



The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

July 2020

tehcc.org

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

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Watauga Dam

Hiking Program to Start in July

Submitted by Jonathan Shumaker (Steering Committee Chair)

Eastman Chemical has started the process of reintegrating employees working from home back into full-time presence on site, which was one condition set by the club's Steering Committee before the 2020 Hiking Program could begin. While there are a few new cases of COVID-19 infection each day in our region, it is understood that the risk of virus transmission in dispersed outdoor settings is very low. Therefore, the decision has been made to start leading hikes in July with several conditions on the participants. First and foremost, do not come to any hike or event if you are showing any signs of illness, have had contact with anyone with COVID, or have any concerns with your own risk factors. A change from previous years is that the hike leader will not organize carpooling to events. Instead, we plan to meet at the trailhead parking areas (hike leaders are willing to give detailed directions if contacted). Bring your own sanitizing supplies and PPE for preventing virus transmission (masks are not required but encouraged to have available). Also, bring your own drinking water and snacks for the hikes. Conversations will be held with at least 6-foot separation and social distancing will be encouraged during the hike.

Enough of the heavy news; the 2020 Hiking Program hopes to take advantage of the many great hiking opportunities in our area, with outings on most weekends through October. The hikes will vary in length, difficulty, and scenery. The club website tehcc.org will be kept up-to-date with the schedule and latest information on trips.

We hope to see you out on the trail soon! If you want more information, or are interested in leading a hike, let Jonathan know! He can be contacted at jonathanshumaker@eastman.com or by phone at work: 423-229-1996 or cell: 417-389-6987.

Trail Maintenance - COVID-19 Phase 2 Adaptive Recovery

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

Our communities and region are taking a phased approach to reopening activities during the still-active COVID-19 pandemic. North Carolina and Tennessee plus the Appalachian Trail Conservancy have all entered Phase 2 of their respective plans. And fortunately, there are very few active COVID-19 infections in the seven-county area of Northeast Tennessee.

In last month's newsletter, it was announced that the temporary suspension of our Volunteer Service Agreement with the US Forest Service, Pisgah and Cherokee National Forests, had been lifted. It has been great to see the maintenance reports begin flowing again as this club ensures an open path for the Appalachian Trail while we all strive to work safely.

There are several conditions for our operation:

- Most important is that each volunteer must continue to 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 concerns, it is critical that you not participate at this time.
- For TEHCC, our maximum group size is now 3-4 under Phase 2. When Phase 3 is implemented in the future, the crew-size limit is expected to roll back to normal.
- Still no carpooling - only travel with immediate family (those sheltering together).
- No sharing tools. Maintainers are welcome and encouraged to use their own tools that are in good condition. Otherwise, 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.
- Reinforce the safety JHA for working under Phase 2 conditions and conduct pre-planning checks as well as reinforce activities in a bumper safety-training discussion in the field.

If you have any questions, please contact one of our A.T. Committee members.

A new expectation by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy is that maintainers will view the training video and COVID-JHA found on this webpage (appalachiantrail.org/get-involved/volunteer/safety/covid-19) regarding "Volunteer Protocols During COVID-19" and complete the online Acknowledgement form.

Because of the no carpooling condition and having some vulnerable members, our formal Thursday maintenance crews and "Third-Saturday Hiking with Tools" are still suspended for July. Inform Carl Fritz about blowdowns for the club sawyers to address. Also, he and Kim Peters can identify projects for small crews of two to four maintainers. New volunteers are welcome to be paired with section maintainers and these small projects.

Where Can We Go Canoeing and Kayaking?

- Most launch points are open in Tennessee, but nearby facilities may be 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.
- The Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts (APEs) group (riverapes.org) is 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.

2020 Roan Naturalist, Kalie Pierce

Introduction assembled by Vic Hasler



Kalie grew up in Crossville Tennessee, exploring the many caves and waterfalls of the Cumberland Plateau. She received a BS degree in Parks and Recreation Management from East Tennessee State University. Her focus since then has been on interpretation and outdoor education with experiences at Big Hole National Battlefield (Wisdom, MT) and Camp Wesley Woods (Townsend, TN). Kalie thru-hiked the A.T. in 2019 (trail name, "Savage"). She is excited to play a larger role in protecting the Roan Highlands and the trail.

The eighth Roan Naturalist has a challenging year serving during the pandemic. Each week, Kalie will be on the A.T. for two weekdays concentrating on trail conditions, dismantling fire rings, and stewardship efforts. On the other days, she will be performing a user group survey for Tennessee, creating outreach videos, and performing trail maintenance on "connector" trails, such as the Overmountain Victory Trail through Hampton Creek Cove.

