



The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

April 2023

tehcc.org

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

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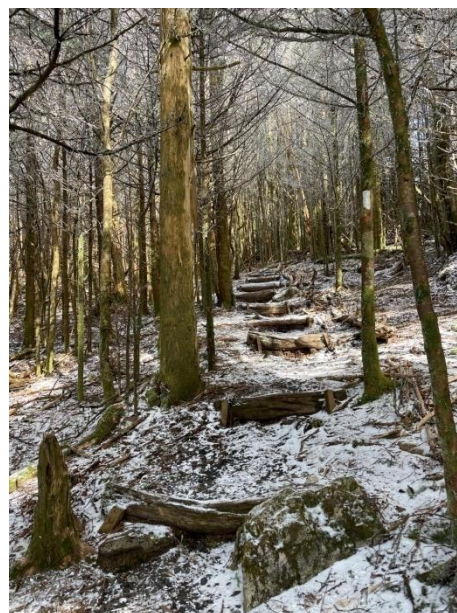
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A snowy
March 11th
on the A.T.

But spring is
finally here!

Photo by
Lori Mirrer

Letter from the Chair

Submitted by Josh Hayes (2023 Steering Committee Chair)

Hello friends,

As we enter April there are some exciting things happening! From the hiking program starting back up, to new volunteer opportunities, the Steering Committee hopes for great involvement this year. Last letter, we talked about the importance of bear safety, one of the seven principles of “leave no trace” (**Respect Wildlife**). This letter will deal with the principle of **Dispose of Waste**.

Hiking, in and of itself, is a wonderful source of therapy, a way for one to unplug and reconnect to the nature that surrounds us by reminding ourselves that we are only a small part of the world. Much like we would tend to our own home, we should take care of the home of others. You wouldn’t walk into a friend’s house and dump your kitchen trash onto their floor; yet it has become too common to dump one’s litter on the trails and forest floor. More than trash, some hikers need to dig catholes to take care of “business” while on longer hikes. If not done properly, this can lead to polluting waterways and the spread of disease.

What you can do: As with any hiking trip, the best thing you can do is plan, plan, plan. Bring a trash bag with you and haul out your garbage; bonus points if you pick up garbage to ensure the trail is better than the way you found it. Plan a route that will have latrines or porta-potties readily available. If you don’t have an EPA-approved packout system and find yourself in a situation where you must use a cat hole, follow these steps to ensure minimal impact: Find a spot at least 200 steps away from a water source, dig a hole 6-8 inches deep, and pack out used toilet paper/feminine care.

Together, we can be better stewards of the places we all love. By using foresight in our planning, we can minimize the impact of human waste. By hauling out trash, we can ensure that everyone can create core memories that will be their own form of therapy.

Thanks all,
Josh

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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://www.riverapes.org/calendar.html>.

Date	Description	Contact	Telephone
April 8	Hiking with Tools!, 9:30 am	Tim Stewart	
April 15	Warriors Path – Devils Backbone/Fall Creek Loop Hike, 9:30 – 11:30 am	Josh Hayes	270-585-5929
April 15	Bays Mountain Park Maintenance, 9 am – 2 pm	Tony Messina	423-677-6650
April 20	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	Josh Hayes	270-585-5929
April 21	TEHCC Spring Dinner Meeting	Joseph Sengeh	
April 22	Coon Den Falls Hike, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm	Andy Steffan	919-928-4738
May 13	Hiking with Tools!	Tim Stewart	
May 13 - 15	Appalachian Trail Days Festival, Damascus, VA		
May 18	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	Josh Hayes	270-585-5929
May 20	Bays Mountain Park Maintenance, 9 am – 2 pm	Tony Messina	423-677-6650

Details of Upcoming Events

Recurring Events

TEHCC Steering Committee Meeting, Third Thursday of Each Month, Noon to 1:00 pm

Contact: [Josh Hayes](#)

Location: Teleconference

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. Teams teleconferencing is used as the committee is spread across the Eastman plant site or working from home. If you want to listen/join in, please contact me.

Johnson City Roll Practice, Tuesdays, 7:35 – 9:00 pm

Contact: [Wesley R. Bradley](#), 423-647-1321

Come join the Jackson Action Wagon, [Mahoney's Outfitters](#), [APEs](#), and other paddlers from our region at Freedom Hall Pool for tips about basic kayaking skills. Have you already mastered the basics and have a bomb proof roll? There is still a lot of fun to be had at our pool session by practicing your flat-water freestyle moves and fellowshiping with other paddlers. Admission to the pool is \$2; rolling advice is free! Contact the pool office (423-461-4872) for session confirmation or questions regarding the facility.

