

APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

FOUR THOUSAND FOOTER COMMITTEE



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Keith D. D'Alessandro, *Chair*
Eric L. Savage, *Corresponding Secretary*
Brian K. Miville, *Vice Chair*
Deane H. Morrison III, *Treasurer & NE111 Secretary*
Steven D. Smith, *Recording Secretary*



Dear Hiker,

We appreciate your interest in the Four Thousand Footer Club, which was formed in 1957 to bring together hikers who had traveled to some of the less frequently visited sections of the White Mountains, and to encourage hikers who were addicted to the Presidentials and Franconias to strike out into less familiar areas. At that time, such peaks as Hancock, Owl's Head and West Bond were trailless and practically never climbed. Many other peaks on the list that had trails were seldom climbed, and overuse was almost unheard of except in the Presidentials and Franconias. Today the Four Thousand Footer Club is composed of active, enthusiastic hikers whose travels in the mountains have made us familiar with many different sections of the White Mountain backcountry, and with the problems which threaten to degrade the mountain experience that we have been privileged to enjoy. We hope that this broadened exposure to the varied beauty of our beloved peaks and forests will encourage our members to work for the preservation and wise use of our wild country so that it may be enjoyed and passed on to future generations undiminished.

Please note: Applicants should understand that the Four Thousand Footer Club is a volunteer organization, conducted as a friendly group of fellow hikers. This permits us to operate relatively frugally, and therefore we are able to donate a significant percentage of the money we receive to trail maintenance and other projects — a matter explained at length later in this letter. However, this also means that application processing can go quite slowly, particularly in the late summer and fall when most of the year's applications are submitted (and when the fine weather often lures the Secretary away from his stack of paperwork and into the mountains). Please expect application processing to take at least a month, and perhaps longer from August to November. (Please note that, due to technical issues, we usually do not start processing applications that arrive after the annual meeting in April until late July — during this time, when fewer applications are submitted, we are usually trying to catch up with matters that have to be put aside during the busy period that starts in the late summer and often continues up to the annual meeting in April.) If you fail to include your application fee with your application, or submit an un-official application form, or submit materials with more than one applicant on a single form, expect an additional delay, as such applications require extra attention and usually involve another round of communication with the applicant. The Secretary hopes applicants will realize that this is something he does in his spare time. (Yes, I love doing it, but please help keep unnecessary extra paperwork to a minimum by following the procedures described in this letter as closely as possible.)

Very few items sent to us have been lost in the mail (though the black holes that surround my cluttered desk can be voracious); in any case, if you wish an acknowledgement when I receive your application material, please include an email address, or enclose a stamped self-addressed postcard or envelope. Please write "Acknowledgement Requested" on the lower left corner of your **outer** envelope, as I may not notice the acknowledgement request/envelope until I begin to process the application, at which point it no longer serves the intended purpose, but will be used to send your acceptance packet.

AWARDS AND REQUIREMENTS: The Four Thousand Footer Club recognizes three lists of peaks — the White Mountain Four Thousand Footers, the New England Four Thousand Footers, and the New England Hundred Highest Peaks — and we award scrolls and shoulder patches to those who have climbed each peak on the appropriate list. You must be a member of the White Mountain Four Thousand Footer Club in order to be eligible for the New England Four Thousand Footer Club, and be a member of that club in order to be eligible for the New England Hundred Highest Club. However, if eligible, you may join two or more clubs at the same time. Winter Awards are given to those who climb all peaks of a list during calendar winter. Note that for a peak to qualify as a winter ascent, the **entire trip** must begin after the hour and minute of the beginning of winter (winter solstice) and end before the hour and minute of the end of winter (vernal equinox), to satisfy the criteria established by Miriam Underhill, the inventor of the Winter Four-Thousand-Footer game. In 2016, we introduced the Four-Season White Mountain Four Thousand Footer award, which includes a trail work requirement.

To qualify for membership in any of these clubs, a hiker must climb, **on their own feet, to and from** each summit on the list. Ascents may have been made at any time* during a hiker's lifetime, and any combination of two or more peaks may be climbed in one continuous trip. No part of the ascent or descent can be done via ski lift, cog railway, snowmobile, car (on an auto road intended to ascend all or part of a mountain), or bike – generally meaning that one must be on foot from and back to a trailhead and/or publicly drivable road. Regarding fine points of peakbagging ethics, each hiker is left to the exactions of her or his conscience but please don't put us in a position to have to enforce these technicalities. [The three most common mistakes are biking any part of the Lincoln Woods Trail, combining an unconnected ascent and descent (e.g. a hike up Cannon with gondola descent one day and returning later via the gondola to do a descent) and starting/finishing a 'winter' trip before/after the solstice/equinox.]

