



The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

April 2020

tehcc.org

Co-Editors – [Terry Oldfield](#) and [Sharon Burnette](#)

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The Appalachian Trail, given its ever-increasing popularity over the past weeks, is no longer a viable space to practice social distancing.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy



TEHCC Club Update with Regard to COVID-19

Submitted by Jonathan Shumaker (Steering Committee Chair)

Spring is here and the weather is starting to turn to perfect hiking conditions. I, as much as anybody else, want to be loading some snacks and water into my pack every weekend and hitting the trail. Many others in the club spend extensive hours on the trail keeping it well maintained. With the current worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to change our actions and habits. I still believe it is important to spend time outside to get fresh air and clear the mind, but I encourage you to practice social distancing in every activity you decide to pursue.

Around the country people are being asked to stay inside and work from home as much as possible. Working from home and limiting non-essential trips outside the house can increase the stress we experience. Many people believe that going out on a hike is the perfect way to get out of the house but still be able to distance themselves from others. Based on information from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and other authorities across the country, popular hiking destinations have been excessively overcrowded recently which can enhance the community spread of the virus. When you go to a popular spot for hiking on a weekend, you may touch a handrail, picnic table, sign, or restroom that has been used more often than normal. You may have to pass someone on the trail without being able to keep at least six feet of distance for yourself. Or you may even damage the environment around the trail while trying to keep your distance. If you travel to get to one of your favorite hiking spots, you may have to stop at a gas station to use the restroom or fuel up, which is another environment where the virus can spread. It is in everyone's best interest if we are mindful of the impact we all have on limiting the spread of this virus.

The response to this situation doesn't have to be “stay inside 24 hours per day.” Everyone should be able to spend time outside. Being able to walk, for even just a few minutes, can be a great stress reliever. The important thing is to be smart with where and when you decide to go out on a hike or walk. Maybe just take a walk around the block or down to the end of your neighborhood street and back instead of driving to your favorite trail. Get out on the trail early in the morning or in the middle of the week. Limit or avoid traveling to get to a trail you want to hike. Avoid using facilities at any park or trail you go to (many are closed already). If you pull up to a parking area that is full of cars, you should look for a different place to hike. Use resources like the TEHCC trail wiki (tehcc.org/wiki) to find a new trail.

Stay healthy and stay happy during this difficult time. Take steps in every part of your life to physically distance yourself from others to prevent the spread of this virus. Hopefully you can still take in the beautiful weather and nature that is changing this time of year.

To stay current with the most up-to-date information from the club go to tehcc.org. We will work to keep the top post relevant with the seemingly ever-changing guidance and closures until the impact passes.

Other hiking club notes:

- Hikes and events will only be scheduled after Eastman Chemical employees have stopped working from home.
- Hiking equipment checkout is currently still available from B301 for Eastman Employees only, but most places to use this equipment are closed or limiting access. Again, be smart about where you go if you do decide to rent equipment, and it's a good idea to disinfect equipment. The club does not disinfect between uses.
- ATC asks hikers to stay off the A.T. due to overcrowding and requests thru and section hikers to suspend their hikes.
- Thursday maintenance crews, Third Saturday Hiking with Tools, and section maintenance have temporarily been suspended until guidance changes from the ATC.

COVID-19 and the Appalachian Trail

Alivia Acosta (ATC National Service Coordinator)

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is communicating regular updates on the impacts of the COVID-19 virus on the Trail and its visitors, volunteers, communities, and partners through its website, social media, email, AT Camp, and through media partners like The Trek and Guthook Guides. For the most up-to-date information, go to: wildeast.appalachiantrail.org/covid19. The patience and adaptability of A.T. clubs during this time has been incredibly heartening, especially in the move to online meetings, suspending hikes and work trips on the A.T. The Conservancy is committed to keeping the well-being of its volunteer corps, adjacent Trail Communities, and visitors safe. The ATC will continue to monitor the situation, share information on closure statuses, and provide guidance on its website.

[Link](#) to Letter from ATC President & CEO Sandra Marra asking all hikers to postpone A.T. hikes of any length until further notice

TEHCC Spring Dinner Meeting – Friday, May 8, 2020

Due to the COVID-19 situation, this dinner was rescheduled from April 17th to May 8th. The Steering Committee will reassess the situation at its April 16th meeting.