Greet Kalie if you see her in the field... from a social distance.

Tennessee License Plate Grant Provides New Saws

Submitted by Dan Firth

TEHCC received a 2020 Tennessee Appalachian Trail License Plate Grant to purchase a 16-inch Dewalt battery-powered chainsaw, several batteries, and two Silky Katanaboy saws. The chainsaw is expected to replace several 35-year old chainsaws (16" bars) with a lighter and more reliable solution. Technical improvements have brought these saws to the point where they may be effectively carried and used away from home and the trailheads. Gone are the challenges of starting the saw in the field and carrying bottles of fuel. Bar oil is still required. Even with extra batteries, the saw and its accessories are lighter than the old gasoline saws it replaces. This electric saw is only for use by our certified sawyers.

The two Katanaboy saws will add to the handsaws available to maintainers when they are working on the Trail. The current saws are popular, as the demand out-strips the supply. Being light weight and easy to use, many blowdowns may be safely cleared without the need of a separate trip by a sawyer.

These saws may be signed out by contacting Carl Fritz.

Throughout the years, the receipt of license plate grants has enabled TEHCC to purchase equipment and materials that enhance our ability to maintain our assigned section of the Appalachian Trail. Your purchase of A.T. license plates contributes to the funding of these grants.

A.T. Highway Signs Replaced

Submitted by Vic Hasler

A member of the community, Kenneth Johnson, pointed out two damaged Appalachian Trail road signs along TN Hwy 91 and US Hwy 421 (see the before pictures). The club referred this request to the Tennessee Department of Transportation, who recently completed their replacement (after pictures). Please help us be aware of needed information signs or their repair.



Damaged TN 91 A.T. Sign



Replaced TN 91 A.T. Sign



Damaged US 421 A.T. Sign



Replaced US 421 A.T. Sign

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
July 11	A.T. Hike: Watauga Lake Dam	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987
July 11	"Babes on the Waves" Pigeon River Trips	Debbie Briscoe	423-534-3636
July 16	Steering Committee Meeting, 11:30 am	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987
July 18	Hike: Laurel Run Park	Vic Hasler	423-416-3166
July 18	Lower Watauga River (Class I-II)	Debbie Briscoe	423-534-3636
July 25	WPSP Hike: Devil's Backbone and Fall Creek Loop	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987
Jul 31 – Aug 2	Hiwassee River Weekend (Class I-II)	Debbie Briscoe	423-534-3636
August 20	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 July. Be sure to check the August 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 July, 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, Saturdays, July 18, August 8 and 22, 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

A.T.: Watauga Lake Dam, Saturday July 11, 2020

Leader: Jonathan Shumaker, 417-389-6987

Rating: Medium 6-mile round-trip hike, fairly flat

We will hike from the A.T. crossing of US321/HW67 just east of Hampton, TN. The trail follows the southside of Watauga Lake all the way to the dam. It is about 3 miles to the dam; we will come back the same route along the A.T. for a total of 6 miles. There are great views of the lake and mountains in the area. We will plan to meet at the trailhead at 9 am. The hike should be done around noon, so bring snacks/light lunch to enjoy when we get back to the cars. To let us know of your interest, or if you have questions, please call/text the hike leader. For information on the trail, check out the trail wiki for Dennis Cove Rd to Wilbur Dam Rd: http://tehcc.org/wiki/Dennis_Cove_Rd_to_Wilbur_Dam_Rd

Annual "Babes On The Waves" Dual River Runs, Pigeon River, July 11, 2020

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

We're making it a double trip on the Pigeon River again this year, staggering an Upper and Lower run!

The Upper Run (Class III-III+): Meet at 11:00 am at Smokey Mountain River Rat Whitewater, 3630 Hartford Rd, Hartford, TN

The Lower Run (Class I-II): Meet Debbie Briscoe at 3:00 pm at NOC, 3485 Hartford Rd, Hartford, TN

Once a year, all the female APEettes come together to rule the river. All are welcome, even you guy's who don't want to be left out; we don't discriminate. But it's our day and our goal is to get as many female paddlers out on the water as we can! So all you gals, plan to join us on the water Saturday, July 11. And yes, per-tradition, you'll get a free helmet sticker for coming!