Once all the peaks have been climbed, the applicant must complete an application for membership. Applicants need not be AMC members, although the Committee strongly urges all hikers who make considerable use of the trails to contribute to their maintenance in some manner. Membership in the AMC is one of the more effective means of assisting these efforts, as well as helping with the work of protecting the mountains through education, research, and conservation programs. Information about and applications for membership in the AMC are available on the AMC website, www.outdoors.org, or from the AMC office at 10 City Square, Boston, MA 02129. Dogs who are companions of human members can be recognized as canine members of the White Mountain Four Thousand Footer Club (using the normal application process), but not for the two New England clubs, since most cannot legally climb the peaks in Baxter State Park, nor for any of the winter lists.

The enclosed lists have been updated in accordance with all currently issued USGS maps. Applicants must have climbed all peaks on the new list for each club. Hikers who registered for the New England Four Thousand Footer Club without having climbed Redington and/or Spaulding must have climbed these peaks in order to qualify for the New England Hundred Highest Club. As of May 2022, these clubs had the following numbers of officially registered members: White Mountain Four Thousand Footers: 16,729 (winter: 1,020; four-season: 46), New England Four Thousand Footers: 4,091 (winter: 220), New England Hundred Highest: 1,164 (winter: 129).

APPLICATIONS: An application form is enclosed with this letter for each list you have mentioned. To complete an official application, fill out the form and return it, **along with an account of the ascent of your final peak** (or another peak if you prefer). The primary purpose of this last requirement is to afford us the benefit of hearing some of your reactions to your Four Thousand Footer experience. Therefore, we will be even more pleased if you write on some aspect of this experience of your own choice that appeals to you more. The Committee does not require that you supply precise dates for each ascent, as we operate on the honor system, but we appreciate as complete an application as you can provide, and would prefer to have a precise date for your finishing peak (please indicate this peak on the form). Due to the volume of applications, we require use of the official application, though we can be flexible if your version matches the format *exactly*: **one** side of a **single** 8½" by 11" sheet (**'portrait'** orientation) with your **name and address at the bottom**. We have to maintain files of over 17,000 individuals, with over 1000 new items each year, so it is critical to have some standardization.

Important Note: After sending us an application, you should monitor your e-mail spam folder. For some reason, a lot of our attempts to contact applicants via email get filtered out, and we often get frustrated emails from applicants wondering what happened to their paperwork – when we have been trying to e-mail them for months.

APPLICATION FEE: We charge a one-time fee to cover the expense of the scroll, one shoulder patch, postage, printing, and other administrative costs. The fee is **\$15** for the White Mountain Four Thousand Footer Club, and **\$10** for all other clubs. Additional patches may be purchased at \$4 each (\$5 for the four-season patch). Your fee should be sent with your application; checks should be made out to the *AMC Four Thousand Footer Committee*. Please include a note with any additional requests; if you only use the memo section of your check to order patches, etc., I may not notice what is written there. Patches will be mailed to you after your application has been processed; the scroll will be mailed after the Annual Reunion in April if you do not appear in person. As noted below, any surplus we accumulate will be designated for work on trails or similar projects of service to the hiking public, and we gladly accept donations for such purposes. Due to the generosity of our members we have been able to donate about \$60,000 to AMC Trails and \$5,000 to the Guy Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund over the last five years.

ANNUAL REUNION: Scrolls are awarded at our annual awards night, which is typically held in April of each year. Next year's meeting is *tentatively* scheduled for Sat., April 22, 2023 at Exeter High School in Exeter, NH, but watch the website for updates. The event is open to all who are interested in the Four Thousand Footer Club, including family, friends, and anyone who is working on the lists. Typically there is a social hour (no alcohol permitted on school grounds), with several vendors and trail maintenance organizations staffing tables. This year, we may also have some seminar and discussion sessions during the afternoon. The awarding of scrolls will begin at 6:30 PM. For those who are interested, there is a dinner available in the cafeteria (reservations and payment required in advance). All are welcome to the award ceremony (a \$2 entrance fee will be collected at the door), and to join us for dinner. Information about the event is sent with the acceptance letters; other interested persons can get the information from our website, or can send a self-addressed stamped envelope for this material.

Please note that the deadline for non-winter applications is December 31. After that date, we have to focus on more recent finishers (usually of winter lists) and we may not be able to process delayed applications (e.g. from the summer) in time for the awards ceremony.

Correspondence concerning the Northeast 111 Club should be directed to Deane Morrison, 1 Flaghole Rd., Concord, NH 03301-1827 or deane.morrison@comcast.net.

