

Project Description
AT Mega-Transect Chestnut Data Project

Scientists and volunteers from The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) and Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) will train PATC volunteers to collect data on American chestnut trees identified along the Appalachian Trail (AT). The effort is part of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's AT Mega-Transect Project, which seeks to engage the public in citizen-science efforts to collect data along the AT to raise awareness of threats to the environmental health of the Appalachian Region.

Two types of data will be collected: (1) total number of American chestnut trees three feet in height or taller within fifteen feet on either side of the trail and (2) location and description of large individual trees eight inches or greater in circumference at 4.5 feet above ground. The data will contribute to understanding the status of surviving remnants of a species that played a key role in forests throughout Appalachia before being devastated by a blight fungus imported with Asian chestnut trees in the early Twentieth Century. Data on large individual trees with the potential to produce flowers will assist TACF in increasing the genetic diversity of its backcross breeding program, which is intended to restore the American chestnut tree to its former place in the region's forests by producing an otherwise American chestnut with the blight resistant characteristics of Asian chestnut.

Initial Training Date: Saturday, May 10th, 2008 from 10:00 am to 12 noon

Dr. Doug Boucher will lead the initial training session. Additional training sessions will be conducted by TACF and PATC staff as necessary.

Initial Training Location: Gambrill State Park trail parking lot

Directions from Washington: Take I-270 north to Frederick, which transitions into U.S. Route 15, and continue to Route 40 west (West Patrick Street). Exit to the I-70 west/Route 40 split, bear right and continue on Route 40. Turn right on Gambrill Park Road and follow one mile to the Rock Run Area entrance on your left to reach the campground. Continue on Gambrill Park Road to reach the trail parking lot. <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/western/gambrill.html>

Training Participants: Training participants will be encouraged to plan to collect data in teams in the afternoon following the training to provide practice in the identification process and prompt feedback on the training and data collection process.

Timing of Data Collection: May 10 – October 31 (While trees have leaves) 2008 data collection will begin after initial training and continue throughout the season.

Location of Data Collection: The goal of the 2008 survey will be to monitor the approximately 250 miles of the Appalachian Trail under the jurisdiction of the PATC. This section stretches from Rockfish Gap to Pine Grove near Carlisle, PA.

Reporting of Data: Chestnut Count Report and "Large Tree" Chestnut Report forms will be used to record data in the field. Reporting will be done online using the same formats.

Supplies: GPS locator, trail maps, measuring tape, hand held microscope or magnifier, clipboard, pencils, reporting forms, list of end/start points, Chestnut identification resource booklet (provided at training).