Laurel Run Park, Saturday, July 18, 2020

Leader: [Vic Hasler](#), 423-416-3166

Rating: Roughly 4-4.5 mile round trip with 600' elevation change and one stream crossing

Our gathering point is at the back of the park ([364 Laurel Run Park Rd, Church Hill, TN 37642](#)) with the shelters, at the trailhead at 9 am. Hikers will first enjoy the new footbridge over Laurel Run built as an Eagle Scout project by Nathan Michalik of BSA Troop 48 ([news report](#)). The group can choose whether to take a steep loop up to Canebrake Mountain Overlook for a nice view of the river valley or just proceed up Laurel Run Trail with one stream crossing to see the low waterfall and abandoned homesteads. Bring a hiking stick, drinking water, snacks, bug repellent, and water shoes or sandals for the creek crossing. Plan to be back to the parking lot by noon.

WPSP: Devil's Backbone and Fall Creek Loop, Saturday July 25, 2020

Leader: Jonathan Shumaker, 417-389-6987

Rating: Medium 3.5-mile round-trip hike, some steep sections, 400-500' of elevation gain

We will hike from the Warrior's Path parking area on the northeast side of the bridge across the lake. It is on the golf course side of Warriors Path State Park. The trail climbs up the ridgeline along the lake before dropping back down to lake level. Once we get to the end of the Devil's Backbone Trail, we will go another mile around the Fall Creek Loop. We will meet at the parking area along the road at 9 am. To let us know of your interest, or if you have questions, please call/text the hike leader. For information on the trail, check out the trail wiki for the Devil's Backbone hike: http://tehcc.org/wiki/Devil%27s_Backbone

Hiwassee River Weekend, Class I-II, July 31 – August 2, 2020

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

We plan to drive down on Friday afternoon and camp at Gee Creek Campground, 404 Spring Creek Rd, Delano, TN. It is a very nice facility with full amenities.

Saturday: We'll first go to the Farmer's Market where they have incredible cinnamon rolls! Then meet at the put-In at 2:00 after the main crowds have already gone down the river.

After the river trip, we'll find a place to eat that evening. A campfire will be great afterwards and I'm bringing my pie irons!

Sunday: Either paddle another run or drive home, it's up to you!

Campground: <http://www.stateparks.com/hiwassee.html>

Map: <http://goo.gl/maps/z7rgO>



A.T. Maintenance Reports

Maintainers, please note: The Appalachian Trail Conservancy expects that maintainers will view the training video and COVID-JHA found on this webpage (appalachiantrail.org/get-involved/volunteer/safety/covid-19) regarding "Volunteer Protocols During COVID-19" and complete the online Acknowledgement form.

Reporting: Gayle Riddervold

Date: 5/29/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 8, US 321 to Wilbur Dam Road

People: Gayle Riddervold, Becky Kinder

Summary: Starting at the Iron Gate and going northbound, there are two blowdowns that will require a chainsaw. There was previous flooding where the trail dips. This area is now passable and some of the big logs that were previously cut are lying in the trail. Due to all the debris and mud, we were unable to roll them off the trail. About 30 feet from that area is the big blowdown that was reported by a hiker. We cut and removed two smaller trees and some weeds. The trail south of the Iron Gate is still flooded.

Reporting: Steve Wilson

Date: 5/30/2020

Purpose: Clean waterbars and cut briars

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

People: Carl Belcher, Steve Wilson

Summary: We scouted for blowdowns, cleared water diversions, and lopped briars from McQueen's Gap to Abingdon Gap Shelter. The trail section is clear and in good shape.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 5/30/2020

Purpose: Assess Trail

Location: Section 7, Vandeventer Shelter to Wilbur Dam Rd

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: I hiked in for the weekend to check trail conditions and to assess blowdowns near the shelter. I cut back some rhododendron and cut out two small blowdowns. I also cleaned out two waterbars. I removed a fire ring located at one of the overlooks along the ridgeline and cleaned out the fire ring located on the Vandeventer spring trail. Both springs are flowing. I counted eight folks either sectioning or thru-hiking.

Reporting: Gayle Riddervold

Date: 5/30/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 8, US 321 to Wilbur Dam Road

People: Gayle Riddervold, Becky Kinder

Summary: We cut weeds, poison ivy, and bushes, and dismantled a fire ring from the Shook Branch trailhead to the small wooden bridge.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 5/30/2020

Purpose: Check section

Location: Section 11b, From Bitter End to two miles north

People: Tim Stewart

Summary: After this brief trail maintenance hiatus because of Covid-19, I finally had the chance to check a portion of my section. I hiked in from Bitter End for about 2 miles. I lopped rhodos (of course) and removed a few minor blowdowns. Overall the trail was in good condition. I encountered a few backpackers.

