

Staff Report of the Camp Property Manager
to Baltimore Yearly Meeting

David Hunter

October 2021

One of the things I love most about my work as Camp Property Manager here at Baltimore Yearly Meeting is the variety of tasks and projects that I get to take on. One day I might be driving to an auction to pick up a piece of restaurant equipment, some mattress another non-profit would like us to have or a canoe a Friend has donated to the camps; the next day I might be in the office researching the best variety of seeds to plant on a given piece of bare ground, the most cost-effective type of party tent to purchase or why the ponds at the camps are growing so much algae this year. Later that week I might find myself building a couple of picnic tables, cutting up a tree that has fallen across the driveway or talking with a contractor about the best way to solve a particularly thorny plumbing problem. There are a broad variety of tasks to tackle in this position and my professional life is never boring.

The reason many of these jobs are necessary is often quite evident. The camps need certain materials and equipment to operate, the driveways need to be passable, it is helpful to have hot and cold running water and some campers may hesitate to go swimming if they think they might come out of the pond with algae in their hair.

The reason we take on some other jobs is not always as clear: Why are we pulling up all of these non-native plants? Some of them have thorns that hurt! We already have an awful lot of trees on the camp properties. Why do we spend so much time planting new ones each year? Do we really need to spend time and energy harvesting timber and concerning ourselves with the health of our forest? The forests seem to be doing ok without our help. Why inoculate piles of wood chips and logs with fungal mycelium so that we can grow mushrooms for the kitchen? They have plenty of mushrooms at the grocery store.

Each year I find myself being drawn into these types of projects. They are stewardship projects. We think of stewardship when we think of taking care of the physical assets on our properties, the buildings and equipment we need to run our camps, but it seems the land upon which it all resides deserves our care and attention too. We can and do have an impact on the places we inhabit and these effects ripple out to the land and waterways around us.

Does all this improve the experience that young people have at the camps? I think it does and I would argue that it is as important for us to practice good stewardship of the land itself as it is for us take care of the assets on the land. We have inherited an incredible and beautiful gift in these properties. Every day I am grateful for the foresight of those Quakers who purchased the camp properties and for the opportunity to participate in their stewardship. The properties are gifts that enrich our lives and the lives of our children. They have been there for us decade after decade and if we are caring stewards they will be there for decades to come. They change our lives, and the lives of our young people and help to make us who we are as a Yearly Meeting. Given the many gifts they have given, the many ways they have made us what we are, it seems that we must do what we can to give back to these places that means so much to us!



Opening the camps in 2021

After 18 months of slumber, the Camp Property Management Committee and a host of volunteers began the work of waking the camp properties up and getting them ready for the summer camping season of 2021. There was a lot to be done after lying dormant for over a year but these friends of the BYM camping program were up to the challenge. There were 3 workdays planned for each of the residential camps and the kitchens, dining halls, cabins, bathhouses and other shared spaces received a deep cleaning and a lot of

repairs. As spring grew warmer more and volunteers came to the camps to build picnic tables, erect tents and prepare the camps for the summer to come. By the time we were ready for skills week and pre-camp to begin most of the necessary cleaning and repairs were done and we were ready to hand the camp properties off to the camp directors and staff so that they could begin working there summer magic!

Lots of careful thought went into considering how we could open the camps safely in the face of a pandemic and several projects were undertaken to keep participants safe and curtail the spread of COVID 19 at camp.

Spread 'um out

One of our goals was to make it possible for there to be as much social distancing as possible during gatherings at camp. Extra benches were added to the fire circles, and many new outdoor gathering places were created. This was accomplished by building 8 to 12 large picnic tables at each of the camps, building several picnic table sized pavilions at each of the camps to shelter campers from rain and provide protection from the sun. In addition, large tents were purchased and set up at each of the camps. All told we were able to provide an additional 1220 square feet of sheltered space at each of the residential camps and around 900 square feet of space at Common Ground where the Teen Adventure program begins and ends.



Clean 'um up

We installed hand sanitizer stations at each of the buildings at camp and improved hand washing stations at Opequon and Shiloh.

Give 'um fresh air to breathe

New ventilation fans were installed at each of the dining halls to facilitate the evacuation of hot air from the building rather than moving air around (which spreads germs) as we have when it

got hot in previous years. We also provided air purifiers in buildings like the infirmaries where it was necessary to have campers and staff in enclosed spaces.

Camp Rentals - The Catoctin Quaker Campground

As friends probably know we were forced to suspend offseason rentals at the camps due to the pandemic in 2020. Unfortunately, we have not been able to resume offseason rentals at the camps due to reductions in the BYM office staff. We look forward to being able to offer offseason rentals again as staff time becomes available.