Weekly A.T. Trail Maintenance, Most Thursdays

Contact: [Joe Morris](#), 423-571-5201, atvolunteer@tehcc.org

Join a group of maintainers who work somewhere on our 134-mile section each week, usually on Thursdays. On-the-job training, tools, and protective gear are provided to allow everyone to quickly engage with the trail. Carpooling is available.

Hiking with Tools! Second Saturday of Each Month, March through November

Contact: [Tim Stewart](#)

Hiking with Tools! is an opportunity to enjoy a day hike on our beautiful section of the A.T. while helping out with some routine maintenance. Typical tasks might include lopping rhododendrons, cleaning water diversions, clearing trail obstructions, painting blazes, etc. All tools will be furnished, and no prior experience is required! All are welcome; so come on out, meet some new hikers and join the fun...and maybe get your hands a little dirty! Email Tim for details and to sign up.

Bays Mountain Park Trail Maintenance, Third Saturday of Each Month, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Contact: [Tony Messina](#), 423-677-6650

This event is family friendly across all the park trails. We will meet in the mountain-bike parking area by the maintenance shed. Please bring gloves and safety glasses. If the task requires, hardhats and other safety equipment will be provided as necessary.

Scheduled Events

Hiking with Tools!, Saturday, April 8, 2023, 9:30 am – 2:00 pm

Contact: [Tim Stewart](#)

Our first outing of the season went well, so let's do it again! We'll hike to the Apple Orchard from Iron Mountain Gap, cleaning water diversions and whatever else we encounter. It is about 4 miles roundtrip with some elevation changes. The meeting place is at Iron Mountain Gap off of TN107/NC226 at 9:30. [Appalachian Trail · TN-107, Unicoi, TN 37692](#) As a reminder, some items to bring in a day pack: work gloves, hard hat if you have one (otherwise provided), plenty of drinking water, lunch, and appropriate cold weather/rain gear (This is at a higher elevation so colder weather might be possible). If the weather changes, we may have to cancel. Please let me know if you plan to attend so that I can bring enough tools.

Warriors Path – Devils Backbone/Fall Creek Loop Hike, Saturday, April 15, 2023, 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Contact: [Josh Hayes](#), 270-585-5929

Weather permitting we will do a moderate 4-mile hike down Devil's Backbone around Fall Loop and back up the backbone. Parking is located on Fall Creek Rd just over the bridge with room for 4-6 cars. Dogs are welcome on leash. There is about 250 ft of elevation gain within the first half mile. It is recommended that you bring water and snacks. Hope to see you there!

Coon Den Falls Hike, Saturday April 22, 2023, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Contact: [Andy Steffan](#), 919-928-4738

Hopefully we have a lovely Spring Dinner with a nice rain preceding so that we can enjoy a fantastic hike to Coon Den Falls the next morning. This waterfall is often overshadowed by the nearby Laurel Fork Falls, which goes the opposite direction on the AT from the same parking area. Coon Den Falls is approximately 60'-80' tall, but seems taller in person. Although the trail to the falls is only 1.2ish miles, we will take a loop route that adds on an additional one mile to the hike. I hope you'll join us for this great hike! Bring water and some snacks. There are a few sections to the trail that are somewhat steep, but we will go at a pace that works well for the group. Plan to meet at the [Dennis Cove trailhead, Hampton, TN](#). If some people are interested in tackling two waterfalls in a day, we could easily add on Laurel Fork falls for an additional 2.6 mile hike. Please contact Andy for additional information and to let him know if you plan to be there.

Detailed directions: Take Exit 24 to merge onto US-321N/University Parkway. Follow 8.4 miles to US-19E N. Turn right onto TN-362S and go 8 miles. Turn left onto US-19E N and go 2 miles. Then turn right onto US321S and go 0.8 miles. Take slight right onto Dennis Cove Rd and go 0.6 miles. Then turn left onto Dennis Cove Rd and go 3.3 miles. Parking area will be on the left.