Hikers requiring specific information about matters of club policy or similar questions, should visit our website or may write directly to the Committee. A pamphlet describing routes to the trailless peaks on the New England Hundred Highest list is available from the Committee for \$5. A set of USGS maps covering these peaks (printed out in color from Maptech CDs) is available for an additional \$10 (\$15 total). [The maps are also available in black-and-white for an additional \$3 (\$8 total).] With the exception of Mt. Redington, we do not provide information and maps for the peaks over 4000 feet, as these are adequately covered by existing guidebooks: the AMC guides to the White Mountains and to Maine, and the Long Trail Guide for Vermont.

We would like to mention in passing that one of the Editors of the White Mountain Guide is also a member of the Committee. The Editors receive few comments about the book from its readers (we assume that some of those who spend their good money on it do read it), and have mixed feelings about this situation: they hope that it means that the book is without error, but fear that it merely means that many people do not think that their comments and criticisms will be used and useful – or even read. Since Four Thousand Footer Club members have been using the trails frequently, they as a group should be more aware of the strong points and defects of the book in general and of many of its particular trail descriptions. We get many useful comments from new members (most of whom were probably unaware that the Editor might be reading them and so were perhaps more frank – and thus more helpful – than they would otherwise have permitted themselves to be), and we would like to hear whatever comments you have to make. (Flattery is always appreciated but – alas – not very useful.) And, after all, we are a captive audience – we have to read your application materials. Incidentally, the Editors only control the actual content of the book, not the format, so comments concerning the physical size of the book should be directed to AMC Books in Boston – we have very little say in that matter. Also, we should mention that (mostly for marketing reasons) it is not economically practical to publish the book in sections or in a loose-leaf format, as many hikers have suggested.

Sermon: Although use of the trails in our backcountry areas has greatly increased over the past three decades, funds available for their maintenance have declined. One year, the White Mountain National Forest's funding for trail maintenance was virtually eliminated, and the future of trail maintenance appropriations for the Forest Service seems to be continually in question. In fact, the parking permit system (which, PLEASE NOTE, was mandated by CONGRESS, not by the WMNF) was initiated in part to replace federal funding for trail maintenance. Neither the WMNF nor the AMC has ever had the funds to adequately maintain the existing trail network with paid professional crews, and in future years – given the irresistible trend of budget-cutting for Federal agencies – there will probably be even less money available. There are three possible outcomes to this situation: (1) a substantial user fee will be imposed on hikers, along the lines of the new WMNF parking permit program and the \$7 daily parking fee that was collected for several years at the Wilderness Trail parking lot in winter, (2) many of those trails which are not used by crowds of people will be closed, and other trails will deteriorate, or (3) the hiking public will become active in the support of the trails. Since alternative #1 is obviously cumbersome and its effective enforcement could be repugnant (do we want a ranger stationed on the Franconia Ridge to check for permits?), #3 seems to be the best alternative, but at present #2 seems most likely. Many hikers do not seem to realize that there is no one out there whose duty it is to provide them with trails. The AMC and WMNF do the best they can, but their budgets are limited. The variety of trails we enjoy today is mainly the result of hard work by a relative handful of dedicated volunteers and professionals over more than a century, and much of it can be lost in the next decade if you and I procrastinate. Most hikers would be shocked to learn the number and variety of trails that the WMNF has proposed for abandonment — and then backed off when the proposals met with strenuous objections. Their budget problems may force them to become more insistent in such matters in the future. (In fact, there are a number of trails that are officially open but have had no significant maintenance for several years – presumably the WMNF plans to abandon them when they have become completely overgrown, as it has done with several such trails in the past.) On the other hand, there has been an encouraging increase in the amount of volunteer effort in trail maintenance – as people become aware of the situation, they have responded. This response has, among other things, required the expansion of Camp Dodge in Pinkham Notch, the AMC's support facility for volunteer trail workers, a project to which the Four Thousand Footer Club has made several significant donations.

In recent years, many New England trails, particularly in the White Mountains, have been hit with several devastating blows. Hurricane Irene, although reduced to a tropical storm by the time it reached us, ripped through the rivers and forests of New England like nothing since the Hurricane of 1938. Even those who have only driven through these areas can see the damage done to riverbanks, bridges and roads. The trails did not fare any better, and some will require massive efforts to repair and/or reroute large sections. Then came superstorm Sandy, the unusually damaging winds of the winter of 2012-13, and the storms in the fall of 2017. It is sobering to recall that there are entire trail networks that were simply abandoned after 1938, never to be recovered, because there were not the resources and personnel to bring them back. Fortunately, we do not have a world war to distract from the recovery effort this time around, but the challenge is nearly as great.