Let's explore the history of some of the more than 250 shelters on the Appalachian Trail through the experience of photographer, writer, and 2008 thru-hiker Sarah Jones Decker (aka "Harvest"). For the evening, we will enjoy a visual montage learning the characteristics of these structures, while appreciating the many hours A.T. volunteers spend maintaining shelters to keep them in good condition. For more information, see the webpage: sarahjonesdecker.com/appalachiantrailshelters

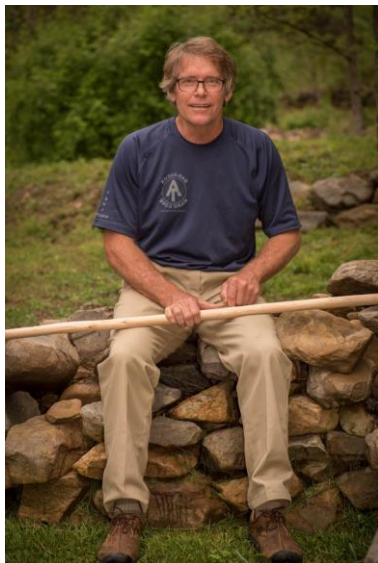
Dinner cost will be \$10/person with the Steering Committee providing beverages and dessert. Attending only the program is free, however we'll need a paid headcount to properly size the food order. Please let [Chantel Roberts](#) know who is coming by Monday May 4th. Checks payable to Chantel can be mailed to her attention via plant mail to Building 167 or to PO Box 511, Kingsport, TN 37662-5167.

Event	Time	Details
Spring Dinner Meeting	5:30pm	Location: Eastman Lodge, Main Banquet Hall 404 Bays Mountain Road, Kingsport, TN
Happy "Trails" Hour	5:30pm-6:30pm	Donations accepted for beer and wine, or BYOB
Dinner – Fajita bar plus tea/water, coffee and desserts	6:30pm-7:15pm	Moe's Southwest Grill Beverages and dessert by the Steering Committee (\$10.00 per person)
Club Business	7:15pm-7:30pm	- Update of club activities - Awards
<i>Program: The Appalachian Trail: Backcountry Shelters, Lean-tos, and Huts.</i>	7:30pm-9:00pm	Author Sarah Jones Decker (Marshall, NC)

Walking Sticks Carved by John “Bodacious” Beaudet

Reprinted with permission from APPALACHIAN TRAIL MUSEUM UPDATES, February 5, 2020

The Appalachian Trail Museum, located in Pine Grove Furnace State Park (Gardners, PA), was established in 2010 and is housed in a historic grist mill building halfway between Georgia and Maine. (Website: www.atmuseum.org) It is formally open April thru October for visitors to learn about the stories related to the A.T. The Appalachian Trail Museum Society publishes a colorful weekly newsletter; its editor has graciously granted permission to reprint the following about Bodacious.



Photograph by Joye Ardyn Durham

John Beaudet is a three-time Appalachian Trail thru-hiker (and one-time section hiker) who acquired his trail name “Bodacious” at an early age; he was the youngest of five children who tried extra hard to keep up with his older siblings.

Having carried one of his own hand-carved hiking sticks on each of his AT thru-hikes, Bodacious’ skills soon attracted the attention of other hikers. In 2011 when the Appalachian Trail Museum in Gardners, Pennsylvania, inducted the first members into the AT Hall of Fame, Bodacious was asked to craft hiking sticks as awards for the inductees. The presentation of his hiking sticks has since become a tradition, with each honoree receiving a personalized stick and the museum receiving a class stick carved with the names of all those inducted that year.

Beginning with natural Tennessee sourwood, the bark is removed, and the wood is smoothed and stained. Lettering and other artwork is elegantly carved into the wood using only hand tools and the skills Bodacious acquired during his 17 years serving as the PGA Tour calligrapher. Finally, a comfortable handle is carved into the wood, and the stick is stained and polished. Each hiking stick is a unique work of art, many say superior in form and function to modern-day trekking poles.



John is an award-winning trail maintainer with the Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club, Carolina Mountain Club and Rocky Fork State Park Trail Gorillas. He lives near Flag Pond, Tennessee, and can see Big Bald on the AT from his cabin. A modern-day homesteader, John enjoyed a simple country lifestyle without electricity until in 2015 he married Frances Figart, now GSMA’s director of Interpretive Products and Services.

TEHCC Welcomes New Members

Kent Archer

Kelci Bryson

Tanner Cradic

Pedro Fehlauer

Roger Hege

Eric Little

Alexander Lyttle

Chantel Roberts

Summer Hiking Program in the Works

Submitted by Jonathan Shumaker

We may not be able to get out on the trail at our favorite hiking spots right now, but that means we have more time to plan some group hikes for this summer and fall. We are hoping to have a hike on most weekends throughout the summer and into the fall. The hikes will vary in length, difficulty, and scenery. Once the quarantine due to COVID-19 passes, the schedule on the tehcc.org/schedule section of the website will be kept up to date with the latest information on hikes. We hope to see you out on the trail this summer after the coronavirus restrictions have been lifted! It would also be great to have input from the club on specific hikes that members are interested in. If you have a specific hike, or length of hike or type of scenery you want to see, let Jonathan know! Also if you are interested in leading a hike or want to help plan the schedule for the year, he can be contacted at chair@tehcc.org or by phone at work: 423-229-1996 or cell: 417-389-6987.

