THE TENNESSEE EASTMAN
HIKING & PADDLING NEWS

June 1999

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NEXT TWO MONTHS AT A GLANCE

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Bridge Replacement in Laurel Fork Gorge

Submitted by the USDA Forest Service

On January 7 and 8, 1998, a major flood event occurred in portions of Carter County, Tennessee. The flood was caused by a combination of an extended, heavy rain and melting of the snowpack in higher elevations of the watershed of the Doe River and Laurel Fork Creek around the communities of Roan Mountain and Hampton. Although the event was relatively limited in scope, it was very devastating in scale, resulting in seven deaths and millions of dollars of property damage. It was estimated to be a 100-year flood event. The affected area was declared a state and federal (FEMA) disaster area.

One impact of the flood was the destruction of two Appalachian Trail footbridges over Laurel Fork Creek on the Cherokee National Forest. Both of these bridges were constructed in 1985 of steel bar joist stringers and wood timber, both were 46-foot spans. Both bridges were totally destroyed, including all decking, stringers, and three of the four concrete abutments.

Soon after the flood, the Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club (TEHC), the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC), the Forest Service began discussing alternatives for a permanent resolution. The process was complex, due to the long span (and therefore high cost) of the two bridges, and the fact that the area is within the Pond Mountain Wilderness. Wilderness designation meant that no motorized equipment could be used in bridge reconstruction, and placed limits on what type of bridges were compatible with Wilderness values while being structurally sound. The two destroyed bridges were constructed prior to Wilderness designation in 1986. A bulldozer was used to get materials to the site...
tools were used throughout the construction. Those were not options now. The resolution had to consider the needs and standards appropriate for the A.T. as a National Scenic Trail including the Optimal Location Review (OLR) documentation, and the needs and standards appropriate within Congressionally-designated Wilderness. Wilderness standards include both nationwide standards mandated by Congress, and specific Wilderness standards developed through the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) planning process.

By May of 1998, TEHC, working with the Forest Service, had developed a temporary blue-blaze bypass route approximately 1.3 miles long, preventing hikers from choosing between a paved-road bypass or attempting two hazardous creek crossings. Water level in Laurel Fork Creek varies greatly by season and rainfall, but can be chest-deep or more in late spring. All brushing and trail clearing was done using primitive tools. The consensus decision was that the best permanent solution was replacement of the two bridges in their existing locations with a design that met Wilderness standards.

Cherokee National Forest engineering, trail, and Wilderness specialists researched nationwide for appropriate designs and materials. It was determined that the construction of the bridges without mechanized equipment in a timely manner, hopefully prior to 1999 thru-hiking season, was beyond the abilities of TEHC volunteers and local Forest Service personnel, and the Forest Service issued a request for bids. The Cherokee National Forest determined that the project was the top trail priority forest-wide. Jim Moran, a contractor based in Abingdon, Virginia, and with experience on "primitive skill" projects for the National Park Service, was the successful bidder. The contract was awarded in February, 1999, with a not-to-exceed date of June 20, 1999.

Mr. Moran prefabricated the wooden (pressure-treated pine lumber) decking and rail materials. All materials, cement and four 50-foot long stringers of pressure-treated poles, were transported to the sites using six mules belonging to Johnny Reed of the Roan Mountain community. Mr. Reed logs with horses and mules. The bridge sites were 1.1 and 1.5 miles from the nearest road access outside the Wilderness.

Mr. Moran and his crew worked diligently and the weather cooperated, enabling the construction to proceed rapidly. The bridges were completed and opened for hikers April 28, 1999, and the temporary blue-blaze route was closed. The remains of the steel bar joists will be removed from the Wilderness by mule team. The new bridges are approximately 24-30 inches higher than the old bridges, making them less susceptible to future flood events.

1998 TEHCC Top Maintainers

Bill Stowell reporting

Many people put out a lot of effort to help maintain the Appalachian Trail. In 1998 we had 6850 volunteer hours by 211 people. The top maintainers accounted for 3240 hours or 47% of the total. The following people were top maintainers in 1998: Ed Oliver, Derrick Stowell, Bill Stowell, Frank Williams, Bruce Cunningham, Joe DeLoach, Bob Peoples, Darrol Nickels, Mary Cunningham, Steve Perri, Dixie Hoilman, Fred Hoilman, John Thompson, and John Kiefer.

TEHCC is always in need of more people to help maintain the AT. Here is some information on the top maintainers to demonstrate the need for more help. Of the top 14 maintainers: one will be leaving for college, eight are retired, three are 65 plus years old, three are adopters and only three are current Eastman employees. I hope everyone will find some time to come out and help.

