APPALACHIAN TRAIL – THRU HIKE

Project Design Document

Mickie Blair

Title:
Appalachian Trail – Thru Hike

Description/Feature Set:
The Appalachian Trail Game is an adventure-based game on the 2,193-mile-long footpath in the eastern United States extending between Springer Mountain in Georgia and Mount Katahdin in Maine. A thru-hiker is a person who attempts to hike the entire trail in a single season carrying only a backpack and supplies. A thru-hiker must make stops along the way in towns to replenish supplies and allow the body to recover.

During the game, the player will face obstacles such as:

- Weather
- Wildlife
- Injury
- Sickness
- Gear Damage

During the game, the player will be able to control:

- The distance walked each day
- The amount of food consumed
- Refill water to maintain health and energy levels

The player must reach Mount Katahdin before October 15 when Mount Katahdin closes for the year.

 Before leaving for the trail, the player must choose a trail name, starting gear, starting date, available funds, food supplies and water amount.

Purpose/Application:
The game purpose is to allow the player to simulate a thru-hike on the Appalachian Trail. The images in the game will give the player an idea of what to expect if on the trail.   I expect most users of the game will use to game to prepare for an eventual thru-hike attempt.

Premise/High Concept:
Mount Katahdin is Calling! Do you have what it takes to make it all the way? Start your in adventure in Georgia and walk all the way to Maine.

Genre:
Adventure/Survival/Strategy

Platform:
The game platform will be a laptop or PC.   The game could eventually be adapted for a tablet, but the images and necessary game statistics will be incompatible with small screens.

Audience/Market:

The game audience will be for people interested in the Appalachian Trail. The game is similar is to Oregon Trail so I expect a large majority of the player will be those who remember that game.   The game will also appeal to the younger crowd interested in hiking the trail after high school or college.

Rating:

ESRB – EVERYONE

Player Mode:

The game is single player.

Time Interval:

The time interval of the game will be controlled by the player. The speed of the game can be adjusted to allow the game to advance at a faster rate.

Backstory/Synopsis:

The game has no backstory, other than the player "saving" money for the trip.

Character Descriptions:

The game only has one character which is the player. The player however can choose their gear which affects their pack weight which in turn affects energy consumption.

Competitive Analysis:

I am not aware of any games currently in the market like the game. However, an older game Oregon Trail is comparable.

Rules:

The player must choose a name, a start date, starting gear, and supplies before setting off.   During the game play, the player must maintain energy and health levels greater than zero.   The player should also not run out of funds for the trip. If the player fails to maintain adequate energy, health or funds, the game ends.   The game will also end if the player does not reach Mount Katahdin before October 15.

Challenges:

The player must balance funds, energy and health levels during game play to reach Mount Katahdin before it closes on October 15. The player will run into obstacles such as a sprained ankle, norovirus, blisters, etc.   The player can recover health by taking rest days(Zeros) in town, however zero days cost money.   The challenge is to balance all these factors and complete all 2193 miles.

Strategies:

Types of Player Strategies:

- Fast - Walk a lot of miles per day and consume as much energy. The player is taking a chance that an injury will end through hike by taking the small amount of energy and health remaining.
- Moderate – Maintain a consistent speed, health and energy to reach the next town even if an event occurs to decrease health and/or energy.
- Slow - Plays the game at a leisurely pace, enjoying the images and taking as much time as possible to reach the end.

Theory/Game Balance:

The game will consist of the player adjusting their strategy on each play in order to accomplish the goal of reaching Katahdin.   The game's obstacles are picked at random so each play will be different.

Perspective/Game View:

The game will consist of an image which represents the current game action or waypoint. A Status Bar will display the date, available funds, health, energy, water supply, food supplies, and distances to the next waypoints.   The player will have the option to view a map of trail as well as a guidebook which shows the remaining waypoints a lot the trail.

In the town or resupply points, the player will see a list of available town options. The player will have the option to purchase replacement gear and food supplies.   The food supplies can be added to the pack or mailed ahead for later pick up.

User Interface:

The game will only be available on PC and laptops. The player will use a mouse or touchpad to click buttons indicating the next action.   The game display has text as well as graphical elements to indicate the button's function.

Audio:

None

Future Updates:

Future Updates will include:

- More waypoints
- More types of random obstacles
- Custom graphics
- A wider variety of images for random trail images
- A wider variety of water images for water sources
- Code revisions to allow the game to be played on tablets
- A more detailed gear store to allow the player to completely choose all items in the pack