ATC Seeking Maintenance Volunteer Input on Training

Based on email from Alivia Acosta (ATC National Service Coordinator)

If you're an A.T. volunteer doing trail maintenance, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) wants to hear about your experience! ATC has opened a survey for all-levels of volunteers (section adopters, regular crews, sawyers, shelter caretakers, etc.) in order to help refine and improve ways they provide support. The survey ([link](#)) takes 20-30 minutes to complete. As a thank you, each volunteer is entered in a raffle to win one of several daypacks, perfect for a day on the Trail.

Event Schedule – Next Two Months

For the latest, up-to-date information, see tehcc.org/schedule.

For additional information on APES/TEHCC paddling events, see <http://regions.worldkayak.com/tri-cities/category/regional-events/> or <http://www.riverapes.org/calendar.html>

Date	Description	Contact	Telephone
April 16	Steering Committee Meeting, 11:30 am	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987
May 8	Spring Dinner Meeting (Rescheduled)	Chantel Roberts	423-224-0199
May 21	Steering Committee Meeting, 11:30 am	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987

Details of Upcoming Events

Note: Due to COVID – 19, the following regular scheduled maintenance and paddling activities are not being held in April. Be sure to check the May newsletter for updates.

Tuesday Evenings: Johnson City Roll Practice, 7:30 – 9:00 pm

Most Thursdays: Weekly A.T. Trail Maintenance

Thursday Evenings: Kayak Session, Kingsport Aquatic Center, 6:45 – 7:45 pm

Third Saturday, Hiking with Tools!

Recurring Events

TEHCC Steering Committee Meeting - On the Third Thursday of the Month, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Contact: [Jonathan Shumaker](#) 423-389-6987

Location: Eastman Chemical Company, Kingsport, TN; Bldg 75 Room 402

The Steering Committee guides the general program for the club. The Committee normally meets at lunchtime on the third Thursday of each month. Meetings are open to all TEHCC members. Bring your lunch or grab a bite at the B-75 cafeteria. Members who are not current Eastman employees need to contact a member of the Steering Committee at least three days prior to arrange for a temporary visitor's pass.

Scheduled Events

There are no scheduled events

For the Record

Nothing to report this month. See Maintenance Reports below.



A.T. Maintenance Reports

Note: As of March 26, 2020, TEHCC is following ATC guidelines suspending all trail related activities, including work trips, until further notice.

Reporting: Bettye Boone

Date: 2/25/2020

Purpose: Check trail condition

Location: Section 15a, Carvers Gap to Cloudland Hotel

People: Bettye Boone, Saylor Fox

Summary: We checked for blowdowns, cleaned water diversions, and picked up trash.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 2/25/2020

Purpose: Rehab Trail

Location: Section 20b, Upper bridge on Oglesby Branch to Devil Creek Gap

People: John Beaudet, Aaron Brown, Carl Fritz, John Jones, Van Hovey, Greg Kramer, Renee Messina, Tony Messina, Joe Morris, Ken Murray, Lotta Murray, Kevin Sedgwick, Tim Stewart

Summary: We were happy to be out in February with the temperature getting in the 50s in the afternoon. We installed six log steps in a couple of critical areas. We rock cribbed and back filled over some awkward roots. We hauled many buckets of small rocks to cover a wet area in the trail. Critical work was to use a 17 foot by 9 inch log plus an 8 foot by 7 inch log in a vee to bypass large roots that were 2 feet above the trail. Some of the stakes were 4 inch by 5 feet. A lot of buckets of soil were transported to fill the cribbing.



Hard work..



But the result makes it all worthwhile.

Reporting: Pat Loven

Date: 2/25/2020

Purpose: Trail maintenance

Location: Section 11a, Dennis Cove Road to Canute Place

People: Patrick Loven, Pat Loven

Summary: Our purpose today was to check erosion a short distance south of the Dennis Cove road crossing. We did construct one water diversion and will evaluate the effectiveness for a few months. More may be needed later. We also did some minor brushing and trail cleaning.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 2/28/2020

Purpose: Field visit for USFS Cedar Gap Farm Bill Thinning Project

Location: Section 11a, Ridgeline near Coon Den Falls Trail intersection

People: Vic Hasler

Summary: In late 2019, the US Forest Service submitted a project proposal to improve forest health through selective removal of primarily white pine and red maple trees west of the A.T. followed by controlled burns. Concerns were raised regarding the visual impact of the commercial thinning and other work since one of the boundaries is the A.T. A leaves-off field tour was arranged by USFS, including UTV transportation to quickly reach the area of concern. This Friday morning provided a nice hike through light snowy weather. The field tour resolved concerns with an understanding of how the two efforts will have minimal long-term visual impact on the trail user. For example, at one overlook, you can already observe the road cut across the valley which supports the power line, while this effort would visually remove the tops of a row of white pines in the distance. Closer to the trail, target trees less than 8" diameter and rhododendron would be cut on the west side of the path. If all approvals are obtained, this USFS project will be executed during the 2020 season.