TEHCC Spring Dinner Meeting, Friday, April 21, 2023

The Steering Committee invites you to the 2023 TEHCC Spring Dinner. This year we will explore the paddling side of the club with engaging speaker, Brad Eldridge. Brad was just elected President of APEs (Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts) for 2023. He has served on the leadership team of APEs for several years, most recently in the VP role. He is an avid paddler, advocates for the paddling community, and teaches classes for NOLI. His presentation will cover the types of boats (kayaks and canoes, flatwater vs whitewater), tips for beginners, overall safety, regional options for classes of water, and regional outfitters. And of course, it will include plenty of pictures and stories from Brad's whitewater adventures. This is intended to be useful and entertaining for everyone, regardless of paddling experience.

The charge for dinner is **\$11/person**. Attending only the program is free. Please send your reservation to [Joseph Sengeh](#) by

Thursday, April 13. Make checks payable to Joseph and mail to:

Eastman Chemical Company

200 South Wilcox Dr.

Building 162, Rm. 132, Attn. Joseph Sengeh

Kingsport, TN 37660

Event	Time	Details
Spring Dinner Meeting, April 21, 2023	5:30 pm	Location: Eastman Lodge, Main Banquet Hall 404 Bays Mountain Road, Kingsport, TN
Happy "Trails" Hour	5:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Donations accepted for beer and wine, or BYOB
Dinner – \$11/person Nick's Chicken Plus drinks, dessert, and coffee	6:30 pm - 7:15 pm	Two options: 3 chicken strips, with fries, slaw, and toast; or lemon-pepper chicken breast with green beans, mac-and-cheese, and toast
Club Business	7:15 pm - 7:30 pm	Update of club activities and awards
Program: Paddling	7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Andy Steffan – Quick overview of club boating options and rentals Brad Eldridge – Main speaker

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2023 TEHCC T-Shirt Order

Submitted by Sal Arena (Steering Committee)

TEHCC is bringing back the 75th anniversary classic club logo t-shirt! The short-sleeve is made of EcoSmart 50/50 pre-shrunk poly/cotton blend, and the long-sleeve is made of lightweight 100% moisture-wicking polyester. Current prices will be \$10 for short-sleeved and \$15 for long-sleeved (final price to be set once order quantities are finalized). If you are interested in ordering, please fill out the form [here](#). We will continue to have the order form open until April 30th!



Size guides can be found [here](#).

*Orders will be placed in the first week of May. Estimated shipping time is two weeks. Shirts will be available to pick up at the employee center (B310/Toy F. Reid Building).

2018-2022 TEHCC Finances Review

Vic Hasler reporting

On behalf of the Steering and A.T. Committees, this article reviews the club's income and expenses over the past five years (since the last formal sharing). First, the paying membership has declined from 614 to 583 employees primarily due to retirements, as Eastman and Kodak retirees do not have to pay dues per ERC policy (however a few do). Meanwhile, the number of affiliates sending in dues has remained steady, around 30-50. Donors have cited the high quality of TEHCC's Appalachian Trail section when giving roughly \$300 each year, which is added to the Trail Maintenance Supplies budget. Rentals of club backpacking equipment – and now kayaks – collected \$285 annually, which has been augmented to \$370 for its repair and replacement. Overall, the club's Steering Committee has \$4,100 each year to invest in recreational activities. It is good practice to let the membership know what is being done with these funds.

By Eastman Recreation policy, no balance can be carried forward into the next year; except the COVID-19 pandemic delayed some expenses from 2020 into 2021. The largest investment is \$1,650 for Trail Maintenance Supplies. Typically, these expenses are for: parts to maintain the chainsaws; brooms, logbooks, and shovels for the shelters; gravel and rebar for the tread and water diversions; trail signs; and lumber and hardware to add/repair/replace bridges and shelters. Donations totaling \$1,050 are regularly made to support partners, i.e., Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards, American Whitewater, Bays Mountain Park, and Rocky Fork State Park. The two annual dinners with AT2000 awards and the 75th Anniversary pint-glass incentives were supported by \$520 each year. In 2021-2022, the club received a donation of six kayaks, a canoe, and life jackets from Eastman environmental affairs organization, thus contributed half the cost of a trailer. The remaining ~\$240 is used to maintain TEHCC.org domain/website, provide a few scholarships for WFA/CPR courses, to get better pricing for club t-shirts, and to supply gloves or trash bags for Nolichucky River clean-up.

