

THE TENNESSEE EASTMAN HIKING & PADDLING NEWS

January 2009

www.tehcc.org

Note: To submit an article for the newsletter, send an email to:

- [Coming Events, January-February](#)
- [Touring Paddling Meeting](#)
- [Preservation of the Rocky Fork Tract](#)
- [Reminder to Potential Eastman Chemical Company Retirees](#)
- [TEHCC Welcomes New Members](#)
- [Scheduled Hiking and Paddling Opportunities](#)
- [For the Record, Activity and Trip Reports](#)
- [A.T. Maintenance Reports](#)

COMING EVENTS January-February

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Jan 17	GPS and Navigation, Warriors Path	Paddler Instruction		423-229-3873
Jan 24-25	Overnight Paddle Trip, New River	Class II		by e-mail
Feb 28	Sam's Gap to Devil Fork Gap	B/3/B		423-963-8654

For an explanation of the ratings, see [Schedule](#)

Touring Paddling Meeting

Debbie Reynolds reporting

Members of TEHCC met with some of the APES (Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts) on December 9 at Kingsport Grocery to discuss classes and single day and weekend trips for recreational and touring paddlers. This group is more interested in the flat-water lakes, inland waterways, and rivers with Class II or below. TEHCC members attending were Ed & Marjean Montgomery and Debbie Reynolds. The Paddling schedule has been updated through April. Items of interest coming up include classes on navigation, how to pack a boat for an overnight

trip and ‘gizmos’. We also plan to have a Thursday event we are calling "Paddle to the Grill." Each week during daylight savings time, we will put in at 1 of 2 local private boat landings and then paddle to either Sonny’s Marina or Marker II Grill to eat dinner. We will paddle back as a group with lights if needed. This will be a great way to introduce others to the club or to paddling in general.

Preservation of the Rocky Fork Tract

Joe DeLoach reporting

At our Spring Dinner Meeting, David Ramsey gave a presentation on the 10,000-acre Rocky Fork Tract in Unicoi and Greene Counties. Rocky Fork has been the largest tract of privately held land in the Southern Appalachians, once even owned by Eastman Kodak. Potential development threatened to forever alter the natural qualities and public use of the tract which has been enjoyed by hunters, anglers, and hikers for decades. The AT runs along this tract with over a mile of the Trail within it. The tract is on the AT section maintained by the Carolina Mountain Club, but with it being close to us and within Tennessee, we’ve been involved in efforts to preserve it. Preservation of a tract this size requires strong partners, with The Conservation Fund, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy leading the way. On December 15, The Conservation Fund announced that acquisition of the Rocky Fork Tract has been consummated. Over 2000 acres of the tract, including the portion adjoining the AT, will become part of the Cherokee National Forest. The Carolina Mountain Club has a longstanding plan to relocate the AT to a more scenic and durable route within the tract, which would make a good future TEHCC hike. The Conservation Fund will temporarily hold the remaining 7400 acres as funds are raised to eventually transfer land ownership to the State of Tennessee and the Cherokee National Forest. Good hiking should be available less than an hour from Kingsport as a result of this tract’s protection. More information on the transaction and a map of the tract can be found on The Conservation Fund’s website, <http://www.conservationfund.org/node/884>.

Reminder to Potential Eastman Chemical Company Retirees

If you plan to retire from Eastman and would like to continue receiving the TEHCC newsletter, please send an e-mail note to with your home e-mail address (if you have e-mail at home) as well as your home street address. We prefer to send the newsletter via e-mail to save us time and money, and so you can receive it (and any late hike notices) in a more timely manner. However, we would also like your street address so we can still reach you if your e-mail address changes. Thanks.



TEHCC Welcomes New Members

Keith Ketron
Johanna Nablo

Scheduled Hiking and Paddling Opportunities

For an explanation of the ratings, see either [Hiking Schedule](#) or [Paddling Schedule](#).