Reporting: Dean Baird

Date: 2/29/2020

Purpose: Inspect and maintain trail

Location: Section 9b, Pond Flats to Hampton trailhead

People: Dean Baird, Aaron Brown, Joe Morris, Tim Stewart

Summary: This was a cold but really nice day to hike with 3 inches of snow on Pond Mountain. We removed several blowdowns and, in some areas, trimmed back rhododendrons. Additionally, we examined, again, the switchbacks (3, perhaps 4) that need rehab and I took some photos. There are also areas that need cribbing where the trail is eroding off the mountain. Our hope is that the already-located locusts and (hopefully) available rock will be enough to crib all of the areas.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 3/2/2020

Purpose: TEHCC A.T. Committee

Location: Eastman Recreation Center

People: Paul Benfield, Dan Firth, Carl Fritz, Vic Hasler, Joe Morris, Ted Mowery, Bob Peoples, Steve Perri, Kim Peters, Tim Stewart, Steve Wilson

Summary: A full agenda was covered by the A.T. Committee with the following highlights:

- Motion approved to fund chainsaw class by NC volunteer instructor (Chuck Ramsey) at USFS Watauga Ranger Station with invitations to other clubs.
- Motion approved to fund two patch plaques for retiring Cheryl Summers and Joe McGuiness.
- Discussed TEHCC's Check-in/Check-out policy for trail maintenance; having a Point of Contact to confirm when back out of field within two hours of target time.
- Proposal made for Remote Maintenance trip (camping Friday/Saturday nights) sometime in the fall
- To continue Third Saturday maintenance trips but recruit more leaders to spread the load
- A sketched proposal for Cherry Gap Shelter has been created based on Curley Maple Gap Shelter

The next A.T. Committee meeting is proposed for May 18, before the summer work projects.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/2/2020

Purpose: Cherry Gap Shelter Design

Location: Section 17, Home

People: Carl Fritz, Ed Oliver

Summary: We have been working to design a replacement shelter for Cherry Gap Shelter. It is a very similar design to Curley Maple Gap Shelter. So Ed was able to modify those pencil drawings. We think we have a plan to minimize water runoff from access trails impacting the inside of the shelter.

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/2/2020

Purpose: Look at trail issue

Location: Section 12d, Campbell Hollow Road to US 19E, Northern end of section

People: Carl Fritz, Gloria Sedgwick, Kevin Sedgwick

Summary: Gloria and I met Carl at US 19E. We took one truck to the church on Buck Mtn road. Gloria stayed with the truck as there have been problems in the past with locals messing with cars. Carl and I looked at the work that was done for golden-winged warbler management. Several questions, issues and problems have resulted from the land clearing. Photos were taken. We looked at increased ATV traffic use, vegetation, and rose growth. We met a thru-hiker who was attempting a triple crown; hiking all 3 trails (AT,PCT,CDT) in one calendar year.

Carl hiked my section back to his truck. He handcut an 8" pine and 6" locust, and found a big locust that is leaning across the trail. He met some other north-bounders.

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/4/2020

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 12d, Campbell Hollow Road to US 19E

People: Kevin Sedgwick, Gloria Sedgwick

Summary: Gloria and I went in on what turned out to be a nice day. A 20" diameter hemlock had fallen across a curve in the trail. Multiple cuts were required to remove it. We were able to roll the sections off the trail. We found that it had hit and pushed back another dead hemlock, 10" diameter. We cut it out and removed another dead 10" hemlock. On the way out, we noticed a 12" hemlock that had fallen parallel to the trail but was held up at the top. We figured it would eventually settle down and end up on trail; so cut it out.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/4/2020

Purpose: Maintain chainsaws

Location: Kingsport

People: Tony Messina

Summary: I refurbished all TEHCC 18" and 16" Stihl chainsaws, including:

Researched Stihl chainsaw maintenance

Replaced spark plugs and deep cleaned or replaced all air filters

Replaced all rim sprockets

Inspected and optimally swapped guide bars and chains

Updated fuel bags to include pliers for field maintenance tasks

Updated fuel bags with spare sprockets/clutch washers/circlips

Procured new bar and chain and carry case for 026#3

Procured new Oregon bar for Dolmar

Procured surplus fuel bag for MS192T

Replaced chain tensioner parts on both 009s

Reporting: Elzear Lemieux

Date: 3/6/2020

Purpose: Maintenance Patrol

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

People: Elzear Lemieux, Emily Lemieux

Summary: Emily and I did an initial patrol of our new maintenance section, TN-91 to Double Springs Shelter. It was great weather for the hike. We noted one small blowdown ~8-10" (easy to walk over) that I will take care of by handsaw in April. We cleaned out several water diversions, removed a firerig in a non-designated campsite and picked up trash at the designated campsite and the shelter. We took an inventory of the signs.

