

# AMERICAN HIKER

2018 VOL. 1





## NEXTGEN TRAIL LEADERS PROVIDE A VOICE FOR PUBLIC LAND PROTECTIONS

American Hiking Society united five emerging outdoor leaders from across the country united in Washington D.C. in February to stand up for public lands and trail access. These leaders represented the voice of AHS members, partners, and the millions of supporters of public lands and met with congress and federal agency leaders to demand that public lands be protected and trail access and maintenance be preserved and expanded, during American Hiking Society's and the Partnership for the National Trails System's advocacy week—Hike the Hill®. Each of the NextGen Trail Leaders are accomplished hikers and thought leaders in their own right. When brought together through AHS, they are a powerful and diverse voice for the hiking community and introduce public lands to a whole new audience. [Hear more](#) about these rising stars in the

outdoor arena and what inspires them to speak up on behalf of public lands.

For **Ron Griswell**, navigating white water rapids for 15-days with an individual with cerebral palsy transformed his life. During that trip, Ron carried his expedition partner over a mile, to provide them the opportunity to hike with the group. Seeing the joy on their face while experiencing the hike brought Ron profound pleasure in helping others experience outdoor recreation. As a result of this and other experiences, Ron re-enrolled in college and currently organizes outdoor activities for students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, a Historically Black College and University, where most have not had the opportunity for the outdoors to transform their lives. Stay tuned to hear more from Ron as he leads an American Hiking Alternative Break in March.



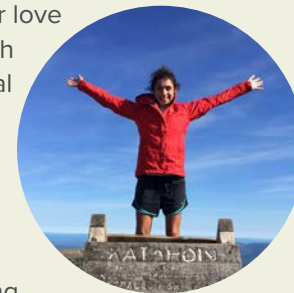
**Tyler Lee** is the embodiment of trail stewardship. Beginning with AmeriCorps and the Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church Foundations, Tyler gained valuable insight on the critical need to protect Wilderness areas, our most sacred public lands. Tyler makes it his mission to ensure that these same opportunities on public lands are available for the next generation.



Tyler Ray



**Dakota Jackson** combines her love of history and archaeology with hiking to highlight the historical and cultural significance of our nation's trails. After college, Dakota thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail and blogged for The Trek to share a feminist perspective on hiking. Dakota also shines a light on the health benefits of hiking, including managing anxiety. Dakota is currently working on a podcast about her time on the Appalachian Trail and uses these mediums to advocate for public land protections.



**Liz Thomas** not only broke the women's unsupported thru-hike record of the Appalachian Trail in 2011, but she has also won the the 2017 National Outdoor Book Award for *Long Trails: Mastering the Art of the Thru-Hike*. And no wonder . . . Liz has backpacked over 17,000 miles across the United States on 20+ long distance hikes and uses these experiences to advocate for public lands and trails. As a NextGen Trail Leader, Liz [spoke passionately](#) at the 50th Anniversary of the



National Trails System Act Congressional Reception before hundreds of congressional staff, federal officials, and trail organizations on the importance of preserving and maintaining our nation's trails and public lands and the need to introduce the next generation to these experiences.

**Maricela Rosales** grew up in Southern California and did not become introduced to hiking our public lands until college, as hiking and outdoor recreation wasn't a strong part of her community growing up. Recognizing that many others within the Latino community were also excluded from these opportunities, she began working with a local organization, Nature for All, to culturally connect Latino families and children to the outdoors. Maricela has continued this work through Latino Outdoors and hopes to create a snowball effect that enhances the public lands experiences for all communities. During Hike the Hill®, Maricela advocated for more inclusion in government programs for diverse communities that promote public lands and trails for all.



# VOLUNTEER VACATIONS

## HIKING ADVENTURE TRIPS WITH A PURPOSE

Imagine returning from vacation feeling relaxed, connected with nature, and filled with memories of adventures with new friends.

Imagine working hard, getting dirty, digging deep...and feeling immensely rewarded.

Imagine building a legacy that will provide outdoor adventures to others for years to come.

**Stop Imagining. Start Doing.**

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See 50+ service vacation destinations at [AmericanHiking.org/volunteer-vacations](https://AmericanHiking.org/volunteer-vacations)



Watch the video!

