SESSION TITLE : Developing successful trail maintenance and monitoring programs

CONVENER(S): Karen Lutz, ATC

PARTICIPANTS: N/A

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS and/or RECOMMENDATIONS:
WHY/WHAT

Skills to guide volunteers
Planning for maintenance
Monitoring
- definition
- - recording/capturing

Managing incoming information about the conditions
Keeping volunteers engaged in maintenance
Using tools like life cycle analysis for infrastructure for long range management of trail infrastructure
- look at initial investment
- consider the over the lifetime investment and time of replacement

Record keeping and tracking
Compliance – wetlands and NEPA
Monitoring as a management tool for maintenance
Trail building is sexy but maintenance is "janitorial" – image issue in the minds of volunteers

IDEAS

Monitoring

- Appalachian – handbook for monitoring and boundary maintenance
- Facility Management Software System – sophisticated, uses GIS to place deficiencies and then associate costs with deficiencies, 5 year rotation; enables planning for the larger cost/time items and prioritizing (FMSS is a Park Service tool)
- Arizona - Volunteer stewards from the 43 passages walk the section once per year and report needs from passage; done on paper form

Compliance

- Natural Historic Preservation Act (Sect 106)
- Wetlands
- NEPA
- FEMA flood insurance
    - permits not needed for maintenance on exiting trail

Maintenance Prioritization

- Public safety, resource protection, visitor experience
- Break the chain on maintenance

Consistency

- Send trained staff out with volunteers
- Photo guide
- Data dictionary: Appalachian Trail will share data dictionary

Technology

- Hand held GPS entry unit; link the photo to he GPS coordinate
- Cameras:
  - Panasonic Lumix
  - Ricoh G700SE ($1000) – dustproof, waterproof – also a GPS Unit
- Video flip cameras: Video provides a rich format
    - load on U Tube to share
    - Share on FTP site (agency partner)
- Need to make tech fun
- Pair tech savvy with local volunteer

Volunteer Engagement

- Use a sexy name and set up structure – Managers, F Team/Trail Steward/Section Leader
- Organizing outings/teams: education of the "why", food and beverages
- Use "fun" names and gives identity, personality and a sense of community
- Develop the community feel so there is an investment
- Recognition (see TRACK 1 volunteer session)
    - Chain saw day with stuff (chaps, sawyers helmet)
    - Card with membership for a year for new volunteers
- Training is an investment; lets the volunteers know that you care; training is empowerment and leaves people with skills
- Educating on the "why" events/gatherings
- Trail Ops conference
    - why training
    - round table discussions and brainstorming
    - allow cross fertilization
    - volunteer groups start mobilizing and working other sections
    - builds sense of the trail as a whole
    - peer to peer learning
- Crew leader training
- BEER

<u>CHALLENGES</u>

Consistency

- Relying on volunteers who are responsible for monitoring and reporting on their sections of a trail
- Everyone brings a subjective view to what they are observing
- Hard to replicate techniques; data not useful

Technology

- FMSS system is not easy to use and its cumbersome – dense; is there a FMSS lite?
- Paper: note taker, data entry onto system, readability
- Higher tech methods are a challenge for the less tech savvy

Maintenance prioritization

- 30 Chapters are making their own judgments on prioritizing maintenance projects
- Individuals making the judgments

Compliance

- Causes delays in momentum
- Takes the steam out of the project
- FEMA
- The OK from the land manager/owner does not equal NEPA compliance

Volunteers

- Don’t over title volunteers because it implies authority that is not there

RECOMMENDATION for PNTS ACTION: None noted