

## Chapter 1: How a GMC Section Works

Sections are formed and exist because their members see a common purpose and want to share their efforts as well as enjoy congenial activities. Basic functions sections have in common include:

- Each section is responsible for a specific portion of the Long Trail System and/or Appalachian Trail in Vermont, and schedules trail work to maintain the trail and shelters on that portion<sup>1</sup>.
- Sections offer outdoor and social activities throughout the year. Activity planning is an important facet of section leadership.
- Each section conducts its own annual meeting to review its operations for the past year, elect officers, and provide a major social gathering.
- Each section prepares a newsletter or outings schedule, typically on a quarterly basis, and sends it to its members; newsletters and internet tools are the chief vehicles for communicating information to all section members.

Without volunteers and a supporting membership a section cannot exist. Yet, even while having common goals and interests, volunteers are individuals and function in different ways. Therefore the need arises for understanding how a section functions, and the rules that govern its operation. These are laid down in the section bylaws which typically include, but are not limited to, the following articles (see sample section bylaws in Appendix A):

- Membership (types, voting rights, dues) as defined by the corporation bylaws<sup>2</sup>;
- Section officers (responsibilities, terms of service);
- Committees (composition, responsibilities);
- Meetings (type, frequency, voting).

Bylaws provide only the formal organizational framework and may be different from section to section. Typical section operations are described in detail in the following chapters of this guide.

Throughout the chapters of this handbook, we hope you will find structures and solutions that fit the needs and circumstances of your section as well as the specific tasks at hand. Use your judgment and keep in mind the following: As section representatives, we are clearly aware that each section of the GMC has its own history, traditions, and procedures. We have tried to incorporate as many of them as possible in the text, accepting that there is often more than one way to do things. Nothing herein should be construed to change practices that have historically worked well for your section.

*People are important.* Trip leaders, committee chairs, and volunteers are the heart and soul of each section. They come and go and carry with them their own style. Do not panic if an office or

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<sup>1</sup> Except for the Northeast Kingdom section, which works on mountain trails in the northeast part of the state.

<sup>2</sup> The corporation (GMC) bylaws are shown in Appendix A. Each voting member gets one vote; a membership may represent one or two voting members.

task is not always conducted as suggested in this handbook. Consider the integrity and results of the job. Do not, however, change the bylaws to reflect an officer's style or to accommodate a specific situation. Good bylaws provide a stable business framework for your section. They should be written broadly enough to accommodate a range of styles of work. Short-term changes should be avoided.