### Record Number of Participants Hike the Hill® to Advocate for Trails and Public Lands

The largest ever Hike the Hill® brought 123 hikers and trail organization representatives to Washington, D.C. to advocate before congress and the federal government for trail programs and public lands. AHS NextGen Trail Leaders joined trail organizations from the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) for a week of action and celebration of the [50th Anniversary](#) of the [National Trails System Act](#). Events and meetings honored the achievements of this landmark legislation and called on Congress and federal agencies to complete the National Scenic and Historic Trails System and to fully fund the programs that provide for the stewardship, maintenance, and expansion of trails and public lands.

Among the asks to Congress was for members to publicly speak

out in support of public lands. With recent efforts by the current administration to shrink National Monuments and proposals that would nearly double the fee to enter our most popular National Parks, it is crucial for our elected officials to vocally oppose these attacks on public land and do everything in their authority to protect these open spaces.

During Hike the Hill®, the President released his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2019, which, among other cuts to trails funding, calls for the near elimination of support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The LWCF is America's most important funding source for building and maintaining trails, and it does it at no cost to American taxpayers because it's funded through offshore oil and gas leasing. In addition, the legislation that authorizes the LWCF expires on September 30, 2018. Hike the Hill participants called on both the Administration and Congress to save the LWCF.

NextGen Trail Leaders and other Hike the Hill® participants shared with Members of Congress and their staff all of the projects that they have completed through the fund and were assured by many offices that Members recognize the need to reauthorize the LWCF before it expires. We urge AHS members to contact their Representatives and tell them to pass [H.R. 502/S.896/S.569](#).

The participation of the AHS NextGen Trail Leaders in Hike the Hill® brought a new level of engagement to the advocacy week that expanded the voices that were being represented, putting forward a more inclusive view of hiking and public lands policies.

AHS will seize upon the momentum from Hike the Hill® to push for public lands protections, LWCF reauthorization, and funding for trails in our advocacy efforts. Stay tuned for new opportunities for AHS members to engage.



# TRAIL TERMINUS AT MONUMENT OR MINE?

By Matthew J. Nelson

Arizona Trail Association  
Larry Simkins

The Arizona National Scenic Trail (AZT) traverses deserts, mountains, forests, grasslands, and canyons along a wild and remote path that is often referred to as “the backbone of Arizona.” The trail can be hiked in either direction, but the AZT’s founding father envisioned a south-to-north adventure. Maybe it has something to do with walking with the sun at your back, or following the same path as migratory birds making their annual journey north, or watching the landscape come to life as dull winter transitions to colorful spring. Seventy percent of thru-hikers choose a northbound trajectory.

Walking through the heart of the Grand Canyon is an unforgettable experience, as is the day you wake

up in a forest of giant saguaro cacti and sleep under towering ponderosa pine trees in the Rincon Mountains. Perhaps most dramatic of all the scenic landscapes is the one you encounter as you arrive at the northern terminus at the Arizona/Utah border. The dense pine forest of the Kaibab Plateau disappears, and soon you’re surrounded by sagebrush and wildflowers as you descend into Coyote Valley. A world of colorful sandstone cliffs and domes is revealed as you take the final steps of the 800-mile Arizona Trail.

Although the AZT officially ends at the Stateline Campground, the adventure is far from over. Just a few steps away is Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, one of the

most photographed destinations in the Southwest, and home to Coyote Buttes, The Wave, and Paria Canyon. One of the reasons the Arizona Trail ends where it does is to deliver individuals to the entrance of this natural wonder. When President Clinton designated the area a national monument in 2000, everyone at the Arizona Trail Association (ATA) celebrated. With the southern terminus located within Coronado National Memorial and the northern terminus bordering Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, we assumed these most important waypoints would be protected in perpetuity.

But when President Trump dispatched Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review 27 National

Monuments in April of 2017, we were genuinely concerned. While much of the national attention has been focused on Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, impacts to Vermilion Cliffs could be detrimental to the Arizona National Scenic Trail. After all, Vermilion Cliffs contains one of the largest number of rock art sites in any nationally-protected area, and they’re believed to be among the oldest in the United States. Also on the list of national monuments being reviewed is Ironwood Forest, and while it doesn’t have an immediate nexus with the AZT, it’s one of the primary destinations for our youth outreach and education program. Ironwood Forest is an ideal outdoor classroom, with an unusually high density of archaeological sites and petroglyphs where many youth from Tucson are able to connect with ancient cultures in a meaningful way.