Reporting: Jake Mitchell

Date: 5/30/2020

Purpose: Scout from barn to Little Hump

Location: Section 14b, Overmountain Shelter to Little Hump

People: Jake Mitchell, Rob Bunch, Ethan Bunch

Summary: We hiked up to the barn from the FS gate. We cleared several fire rings between the woods and the barn, and cut back weeds from the FS road/blue blaze intersection up to the A.T. and on the A.T. most of the way up to Little Hump. We picked up about a half bag of trash, mostly around the barn, and also removed a couple of minor blowdowns from the FS road. There were many more hikers than I expected: several section hikers, several thru-hikers, a gaggle of trail runners, and many day hikers. The Roaring Creek Road parking area was full. I will need to return to go over the top and mow around the barn when I can get through the gate.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 5/31/2020

Purpose: Assess Trail

Location: Section 6, Iron Mountain Shelter to Vandeventer Shelter, 3/4 mile north of Vandeventer

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: I spent the morning cutting back vegetation along an open canopy section located at ½ to ¾ mile north of Vandeventer Shelter. I cut out one small blowdown along the section. On the hike out, I encountered 20 people. All but five were sectioning or thru-hiking. Also, I had a bear come through my camp the night before.

Reporting: Pat Loven

Date: 5/31/2020

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

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

People: Patrick Loven, Karen Loven, Pat Loven

Summary: We parked a vehicle in Dennis Cove, Patrick drove us to White Rock, and we worked back north. The Trail condition was actually better than we anticipated, although there were quite a number of blowdowns. Many were in the 6-8" range with a couple 14" which required numerous cuts. The largest was a dead 24" hemlock blocking the trail about a half-mile above Dennis Cove. We also trimmed a lot of encroaching vegetation. It looks like another good growing season in the mountains. We met 14 hikers; most were traveling north. The weather in the mountains was perfect - a good day!

(See photos next page.)



Before...



And After



That's a big one!

Reporting: Richard Ramsey

Date: 5/31/2020

Purpose: Assess Trail condition

Location: Section 14a, Doll Flats to Bradley Gap

People: Carl Fritz, Richard Ramsey

Summary: We hiked in from Little Elk Road to search for endangered species, as I am the new maintainer for this section. We cut out a few blowdowns above Doll Flats before the first fence. At the first fence, Carl headed back and I continued to checkout the rest of the section. I traveled all the way to Yellow Mountain Gap, then returned. Overall, this section is in good condition.

Reporting: Ken Murray

Date: 5/31/2020

Purpose: Routine Blowdown Patrol

Location: Section 20b, Temple Hill Gap to Spivey Gap

People: Ken Murray, Van Hovey, Carrie Hovey

Summary: We conducted an end-to-end, trail-maintenance needs inventory. We also removed numerous small blowdowns with Silky saws and loppers. The trail was in surprisingly good shape. There are no serious blowdowns requiring immediate attention. I did note the Guthook mileage location of several step-over blowdowns, as well as areas where the treadway needs rehab.

Reporting: Greg Kramer

Date: 6/1/2020

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 5, TN 91 to Iron Mountain Shelter, and Section 6 to the powerlines

People: Greg Kramer, Carl Fritz, Bill Murdock

Summary: We removed hazard trees in the camping area in Section 6 near the water source. We also removed one large blowdown near Iron Mountain Shelter, and removed two trees that had tops down. Bill Murdock repaired the water source near the start of the section.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 6/1/2020

Purpose: Remove blowdown

Location: Section 10, Hampton trailhead to Dennis Cove Road, Laurel Fork Falls

People: Tim Stewart, Bob Peoples, Joe "Triton" Schmidt (hiker from Kincora)

Summary: We went in from Dennis Cove Rd to remove a blowdown at the intersection with the blue-blazer to the falls. The tree was hollow and was actually easy to cut with a crosscut saw. Once cut, we pushed it off the trail. We also did some lopping and some minor rock-step repairs in several places. The short blue-blazer to the falls could use some additional step repair. We also checked the narrow ledge. The small hole which has already been reported is still visible, but does not appear to be any larger. Numerous day-hikers from both trailheads were hiking.