Reporting: Bettye Boone

Date: 3/8/2020

Purpose: Spring Checkup

Location: Section 15a, Carvers Gap to Cloudland Hotel

People: Bettye Boone, Saylor Fox

Summary: We identified blowdowns that will require a chainsaw and shared pictures with Carl Fritz so they can be located. We replaced the journal at Roan High Knob Shelter.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/8/2020

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 16a, Clyde Smith Shelter to Greasy Creek Gap

People: Tony Messina, Orrin Warwick

Summary: Tony and Orrin Warwick, an ETSU student, removed five blowdowns from Greasy Creek Gap to Clyde Smith Shelter. They attempted to clean waterbars without tools.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/8/2020

Purpose: Prep for Konnarock Crew

Location: Section 16b, Greasy Creek Gap to 2 miles south

People: Carl Fritz, Joe Morris, Bob Peoples, Steve Perri

Summary: We redefined access from Tiger Creek Road to Greasy Creek Gap, cleared it of blowdowns, located a potential campsite for Konnarock Crew, located locusts along the trail south of Greasy Creek Gap for 2 miles, and fell some dead locusts. We also removed a 16-inch blowdown.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 3/9/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 7, Wilbur Dam Rd to spring 3.3 miles

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: I spent the day cutting back new rhodo and greenbriar growth to the spring. Also, I scouted out a blowdown that is about 2.5 miles from Wilbur Dam Rd. A friend had contacted me about it and said they had cut the limbs off around the trunk to open up a passage. I will be heading back in the near future with a crosscut to remove the remainder. It is currently a good-sized step-over. The spring located at 3.3 miles from Wilbur Dam Rd is flowing pretty well.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 3/11/2020

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 7, Between Wilbur Dam Rd and spring

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: The plan was to clear a 12" hickory located midway between Vandeventer and Wilbur Dam Rd. Some of its limbs had been cleared and it was elevated off the ground by about a foot. I ended up dropping this one to the ground and it is now a step-over. I started to run out of daylight, as the majority of my time was spent clearing a 24" white oak leaner that had dropped across the trail. All in all, it was great to spend the afternoon in the woods.

Reporting: Jim Foster

Date: 3/11/2020

Purpose: Check trail and clean waterbars

Location: Section 16a, Hughes Gap to Greasy Creek Gap

People: John Tomko, Jim Foster

Summary: John and I walked the whole section and removed 4 blowdowns. Neither of us had been out in awhile so we were pretty tired. Cutting with handsaws will get the ole heart pumping. The trail was in surprisingly good shape. I was wondering who had been on my section with a chainsaw, then read Carl's email. Thanks guys. Top right bunk in Clyde Smith Shelter was wet.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/11/2020

Purpose: Remove hazard trees

Location: Section 12b, Walnut Mountain Rd to Camping area, south of Mountaineer Falls

People: Carl Fritz, Tony Messina

Summary: It was beautiful day to be in the woods. We installed a new sign for the Mountaineer Falls Shelter wash pit and cleared some minor trail obstructions. Our primary task was to fell 10 hazard trees, mostly dead hemlocks. These were in the camping area just above the shelter, at the shelter, and at the camping area just south of Mountaineer Falls. We saw only one north boulder.

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/11/2020

Purpose: Remove invasive rose

Location: Section 12d, Campbell Hollow Road to US 19E

People: Kevin Sedgwick

Summary: After recent work in my section, I noticed invasive rose growth and budding out. So I decided to be proactive with rose encroaching on the old farm road. Nature is slowly reclaiming it. The past few years, more time has been spent cutting back rose vs grass/weeds. With a brush-blade, I cleared back as far as I could reach. Hopefully weed clearing will be easier this summer. I also flagged areas for Carl to look at for possible bog bridges. On the way out, I ran into Carl and Tony and helped them with tree removal. Also we talked about the bog bridges.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/11/2020

Purpose: Determine bog bridge need

Location: Section 13, US 19E to Doll Flats, Bishop Hollow

People: Carl Fritz, Tony Messina

Summary: We inspected the bottom of Bishop Hollow for possible bog bridge installation. This has been a long term need. In wet seasons or after heavy rains, a couple of areas become extremely marshy. With the help of Kevin Sedgwick, who was cutting back multiflora rose, we identified about 40 feet of bog bridges that are needed. They must be placed to reduce disturbance by ATVs. We all three worked on removing a large locust that was leaning over the trail such that it was difficult to get past at the top of Bishop Hollow.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/12/2020

