TO: Walter G. Wells

FROM: George Alderson

SUBJ: Notes on Sierra Club chapter activities in Washington area, 1965-69

January 9, 1988

October 1965 – I arrived in Washington, D.C., as a member of the Air Force. I had previously joined the Sierra Club in my hometown of Portland, Oregon, where I had seen some of the work of the Pacific Northwest Chapter, and I had gone to graduate school in Logan, Utah, where I was a member of the Toiyabe Chapter's "Uintah Group" based in Salt Lake City. When I arrived in Washington, local hikes were infrequent and were listed in The Argonaut, published by the Atlantic Chapter in New York.

About November 1965 – I went on a local Sierra Club hike led by Irv Delappe (then chairman of the Washington group) in Shenandoah National Park. Shortly thereafter Irv recruited me as conservation chairman of the group. A working group was formed to expand the leadership of the group, consisting of Delappe, Alderson, Armin Behr (another recent arrival in Washington formerly active in Toiyabe Chapter in Nevada), and Phoebe Moss. Together we decided to hold weekly hikes as a leadership development tool.

December 1965 or January 1966 - first issue of "Newsletter" of Washington Area Group of the Atlantic Chapter was published, listing weekly hikes. Editor (anonymously) was Phoebe Moss. (My files lack a copy of this issue, but the Feb-Mar 1966 issue refers to its hike list as the second such list.)

Late 1965 or early 1966 – Irv Delappe recommended me for a seat on the Atlantic Chapter executive committee. When that became official, I began attending (monthly?) excom meetings in New York City, where I got the benefit of the chapter's leadership expertise. Chapter leaders and the club's new eastern representative, Gary Soucie (appointed in 1966, I believe, after being a volunteer in Atlantic Chapter), encouraged me in my Washington organizing. I later served as "Decentralization Chairman" of Atlantic Chapter, to encourage organization of regional groups throughout the chapter territory, with a view toward eventual chapters spinning off.

February–March 1966 – second Newsletter. Announced weekly hikes and a general meeting on February 28, speaker to be Harry Nees, chairman of Atlantic Chapter.

March–April 1966 -- third Newsletter. More hikes. Meeting set for April 23, speaker to be Rep. Jeffery Cohelan (D-Calif), lead sponsor of club's Redwood NP bill, speaking about redwoods campaign. Newsletter announces that Wash. Area Group has undertaken wilderness study of Pass Mountain area in Shenandoah NP as part of overall study effort with PATC and The Wilderness Society; one of listed hikes is to our study area.
April 1966 – wilderness study completed: our proposal was adopted as part of the PATC proposal for entire park.

May-June 1966 – newsletter lists more hikes.


September 1966 – Washington Area Group opposes proposed dam on Hunting Creek in Cunningham Falls State Park, near Thurmont, Md.

September 25, 1966 – Washington Post outdoor column notes Atlantic Chapter's opposition to Hunting Creek dam. (We used Atlantic Chapter name in many public positions, for greater stature than just Washington Area Group would imply.)

October 1966 – Alderson testifies at hearing of Maryland Dept. of Water Resources in Annapolis, opposing Hunting Creek dam on behalf of club.

October 20, 1966 – "special issue" of Potomac Sierran headed "Save Hunting Creek" urging turnout at hearing.

November 14, 1966 – "special issue" of Potomac Sierran urging further letter-writing on Hunting Creek dam.

(I now omit further summaries of newsletter contents from this chronology.)

March 1967 – Nancy Zastrow took over as editor of Potomac Sierran

(Correction to your notes, Walter: May 1, 1967, was not a Sierra Club luncheon, but a Conservation Roundtable at which Brower spoke, not under our auspices. The roundtable was a long-standing gathering of federal agency people and conservation professionals. I believe we gave it a little mention in our newsletter to encourage Sierra Club members to sit in on that meeting to hear Brower speak.)

May 1967 – Atlantic Chapter cosigned flyer mailed to members urging turnout at wilderness hearing on Shenandoah NP.

June 1967 – Alderson testified for Atlantic chapter at Luray hearing on Shenandoah NP wilderness.

December 1967 – Jeanne Truett took over as editor of Potomac Sierran.

April 18, 1968 – Washington Group excom formally asks Atlantic Chapter to approve formation of Southeast Chapter and waive its jurisdiction over the territory.
April 26, 1968 - Petition signed by 61 members submitted to Atlantic Chapter and Sierra Club Council favoring new chapter.

May 4, 1968 - At Sierra Club board meeting in Santa Monica, Calif., the board approves formation of Southeast Chapter. Alderson in attendance. I was awarded the Sierra Club Special Achievement Award during the annual banquet, recognizing my organizing work in the Washington area.

Late May or Early June - undated form letter signed by Phillip Berry, Secretary of Sierra Club, sent to members in new chapter territory inviting them to organizational meeting June 12 at Little Falls Library, Bethesda, Md. Letter says temporary officers are: Chairman, Alderson; Vice-chairman, Jean R. Packard; Secretary, H. Anthony Ruckel.

May 17, 1968 - first "Southeast Chapter Newsletter", with Jeanne Truett as editor. Lists the groups we assumed from Atlantic Chapter -- Blue Ridge, Carolinas, Georgia.

July 19, 1968 - Southeast Chapter Newsletter reports two more groups are being organized -- Delaware and Florida. Lists results of June 12 organizing meeting and subsequent appointments:

George Alderson Chairman
James Moorman Vice-chairman
Julie N. Walker Secretary
Treasurer
Barry R. Weaver Earl O. Hannsz (Walter: note spelling)
Ronald Cooksy XC and Chairman, Conservation
Jeanne Truett XC and Chairman, Membership
Frank J. Dahlhaus XC and Editor
Dennis R. Neuzil XC and Chairman, Trips
Jean R. Packard XC and Chairman, Delaware Group