It should come as no surprise that in addition to the cultural and recreational resources found within Vermilion Cliffs and Ironwood Forest, there are also abundant mineral resources underground. Reducing the size of these particular monuments and many

others around the Southwest could prove beneficial to mining project proponents. But at what cost?

**“Impacts to Vermilion Cliffs National Monument could be detrimental to the Arizona National Scenic Trail.”**

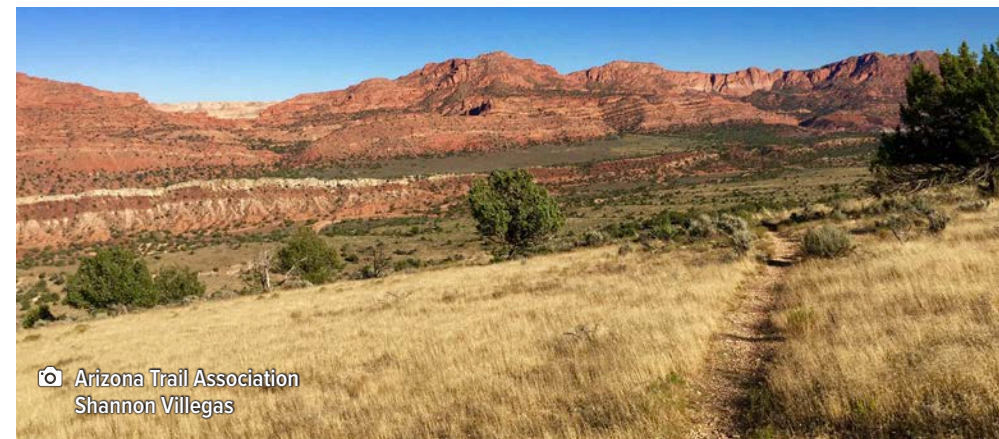
The numbers are pretty straightforward. In Arizona, the outdoor recreation industry contributes \$21.2 billion in consumer spending; \$5.7 billion in wages and salaries; \$1.4 billion in state and local tax revenues; and is responsible for providing 201,000 jobs (Outdoor Industry Association, 2017). The economic impact of the mining industry is \$4.3 billion; \$482 million in state and local tax revenues; and is responsible for providing 43,800 jobs (Mining Association of Arizona, 2015).

The extractive industry is important to Arizona and America, and there are plenty of examples of mining and recreation industry leaders working together for short- and long-term benefits for communities, and building conscious infrastructure to

minimize environmental scars after mining operations have ended. There are even examples of that happening on the Arizona Trail. But one resource should not be outright sacrificed for another in the name of jobs, especially when one industry is sustainable and the other has a very short life span.

Public lands that are nationally significant should be hands-off to development, including Congressionally and Presidentially designated parks, monuments and trails. Undoing the work that has been done over the last hundred years is a disservice to past, present and future generations. We’re already leaving our children a particularly ugly mess to clean up. The very least we can do is preserve currently-protected wild lands for our grandchildren. Theodore Roosevelt said, “We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people have ever received, and each one of us must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune.” National monuments, parks and trails are priceless. Now it’s up to us to tell our elected leaders just how important they are, and show how hard we’re willing to fight to protect them.

Matthew J. Nelson is the Executive Director of the Arizona Trail Association, the nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect, maintain, enhance, promote and sustain the Arizona Trail as a unique encounter with the land. Learn more at [aztrail.org](http://aztrail.org).



Arizona Trail Association  
Shannon Villegas



# DREAMS OF UNINTERRUPTED LANDSCAPES

By Liz “Snorkel” Thomas

“To be a hiker is to be homesick for a place I’ve never been.” That’s what my friend Bill told me when he quit his job to walk across the Utah desert in June. It was a bad idea – especially since he’d spent the winter doing little more than programming in Pittsburgh. But the desert called to him like foreign lands to sailors of old. He became like those explorers, and came back with stories from sandstone cliffs in a landscape not fenced in by barbed wire or property lines, but limited only by his own imagination. I too am one of those explorers—albeit an armchair adventurer dreaming of a landscape expansive and remote, but also uninterrupted by modern man. As hikers we can simply embrace the large swaths of protected areas we have visited, but also for the hikes that live only in our imaginations.