In addition, the club's A.T. Committee has submitted grant requests to the Tennessee and North Carolina Appalachian Trail license plate programs. In 2018, a grant for \$650 purchased gravel and buckets for student brigades to harden the tread. Another grant of \$1,120 purchased paint for Overmountain, Curley Maple, and Roan High Knob shelters. First-time volunteer recognition patches were funded by a \$600 grant. In 2019, a cordless hedge trimmer and a hammer drill were bought for \$2,650, which have been very useful tools for regular maintenance projects. In 2020, a DeWalt battery-powered chainsaw with extra battery and three Silky Katanaboy handsaws were purchased using a \$1,150 grant. In 2021, a set of grants provided funds to hire a neighbor to mow the accessible trail on the former Osborne Farm (\$900), for bog bridges in Bishop Hollow and Bradley Gap (\$1,160), and for a cordless tacker and angle grinder (\$490). In 2022, grants supported more bog bridges at Chestoa and Bitter End, trail maintenance tools – Pulaskis, loppers, rock bars, and slings (\$3,491), and contract mowing at Osborne Farm (\$900). As you can see, the license plate grant program has been useful to the club in supporting our trail maintenance efforts. Many thanks go to Dan Firth for completing and submitting paperwork each year. And thanks to all whose vehicles sporting an A.T. plate!

Any questions can be directed to a Steering Committee member. Thanks for your support.

Dolan Branch Trail Improvements at Bays Mountain Park

Submitted by Tony Messina

The “Trail Gorillas” are a group of volunteers working to improve the trail system at Bays Mountain, consisting mostly of TEHCC trail maintainers. The most recent accomplishment of the group is the renovation of the stone staircase leading down from the dam into the hollow formed by Dolan Branch along the Dolan Branch Trail. The trail follows the historic Kingsport Water Supply pipeline down to the Eastman Recreation Center, and if you haven’t explored that trail, you are missing a real gem with waterfalls, cascades, and some old growth forest.

The staircase is one of the original park features, but had fallen into disrepair over the years. About a year ago, Park Manager Megan Krager asked the gorillas to renovate the trail and the team started work. Working mostly on their regular third-Saturday workdays at the park, the gorillas completed the staircase work in February and reopened the trail.

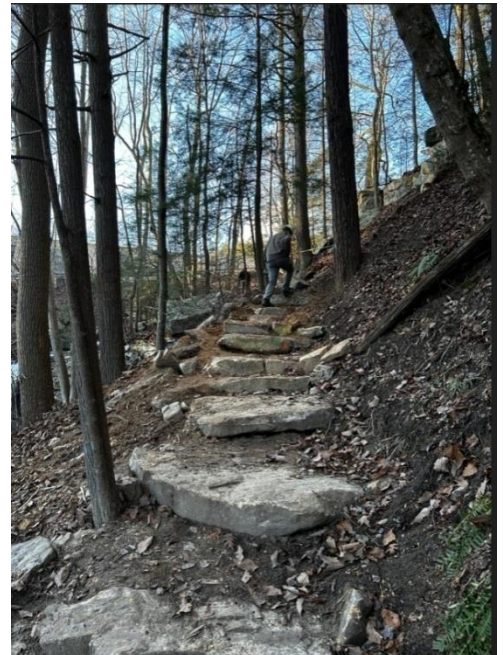


It was decided early on that the original staircase could not be replicated. It consisted of many relatively small rocks mortared together in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) style that is prevalent in much of the original park construction. The gorillas chose a more rustic approach using stacked natural stones.... BIG ONES. The stacked technique is used by TEHCC maintainers on the A.T. and was used a couple of years ago in the “Stairway to Heaven” renovation done by the Gorillas on the Bays Mountain fire tower Trail.



Stones were harvested from the hillside near the trail until that supply was exhausted and then more stones were harvested from the sides of Bays Mountain Road, the gravel road which leads up to the antenna farm atop Bays Mountain. A long time Bays Mountain volunteer, Jody Milsap, used his tractor/front end loader to haul the rocks down the mountain to the Dolan Branch trailhead. From there, the gorillas used a rock sled and a cable highline system to move the rocks down the hill onto the trail. It was quite a spectacle to behold, with some of the rocks weighing well

over a thousand pounds. A total of 37 large steps were installed and should last for folks’ enjoyment for many years to come.



Typically, the Bays Mountain trail gorillas work on the third Saturday of each month, although special workdays are held to accommodate volunteer groups or address special projects such as the bridge repair. If you would like to learn about or help with trail work at Bays Mountain, contact Krystal Haney, Park Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator at Bays Mountain krystal.haney@kingsporttn.gov or the TEHCC coordinator for Bays Mountain, Tony Messina, tmess@chartertn.net.