Reporting: Michael Watts

Date: 6/1/2020

Purpose: Section Maintenance

Location: Section 13, US 19E to Doll Flats

People: Michael Watts

Summary: I trimmed brush, cleaned waterbars, brushed in short-cut, painted blue blazes, and picked up trash. I also added stepping stones through the marshy area to reach the water pipe near Doll Flats.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 6/1/2020

Purpose: Section Maintenance

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

People: Tony and Renee Messina

Summary: Renee and I finally had an opportunity to inspect our section this spring. It was in better shape than expected; no blowdowns. However, there was LOTS of grass and vegetation to whack. We cut weeds for about 1.5 miles, including the access trail from the barn road to Yellow Mtn Gap. It appears someone has done a little clearing up near the Overmountain Victory southbound trail already. There were about 8 tents near the barn at the end of the day, fairly well spaced, but could have been better. The grass was about 18 inches high, which impeded camping a bit. Overall, we saw at least 40 hikers throughout the day. Most were section or overnightriders; at least 4 were thru-hikers resuming their trek one way or another.

Reporting: Dan Firth

Date: 6/2/2020

Purpose: Section Maintenance

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

People: Dan Firth

Summary: I checked the section, cleaned water diversions, and cut back briars and branches. The section is clear. I saw nine hikers.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 6/2/2020

Purpose: Trim uphill growth

Location: Section 19b, Nolichucky River, Chestoa parking lot to outfitter

People: Vic Hasler

Summary: With Cherokee NF now allowing return of section maintainers in small groups, I decided to give the southern 1.3 miles a "good haircut" using a swing blade and loppers. There were clumps of growth pushing the hikers toward the lower lip of the path. I was able to get north to the cut rock steps before lunch, but did not finish heading south from the outfitter before my water ran out and temperatures hit the 80s. For safety, I called it an afternoon. Two trail runners from Old-Timers Hiking Club reported Section 19b was clear, but observed a blowdown a mile south of Indian Grave Gap. Eight backpackers were all NOBO, including the couple who had inquired via the website about trail access.

Reporting: Elzear Lemieux

Date: 6/3/2020

Purpose: A.T. Maintenance

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

People: Elzear Lemieux

Summary: I walked my section to remove a blowdown and check trail condition. The blowdown had already been removed. I cut back some vegetation and noted some grassy areas that need to be trimmed about 0.3 miles south of the shelter.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 6/4/2020

Purpose: Blowdowns

Location: Section 8, Wilbur Dam Rd to Oliver Hollow access

People: Tony and Renee Messina, Joe Morris

Summary: It was a warm day to finally be able to get out and address blowdowns. We cleared two large blowdowns south of the old Watauga Shelter site and two north of Watauga Dam. One hazard tree was left about 0.4 miles north of Wilbur Dam Road because we were afraid it would get hung up in canopy and we did not have adequate rope equipment to address it. Some lopping and rhododendron abatement was also done along the way.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 6/4/2020

Purpose: Blaze, prune, minor Rehab

Location: Section 10, Dennis Cove to Laurel Fork Falls and loop to shelter using high water trail

People: Bob Peoples, Elaine Ma "T-Storm", Eileen Hill, Beth Tryer

Summary: "T-Storm" brought two friends from Asheville to do trail maintenance. She had worked with us last during 2015 Hard Core. They painted some blazes. At top and bottom of stairs to falls the blaze trees have fallen. So they blazed appropriate rocks. They had to set one rock. At Falls they did indicate N or S. They pruned the high-water blue-blaze trail. It needs some rehab. They were able to set two locust steps on the A.T. near the shelter. One step had rotted out and a second was needed.

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 6/4/2020

Purpose: Walk Thru

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

People: Kevin Sedgwick, Gloria Sedgwick

Summary: We got on the trail after ATC lifted restrictions for trail work. It was a pretty day to be out. We saw several section and thru-hikers, who were very talkative and fun to be with. We cut back growth, painted blazes as needed, and cut out a few small blowdowns. We have never seen the invasive roses in bloom like they were today. Lots and lots of signs of ATV use.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 6/6/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 7, Vandeventer Shelter to Wilbur Dam Rd, First 3/4 mile on the switchbacks

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: I spent the day cutting back the new growth of Laurel and blueberry bushes along the switchbacks. Only 4 more miles to go! I put in a temporary fix to a cut at the switchback located a half- mile from Wilbur Dam Rd. Some folks have been cutting the switchback and now the water is starting to wash it out. I used a piece of oak and rocks to fill in the high side of the cut and then brushed in the rest. There were plenty of folks out. I counted 13 people, most of whom were NOBO with one SOBO.

Reporting: Gayle Riddervold

Date: 6/6/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 8, US 321 to Wilbur Dam Road

People: Gayle Riddervold, Becky Kinder

Summary: Going South from the iron gate, we trimmed back weeds, poison ivy, and cut a small tree hanging over the trail. We cut most of the weedy section and will return to finish the rest on another day.