GPS and Simple Navigation for Paddlers, Warriors Path State Park, January 17, 2009

Leader: , 423-229-3873

This event at Duck Island is done in conjunction with the APES paddling group and will be taught by Joe Harrison. Contact Debbie Reynolds if you are interested and need more information. This will be done on the water, so dress appropriately for the weather and bring your kayak or canoe.

Overnight Paddle Trip, New River, January 24 - 25

Leader:

We will paddle to a campground only accessible by water to camp. If you have the energy, you can make this a one-day trip the entire way through. This route has 2 class II rapids. Contact Rich Ruhlen for details.

Sam's Gap to Devil Fork Gap, February 28, 2009

Leader: , 423-963-8654

Rating: B/3/B

Jake Mitchell will be leading a day hike from Sam's Gap, TN/NC to Devil Fork Gap on the AT from about 10 am to 3 pm. Highlights of this section include High Rock, Lick Rock, and Hogback Ridge Shelter. This is an excellent chance to walk off some of those pounds gained over Christmas, as this hike will include some significant elevation gain and loss. We will need at least one other driver. The meeting place will be arranged based on those who show interest. If weather threatens, the hike will be cancelled one to three days in advance. If interested, contact Jake for details.

For the Record, Activity and Trip Reports

Backpack: AT - Elk Garden to Damascus, December 19-20, 2008

Jake Mitchell reporting

Jake Mitchell and Ian Powell enjoyed an uncharacteristically balmy December trip to the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and the AT. It began with a shuttle from Mount Rogers Outfitters from Damascus to Elk Garden. Dave, the founder of MRO, took us the “back way” and unloaded a wealth of local knowledge on the way. From Elk Garden, we climbed into the clouds toward Whitetop. Upon reaching the first bald area, we were blasted with cold, wet wind gusting no less than 50 mph. We were granted a brief reprieve upon reentering the woods, but were blasted again when we came into the open areas of Buzzard Rock. Visibility was less than 50 yards. We soon started the descent towards VA 600, dropped under the clouds where we were blessed with some nice views through the leafless trees. After strolling through pastures just past VA 600, we entered a green rhododendron tunnel until reaching the first crossing of US 58. We then reentered the tunnel for a short time before reaching Lost Mountain Shelter and the end of an 8-mile afternoon. We were greeted by a ‘yellow blazer’ who already had a fire going. He gave us lots of skewed advice over the night including: always leash your dogs, stay away from women, and don’t worry about being “GQ” when hiking. He kept it interesting for sure. Lost Mountain Shelter was nice and we slept well. The next morning we woke early and hit the Trail around 7:15 just as the sun was breaking. The weather was great. Jake was in shorts within one hour. We quickly reached VA 859 and soon thereafter the Virginia Creeper Trail. We stopped for pictures before following the Creeper for about a mile. We did not see a single biker. After leaving the Creeper, we started the long climb up to Bear Tree Gap and eventually the summit of Straight Mountain. We briefly stopped for lunch where we could see across the valley. After getting our fill, we descended right back down to the Creeper and the second US 58 crossing. We stopped for a few minutes to get psyched up for our last climb of the day. A few minutes later Ian fell through a rotten bridge to the stream below – 1 foot below. It was pretty funny. Coincidentally, we encountered some MRATC maintainers about 30 yards up the Trail. They heard the log break. We chatted a few moments, gave them some blowdown info and started the long climb to the Cuckoo’s Nest at the intersection of the Iron Mountain Trail. After a couple of false summits, we made it to the top and got our first view of Damascus. We soon reached US 58 for the third time where we took the Creeper/AT into town. Subway-on-the-Trail for \$5 footlongs was the last stop before finishing the short distance through town to MRO and the truck for a 2:30 finish. The second day we did about 16 miles for a total trip of 24 miles.