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2023 Roan Naturalist, Adam Kluge

Introduction assembled by Vic Hasler



The Roan Naturalist position continues in 2023 with Adam Kluge, who grew up in Fairview, NC. He previously worked at (and did a high school senior project in sustainability) at Hickory Nut Gap Farms, a fifth-generation cattle ranch in his hometown. Last summer, Adam completed a stint at Ironwood Outdoors (Warrenton, VA), which is a full-service trail construction company where he learned to plan, build, and restore biking and hiking trails. He is currently a junior at Warren Wilson College, studying Conservation Biology.

Adam describes himself as an Outdoor Adventure Enthusiast with extensive experience solo backpacking in WNC Appalachian region and canoe camping in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. He actively practices and promotes "Leave No Trace" ethics on land and water trails. Other interests cited are being an avid birder proficient in identification by sight and sound plus a plant seeker roaming woods to discover native spring and summer wildflowers. (Hopefully, he will not get tired of sharing about the "purple" and "orange" flowers in the Roan Highlands as how the public describes Catawba Rhododendron and Flame Azaleas.)

The Roan Naturalist role is to educate visitors about the unique ecosystem to hopefully improve behaviors for protection of the landscape that the Appalachian Trail crosses. He will also monitor the campsites and other key indicators of visitor use, while joining trail maintenance activities and briar mowing on the balds.

A.T. Vista: August 4 – 7, 2023

Contact: Vic Hasler or Steve Perri



The A.T. Vista program (atvista2023.org) based out of East Tennessee State University (ETSU) is a long weekend offering excursions, exhibits, hikes, workshops, and a pair of dinners as the region celebrates the Appalachian Trail and other outdoor opportunities. Schedules for excursions, hikes and workshops are now being assembled for registered participants to select starting in early May.

If you want to be a participant, Early Bird tickets for admission to all events are available through May 31st at \$100 adults, \$50 Youth (ages 16 & under). Currently, 70 folks have signed up. The current goal is to have 400 participants engaged in these activities over the weekend.

If interested in leading a hike, making a presentation, or just helping with the event, please contact TEHCC or register at [Volunteer | AT Vista 2023](#). Assignments for these activities are underway with some being arranged by partner organizations closer to the August weekend. Hike leaders will have had prior experience with the routes. Please note that while paid participants can be volunteers; hike and presentation volunteers will not

be able to register for the other activities without paying.

In anticipation of the Inaugural 2023 Appalachian Trail Vista summit, the organizers have partnered with [FytFeed](#) on an April Hiking Challenge. Sign up this month by downloading the app, compatible with smart phones and your favorite activity watch. Participants who log at least two hikes per week April 1-30 will be entered to win an A.T. Vista registration, as well as other great prizes.

KKB (Keep Kingsport Beautiful) Cleanup Events

Although not TEHCC sponsored events, if you have a few hours to spare away from hiking, paddling, or trail maintenance, and have an interest in cleaning up our local community outside of our trails, there are a few opportunities to get involved this Spring:

- April 15: Riverview Community, 9am-11am. Meet at the Splash Pad, sponsored by AEP.
- April 22: Downtown Kingsport, 10am-noon. Meet in the Cherokee Street parking lot, sponsored by Domtar.
- April 29: Lynn Garden Community, 10am-noon. Meet at the Lynn View Community Center, sponsored by AEP.
- May 6: Stone Dr. and JB Dennis clover, 10am-noon. Meet in lower parking lot of Honda Kingsport, sponsor for event.

Trash bags, grabbers, gloves, and safety vests will be provided. Contact Sharon Hayes at shayes@kingsportchamber.org for more information.

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TEHCC KKB Day at George Washington Elementary – Saturday, May 6

TEHCC is partnering with KKB to help create a pollinator garden area at Washington Elementary to give back to the next generation, helping them learn and gain appreciation for nature and the outdoors. The school plans to use the space for hands-on activities to learn about plant and animal lifecycles, ecosystems, and more.

