



The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

June 2020

tehcc.org

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Impact of COVID-19 on TEHCC and our Regional Activities

Submitted by Vic Hasler (A.T. Committee Chair)

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our region are still very much fluid. Fortunately, per the TN government ([link](#)), there have been roughly 250 cases total in the seven counties where our trail section passes and volunteers live. Currently, there are very few active infections in this area. Businesses and many venues have begun Phase 1 reopening with partial capacity under continued social distancing. The club's website (tehcc.org) has a pinned top post which is updated as new developments are reported for northeast Tennessee.

Where can we go hiking?

Our Steering Committee has decided to not schedule club hikes until Eastman Chemical starts the process of bringing employees working from home back into full-time presence on-site. A recent announcement has been made that business personnel will be the first ones allowed back starting June 10th. TEHCC is more optimistic about the prospects versus groups who have already cancelled their hikes for the rest of the year.

At this time (when this article was written in late May):

- Trails in TN state parks are open for use. Campgrounds are beginning to be opened, but other park facilities remain closed including some bathrooms. The plan is to restart hosted events in June.
- Virginia State Parks opened for day-use activities, including trails for hiking, biking and equestrian use. Campgrounds and restrooms are open, but picnic shelters are staying closed. Bring cash for entrance fees which are being collected.
- Bays Mountain Park (Kingsport) parking and trails are open. There is a drop box for the entrance fee. The Nature Center and some programming will resume Monday, June 1st with limited capacity.
- Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) continues to recommend staying at home and away from the A.T. to ensure health of staff, volunteers, visitors, and communities.
- Cherokee (TN) and Pisgah (NC) National Forests reopened all trailheads for the A.T. including Hampton blue-blaze and Dennis Cove accessing Laurel Fall, Osborne Farm/Cross Mountain, and Roan Mountain/Carvers Gap. While the A.T. path and parking lots are open, **the shelters are not**. Plan to camp dispersed in established sites.
- The Roan Mountain Rhododendron Festival, normally held the third weekend in June, is cancelled for 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Where can we go canoeing and kayaking?

- Most launch points are now open in Tennessee, but nearby facilities are likely closed.
- USFS has reopened the Poplar (Nolichucky River) and StackHouse (French Broad River) access points.
- Roll practice at Johnson City and Kingsport aquatic centers remains cancelled, while these facilities focus on lap swimming.
- USA Raft (Erwin, TN) is not mixing groups with a maximum of 4-5 per boat (plus guide). At least four people are required for trips on the Nolichucky Gorge and French Broad and two people for Lower Nolichucky.
- Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts (APEs) group (riverapes.org) has started planning events, some of which appear on their calendar and the TEHCC calendar. Covid-19 distancing guidelines will be followed. Contact Andy Steffan for information.

When will A.T. maintenance be allowed?

First, the good news is, per recent communications, the TEHCC trail section is in good and passable condition. Eight blowdowns requiring sawyers have been reported, plus the weeds and briars have grown. Some flood damage has been observed from the heavy rains.

Our volunteer activity is under a service agreement with the US Forest Service, Pisgah and Cherokee National Forests, who informed the club in late May that suspension of the agreement has been lifted!

- Most important is that each volunteer must judge whether they feel safe in participating in an outing because of potential exposure to COVID-19. Likewise, every volunteer must evaluate their symptoms (coughing, fever, temperature, exposure to people having COVID-19, etc.). If you have any concern, it is critical that you not participate at this time. Be safe, do not take risks. We can develop another plan.
- Club maintainers are now allowed to work on the A.T. with restrictions under Phase 1 to complete site assessments, pick up trash, and conduct minor maintenance and repairs. These conditions include:
 - Maximum group size is three.
 - No carpooling - only travel with immediate family (those sheltering together).
 - No sharing tools. Carl Fritz has tools owned by the club that can be loaned out during this time.
 - Wash hands or use sanitizer frequently, especially before eating.
 - Maintain 6' social distancing. If hiker traffic becomes too great, you need to abandon the work in that area.
 - Shelters and privies remain closed, so no maintenance on shelters including trash pick-up in their vicinity.
- ATC has created a new Job Safety Analysis and guidelines for maintaining the A.T. during the pandemic. These are available for your review and will be used to update club documents.
- Due to above restrictions, primarily the group size, our formal Thursday maintenance crews and Third-Saturday Hiking with Tools are still suspended. Inform Carl Fritz about blowdowns for the club sawyers to address.
- Please report each outing on the TEHCC website, including the conditions observed and tasks completed. These reports will be shared with the appropriate Forest Service personnel to keep them informed.