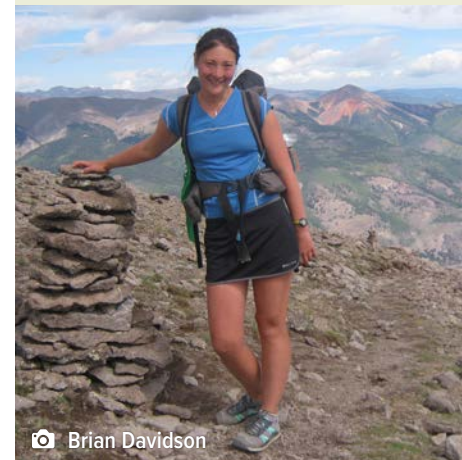
Why do I care about National Monuments I have never visited? So far, job and family have kept me from walking in Bill’s footsteps across Utah, but they’ve also kept me from visiting the South Pole. But I watch movies about penguins and Antarctic explorers and envision for hours at a time what it must be like to be there. Be it Antarctica or Bears Ears, I relish that we

live in a world of wild wonders. I value knowing that lands exist mostly unfettered by modern humans’ touch and sacred with the footsteps of travelers of the past. When National Monuments are reduced, so too do we shrink the reaches of the explorative mind. Though my hikes in “monuments under review” are modest so far, I take solace knowing that, should I put my mind to it, I too could walk across a landscape unmarred by lights, heavy machinery, or “No Trespassing Signs.”

As a long-distance hiker, I know all too well the alternative to large, continuous protected landscapes. I walked the long, skinny green corridor of the Appalachian Trail and ventured on the still unconnected Pacific Northwest Trail. Both trails have sections marked as “trail” that are penned on either side by private property. Here, hikers walk a thin line of trail or public road surrounded by backyards, ranches, tree farms, and mining development. These are important parts of America. But the experiences associated with walking these areas do not bring me the solace I seek while hiking. I’ve walked miles of roads afraid to pee, lest a landowner find me squatting behind their bush. Despite exhaustion from a day of hiking, I’ve trudged hours on these narrow public corridors, sometimes in the dark, to find a legal place to camp. As a woman, I feel exposed to the driver of any car who comes along the road I’m walking to connect sections of trail. I hike to get away from

human troubles, but walking these interrupted landscapes forces me into situations where the dangers aren’t bears or lightning storms, but the very human concerns I am fleeing.

**“As hikers we can simply embrace the large swaths of protected areas we have visited, but also for the hikes that live only in our imaginations.”**



© Brian Davidson

So what makes Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante so important for hikers? The answer is connectivity. It’s not just good for wildlife who need big ranges for migration. Hikers walk because, well, we like to cover some miles and watch nature change as we move. Imagine if halfway through the hike up Half Dome,

the view was abruptly interrupted by buildings, heavy machinery, or no trespassing signs. When Bears Ears became a monument in 2016, it created a wide public corridor that connects Canyonlands National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreational Area. Grand Staircase Escalante connects Capitol Reef National Park, Dixie National Forest, and Vermillion Cliffs National Monument (also up for review). This opened a world of possibilities where a hiker could walk 1,000 continuous miles, almost all on public land, with nothing but Mother Nature to reckon with. There are few places in the country—heck, on this planet—where we can say this.

When hiking closer to population centers, I accept that I will see houses and factories. But that’s why a National Monument is different. These monuments are grander, bigger, and wilder than a local open space trail system. They are remote, expansive, and uninterrupted. They are scary. They are extraordinary, above and beyond what a hiker can find in a city or county park. To reduce the monuments is to reduce the world of possibility. By saving these monuments, we preserve not just the unfettered landscape, but the human psyche.