In the meantime we have been able to offer a few other alternatives at Catoctin. In the spring and again this fall we have been offering campsites for rental on [hipcamp.com](https://www.hipcamp.com). This effort is just now



beginning to take off. We have had several groups rent campsites and we are looking forward to having several more in the weeks to come. Anyone interested in renting a campsite should visit [hipcamp.com](https://www.hipcamp.com), search for campsites in Thurmont MD and look for rentals with Catoctin in the name. They will be listed as cabins like "Elizabeth's cabin at Catoctin" or "Elias' cabin at Catoctin" Hipcamp renters get a cabin to sleep in, a fire pit, a picnic table, ropes that are set up to keep food away from animals, access to the bathhouse, firewood, freshwater and the opportunity to explore one of the most beautiful places on earth.

We have also been able to offer sites for rental on Airbnb. It is listed as the Studio at Catoctin but you may know it as the Catoctin Infirmery. Last winter several dedicated volunteers and members of the Camp Property Management Committee worked tirelessly to improve and beautify the infirmery, getting it ready to list on AirBnB. Again, after camp was over it was transformed into a cozy get away on the mountain for people to rent and enjoy. Anyone interested in visiting can go to [airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com) and search for places in Thurmont MD. It is available all year long except during the time camp is in session. The Airbnb and HipCamp rentals have generated as much income in 2021 as all three camps have generated in offseason rentals during previous years.



This winter we are trying something new at Catoctin. We have found a company that is willing to lease deer hunting rights at Catoctin from BYM. They in turn leased the rights to hunt the property to other individuals and families. We have contracted with them to lease the property on the east side of Mink Farm and Tower roads at Catoctin which is helping us manage our over abundant deer herd on the property as well as to increase revenue generated on the property.

Other Work at Catoctin

After having to cancel the construction of a cabin in 2020 we were able to get a cabin constructed in the spring of 2021. It was available for almost all of the summer camping season despite some new inspection requirements from Frederick County that came as a surprise to us. With the completion of this cabin, 10 of the 12 cabins at Catoctin have been replaced. Only two more to go!



Last winter Harry “Scotty” Scott and a few other trusty volunteers cleared a great deal of ground around the caretaker's cabin which had been completely taken over by multiflora rose and other invasive species. We were also able to clear invasive species away from part of the banks of the pond. As spring arrived we began busily planting shrubs and trees to take the place of all those menacing thorns. We planted white pine, elderberries, Nine bark, Gray Dogwood and lespedeza bicolor. We're eager to see which varieties will thrive at Catoctin. Many trees, mostly Papaws, were planted at Shiloh as well.

The year to come at Catoctin

Several smaller jobs will need to be undertaken at Catoctin this year. We have budgeted to replace the craft shelter roof in 2020 but since it was not leaking we put that work off. Now it is leaking and we need to give the structure a new roof. We are also keeping a careful eye on the dining hall roof since we know it will need to be replaced soon.

The tile floor in the lodge and kitchen have served us well for many, many years. However, the tiles are wearing thin and beginning to come up in several places. It is time for a new floor. We look forward to completing that work in the spring.

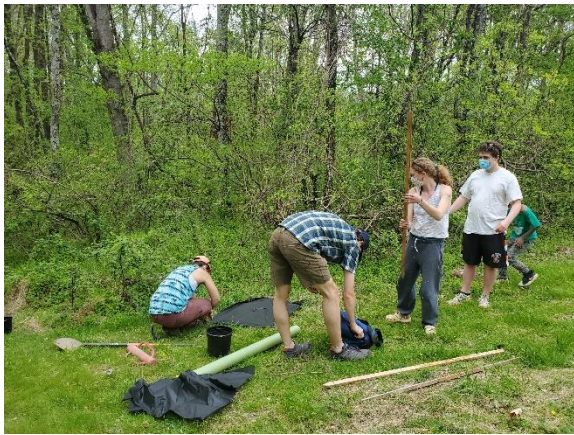
We also look forward to replacing the 11th of the 12 camper cabins in the spring of 2022. Peter Bugler will be our timber frame contractor again this year and we are grateful for all the time he has put into making beautiful camper cabins at Catoctin! We look forward to replacing the last of the camper cabins in 2023.

Opequon

Work on improving the bathhouses has continued over the last several years. Both bathhouses have received new coats of paint on the floors and walls. This summer the camp staff continued to make improvements by adding paper towel dispensers, cabinets for cleaning supplies, and racks to hang the floor mats on while cleaning. Several new sinks for hand washing have been installed as well.