Attention all TEHCC members: If you are interested in joining a section maintainer who might otherwise consider working alone, please contact Kim Peters (atmaint@tehcc.org) or Vic Hasler (atchair@tehcc.org) to be paired. Particular need is for folks who are willing to operate a weed trimmer to help catch up on cutting back the spring growth.

The club will continue to monitor the situation, along with our partners, and will inform club members of any changes to these guidelines. Until then, please take care of yourself, family, and friends by following the recommended prevention strategies.

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
June 12-14	Hootenanny Hangout and Paddle Weekend	Debbie Briscoe	423-534-3636
June 13-14	APEs Basic Swift Water Rescue Course	Steven Adams	423-650-1293
June 18	Steering Committee Meeting, 11:30 am	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987
June 20	Nolichucky River Cleanup	Andy Steffan	
June 27	Lower Watauga River (Class I-II)	Debbie Briscoe	423-534-3636
July 16	Steering Committee Meeting, 11:30 am	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987

Details of Upcoming Events

Note: Due to COVID – 19, the following regularly scheduled maintenance and paddling activities are not being held in June. Be sure to check the July 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 - 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. For June, we'll be using teleconferencing again due to Eastman directions to current employees. If you want to listen/join in, please contact me.

Paddle to the Grill, Thursday Evenings During the Summer, 6:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Contact: [Debbie Briscoe](#), 423-534-3636

Each week we will be alternating from different locations on Boone Lake. Bring your touring kayak/canoe to meet with The Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts (www.riverapes.org) and TEHCC (www.tehcc.org). We will launch within 30 minutes of the meeting time to paddle no more than 3 miles (about an hour, oneway) to a restaurant or a place to have a picnic. We'll have dinner and social hour, then paddle back under the stars. As we may be paddling back during low or no light, please have a stern light for your boat and a head light for when we land. PFD's and Stern Lights are TWRA Regulation. Covid-19 safety guidelines will be followed. If you aren't on the contact list, contact Deb each week to see if it's on and for the location.

Lower Watauga, Class I-II, Alternating Saturdays, Tentatively Beginning June 27, 2020, 3 pm

Contact: [Debbie Briscoe](#), 423-534-3636

We will launch from Riverside Park in Elizabethton behind the Ballpark at 3 pm. Call Deb first to check and see if it's on! We stop for a break about halfway down the river, so don't forget your snacks. We are usually off the water by 7:00 pm or so. After we get back to the park and transfer boats back to our vehicles, we can go to dinner in town. Please be prepared for cold water and wear appropriate gear. Covid-19 safety guidelines will be followed.

Directions: From W Elk Ave in Elizabethton Turn at the Rite-Aid onto West Mill Street, take the first street on left onto Ash Street, follow that street to the end and you will see the river. Turn left and pull into the small paved parking area near a covered picnic area. Look for boats! Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/HVXN7MAaDBw>

Scheduled Events

Hootennany Hangout and Paddle Weekend, June 12 –14, 2020

Coordinator: [Debbie Briscoe](#), 423-534-3636

The Hootennany Hangout Weekend will be at Blackberry Blossom Farm and Campground in the Roan Mountain area, 20 minutes from the Nolichucky River and Watauga Lake. It's a weekend camp-out, following Covid-19 safety guidelines, with outdoor activities, music, food and prizes set in a beautiful wooded location on Upper Stone Mountain!

Whitewater: Nolichucky Gorge Class III-IV, led by TBD; Saturday, June 13, 10:30 am at USA Raft

Lower Nolichucky River Class I-II, led by Debbie Briscoe; Saturday, June 13, 11:00 am at USA Raft

Flatwater: Watauga Lake Touring Trip led by Rob Shoeborg; Saturday, June 13, 10:15 am at Watauga Dam Boat Launch

Hiking: Hikes on Roan Mountain from Carvers Gap to Grassy Ridge or to Roan High Knob. Meet at the campground, Saturday, June 13, by 9 am.

Saturday Night Pot Luck: At 6 pm we'll do a pot luck dinner, so bring anything you'd like or get with me to find out what's needed.

Raffle: We're having a raffle of camping gear to help pay for the use of the campground. Tickets to the gear raffle are sold and paid for Saturday night at the event. Bring cash to buy your tickets! \$5 per ticket or 5 tickets for \$20.

Music: Saturday night, after a day of fun activities, there will be picking on the porch by a local bluegrass band and it's open for anyone with an instrument to join in! Last year we had music on the front porch, back porch and inside! It was awesome!!

Camping: Do not make reservations for camping. I have already rented the entire campground. Anyone camping can give a donation to help cover our costs.

