

**Laurentian Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club
Ad Hoc Meeting on Membership issues
October 19, 2010 Minutes**

An ad hoc meeting of Chapter Officers, Appointed positions, and concerned members was held at the residence of John and Susan Omohundro in Hannawa Falls at 7:00pm on Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2010.

Attending: John Barron, John Omohundro, Susan Omohundro, Geri Ames, Ellie Menz, Dick Mooers, Blair Madore, Armond Spenser, Ann Spenser, Gene Kaczka, Carolyn Kaczka, Tom Ortemeyer, Bill Mueller, Hollis Easter.

Outings Concerns

The group discussed problems regarding non-members and new hikers on outings. Several leaders reported experiences with new hikers who showed up at rendezvous points very un-prepared.

Suggestions included:

- Do away with external publicity
- Add information to the Laurentian Chapter website regarding appropriate attire
- Advertise easy hikes only, not strenuous hikes
- Firm up the screening process for new hikers
- Publicize only one trip per year

Discussion ensued regarding the diversity of outing programming. Outings range from expert to intermediate to new hiker and kid's hikes. The group discussed the questions of "What is the purpose of outings?" It was agreed that outings served as social events and to educate the public. Some outings have a focus on local history. It was observed that expert hikers do not participate on Chapter hikes, as new hikers delay and can jeopardize hikes. Consensus was leaders were responsible for screening participants.

The group then discussed what should be the recommended approach to publicizing outings? Since one of the purposes of Chapter outings is to recruiting new blood, it was suggested that the liability waiver forms should include an "are you a member" box and request email addresses.

Discussion ensued as to whether leaders could "opt out" of advertising, and whether a hike could be advertised as "members only." Consensus was that outings could be included in the newsletter, but not advertised in local newspapers. It was suggested that all "strenuous" outing hikes should include wording regarding appropriate gear, e.g. "proper attire required. Ask leaders for details."

Discussion ensued regarding the Liability forms. It was agreed that:

- Liability forms would be kept for three years.
- Trip leaders would forward them to the Outings Chair

- They could be used for membership drives
- Leaders could/should email participants with photos from the trip as a way of encouraging membership participation.
- Sponsoring more “members only” events, but continue to allow the potluck dinners to be members and the general public.

Discussion ensued as to how to limit advertising for outings, depending on the preference of leaders. It was agreed that the Outings Chair would send outings information, including any restriction preferences to the Newsletter Vice-Chair. The Newsletter chair would then notify the Webmaster, E-Letter Editor, and Secretary/Facebook Group Administrator.

Overall Drop in Membership Discussion

Several observations were made:

- Membership is never stable.
- A larger membership gives the ADK more political clout.
- Overall, ADK membership is down, and
- Perhaps the decline is due to the poor economy?

Recent Chapter publicity has focused on outings and trail work. It was questioned whether we need more publicity on advocacy. It was suggested the Chapter could include more information at trail registers. Another suggestion was that the North Country Public Radio could be employed as a way to advertise upcoming events.

There was brief discussion regarding the possibility of recruiting ATVs and snowmobile enthusiasts as Chapter members, and the philosophical tensions surrounding ATVer’s and Chapter members who feel recreational vehicles present environmental concerns.

Other suggestions included sponsoring more evening talks about conservation issues, as a way to reach “silent” members. Speaker suggestions included Peter O’Shay and Michael Wilson.

It was noted that:

- Potluck attendance is down
- Potluck advertising should include information about available childcare

After discussion, it was agreed that the Chapter would try to make childcare available at potlucks, and to include that information in potluck publicity.

J. Barron presented a few points submitted by David Katz, who was unable to attend:

- Is it possible that having an up-to-date web site is harming member recruitment, because members of the public can obtain details of the program on line? The consensus of the meeting was that having an up-to-date web site is very beneficial and should be continued.

- Number of members is only one measure of the success of the chapter, and we should consider other measures in evaluating our own success (e.g. participation in outings, number of outings cancelled due to lack of participants, and others).

Wrap-up: Each attendee was asked to make a comment as the discussion went around the table:

- C. Kaczka noted that members who renew for 3 years tend to stay with the Chapter. She suggested renewal forms should include a discounted “3 year renewal” option. She also suggested outing leaders should come to potlucks and bring friends.
- B. Madore suggested there be assigned seating at the potluck. He observed as a new member, it appeared that long-time members weren’t interested in embracing newcomers. Armond Spenser noted the potluck was the only venue for long-time members to catch up, and that was probably why they came across as unwelcoming.
- H. Easter asked how the Chapter could get new people to become devoted active members.
- Anne Spenser suggested we need to get the “club” feeling back.
- Armond Spenser suggested that the goal to get younger people in leadership roles is beginning to happen.
- J. Barron stated that we now have a new recruitment strategy.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:25pm.

Attachment: ADK Handout – Membership and Outings Concerns September 2010.doc

The number of North Winds that we mail has been declining

We suspected that membership has been declining. Indeed, it has.

Is our recruitment strategy not working?

Results of survey

Implication: few if any people join because they went on an outing

Examples

- Mt Arab last summer: extensive publicity, 10 non-member families or individuals, but no joiners
- Some non-members come repeatedly

This is heavy use of chapter resources and frequent headaches for trip leaders

Why do we advertise ourselves? North Woods chapter doesn't advertise, and its membership is stable

What exactly is the mission of our chapter?

Why would someone join ADK?

What are outings for?

- Recreation
- Socializing
- Recruitment
- Community service (eg trail work)
- Education and advocacy
- Other?

Suggestions:

1. Advertise only outings meant for public or for recruitment. The default should be: don't advertise, especially events requiring special skills or fitness.
2. Non-members are welcome on outings once or twice, not indefinitely (exception: friends of trip leader). Trip leaders should determine when people ask about an outing who is a member.
3. Leaders should encourage non-member participants to join by offering them literature
4. We should have a brochure for that purpose showing why join ADK/Laurentian
5. Leaders may choose whether to advertise, and to set size and composition of group (age, species, number of participants, etc.)

6. Leaders should seek consensus on how to handle problems on an outing (waiting for late arrivals, splitting up, turning back, injuries, improper gear, etc.)

Attachment: NonMembersResearch.doc

Do Non-Members Who Attend Outings Eventually Join the Club?

| Year | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of Non-Members on Outings | 24 | 4 | 22 | 34 | 56 |
| Number Who Were Members in 2008 or 2010 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of Non-Members Attending More Than One Outing | 4 | 0 | 8 | 5 | 6 |

Based on 2008 and 2010 member lists and 3 or more Backtracks from each year. Couples/families count as one.

What Has Been the Trend in Membership?

| Date | Households | Voting Adults |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Jul 2006 | 276 | 405 |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Jan 2007 | 265 | 490 |
| April 2008 | - | 510 |
| Oct 2008 | - | 493 |
| Jan 2009 | - | 469 |
| July 2009 | - | 454 |
| Oct 2009 | - | 464 |
| Jan 2010 | - | 471 |
| April 2010 | 273 | - |
| July 2010 | 253 | 413 |

Data from North Wind