Reporting: Jake Mitchell

Date: 6/6/2020

Purpose: Weed and mow

Location: Section 14a, Overmountain Shelter to Little Hump

People: Jake Mitchell

Summary: I finished trimming weeds from Bradley Gap to the rocks on Little Hump. The weeds are growing fast in the heat. I "tried" mowing the open area at the barn, but it was too thick and too wet. It had just been too long since getting a mower up there. I mowed about 40% of it, mostly on the uphill side of the footpath. We need to request the FS to get a bushhog up there. A midweek crew or Saturday crew could be used soon to shear back the limbs in the woods that I couldn't stop and get while trimming weeds. It wasn't bad, but will need to be addressed within the next few weeks.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 6/6/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 16b, Iron Mountain Gap to Weedy Gap

People: Joe Morris

Summary: I trimmed weeds along this section.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 6/6/2020

Purpose: Finish the "hair cut" and check for flood damage

Location: Section 19b, Nolichucky River, Cut rock steps to past second bridge

People: Vic Hasler

Summary: I returned to this trail section to first check for reported flood damage by the spring rains. Several places in the Jones Branch bottomland showed impact of heavy runoff. The trail was gouged north of the first bridge, so I used a hand saw to remove some overgrown rhododendron to open up more of the path, and then hauled rocks from a nearby fire ring to fill in the hole. More fine sand and clay soil is needed to finish the repair, which could be gotten with a shovel and bucket from a filled waterbar just to the north. I returned to the outfitter (which was full of campers from as far as Florida, everyone with a tube, kayak, or raft), and headed south to finish trimming the uphill growth to the cut rock steps before lunch. This portion of the path could benefit from removal of sloughed soil – and by the new hammer drill to cut out some rock. I saw six section hikers and roughly two dozen day folks mostly from the campground. After lunch, I went back to work on pruning the dog hobble up to the first bridge, but gave up as temperatures exceeded 80°F (with the stream and river providing some cooling). Overall, Section 19b is in decent shape.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 6/8/2020

Purpose: Clear hazard tree

Location: Section 8, 0.4 mile south of Wilbur Dam Rd

People: Tony and Renee Messina, Carl Fritz

Summary: A hazard Tree was removed which was leaning over two sections of the trail near a turn. The tree was partially hung in other trees and its rootball would have done significant damage to the trail if it fell naturally. We also 'planted' rhododendron cuttings to block cutting of a tight switchback turn about 0.2 miles south of Wilbur Dam Road.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 6/10/2020

Purpose: Scouting with SAWS (Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards) crew leaders

Location: Section 6, Iron Mountain Shelter to Vandeventer Shelter

People: Scotty Bowman, Grayson Bullock, Gabe Nelson

Summary: I hiked in with the SAWS crew leaders to show them where they are to base camp for their hitch next week. They will address tread issues between Vandeventer and the Turkey Pen Gap relo, some brushing, and blowdown removal during their hitch.

Reporting: Gayle Riddervold

Date: 6/11/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 8, US 321 to Wilbur Dam Road

People: Gayle Riddervold, Becky Kinder

Summary: We went back to the weedy section, south of the Iron gate to finish cutting back vegetation up to the small wooden bridge. Due to the massive poison ivy, we brought a lawn mower and cut down the poison and widened the trail on each side. There are two small leaning blowdowns. We started sawing one of the trees and have it 3/4 of the way cut. Tomorrow we hope to finish the job if weather permits.

Reporting: Michael Watts

Date: 6/11/2020

Purpose: Section maintenance

Location: Section 13, US19E to Doll Flats

People: Michael Watts

Summary: I repainted blazes in both directions, dug out waterbars, did some additional trimming, and hauled out trash.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 6/12/2020

Purpose: Cut weeds

Location: Section 9b, Blue-blaze Trail to Hampton

People: Carl Fritz

Summary: I did some whacking of growth under the power line.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 6/12/2020

Purpose: Section Maintenance

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

People: Tony and Renee Messina

Summary: Renee and I weed whacked the remainder of our maintenance section today, which involved the last mile north of Stan Murray Shelter. Carl joined us for a while nearer Yellow Mountain Gap to tutor us on identification of the Bent Avens endangered plant. We ended up finding at least 30 individual specimens during the day, giving them a wide berth. (Carl is reporting separately.) We also encountered perhaps 40 hikers, mostly weekenders heading to the barn. The weather was AWESOME; the high was only in the 60's up there with a pleasant breeze throughout the day.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 6/12/2020

Purpose: Cut Grass

Location: Section 14b, South of Yellow Mountain Gap and at Barn

People: Carl Fritz, Hiker Ken

Summary: I ventured with Tony and Renee from the Barn towards Stan Murray shelter to identify some plants. Then I cut the remaining grass at the barn. The harder part was raking all that wet hay. A group of hikers were sun bathing for about three hours. Many other hikers came in the afternoon to camp. One jumped in to help with the raking and hauling!