Purpose: CPR/First Aid Training

Location: American Red Cross

People: Carl Fritz

Summary: I completed the American Red Cross course for Adult First Aid/CPR/AED as part of the qualification for chainsaw certification.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/12/2020

Purpose: Maintenance Patrol

Location: Section 14b, Overmountain Shelter to Stan Murray Shelter

People: Tony and Renee Messina

Summary: What a gorgeous day to hike our new maintenance section! We encountered a total of 7 hikers, 3 section hikers and 4 overnightriders. We cleared about 6 blowdowns, two of which completely blocked the trail and were causing walkarounds. We picked up a bag full of trash in the vicinity of Stan Murray Shelter and swept out the shelter. We checked out the water trail as well and it is OK, though a little eroded in places. The graffiti board is getting full and needs painting, but has been effective in keeping stuff off the walls. At Yellow Mtn Gap, we tried to replace the Overmountain History sign with the new one, but were unable to get it apart with simple tools. We need to escalate next time with a battery drill and Dremel tool since the bolts are rusted tight. Minor rehab and water diversions are needed in the first half-mile or so south of Yellow Mountain Gap.

Reporting: Steve Perri

Date: 3/13/2020

Purpose: Southern Regional Partnership Meeting

Location: Kingsport, TN

People: Vic Hasler, Steve Perri, Steve Wilson

Summary: The Southern Regional Partnership meeting was conducted as a teleconference to reduce spread of COVID-19.

Discussion regarding action plans and future volunteering on the A.T. due to the spread of COVID-19 was underway within the USFS and Appalachian Trail Park Office (APPA). APPA is developing a poster based on CDC recommendations to place at kiosks and other prominent locations to give guidance on how to minimize spread of the virus – similar to the one developed for Norovirus. The most significant impact likely to come is a decision for volunteers to discontinue maintenance if the USFS and APPA move to remote working locations. This would likely lead to no VIF insurance coverage with emergency response being minimized. Stay tuned for further guidance.

Other news includes: Konnarock staffing will change as a result of funding from APPA being unavailable due to pipeline litigation. Clubs may have an option to ID rehab work instead of relocations in 2020, unless the COVID-19 derails that too. Use of battery chainsaws was confirmed as a possible alternative to gas chainsaws since they are allowed by the USFS (but not in wilderness areas) and only by trained sawyers. Concern was raised that electric chainsaws do not stop as fast as gasoline units, so chaps may not provide as much protection – especially if older/worn. Campsite inventory data that was collected has been distributed to the clubs. ATC has a process defining the objective/desired state for impacted zones, along with a list of metrics and indicators. Based on their situation, Clubs need to decide when to take action. A Visitor Use Management system has been developed to address heavily visited trail sections. It provides options to consider for the heavily impacted area of Carvers Gap to Grassy Ridge. The annual ATC Leadership Management Training course is planned to be held in NJ; a grant has been provided to allow it to occur there instead of Virginia. Clubs have been asked to provide input to Morgan Sommerville for the final draft of the Pisgah National Forest Management Plan. With the assistance of Intern Alivia, ATC will use their website to provide support for club recruitment of volunteers. Clubs need to provide input to a volunteer “Check-in and Check-out” process for maintainers going out alone or in small groups. The process should include contact information in case emergency assistance is needed. The Fall RPC meeting is planned for Nov 7th and is to be held at the Erwin Town Hall.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/13/2020

Purpose: Get person to mow Accessible Trail

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

People: Carl Fritz, Lynn Norris

Summary: Lynn Norris lives on Cross Mountain and wants to help mow at least the Accessible Trail with a commercial zero-turn mower. His brother also has a commercial mower, also lives on Cross Mountain, and will help. They will mow a couple of times and we will work on an agreement.

I tacked down lathe on the first step-over stile and improved a water diversion on the Accessible Trail. Five people came in ones and twos to hike the Accessible Trail.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/15/2020

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 15a, Carver's Gap Bathroom to Roan High Knob

People: Tony and Renee Messina

Summary: It was a foggy but warm trip to Roan High Knob from Carver's Gap to cut three large blowdowns noted by Saylor and Bettye. We got a late start, but ended up cutting about 12 blowdowns and leaners and didn't get out until it was getting dark. Blowdowns in that evergreen forest tend to hang up in nearby trees and are a challenge to clear. One especially large, tall leaner about 0.5 mile N of the shelter was more than we wanted to tackle and needs to be investigated (pics sent to Master Carl). Rehab is needed on the shelter access trail and on the lower 0.5 mile of the section as well. The graffiti board at the shelter is working well, but could use repainting.