Konnarock Crew

Wilders Mine Hollow Relocation

Joe Deloach reporting

We have four consecutive weeks of Konnarock this year, the last two in June (June 3-7 and June 10-14). We are asking for the four consecutive weeks in hopes of relocating the Trail on Round Bald, since once that project is started it needs to be finished quickly. Otherwise it is far from ideal to have consecutive weeks, since normally our volunteers...
Konnarock come from a small core group within the Club and people have other things to do. So, it will especially help this year to have more Club participation in our project with the Konnarock Crew. These are fun projects with different jobs for different folks, and it would really be nice to see some fresh faces. Details of the project are in the May newsletter; volunteers are sought any day but especially Friday-Sunday of each week. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Joe DeLoach.

Scheduled Activities and Trip Reports

Family/Beginner Hike: Mouse Creek Falls Hike, June 5
Leader: Ed Oliver, 423-349-6668. Rating: Easy
This is an easy hike along an old railroad grade in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This hike is suitable for beginners, families, or anyone who enjoys a leisurely hike. We will drive to the Big Creek Ranger Station and then hike about 3 miles to Mouse Creek Falls. We will return by the same trail. The trail follows Big Creek which is one of the beautiful mountain streams in the park. The stream has trout and also has several places where you can go swimming. Bring your swim suit if you want to take a dip in the cold, clear waters. If anyone is interested, we can continue up the old railroad grade past the falls until we decide to turn around and head back to the cars. Bring water and lunch. Meet in the parking area between McDonalds and Burger King in Colonial Heights at 8:00 AM. For additional information, contact Ed Oliver at (423) 349-6668.

Hike: Smokies Dayhike: Thunderhead Mtn, June 12
Leader: Neil Dotson, 423-245-6105, Rating: Difficult
Tired of cramped-up city life, feeling trapped like a duck in a pen? Large phone bills got you down? Still craving strange ursine / feline hybrids? Then this hike is for you - if you're willing to do the 12.5 mile there-and-back, and the climb of about 3750 feet. We will be hiking up the Lead Cove trail from Laurel Creek Road (before getting to Cades Cove), then up the Bote Mt. trail, and then trail north on the A.T. to Thunderhead Mt., the highest point in the park. Although views are obscured at the peak, there are some fine views shy of the peak at a pair of outcroppings called - uh, I forget. Anyway, given the length of the hike and the distance we have to travel to the trailhead, we will meet in Colonial Heights between Burger King and McDonalds at 7:00 a.m. Bring plenty of water, raingear, lunch, and of course your own corn, if you wish, since none grows locally. Plan for this to be an all-day trip; we may want to catch dinner on the way back.

Roan Mountain Rhododendron Hike, June 19
Leader: Steve Perri, 349-5091, Rating: Moderate
This hike is somewhat vague in the title but involves hiking from Carvers Gap to Grassy Ridge. This same hike is likely be offered the following weekend by Steve Falling since it rains on my hikes anyway! This hike should be a good time for spotting the blooms of the rhodos. I'm considering a late morning departure, say 10:00 a.m. as opposed to 8:00 a.m. to allow for the clouds to burn off. However, this is flexible. Plan to bring lunch, water, and of course rain gear - just in case. The round trip distance is 5-6 miles. We'll meet in Colonial Heights between Burger King and McDonalds at 7:00 a.m. Contact the trip leader for more details and to firm up the time.

AT Hike: Carvers Gap to Grassy Ridge, June 26
Leader: Steve Falling, 239-5502. Rating: Easy to moderate
One of the most beautiful places in East Tennessee is the Roan Highlands. In particular, the section of trail between Carvers Gap and Grassy Ridge is always a treat. The broad, grassy balds have an abundance of wild rhododendrons. We hope this trip is timed to hit the bloom near its peak. The temperature is much lower at this elevation so bring appropriate clothing and rain gear. Also bring lunch, water, sunscreen, hat, camera, etc. This is about a 6 mile hike although a shorter trip may be taken if desired. Therefore I rate the trip easy to moderate. We will meet in Colonial Heights between McDonalds and Burger King in Colonial Heights at 8:00 a.m.
Fun Fest: Bays Mountain Moonlight Hike, July 22
Leader: Carl Fritz, 477-4669. Rating: Easy
This is the annual stroll around the lake at dusk. The hike starts at 8:00 PM. Usually, some animals are seen and heard. It is a great hike for children. Refreshments are usually served after this pleasant outing. We need about fourteen volunteers to insure that no one wanders off in the dark. This is accomplished by the volunteers hiking at the back of the line and a volunteer standing guard at each connecting trail until all others have passed. Call the hike leader for help.

