. Chapters offer leadership training courses usually in the spring and/or fall. Search the ActDB for ‘leadership’ to find training.
   2. Any AMC Chapter leadership training course provides the fundamentals including screening participants, risk management, leadership styles, trip planning, managing a group, organizational rules, dealing with an emergency, conservation practice, etc.
   3. If you take leadership training with a chapter or AMC program other than the one you intend to lead with, you will need to complete your requirements with the committee where you do intend to lead. For example, if you take leadership training in the Delaware Valley Chapter, and intend to lead in the Potomac Chapter, you will need to connect with the Potomac Chapter to take the next step.

2. Mentoring - The next step to leadership immerses you in the experience of leading a group with an experienced Leader to assess your skills and comfort level with the activity.
   1. At least 2 co-leads with certified AMC leaders for the activity area you intend to lead. For one of these co-leads you would act as the leader
   2. The ultimate assignment of Leader status for any AMC volunteer activity rests with the volunteer unit (chapter, committee, etc.) with whom you intend to lead.

3. Additional Training
   1. For activities where specific hard skills are needed such as paddling, skiing, winter backpacking, or climbing, leaders will need to demonstrate their proficiency with those skills.
   2. Basic Red Cross First Aid/CPR is required for some activities. Wilderness First Aid is required for others.
   3. If you need additional training AMC volunteers can help.

4. Additional Requirements
   1. All leaders must be age 18 or older
   2. All leaders must be members of the AMC to be covered by our liability insurance policy.

For more information:

Reach out to Leadership Chair, Bryna Selig at leadership@amcpotomac.org
Places to Paddle: Two Gems Just Waiting be Explored and Experienced

Rich Batiuk, AMC Potomac Chapter Paddling Committee Chair and Paddling Trip Leader

Parkers Creek in Maryland and Dragon Run in Virginia are definitely two very unique paddles which need to find a place of your growing list of places you really want to experience via a kayak or canoe or SUP. Given the very special watersheds protecting both waterways, access to each requires some advance planning. Read on for details.

**Parkers Creek** is located in Calvert County, Maryland, flowing into Chesapeake Bay north of Calvert Cliffs. The American Chestnut Land Trust invites paddlers to join them for paddles up the beautiful Parkers Creek, one of the most cared for and protected creeks on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. The creek is surrounded by the Parkers Creek Preserve, over 3,200 acres of wildlands and natural forests.

The American Chestnut Land Trust provides friendly, expert guides to make your trip fun, informative and safe! They also offer you the option to use their canoes (2 person) or you are welcome to bring your own canoe/kayak. While the American Chestnut Land Trust guides give an orientation on proper canoe handling techniques and can assist beginner paddlers, this is not a canoe training event and is challenging for inexperienced paddlers.

Please note – trips are 3 hours long and can be physically strenuous. It requires regular paddling for two hours (occasionally against wind and tides), and may require participants to help carry a canoe for up to 150 yards over loose sand and gravel to access the creek. Registration is required.

Go to the American Chestnut Land Trust website at [https://www.acltweb.org/index.php/get-involved-2/guided-canoe-program/](https://www.acltweb.org/index.php/get-involved-2/guided-canoe-program/) to find their schedule of guided paddling trips from May through October. Every season provides paddlers with a very different view of this protected ecosystem, from spring marsh plants to amazing fall foliage, this paddling trip is worth returning for each season. And while you are there, you can take advantage of the 22 miles of free hiking trails that are open year-round from dawn to dusk every day. Paddle and hike on the same day—life outdoors doesn’t get much better than that!
The Dragon Run wilderness is a unique ecosystem located on Virginia’s middle peninsula. In a study conducted by the Smithsonian Institution, Dragon Run was ranked second (first in Virginia) in ecological significance among 232 areas investigated in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The unique character of Dragon Run and its natural beauty exist primarily because it is remote. Several highway bridges cross its 40 mile run to the Piankatank River. Most access points are, however, reached only by a one mile or more trek through forests and swamplands and across private property. This natural protection has contributed to its abundant wildlife.

Concerned landowners, who over the years have exercised good land use judgment, can be credited with the conservation of this threatened gem.

Friends of Dragon Run invited paddlers to join them in the spring when the Dragon Run swamp is particularly beautiful with the emergence of flowers and the leafing of the bald cypress. It is also the only time paddlers get to see the prothonotary warbler. They offer paddling trips in April and May when the water levels are high enough to enable paddlers to navigate through this wild waterbody. Check the Friends of Dragon Run’s website at https://www.dragonrun.org/paddle-season-information.html for their schedule of spring paddling trips and more logistics information. Once you experience this nearly pristine ecosystem, you will already be planning your next paddle!

Friends of Dragon Run is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation organized in 1985 by a group of Virginia’s Middle Peninsula citizens who generously donated funds to purchase and preserve a 203-acre tract of Dragon Run swampland in Middlesex County. Friends of Dragon Run now independently owns and manages this tract and additional wilderness areas totaling more than 650 acres along the shoreline of Dragon Run. Friends of Dragon Run members and the public enjoy the use of these properties for purposes consistent with conservation and education.