Liz Thomas is among the most experienced hikers in the United States and is known for backpacking light, fast and solo. In 2011, she broke the women’s unsupported speed record on the 2,181-mile long Appalachian Trail, besting the previous record by almost a week. Her book, [Long Trails: Mastering the Art of the Thru-hike](#), won the National Outdoor Book Award, which called it “destined to become the ‘bible’ of the sport.” Liz is also an [American Hiking Society Ambassador](#) and [NextGen Trail Leader](#).

## Your Voice on the Hill

Hello, American Hiking Society! I'm Tyler Ray, and I am thrilled to join the AHS family as the new Director of Policy and Advocacy. I look forward to bringing more than six years of policy and advocacy experience from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) together with my passion for hiking and the outdoors to lead the fight for public lands and trails.

Like our most beloved trails, the path ahead will be long and at times arduous as we face proposed funding cuts to trail programs, threatened reductions to our public lands, the possible expiration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and legislation that amends the Wilderness Act, compromising the most protected and untouched land in the country. AHS and I will

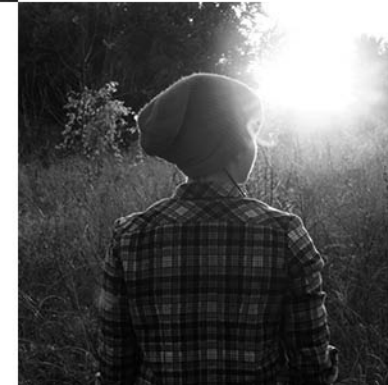
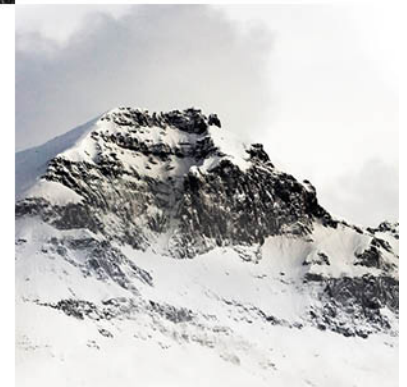


fight every day to protect and expand the trails you love, but we will need your help.

Having just experienced my first Hike the Hill®, I am inspired and energized by the determination of AHS members and affiliated organizations to speak on behalf of the national hiking community.

Through 2018 and beyond, AHS will provide new opportunities for members to engage on trail and public lands issues, using the collective voice of our members to shape and defend policies that impact the trails we all love and our shared hiking

experience. I hope that you will join me in these efforts as we blaze new trails together.



## Our public lands are at risk.

Every week you hear about a new threat—actions that shrink National Monuments and proposals that seek to re-designate public lands, possibly opening them up to drilling.

You can help protect the places you love to hike and explore.

[You have until only March 16 to get your shirt and wear your love for public lands.](#)

AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY'S  
**NATIONAL TRAILS DAY®**

# JOIN THE PARTY

June 2, 2018

Across the country, thousands of individuals and organizations will offer local stewardship and recreational opportunities to celebrate America's magnificent trails system. This party is going to be BIG as it honors the 50th anniversary of the National Trail System. And this year, we are urging every participant to give back to their trail, by doing anything from picking up trash to weilding a pulaski. Join the nationwide celebration by registering an event at [AmericanHiking.org/National-Trails-Day](http://AmericanHiking.org/National-Trails-Day).



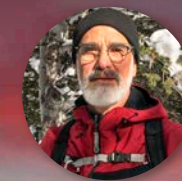
## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

As I write this, my wife and I are just back from a wonderful day of snowshoeing in Rocky Mountain National Park. It was a cold, crisp morning with not a cloud in the sky. This is what our public lands are all about. It is the ability to get out and enjoy our natural environment, to recharge, and to exercise that is very important to us and to you as AHS members. For many years, almost all of my family's outdoor activities of hiking, backpacking, and snowshoeing have been enjoyed on our public lands. Prior to moving to Colorado 16 years ago, I spent a lot of time doing hydrologic research in caves in many National Parks around the country. This research would have been significantly more difficult to conduct on non-public lands. Our public lands are natural laboratories for conducting many different kinds of research to better understand our natural environment.

In this country, we have been protecting special places for future generations for more than 150 years. We have set aside more than 635 million acres of mountains, forests, deserts, plains, and coasts to be managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Now some of these public lands are under threat by proposed shrinkage in size and being opened to incompatible usage. AHS is fighting to protect our public lands.

