

# **Guy Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund End of Project Reporting Form**

**Project Title:**

Alpine Outreach Program

**Organization Name and Mailing Address:**

Green Mountain Club  
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road  
Waterbury Center, VT 05677

**Contact and Title:**

Matt Larson  
GMC Group Outreach Specialist

**Date:**

November 22, 2004

**E-Mail Address:**

groups@greenmountainclub.org

**Phone Number:**

(802) 244-7037 x. 27

**Please answer the questions below:**

**1. What were the major accomplishments?**

The goals of the Alpine Outreach Program for the 2004 field season were: 1) to provide alpine-specific environmental education to organized groups, 2) to offer these groups new skills to enable them to travel above treeline with minimum impact, 3) to provide these groups with relevant information prior to their reaching the alpine zone and 4) to collect group use data for Vermont's three alpine areas. The information the Alpine Outreach Program dispersed and collected in pursuit of these goals enhanced and validated a program that was already showing signs of success. This accomplishment was due to a strong and sustained effort by the Green Mountain Club (GMC) and the support of several partners.

Over the course of the 2004 season the Group Outreach Coordinator, Brian Aust, presented formal workshops on Leave No Trace principles and alpine ecology to ten groups totaling more than three hundred people. Brian also spent sixteen days on the summits of Mount Mansfield and Camel's Hump where he familiarized summit volunteers with alpine flora and fauna, passed on Leave No Trace pointers to summit and shelter caretakers, met organized groups for informal workshops, engaged in countless discussions of alpine ecology, and assisted with ongoing trail delineation efforts. In addition, all of the twenty-four GMC summit and shelter caretakers who began the field season in late June attended a combination Leave No Trace-Group Outreach-Group Feedback training led by Brian at Taylor Lodge. This led to the compilation of almost one hundred Group Feedback Sheets directly relevant to the alpine zones of Camel's Hump, Mount Abraham, and Mount Mansfield.

The Alpine Outreach Program also partnered with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation to send postcards to over one hundred schools in Vermont that have sent groups to the alpine zone in the past. Other proactive activities were a series of late-June phone calls to all of the camp groups in the GMC database to determine their 2004 itineraries, the planning and presentation of workshops on updated Leave No Trace principles for the northern and central Long Trail Patrols, and a training session for Gifford Woods, Little River, Smuggler's

Notch, and Underhill State Park rangers on Group Outreach skills and Group Feedback Sheet protocols. In total, the Group Outreach Coordinator interacted with one hundred and seventy organized groups over the course of the season, many if not most of which had plans to visit one of Vermont's three alpine summits.

## **2. Describe any setbacks and how you addressed them.**

The most significant obstacle for the Alpine Outreach Program in 2004 was the truncated outreach season brought on by a shortfall in AmeriCorps funding. The Group Outreach Coordinator has been an AmeriCorps member in years past, but when this program was curtailed the GMC was compelled to adjust the Group Outreach position from year-round to seasonal status. Consequently, the GMC's key outreach person was lost during the months "Reach and Teach" alpine ecology presentations are most readily brought to Vermont schools: March, April, and May. These off-season months are an ideal time for scheduling workshops for students and teachers; the high-season months of September and October, on the other hand, are not. The Reach and Teach program, as a result, was placed on the back burner temporarily. Early season emphasis was directed towards monitoring the Group Notification System, reviewing itineraries with camp and college groups, facilitating Group Feedback Sheet communications, and meeting organized hiking and camping groups in the field. The Reach and Teach program was back on the front burner by late August, however, and in the long run the interruption should not be of great consequence.

## **3. Describe any unexpected results or findings.**

The Group Feedback Sheets compiled over the course of the 2004 Alpine Outreach season 1) revealed a dramatic increase in compliance with overnight-use group-size recommendations in the vicinity of Vermont's three alpine summits and 2) indicated a clear correlation between day-use group-size and social/ecological impacts on Camel's Hump and Mount Mansfield.

The six shelters and tent sites adjacent to Vermont's three alpine summits (see Attachment A, Sheet 1) have seen many oversized overnight groups (i.e., groups > 10) in past seasons. Over the course of the 2004 season Feedback Sheets were filled out by caretakers and group leaders for forty-four overnight groups at these six sites. Only three of these groups were larger than the recommended overnight group size of ten, generating a compliance percentage of 93%. The Feedback Sheets also revealed the median group size for these overnight groups was ten, indicating that group leaders are fully aware of the group size recommendation and abide by it knowingly. Day-use groups of Vermont's three alpine summits are clearly lagging in this respect, however (again, see Attachment A, Sheet 1). It seems clear that future efforts to promote awareness and understanding of group-size recommendations on the part of day-use groups should consider past communications with overnight-use groups as a model.

The relationship between day-use group size and awareness of environmental ethics was also surprising in its clarity. Forty-five Group Feedback Sheets were filled out by caretakers and group leaders on Vermont's three alpine summits. These supplied data on seventeen focal categories clustered into three sections: group planning & preparedness, Leave No Trace (LNT) skills & ethics, and group leadership. The results from the three LNT categories most relevant to alpine zone day-users (awareness of durable surfaces, carry in-carry out, and consideration of other hikers) were examined in conjunction with group-size parameters (see Attachment A, Sheet 2). This analysis indicated oversized day-use groups (i.e., groups > 10) are less attentive to these three LNT principles than groups that comply with alpine group-size recommendations (i.e., groups ≤ 10). For instance, 32% of oversized groups needed to improve their awareness of durable surfaces while only 8% of compliant groups did, 48% of oversized groups needed to show more consideration for other hikers as opposed to 14% of compliant groups, and oversized groups showed a need for improvement in 30% of the combined assessment tallies of the three LNT categories evaluated versus 7% in the case of compliant groups. Although the data set used for

analysis of group-size compliance and knowledge of environmental ethics was admittedly smaller than ideal, the tendencies were nonetheless unmistakable.

**4. Who else has funded this project, and at what level?**

**5. Will this project be sustainable? If so, how?**

As of October 2004 the GMC Group Outreach Specialist will once again be a funded by AmeriCorps. The Group Outreach AmeriCorps member will spend eleven months with the Green Mountain Club, starting their stint in September and finishing in August. This essentially year-round status will greatly improve the ability of the Alpine Outreach Program to convey environmental ethics to organized groups in the off-season, before they access the alpine zone, while allowing in-season group protocols to remain in place. Public funding is never a certainty, however, and internal initiatives to support the Alpine Outreach Program are in progress.

**6. Please attach a final accounting for the project, showing cash expenses, other sources of income and amounts, contributed volunteer labor with description of labor and number of hours.**

(see Attachment A, Sheet 3)

**7. If there are documents, brochures, or other items that are relevant to this project, please attach them. Jpeg photographs and electronic files are preferred.**