Hike Report: AT: Tanyard Gap (US 25/70) to Allen Gap, February 27
Neil Dotson Reporting
It’s a puzzle, that although I did the entire hike I can only report half of it. The answer is that the group quickly divided into two portions, fast and slow moving, with your humbled hike leader struggling at the end. The hike up Rich Mountain provided some nice backwards glances at Mill Ridge (a bald some of us had hiked across 4 weeks before) and glimpses of the Rich Mountain firetower. The detour to the Rich Mountain fire tower - at least partly responsible for the slowness of the second group - provided nice views of the nearby mountains. It appears to still be in some kind of use, with new hinges on the doors and all locked up. There were still small patches of snow on the north sides of Rich and Spring Mountains - providing a nice texture of white on brown, and enough snow for a one-ball snowball fight. We lunched at the Spring Mountain Shelter and very light rain began after lunch, but never enough to hide the towers atop Camp Creek Bald, of which there were some nice views toward the end of the hike. Timing was excellent; the first group had completed the car shuttle by the time I stepped out of the woods. Making the hike leader acutely aware of how out of shape he was, were Hugh and Marilyn Thompson, Phylis Cairnes, and Kent and Nancy Wilson. Rolla Wade supplied air support.

Hike Report: AT Indian Grave Gap to Chestoa Bridge, April 24
Steve Banks reporting
The weather was cool, and it looked like rain, as we set out from Indian Grave Gap. But the clouds gradually broke up, and by the time we arrived at Curley Maple Gap Shelter, the weather was sunny with a few scattered clouds. We encountered 20 thru-hikers, including six at the shelter where we ate lunch. Some of the thru-hikers trail names were Bagel, Sunshine, Bearbait, and Snail. The shelter is in good shape; we used the new broom to sweep it out and carried out the small amount of trash from the shelter. The register is almost full and should be replaced. There were blowdowns at 19 and 111 minutes from Indian Grave Gap, and also one about 5 minutes north of USA Raft. The trail needs some rehab work in a few places between Indian Grave Gap and the shelter. The Nolichucky relocation, constructed in the late 1980’s by TEHCC and the Konnarock Crew, is in great shape and is still a marvel of trail engineering. During the hike we saw many wildflowers, including fire pinks, sweet Ceciley, wild lily of the valley (just coming up), cancer root, Bird-on-the-Wing or Fringed Polygala, crested dwarf iris, Vasey's Wake-Robin trillium, Solomon's seal, and different types of violets. We also saw a Fraser magnolia in bloom. Participating in the hike were Freda Kuo, and Mary and Steve Banks.

AT Section Maintenance and Special Projects

Third Saturday Maintenance
Bill Stowell reporting
We will not have an organized 3rd Saturday project for June. We hope people will come out and support the work with the Konnarock Crew. After 4 weeks of Konnarock we should be ready for a rest.

Flagging for Trail Relocation, April 24
Bill Stowell reporting
Ed Oliver, Bill Stowell, Derrick Stowell, and Kevin O'Donnell flagged the proposed relocation route from Walnut Mountain Road into Slide Hollow. This completes all the flagging from Campbell Hollow Road to Walnut Mountain Road.
two proposed routes in this area, one utilizing Pine Mountain and the other a more gentle route with 2 possible shelter sites. We encourage any one who has an interest to look at these routes. If you have any questions contact Ed Oliver. Total: 28 hours.

**Trail Maintenance: Spivey to Temple Hill Gap, April 24**

*Bill Berry reporting*

I walked from Spivey to Temple Hill Gap. The Trail is in good shape, no blow downs and the burning done by the forest service did no damage at all. The burning may have helped with the weeds. I did some cutting from shelter to Temple Hill. Total: 7 hours.

**Flag Trail Relocations Walnut Mtn Road, April 27**

*Ed Oliver reporting*

Frank Williams and Ed Oliver continued flagging relocations trail north of Walnut Mountain Road. Unless something comes up with the flagged routes occurs, we think that we have found good relocations to avoid the numerous steep descents and ascents out of the four or more stream crossings within the first 1.5 miles trail north of Walnut Mountain Road. We completed flagging about 60% of the relocations. We should complete this work in one more trip. Each relocation is relatively short and can be installed in one or two days by the club. Total: 20 hours.