Reporting: Thomas Broeker

Date: 3/16/2020

Purpose: Mainly blocking shortcuts and planning future work

Location: Section 20a, Nolichucky River to Temple Hill Gap, North end (Cliff Ridge)

People: Thomas Broeker, Dr. Craig Hare

Summary: It was a beautiful day, with several hikers around the trail, including one family on their way up to Maine.

Reporting: Elzear Lemieux

Date: 3/16/2020

Purpose: Maintenance work

Location: Section 12b, 0.5-1.0 Miles South of Walnut Mountain Road

People: Elzear Lemieux, Greg Kramer, Bob Peoples, Tim Steward

Summary: Our primary job was to construct three water diversions, using a trench and stone steps for all three diversions. We also cut back some rhododendron, cleaned out some existing water diversions, cleaned out a firering at a designated campsite, and cut in some trail that had been narrowed by soil sliding on the trail from above.

Reporting: Phyllis Cairnes

Date: 3/16/2020

Purpose: Maintain shelter

Location: Section 2b, Abingdon Gap Shelter to McQueen's Gap

People: Phyllis Cairnes, Rolla Wade

Summary: It was a great day to hike in from Low Gap and tidy up the shelter before the bump of hikers. The trail looked good except for a large ball and tangle of limbs and vines (about 1/8 mile N of Low Gap) causing hikers to walk below the trail. At the shelter I painted over the graffiti board, we picked up trash, shoveled the firering, and cleaned the rain guttering. We saw no other hikers today.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/16/2020

Purpose: Clean and improve waterbars, Fell locusts

Location: Section 16b, Iron Mountain Gap to 2.5 miles N

People: Dan Firth, Carl Fritz, Tony Messina, Joe Morris, Orrin Warwick

Summary: Joe had 88 water diversions from Iron Mountain Gap to Weedy Gap. Those were cleaned and many more added. The trail is looking good. We cleared some blowdowns and hanging trees. We also felled about twenty dead locusts for the southern two hills to be rehabbed by Konnarock Crew.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 3/18/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 7, Vandeventer Shelter to Wilbur Dam Rd

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: I decided this would be the day to complete this section and hike up to Vandeventer Shelter. I had previously cleared the first 3.3 miles to the spring. Along the way, I cut out 4 blowdowns and cut back new rhodo growth. There was a new campsite and firering that popped up a half-mile south of Vandeventer and I removed the fire ring and rehabbed the area. The shelter was clean with no trash to be found. The graffiti board was in good shape with minimal use and didn't need to be repainted. I had replaced the logbook back in December and it had barely been used, so I didn't replace it. The mileage sign was replaced last September and is still in great shape. I encountered 4 NOBOs and 1 day hiker.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 3/18/2020

Purpose: Spring walkthrough and clear graffiti board

Location: Section 19b, Outfitter to Curly Maple Gap Shelter

People: Vic Hasler

Summary: The only forecasted dry day in the next ten was an opportunity to check my trail section. I dropped a blowdown right next to Curley Maple Gap shelter to the ground. The path is fully passable with a few step-overs that can wait until a sawyer makes a run from Indian Grave Gap to the outfitter. A 12" blowdown at the first intermittent stream crossing north of the outfitter might be good to slice up if a sawyer is in the area. Water control features on this section were self-clearing – washed by the heavy spring

rains. The white blazes are in excellent condition, except for those purposefully being allowed to fade to cut back on over-marking. The graffiti board required multiple coats of paint to hide marker drawings and writing. While each coat partially dried, trash was picked up and the shovel found. I noted the broom handle was missing, but the head is still available. I replaced the logbook, observed no camping now available at the shelter since the USFS dropped the two large hazard trees, and brushed roughly quarter mile south.

I drove to the Chestoa trailhead to pick up trash, checked signs (NOBO railroad warning missing), and pulled a couple garlic mustard plants. I encountered only section hikers, one SOBO and five NOBO, with report that Uncle Johnny's was closing down due to the coronavirus.

Reporting: Dan Firth

Date: 3/18/2020

Purpose: Clear blowdowns and stage materials

Location: Section 4a, US 421 to Double Springs Shelter

People: Carl Fritz, Dan Firth

Summary: We cleared several blowdowns, including one just north of US 421. We removed four hazard trees, including two large trees near Double Springs Shelter. We also cut and staged locust logs for future waterbar work.

Reporting: Steve Perri

Date: 3/19/2020

Purpose: Conference Call with ATC Partners

Location: Kingsport, TN

People: Carl Fritz, Vic Hasler, Steve Perri, Steve Wilson

Summary: Several of us from TEHCC participated in a call with ATC, USFS partners, the Appalachian Trail Park office, and other maintaining clubs. The purpose was to share the latest decisions coming from land managing partners with the objective of reducing the spread of COVID-19. Many partners are working remotely and are assessing their operating strategies on an on-going basis. There were a total of 100 people on the call from Maine to Georgia. Here's a summary of key points.

