

# **AND THE BEAT GOES ON.....(How we hiked the Appalachian Trail and lived to tell about it!)**

by  
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In the spring of 2005, the Virginia Association of Surveyors decided to hold a fundraiser for their Educational Supplement College Fund which donates money toward the formal education of future surveyors. What's more, the event served as a public awareness program for the surveying profession. So, a membership wide 544 mile walk-a-thon was organized to walk the Virginia portion of the Appalachian Trail in order to garner the donations. Ultimately, 83 VAS members and associates along with two dogs hiked the trail and raised \$20,000 for the fund. The ensuing public relations generated throughout the Commonwealth for the VAS and the land surveying profession was worth its weight in gold.

The fundraiser was so successful that it was decided to encourage the other thirteen state survey associations along the Appalachian Trail to have a similar fundraiser and promote the land survey profession on a national scale. As state president of the VAS in 2006, I discussed this idea with the other state survey associations as I attended their conventions throughout the year. And so, the idea has spread, the challenge has been accepted and results are now coming in from Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Maryland.

Dan Collins, LS has informed me that the Surveying and Mapping Society of Georgia (SAMSOG) has successfully finished hiking the 75 mile Georgia portion of the Appalachian Trail. They have collected approximately \$8,000 in donations for their Educational College Fund. They broke the trail up in two sections with group one hiking the south section and group two hiking the north section. Dan informs me that the first night out was below 20 degrees and the winds were a steady 30 mph along with freezing rain and snow. However, Georgia has some tough surveyors and they got the job done.

Next up is the North Carolina Society of Surveyors planned Appalachian Trail hike. Brian Souva, LS tells me the NCSS will be hiking the trail this fall from September 14-23. Trekkers will be tasked with soliciting funds from participating sponsors in either dollar amounts per mile or lump sum sponsorship investments. The goal is to raise over \$5,000 to benefit the NCSS Education Foundation. All twenty chapters will be hiking the North

Carolina 300 mile portion of the AT trail which has been divided into 21 segments consisting of 1, 2, and 3 day hikes. Medallions commemorating this event will be carried by the hikers on their treks. At the end of the event, the medallions will be gathered, mounted and framed for the auction at the 2008 NCSS convention.

The Tennessee Association of Professional Surveyors (TAPS) will be encouraged to hike the 71 miles of trail that leaves Virginia and goes through Tennessee before beginning to follow the Tennessee-North Carolina border.

Bob Banzhoff, LS has also indicated that the Maryland Society of Surveyors plans to hike their 41 mile section of the Appalachian Trail this summer beginning at Harper's Ferry and ending at the Pen Mar State Park at the Mason Dixon line. Actually, West Virginia has a two mile stretch of the trail as it passes through Harper's Ferry, so we will encourage the West Virginia Society of Surveyors to hike their portion.

Once the AT has been hiked up to the Mason Dixon line, which is the half way point of the 2,000 mile Appalachian Trail, we will encourage the northeastern state survey societies to continue the chain of AT hikes all the way to Maine. The AT sections for these states would include:

Pennsylvania – 232 Miles, New Jersey – 74 Miles, New York – 88 Miles, Connecticut – 52 Miles, Massachusetts – 90 Miles, Vermont – 146 Miles, New Hampshire – 161 Miles, and Maine – 281 Miles.

So, the challenge has been issued and we will see where it goes from here! These hikes have been a very successful fundraising and public relations tool for the land surveying profession. It requires considerable time, effort, motivation and money to culminate into a successful venture. However, as every land surveyor in the United States is fully aware, the land surveying profession is facing a crisis. The attrition rate of retiring licensed surveyors is currently about even with the incoming rate of newly licensed surveyors. Of course, this "graying of the profession" cannot continue as the status quo and it is absolutely necessary to attract our youth into pursuing a career in land surveying. There are approximately 40,000 licensed surveyors in the United States and their average age is 58. So, in less than ten years about 15,000 licensed surveyors will hang up their plumb bobs and opt for the "good life" of retirement. At the same time about 1,500 – 2,000 surveyors will become licensed within that ten year time period. Thus, a land surveying career public relations and public awareness campaign must be expanded to convey our message. It's time to walk the walk and talk the talk. Happy Trails!!