**Trail Maintenance: Temple Hill Gap, April 23**

*Craig Haire reporting*

I completed clearing the blowdowns north of Temple Hill Gap. On a hike this past week, a friend and I cleared a tree that had been across the trail for about a year, on the stone steps north of and down hill from Doll Flats. The rest of the trail from 19E to Carvers Gap is in pretty good shape. I also did some clearing a few weeks ago between Walnut Mountain Road and the Coon Den Falls trail, but more work still needs to be done there. Total: 10 hours.

**Grip Hoist Training Class, May 1-2**

*Bill Stowell reporting*

Bill and Derrick Stowell attended a two-day training class on the use of Grip hoist. The first day was some class work and basic grip hoist techniques the second day was advanced techniques. We actually got to rig up high lines and transport larger rocks. We got to stay at the Konnarock base camp and train with some of the Konnarock crew leaders. Fred Lashley taught the class. Total: 40 hours.

**Complete Flagging Trail Relo Walnut Mtn. Road, May 5**

*Ed Oliver reporting*

Bruce Cunningham, Bill Elderbrock, Darrol Nickels, Frank Williams, & Ed Oliver either flagged relocations trail north of Walnut Mountain Road or walked the flag lines between Walnut Mountain Road, the Elk River, and Big Pine Mountain Road. We completed flagging the relocations trail north of Walnut Mountain Road. The group that walked the flag lines south of Walnut Mountain Road had some suggestions about the route. These suggestions will be considered. Total: 45 hours.

**Dismantle Temporary Relocation, May 2**

*Steve Perri reporting*

Steve Perri, Frank Oglesby, John Thompson inspected the bridge since the completion and removed signs at the Hampton blue-blaze/AT junction. The USFS has asked us to remove the signs, blazes, and stop maintaining the temporary relo. All visible indications of the signage of the temporary relo are now removed. Total: 12 hours.

**Maintenance: Hughes Gap-Little Rock Knob, May 8**

*Bill Stowell reporting*

We started at Hughes Gap and cleared blow downs to Little Rock Knob. The largest one was almost too large for the chain saw. We also rehabbed some trail where it need it and dug out around a root ball. At Little Rock Knob we cleared out the vista which had over grown. We went down the back side of Little Rock Knob to get a blow down tree blocking the trail there. Along for this trip were: Bill Stowell, Bruce & Mary Cunningham, Waylon Jenkins, Ed Oliver...
and Joe Deloach. Total: 48 hours.

**Annual Trail Maintenance, May 9**

*Steve Perri reporting*

Bruce and Mary Cunningham and I worked on our section of trail from Walnut Mt Road to Campbell Hollow. We spent an hour looking at an alternative flagline for traversing a hillside to join up with one of Ed's proposed flaglines. The one we walked was a direct route with only one short section with a grade of greater than 11%. The remainder of the time we spent cutting out rhodos and blowdowns between Walnut Mt Road and Campbell Hollow. This portion of our Section is Cunningham approved. Total: 24 hours.

**Old Timer's Trail Maintenance, May 12**

*C.B. Willis reporting*

We cleared several previously identified blowdowns between Little Bald Knob and Low Gap. Regrettably two more we have to go back for as our fine chain saw balked on us. These two are no real problem as one can step over them but we will remove them later. We carried a picnic table in to the Cherry Gap shelter and assembled it there for future reference we wish we had assembled at home and then reassembled at the shelter since the label on the carton stating "screw holes drilled" isn't exactly accurate. Anyway, with some ingenuity, the table is in place. Participating on the trip were Ben Pat Bailey, Heuston Fortner, Nancy Kinkead, Dick Lewis, Sam Lloyd, Waymon Mumpower, Sandra Perry, Ed Schell, Ed Shackelford, Wayne Sparks, Bob Spencer, Clyde Taylor, C. B. Willis, and Malcom Wolf. Total 120 hours.

**Clear Field At Doll Flats, May 13**

*Ed Oliver reporting*

Bruce & Mary Cunningham, Darrol Nickels, Frank Williams, and Ed Oliver worked on the open area at Doll Flats. We collected all the cut trees into piles and we cut additional trees to help maintain the view in the future. This area is being mowed to keep it open. We also cut many of the tree stumps off at ground level so that it will be easier to mow. One more trip will be required to complete this work. There are twenty or more trees to cut and several more stumps to cut off. Total: 45 hours.

To submit an article for the newsletter, contact:

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