Several land managing agencies are closing facilities and canceling programs, but some campgrounds are still open. Some agencies consider shelters to be facilities and will be posting signs for closure to minimize congregation. Concerns were expressed that many people are getting out on hiking trails based on full parking lots. ATC is recommending that thru-hikers and section hikers suspend their plans to hike the trail. APPA and ATC are following CDC guidelines to protect visitors, employees, and volunteers. Great Smoky Mountains Natl Park closed facilities and shelters, and recommend camping away from shelters. ATC and other agency partners have employees working remotely now. ATC has canceled the 2020 Konnarock season. The Ridgerunner program has been postponed for at least 2 weeks. Agency partners are keeping trails open and recommend CDC sanitation and social distancing recommendations be maintained. TEHCC is suspending the hike program – likely through April.

TEHCC Spring Dinner Meeting is being rescheduled to May.

ATC is providing updates continually. Below are resources available on the ATC website:

ATC's Guidance to Hikers

ATC's Letter to Long-Distance Hikers

ATC's Current guidance to Volunteers

ATC's Notice on decisions related to Visitor Centers and Ridgerunners

Reporting: Gerald N Scott

Date: 3/21/2020

Purpose: Routine Spring Maintenance

Location: Section 12b, Sugar Hollow Creek to Mountaineer Falls Shelter

People: Gerald Scott, Eric Scott

Summary: We installed the "Wash Pit" sign inside the shelter. The sign gives location of the wash pit and instructions on how to use it. We encountered 5 day/weekend hikers, no thru-hikers.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 3/21/2020

Purpose: "3rd Saturday, Hiking with Tools"

Location: Section 15b, Cloudland Hotel to Hughes Gap, Ash Gap

People: Tim Stewart, Carl Fritz, Greg Kramer, Bob Byrd

Summary: This month's "3rd Saturday, Hiking With Tools" event began in the rain, but ended with nice spring-like weather. Carl, Greg and I met at Hughes Gap. I didn't expect anyone else, but Bob Byrd arrived and joined us. We hiked over Beartown Mountain while performing minor maintenance tasks. After making it to Ash Gap, we hiked down to the spring, which was flowing. In view of recent coronavirus concerns, it was somewhat surprising that we encountered a number of other hikers, including 4 thru-hikers.

Reporting: Joel Zabel

Date: 3/21/2020

Purpose: Check trail, clear blowdowns

Location: Section 17, Iron Mountain Gap to Low Gap

People: Ed Brading, Denny Samuel, Yong Li, Marianne Huff, Jeff Miller, Joy Zabel, Joel Zabel

Summary: This was our first check this spring of this part of our section. Our main task was clearing numerous blowdowns with handsaws. We checked Cherry Gap Shelter and the water source - both good, and replaced the hiker log.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/21/2020

Purpose: Remove blowdown

Location: Section 18, 0.8 mi N of Indian Grave Gap

People: Carl Fritz, Greg Kramer

Summary: We removed a 16" dead pine that was blocking the trail. Mike Watts had alerted us and we were able to stop off on our return trip from Hughes Gap.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/22/2020

Purpose: Replace sign and inspect/maintain Trail

Location: Section 14b, Yellow Mountain Gap to meadow below Little Hump

People: Tony and Renee Messina

Summary: Renee and Tony escaped coronavirus madness by hiking in from Overmountain Shelter to the meadow below Little Hump on Sunday. We replaced the Overmountain interpretative sign at Yellow Mtn Gap, which required using a battery grinder on the bolts. The new one looks very nice. We cleared quite a bit of debris from the trail, cleared a couple of minor blowdowns, and did a little bit of lopping. The new water diversions seem to be a mixed bag, about half working well and half not. The lower ones seem to be the worst. More are needed here and there, including closer to Little Hump than we rehabbed recently. The new water diversions on the blue-blaze trail to Overmountain Shelter are also a mixed bag, some plugging up already. We saw 12ish hikers, including only one NOBO thru-hiker and two SOBO section hikers. The day started out cool, windy, and foggy but warmed up a bit after lunch and cleared enough for some excellent views on the way back down.

Tony hiked down the Overmountain Victory (OMV) Trail to Roaring Creek road on the way out and found it to be in really very good shape. It's mostly a double-track road with adequate OMV blazes. The OMV trail comes out just below the gate on the road to the barn.

Reporting: Thomas Broeker

Date: 3/22/2020

Purpose: Move rocks and logs to create steps

Location: Section 20a, Nolichucky River to Temple Hil Gap, North end

People: Thomas Broeker, Craig Hare

Summary: We moved logs and rocks up the trail for the next part of the project (creating steps).