Jake at VA 600 Road Crossing



Ian Powell on the Creeper Trail

Buffalo Mountain Park, December 27, 2008

Joe DeLoach reporting

December 27 turned out to be a stellar day for a hike, with record high temperatures and clear skies. The only negative is that more TEHCC folks didn't come out for the hike. Along the way we had great views east from White Rocks and north from the Stairstep Ridge Trail and the Huckleberry Knob overlook, the latter two enhanced by the May wildfire. Many trail loops are available within Buffalo Mountain Park, with ours amounting to close to five miles. Thanks to the Mid-Appalachian Hiking Club for their trail rehab work on the Stairstep Ridge and Lone Oak Trails. Our hikers were Ann Wellington, Kat Johnson, Craig DeLoach, and Joe DeLoach.



A.T. Maintenance Reports

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: December 3, 2008

Purpose: Miscellaneous Trail Maintenance

Location: Sections 12c, 12d, 13a

People: Paul Benfield, Ken Buchanan, Richard Carter, Bruce Cunningham, Dave Dunham, Carl Fritz, Ed Oliver, Bob Peoples, Tim Stewart

Summary: With a minor break in winter weather, we were able to complete these tasks: (1) Cleaned the 29 water bars from 19E to above Apple House Shelter. (2) Installed a rock border around parking lot south of 19E to confine area to four vehicles. (3) Cut all the tree sprouts under the power line just north of Bear Branch, and removed a multi-tree blowdown north of Campbell Hollow Road.

Reporting: Jim Foster

Date: December 15, 2008

Purpose: Flag relocation from Hughes Gap trail north to Roan Mtn.

Location: First two miles trail north from Hughes Gap

People: Ed Oliver, Jim Foster

Summary: Ed and I started flagging a trail relocation going north from Hughes Gap. We worked on two legs of the relocation and scouted a third. We weren't sure about property boundaries in a couple of places, so we had to stop. Ed is checking with the Forest Service so we'll know how to proceed in the future.

Reporting: Paul Benfield

Date: December 26, 2008

Purpose: Cleanup Trail

Location: Section 4b, TN Hwy 91 to Double Springs Shelter

People: Paul Benfield

Summary: I removed blown down limbs from the trail, cleaned up litter at the shelter, and moved an old barrel near the shelter.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: December 28, 2008

Purpose: Prepare relocation for digging

Location: Section 1, South of Damascus

People: Ed Oliver

Summary: Ed finished marking the relocation and installing pin flags so the trail could be dug the next day.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: December 30, 2008

Purpose: Dig Trail relocation and rehab Trail

Location: Section 1, South of Damascus

People: Paul Benfield, Richard Carter, Bruce Cunningham, Carl Fritz, Bill Murdoch, Bob Peoples, Tim Stewart, SCOUTS Bryan Cooksey III, James Cooksey, John Searcy, John Wright, David King, Houston Wilson, HIKER Ray Hudson

Summary: With four Scouts and two leaders from Florida troop 35, a hiker and seven club members, we were able to significantly improve the trail south of Damascus. The terrain was very rocky. There was a choice of large rocks or small rocks. Thank goodness there was one 100-foot section that was very tiny rocks (sand). We completed and opened a 330-foot relocation. We also redug and installed seven steps in about 200 feet of existing trail. Only one optional relocation remains to be completed.

Reporting: Joe DeLoach

Date: December 30, 2008

Purpose: Flag relocation

Location: Section 15, Hughes Gap to Beartown Mountain

People: Joe DeLoach, Jim Foster, Ed Oliver, and Mark Peters

Summary: We continued flagging a series of AT relocations between Hughes Gap and Cloudland, focusing on areas near Beartown Mountain. We flagged seven short relocations, all about 1/2 mile Trail south of Beartown Mountain. The rocky, rugged terrain doesn't lend itself well to the more sweeping relocations we typically flag. While this will remain a steep section of Trail, it will be much better and safer than the existing section, which may be the steepest part of the AT in the South. The Beartown Mountain overlook will be preserved and we need a sign there. Views from that overlook were spectacular, all the way to Richlands Balsam, the Smokies, and the Plott Balsams 75 miles away. There is a very large and nasty blowdown about a mile up from Hughes Gap. It will be difficult to remove but is easy to get around.