What can we do? We need people to do all sorts of trail maintenance, from cutting brush and painting blazes to constructing rock steps. Many groups do this work, and can easily train you to do some useful service on the trails. Besides, we'll let you in on one of the best-kept secrets in the mountains: trail work is fun. And a trail that you have worked on belongs to you in a way that those who have only taken from the trails and have never given to them can never know. The AMC has an Adopt-a-Trail program, and most of its chapters have volunteer crews. You do not have to be a member to participate. Write or call the AMC in Boston or at Pinkham Notch Camp concerning the AMC Trails program, or write or email the Four Thousand Footer Committee and we'll try to find something suitable for you. Another group that should be mentioned as particularly skilled in introducing inexperienced people to trail work is Trailwrights (www.trailwrights.org). At the very least, carry a small saw and remove small blowdowns from trails. In the long run, we will probably have precisely the quality and variety of trails that we deserve, so let's try to deserve the best. One possible role for the Four Thousand Footer Club is to work on a few trails where a one-day effort by a small but determined group could make a substantial impact. Write or email us for details, or watch for notices on the website and in the AMC Bulletin (mostly in New Hampshire Chapter notices).

We understand that there are people who are very short on free time, but who can contribute money. Although we would rather have your work and your companionship than your money, the latter is also useful for purchasing tools and supplies, and for hiring people for the professional trail crew to do jobs that can be done most efficiently by people with more intensive training and experience. You can donate money directly to AMC Trails or through the Four Thousand Footer Committee. Earlier in this letter we told you that we were trying to raise money in order to make a contribution to trail maintenance and mountain stewardship in the Northeast. We consider any sum in excess of the basic \$15/\$10 application fee and \$4 extra patch cost as such a contribution.

Some hikers have donated a fixed amount for each of the peaks on the list that they have climbed, which seems like an interesting and attractive concept for providing support to the trails that have given them so much enjoyment. When we began this fund-raising effort, we were hopeful that we would be able to make an annual donation of \$1000 toward some trail project, which seemed at the time to be an optimistic but attainable goal. The generosity of our members has far exceeded our expectations. We were particularly pleased to be able to contribute a notable amount of money to help with recovery efforts in the wake of the aforementioned fall storms of 2017.

Each year, we consult with AMC Trails concerning projects for which the year's donation could be used. We typically designate much of our donation for specific trail projects related to Four Thousand Footer use patterns that are planned for the AMC trail crew's summer schedule, usually rock work and/or bog bridging, which must be constructed and maintained in order to keep hiker traffic (us) from trampling the numerous moist areas on trails into steadily widening gullies and mudholes. Our contribution will help keep these sections of trail narrow footways with limited impact on the soils and vegetation around them. When the opportunity arises, we may also make a significant contribution to the AMC Trails general fund for Volunteer Trail Programs. Many years ago we made our first donation of \$1,500 toward improvements that were made at Camp Dodge. One of the most surprising and satisfying trends of the past few years has been the virtual explosion of volunteer involvement in trail maintenance (of which our contribution fund is certainly one excellent example). Camp Dodge, built to provide support facilities including inexpensive and convenient lodging for volunteer trail workers, was bursting at the seams. To take advantage of the growth in numbers of volunteers available for trail work, the AMC needed to be able to expand these facilities so that people who are willing to donate their time and energy can have a convenient and comfortable place to stay without being forced into substantial out-of-pocket expenses for lodging. Each year there is a need for money to buy tools to be used by volunteer maintainers and to maintain and enhance the major work that was done in past years, so we also designate some of our donations for this work. We feel that our dollars will be multiplied several times over through the work that will be done by volunteers making use of these facilities.

Originally, and for many years, we were the adopters of the four-mile portion of the Davis Path between Mt. Davis and the Glen Boulder Trail under the AMC's extremely successful Adopt-a-Trail program. The Davis Path is one of the most historic trails in the Whites, having been built in the 1840s as the third bridle path to the summit of Mount Washington. It is a rough, wild path that traverses the northern part of the Montalban Ridge in the Presidential Range - Dry River Wilderness, giving access to several outstanding natural features, including the wild and scenic Giant Stairs, the remote and seldom-visited summit of Mt. Davis (considered by some to have one of the finest views in the Whites), and our old friend, Mt. Isolation, upon whose summit more people have completed their pursuit of the Four Thousand Footers than on any of the other 47 peaks (though in recent years, Mt. Carrigain has often taken the top spot). Presently we are the adopters of the Passaconaway Cut-off. We are hopeful that the Four Thousand Footer Club has enough energetic, ambitious members that we will always be able to keep our trail in top condition. The work itself, cleaning out waterbars, clearing small to medium blowdowns and clipping brush, is fairly easy. Write or call Steve Smith, Box 445, Lincoln, NH 03251 (email: info@mountainwanderer.com; phone: 800-745-2707) for details. Or drop in and visit Steve at his Mountain Wanderer bookstore on the main drag in Lincoln.

The committee extends its best wishes for your continued enjoyment of the mountains.

* applicants should be aware that due to the stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee cannot recognize ascents made from April 13 to June 5, 2020.