Shiloh

We had planned to have a new camper cabin constructed at Shiloh for the summer of 2021. Unfortunately the fates had other plans. We had a great deal of trouble scheduling contractors for the project. We were finally able to contract with Miles Trails, a contractor, Teen Adventure trip manager, and enduring camp presence, to build the cabin. Unfortunately, we did not leave him enough time to complete the cabin before camp opened. We look forward to completing the cabin in the months to come.



Mike Reed, our caretaker at Shiloh, was able to build an awesome new hand washing station outside the dining hall in the spring. He also got ventilation fans installed in the dining hall well before camp began

The year to come at Shiloh

We have been deeply grateful to have received two generous gifts for projects at Shiloh over the last two years. Thoughtful members of the camp community have donated funds to cover the construction of a new maintenance shed, help to

purchase a new tractor, the construction of a second well at Shiloh, and to make some repairs to the pond. In addition, these generous donors have funded the construction of the rest of the camper cabins that need to be replaced at Shiloh. We look forward to completing as many of these projects as possible before the 2022 camping season.

Equipment and Vehicles



Over the course of the pandemic we have not attempted to replace any of the camps vehicles and only critically necessary new equipment has been purchased. While this enabled us to weather these difficult times, we now find ourselves living with some seriously aging equipment and vehicles. We are looking forward to replacing several vehicles, canoes and other equipment before the 2022 camping season. Fortunately we did receive a generous contribution that helped up purchase a new compact tractor at Shiloh

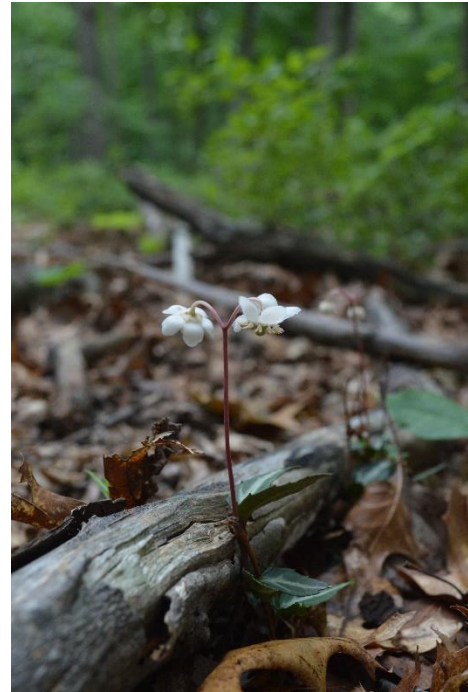
Over the last 18 months we have taken a careful look at the cost of ownership for the pickup trucks that we use at camp. The used pickup trucks that we purchase for the camps are much less expensive to buy than new vehicles. However, keeping these vehicles repaired and running is

often quite expensive. These vehicles are also not at all fuel-efficient, increasing our budget for fuel and negatively impacting our environment. After doing some research and analysis we have determined that it would be more cost-effective to purchase new vehicles and avoid costly repairs and high fuel costs. We have also found that new, high fuel efficiency and electric trucks are beginning to come onto the market. We are looking forward to purchasing a new hybrid pickup truck in the months to come. The development committee has put together a campaign to fund this investment and would love to have the support of all interested Friends. If all goes well, we look forward to purchasing additional hybrid and electric pickup trucks in the future.

Caretakers

We are profoundly blessed to have two great caretakers on our camp properties. Mike Reed continues to take meticulous care of our property at Shiloh. He rose to the particular challenges associated with opening camp during the pandemic with energy and grace. It is a wonderful to have such a competent, capable and diligent resource at Shiloh.

Dylan Phillips came to Catoctin to serve as caretaker in the spring of 2021. He has embraced the challenges of his new position and is well on his way to acquiring the skills that job demands. He is doing a fabulous job hosting HipCampers at the Catoctin Campground as well as managing Airbnb rentals. We have never had a caretaker who has been as engaged with the summer camp community as Dylan was this summer. He is also did research on and facilitated the installation of a new internet service at Catoctin which is going to serve us well into the future.



Committee work

The Property Management Committee has grown into a formidable force for accomplishing tasks on the camp properties over the last couple of years. They continue to oversee the management of the properties in the broader sense. The committee organized many work days in order to get the camps open for the summer of 2022 as well as explored and implemented new opportunities for the generation of revenue at the camps, such as opening the Catoctin Quaker Campground and getting buildings ready to post on Airbnb. I hope the Yearly Meeting is aware of all the CPMC has accomplished over the last year and takes the opportunity to say thank you when the opportunity arises.

Conclusion

The Camp properties, as many wild places, carry on whether we are there to appreciate them or not. The quiet, the solace, the peace of the place and the resplendent beauty are always there. We all look forward to the time when more of us can come and enjoy these special places. We hope to see you at Camp soon.

With gratitude,

David Hunter
Camp Property Manager
Baltimore Yearly Meeting