Campground Amenities: There are 98 acres at Blackberry Blossom Farm of wooded property with Walk-In-Only camp sites; they will gladly haul all your stuff to your site with their tractor and small trailer. The sites have fire pits and picnic tables. There is potable water in the common area. There are two very clean bathrooms with showers and a large outside sink for clean-up near the camp store. The camp store has ice, ice cream and snacks and just about anything you may have forgotten!

Location: 250 Blackberry Blossom Ln, Unicoi, TN 37692, (423) 833-7089, <http://www.blackberryblossom1.com/index.php>

APEs Basic Swift Water Rescue (SWR) Course, June 13 – 14, 2020

Contact: Steven Adams, 423- 650-1293 or campingskeeter@gmail.com

Location: Pyrahna Erwin Facilities/Lower Nolichucky River

ACA Instructors: Jeremy Gass and Steven Adams

Whitewater enthusiasts participate in hazardous activities in wilderness environments. Are you prepared to rescue yourself or your best paddling friend? Are they prepared to rescue you? Help in many cases may not be immediately available, and might be hours, not minutes away. Sign up and bring your favorite paddling crew to this clinic. It's like buying yourself, and them, the safety line that may save your lives.

The Basic SWR Course, sponsored by Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts (APes) and TEHCC, is one in a series of swiftwater rescue courses offered through the American Canoe Association. The course is led by ACA certified swiftwater rescue and kayak instructors, Steven Adams and Jeremy Gass, and is designed to teach the recreational paddler basic swiftwater rescue techniques where limited personnel and/or safety gear is available. The clinic will include classroom instruction, river skills and realistic scenarios. Successful completion of this course will prepare you to self-rescue and aid in the rescue of others in whitewater environments.

Course Overview: The Swiftwater Rescue Course teaches recognition and avoidance of common river hazards, execution of self-rescue techniques, and rescue techniques for paddlers in distress. Emphasis is placed both on personal safety and on simple, commonly used skills. Techniques for dealing with hazards that carry greater risks for both victim and rescuer, such as strainers, rescue vest applications, entrapments, and pins, also are practiced. Scenarios will provide an opportunity for participants to practice their skills both individually and within a team/group context.

Course Objectives:

- Promote proactive prevention of river accidents and injuries
- Develop and practice key self-rescue skills
- Identify and avoid river hazards by understanding hydrology, hazards, and river features
- Focus on fast, low-risk strategies for early management of river accidents
- Develop and practice methods for recovering swimmers, and loose boats and equipment
- Develop and practice more advanced rope-based and in-water skills
- Gain experience using the rescue PFD, and understand its strengths and weaknesses
- Utilize rescue scene management principles needed within a paddling group

Course Prerequisites: All paddle craft are welcome. Ideally, students should be able to competently maneuver their craft in at least class II whitewater. However, all boaters, and non-boaters with an interest in swiftwater rescue (e.g., professional rescuers), will benefit from the class. Participants should be in good health and overall fitness, possess solid swimming ability, and be comfortable swimming in moving current during river drills. Participants should dress appropriately for weather and temperature, and should expect to be in the water for extended periods of time.

Minimum personal equipment for class: Type III PFD designed for whitewater use (Rescue PFD is recommended but not required), whitewater helmet, protective clothing suitable for extended swimming in cold water, protective footwear, boat, paddle, whistle, throw rope, 15+ feet of one inch tubular nylon webbing, 2 locking carabiners, and 2 prusick loops (2 x 6-8 feet pieces of 4-5 millimeter polypropylene cord)

Who: Adults and minors 15 years and older (parent/legal guardian **MUST** accompany minor and arrange ahead). Instructors reserve the right to exclude anyone if they feel safety will be compromised.

When: Saturday, June 13, 8:00pm – 7:00pm; Sunday, June 14, 8:00am – 5:00pm

Cost: \$100; \$85 if already an APes member; ACA members can further deduct \$5; Registration and payment deadline is 6/11/2020.

Lodging Note: Local businesses offer nearby lodging: USA Adventure Resort, Riverpark campground, Mountain Inn & Suites

Pandemic Note: Challenges and risks will be discussed at the beginning of the course, and it will be modified as needed to ensure participant safety and adherence to CDC and local government guidelines.

Registration: There are two ways to register:

1. Online: Register online at <http://www.riverapes.org/registration.html>

2. Mail: E-mail Steven Adams with your intent to register and a downloadable registration form will be sent to you. Those mailing in their registration can add the \$15 annual APES membership fee to their course payment, if desired.

If you cannot make this event and are interested, the TEHCC Steering Team is working on pulling together a poll for TEHCC members to determine what level of class you might like to attend related to SWR. Options will range from classroom overview only to the full class similar to the one shown above.