

## FINAL REPORT – REESE WELLS

### Hiking the Appalachian Trail, a Qualitative Study

For two weeks this summer I hiked the Appalachian Trail from Spring Mountain (the AT's trailhead), GA to Nantahala Outdoor Center outside Asheville. While this 135 trek was originally fashioned after a loose qualitative photovoltaic study analyzing the feasibility of installing solar panel systems at shelters on the trail, I learned more about myself than solar systems. I will, however, first discuss the academic side of the story.

As it turns out, the AT during the summer is poor for photovoltaic technology. There's too much shade at the shelters. Solar cells need direct sunlight to have any sort of meaningful efficiencies, and of the fifty shelters we passed only three had any sort of potential for installing a solar system. Realizing that, in addition to the intense physical (and fiscal) requirements necessary for installing the systems in the middle of the woods, miles from any sort of civilization, made for an UNFEASIBLE result. This was disappointing, but understandable. The AT was designed as a way to get away from technology, society, and all of the weight that's attached. Perhaps photovoltaic systems have no place on the trail.

With that said, know that this trip was a discovery for me. I learned more about myself in these two weeks than I ever imagined. The practical knowledge gained far outweighed any classes taken at Carolina thus far. I know better my mental and physical limits and what exactly it takes to be an accomplished hiker. I got the itch because of this trip, and I cannot thank you enough for providing me with such an opportunity. Without the Foundation and its generous scholarship, I would never have been able to afford the nearly \$750 worth of expenses. Your scholarship allowed me to pay for my boots, backpack, sleeping bag, and food.

I look forward to my senior year at the Lodge and pursuing all things excellence. This trip has helped give me direction after graduation, and I'm excited to see where my journey takes me. I do know, however, that I will be at the Lodge and enjoying my brother's company.

Thank you again. Your charity has allowed for one of my greatest life experiences.

YITB,  
Byron Reese Wells