SESSION TITLE : Intra-Agency Consistency

CONVENER(S): Bob Proudman

PARTICIPANTS: Mike Dawson, Marci Dupraw, Megan Eno, Dean Gettinger, Anitra Kass, Karen Lutz, Tim Malzhan, Michelle Mitchell, Kent Wimmer, Morgan Sommerville (recorder)

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS and/or RECOMMENDATIONS:
Bob opened the meeting by defining "Intra-Agency" as "Within any one organization, a nonprofit, government agency or any single group." He described ATC's long history of internal debate surrounding its "simple two-by-six-inch, white, painted blaze" (Trail marking standard). ATC has long worked to establish consistent "intra-ATC" policies (See ATC *Local Management Planning Guide* that describe its core consistencies on the web at http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

Megan Eno suggested introductions on this theme. The group made a round-robin of contributions.

The three biggest findings or "Ah ha's" were:

- PNTS needs an overall and inspiring MISSION STATEMENT
- To avoid getting bogged down in minutiae, focus on simple "Best Management Practices" (BMPs). Tim Malzhan shared the Ice Age Trail's short, attractive Trail Sign Guide; and Karen Lutz, ATC's "Boundary Handbook" as good, recent examples
- PNTS and the NGO-NSTs should become a great web resource for everyone, possibly in concert with American Trails website. Consider ways to keep current.
- National Scenic Trails need a Manual Supplement or other desktop reference like the agencies use for Wilderness Management or Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Tackle the issues at two levels: Individual NSTs "from the ground up" and PNTS and the NSTs from the "top down."

Other points made—Transcript of wall posters (except parenthetical additions by this author):

- Differences between Forests and Districts
- Expectation that everyone "knows" the rules (too optimistic an assumption)
- Need mechanism to establish clear standards for management
- Centralized vs. regional trail management—what is "best" management relationship (FTA uses "central" management; PCTA and ATC, regional; may be a function of the trail or unit)
- How do we foster creativity?
- How best to bridge gap between overall standards and good local application
- NPS more flexible (each park "a fiefdom")
- Continuing education/better education
- "It all comes down to 'communication'" –Dean Gettinger
- Continuing education, better education

- Federal fire management lessons could be a good example for us
- NST “BMP” Committee?
- Agency partners “dying” for direction—have to create from “whole cloth”
- USFS never developed overall vision and direction statements: Need to go back to the beginning and promulgate policies that nurture national trail system: Incorporate good things partners have developed into FS direction (Michelle Mitchell)
- Don’t forget the US Fish & Wildlife Service!
- Achieve consistency between agencies for strong overarching direction BUT agency-by-agency and trail-by-trail specifics at lower level
- Long trails provide opportunities for interaction between (otherwise distant, and maybe autonomous) governmental partners
- Nonprofits need better opportunities for interaction (crew leader exchanges; joint-hiring of seasonals)
- Tie agency-staff performance standards directly to NTS/NST needs! (Mike Dawson example of Jefferson National Forest in Virginia—Forest Supervisor Bill Damon’s “Your performance is tied directly the condition of the A.T.”)
- Establish and instill outstanding crew leadership and club leadership to carry-the-day with their agency partners
- Host major trail events to get partners out on the trail and to build relationships

RECOMMENDATION for PNTS ACTION: none noted