Join my family in celebrating and protecting our public lands.

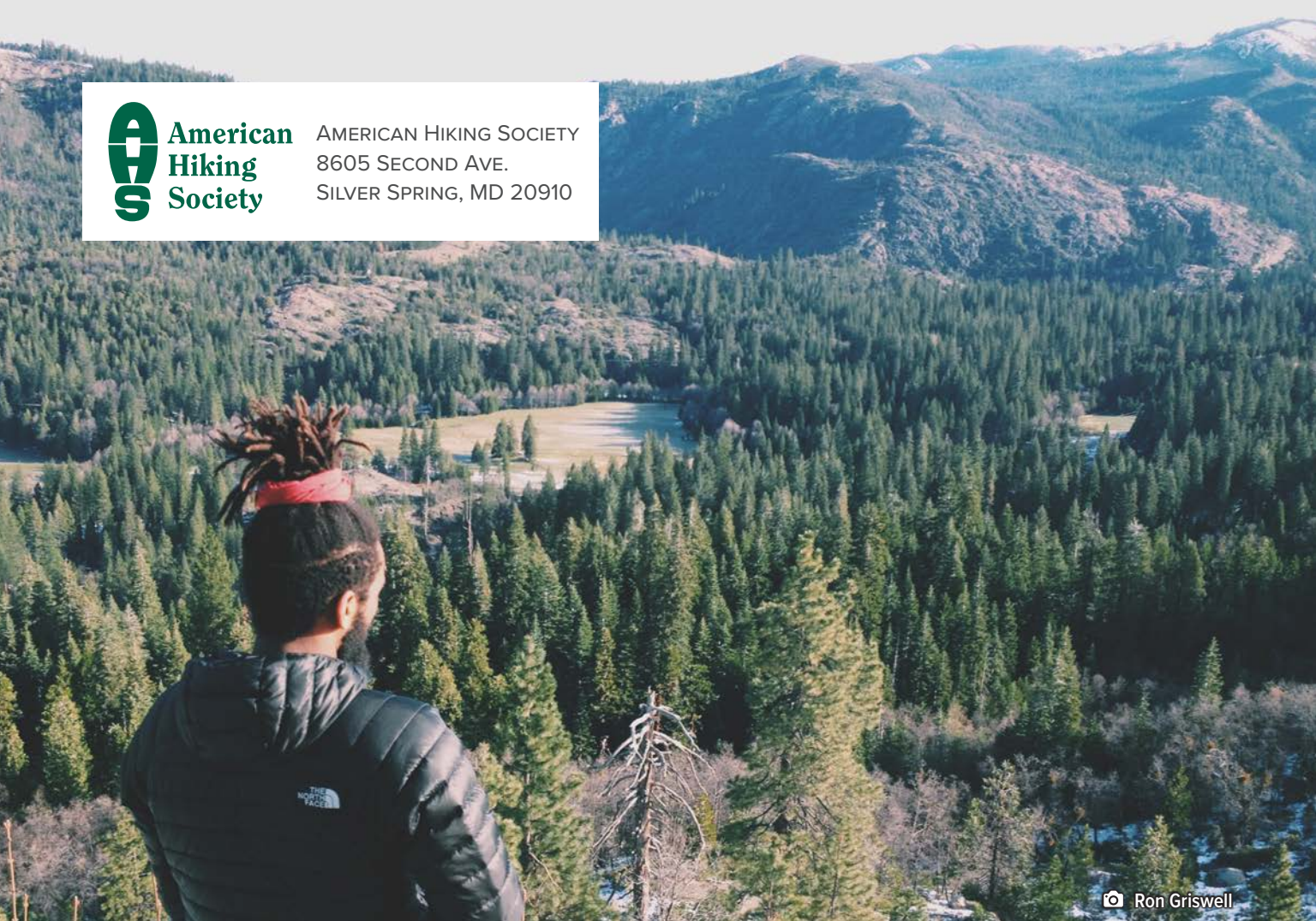
Hike on,



*Jack Hess*  
Jack Hess  
Board Chair



AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY  
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📷 Ron Griswell

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