Reporting: Steve Perri

Date: 6/13/2020

Purpose: Annual Maintenance and Weeding

Location: Section 3b, North of US 421

People: Carl Belcher, Steve Perri, Steve Wilson

Summary: We conducted weeding on the A.T. from 421 to the Spring. We cut lots of briars and other growth since no trip was carried out in March. I cut the weeds with a scythe, moving way ahead of Steve Wilson and Carl Belcher who were working separately. Carl did heavy lopping and Steve cleaned out waterbars and coweta dips with a heavy duty hoe. One blowdown with entangled vines was dragged off the trail just past the old fence posts about 0.5 mile in. Two easy step-over blowdowns of dead trees just past the rock wall remain from previous years. The Spring was running slowly and Steve cleaned this out too. The blue blazes for the spring need to be painted even though it is hard to miss. We saw three thru-hikers and four section hikers all going north.

Reporting: Gayle Riddervold

Date: 6/13/2020

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 8, US 321 to Wilbur Dam Road

People: Gayle Riddervold, Becky Kinder

Summary: We went back to cut two blowdowns that were leaning on the trail. The bigger tree was cut in two places in order to clear it off the path. The upper part that remained tangled in the vines was moved with a rope. We had many interruptions due to large groups of day hikers. We had to wear face masks because no one was following social distancing guidelines. Some weeding and trimming was also done North of the Iron gate.

Reporting: Lori Mirrer

Date: 6/15/2020

Purpose: Clear weeds

Location: Section 15b, Hughes Gap to Beartown Mountain

People: Lori Mirrer, Kim Peters, Phyllis Cairnes

Summary: We delivered a well-needed weed whacking to the trail from Hughes Gap to Beartown Mountain. As is typical for this section, parts of it looked fine while other parts had plenty to cut. We kept an eye out for the rare plants reported in this section, but didn't see any. The blazes looked good; so did the water source. We didn't see any toppled trees or other blockages. We saw about a half-dozen hikers on Sunday afternoon, all going southbound; a few more than that on Monday (mostly northbound). I hope to get back and do the rest of the segment (Beartown Mtn to Cloudland) in July.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 6/17/2020

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 6, Turkey Pen Gap to Vandeventer Shelter

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: I hiked in for an overnight to scout the section for the SAWS crew and cut out any blowdowns. Day 1 was filled with rain and blowdown removal. In total, I cut a total of 10 blowdowns between Turkey Pen Gap and Vandeventer Shelter with my trusty Silky Katana Boy. The trail is clear of blowdowns. With all the rain, water is plentiful. The spring between the shelter is flowing as are both of the springs at Iron Mountain and Vandeventer Shelter.

Reporting: Jim Foster

Date: 6/19/2020

Purpose: Cut blowdowns

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

People: Bruce Darby, John Beaudet, Jim Foster

Summary: We mainly went to cut five blowdowns, but also ended up cutting two hazard trees behind the shelter above the tenting sites. It was a good day and thanks to John for being my sawyer. We ran into quite a few hikers, and the trail is now free of all obstructions.

Reporting: Kayla Carter

Date: 6/20/2020

Purpose: Reconnaissance

Location: Section 12c, Sugar Hollow Creek to Jones Falls

People: Kayla and Ed Carter

Summary: This was my first time out since the quarantine. For our Fathers Day camping trip, we mixed some work (trail maintenance) and play (camping and fishing). We hiked in from Elk River Falls on the improved fisherman's trail. WOW! Good work. Thank you!! Our goal for the outing was to clear blowdowns and cut back vegetation along the whole section, but we weren't able to make it all the way to Campbell Hollow Road. I will return another weekend to finish the lopping as well as cut the larger blowdowns by saw or axe with help. We were only able to clear one small blowdown with the tools we brought this time. We were able to get all the vegetation cut back from Sugar Hollow Creek to Jones Falls. We also picked up trash (Elk River Falls trash issue is getting worse), checked the water sources and made sure that no one has stolen the Jones Falls sign. It would seem to me that the Jones Falls waterfall is getting quite a bit more visitation. Staying the night on my section was quite eye opening. We met 8 thru-hikers and 17 day-hikers. Five (one group of three and two solo hikers) of those day hikers were lost looking for Jones Falls. I would

suggest, if able, painting one blue blaze on the tree at the fisherman's trail and A.T. junction. It's quite confusing there. There are white blazes visible, but I think having a blue blaze at the rocks may help folks find their way back from the waterfall, as well as avoid a wrong turn on the A.T. I witnessed both while out there. A few folks went off toward Elk River Falls instead of making the right turn there at the rock outcropping to continue northbound on the A.T. Then a lady wandered up to our camp at Sugar Hollow Creek asking how to get back to Elk River Falls. Next trip will be for cutting weeds, clearing blowdowns, and cutting vegetation from Jones Falls to Campbell Hollow Road.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 6/20/2020

Purpose: Install Beauty Spot Gap sign

Location: Section 19a, Beauty Spot Gap (formerly known as Deep Gap)

People: Vic Hasler

Summary: Now that maintainers are allowed in the field after the Covid-19 lockdown and I have my truck back from the shop with a rebuilt engine, I installed the new information sign: "APPALACHIAN TRAIL, BEAUTY SPOT GAP 4,100 FT., (formerly referenced as DEEP Gap), CHERRY GAP SHELTER 4.9 MI. N, CURLEY MAPLE SHELTER 8.0 MI S". I also took some time to pick up trash from the campsite (mostly broken glass bottles) and used a swing blade (in the wilderness area) to brush along the blue blaze path toward the spring to keep it clearly visible. I observed two vehicles parked at Indian Grave Gap, but did not see anyone since just after sunrise.



Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 6/20/2020

Purpose: Hang A.T. sign, paint blue blazes, clean waterbar to fill hole in trail, and cut back dog-hobble

Location: Section 19b, (1) Chestoa parking lot trailhead, (2) First to third bridge

People: Vic Hasler



Summary: First task of the morning was to hang the sign "Appalachian National Scenic Trail...FOOT TRAVEL WELCOME" NOBO from the Chestoa parking lot. **(Steve Perri and I have more of these signs for other sections as two bundles were found in the Bldg 310 hiking club room.)** There were five vehicles in the parking lot. USA Raft campground was again packed with more visitors for the float trips. Second job was to freshen up the blue blazes from the campground trail head to the main A.T. (The white blazes are in good condition, thus can skip for this year.) Third objective was to follow-up on my June 6th trip report by digging out the filled waterbar between the first and second bridges and haul the gravel 150 feet to the south to pack around larger rocks filling a gouged hole in the trail path. A dozen trips hauling a loaded 2.5-gallon bucket adequately cleared the waterbar and provided sufficient fill for the hole. The fourth maintenance item was to continue trimming back the dog-hobble growth from the first bridge. I gave up for the day upon reaching the third bridge. Jones Branch has running water, but the rivulets feeding the stream are dry. I saw one very slow NOBO hiker, a couple from the Nantahala Hiking Club, and a SOBO hiker.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 6/22/2020

Purpose: Blowdowns

Location: Section 12b, Walnut Mountain Rd to Mountaineer Falls Shelter

People: Tony and Renee Messina

Summary: We cleared a couple of large blowdowns near Mountaineer Falls Shelter, the largest was about 20-inch diameter. We also removed several smaller blowdowns and encroachments between the shelter and Walnut Mtn Road. It was an absolutely gorgeous day to be in the woods, high temp up there was in the 70's with a nice breeze. We covered as far as Mountaineer Falls and saw four individual section hikers and five pairs of other backpackers.

Reporting: Saylor Fox

Date: 6/22/2020

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 15a, Carvers Gap - Cloudland Hotel, NC/TN border

People: Saylor Fox, Carl Fritz

Summary: We removed six blowdowns. Carl was the sawyer; Saylor assisted with appropriate social distancing and a mask.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 6/25/2020

Purpose: Cut Weeds

Location: Section 14c, Stan Murray Shelter to Carvers Gap

People: Carl Fritz, Tony Messina, Joe Morris, Bill Murdoch

Summary: We cut weeds from the Stan Murray Shelter to Grassy Ridge. We also cut back the blueberries at the beginning of Grassy Ridge Trail. Tony had to exit at Carver's Gap because he did a key swap with Renee. So he did some cutting all the way to Carver's Gap. The day with a 20% chance of rain sure deluged us from Elizabethton on to Overmountain Shelter. The rain finally stopped by noon. So we had a chance to see water running in the trail. There were a lot of hikers and over-nighters on this wet day.

Reporting: Michael Watts

Date: 6/26/2020

Purpose: Weeding

Location: Section 13, US 19E to Doll Flats

People: Michael Watts

Summary: I cut weeds and removed trash from the trail head.