When: Saturday May 6, 8 am – Noon (or whenever we complete the task for the day)

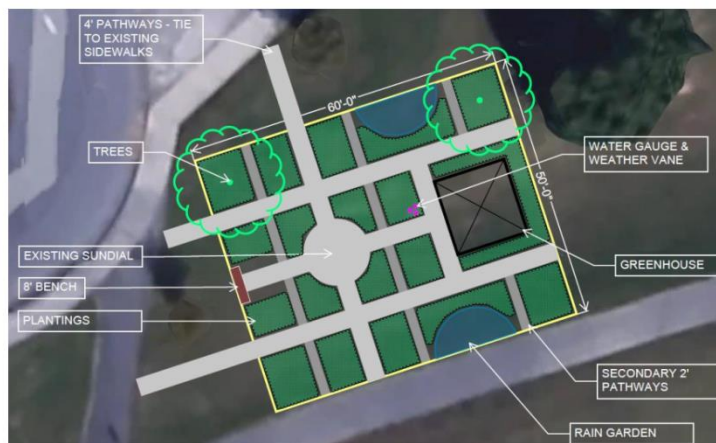
Where: George Washington Elem., 1100 Bellingham Dr., Kingsport, TN 37660

What: By the time of this event, the garden will hopefully be ready for tasks such as planting, mulching, watering, etc., which also provides a great opportunity to involve your kids. The heavy lifting of path making, block setting, dirt moving will likely be complete. Plan to bring gloves, shovels, rakes, etc. if you have them; some supplies may be available if you do not have these.

Who: Due to the space and to maximize volunteers' time, we're limiting the event to 10 TEHCC members, first-come, first-serve (kids not included in that count).

If interested, please email andrewsteffan@eastman.com to sign up or get more details.

Detailed plan – George Washington Elementary



3,000 sq ft total area

Approx 900 sq ft of 4' pathways

Approx 200 sq ft of 2' pathways

Approx 200 sq ft greenhouse

Approx 200 sq ft rain garden(s)

Approx 1,500 sq ft pollinator plants

TEHCC Welcomes New Members

Loren Ferguson

Russell Fleming

Chris Harrington

Trail Wiki Hike Summary

Submitted by [Tim Schaefer](#)

Log your hikes on our Trail Wiki. Keep track of your SB6K and area hikes completed, also share with others the hikes you like to do.

Recent hikes are viewable at http://tehcc.org/wiki/Recent_Hikes.



A.T. Maintenance Reports

Reporting: Richard Ritter

Date: 2/15/2023

Purpose: Hike and blowdown maintenance

Location: Section 3, McQueen's Gap to US 421

People: Pat Kenney

Summary: This was a routine hike for OTHC (Old Timers Hiking Club), but Pat Kenney took on all the small blowdowns and cut back encroaching vegetation along the way.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 2/16/2023

Purpose: Inspect trail; Clear branches and vegetation

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

People: Ed Speer

Summary: Ed hiked his section, cleared the trailbed, removed small trees, removed roots, and inspected the shelter and lower spring (good flow).

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Reporting: Michael Watts

Date: 2/27/2023

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 15c, Hughes Gap to Beartown Mountain

People: Rick Lott, Kevin Sedgwick, Mike Watts

Summary: Although the wind was picking up, it was a nice morning to be on the trail. We saw one thru-hiker from Vermont who started at Springer in January. We cleared two blowdowns across the trail, including one stump and root ball which was along the edge of the treadway. We cleared another tree which was leaning over the trail and a blowdown on the water trail. We also cleaned several water diversions.



Reporting: Richard L Ramsey

Date: 2/28/2023

Purpose: Check trail condition after storm

Location: Section 14a, Doll Flats to Bradley Gap

People: Richard Ramsey, Nancy Mick

Summary: We removed limbs and blowdowns from the trail, and cleaned up at Doll Flats.

Reporting: Jim Foster

Date: 2/28/2023

Purpose: Deliver new trail register to shelter and perform routine maintenance

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

People: Jim Foster

Summary: I removed several small blowdowns and a lot of debris from the trail caused by the recent high winds. I counted 12 rehab locations in the first 0.6 mile from Greasy Creek Gap going trail north. I left two small step-overs (I need a bigger saw).

Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 3/1/2023

Purpose: Search for and remove blowdowns

Location: Section 3, TN 421 to McQueen Knob



People: Tom Sahlin, Ed Speer

Summary: I searched for new blowdowns as well as known ones to remove. Two large ones were removed. While on the way, I cleaned the trail of limbs, sticks, and loose rocks. The blowdowns found were near the top of Locust Pole Knob and then on toward McQueen Knob 2 miles from the trail head. There was one more that I thought was on this trail; so I continued on toward McQueen Knob, but realized when I got there it was a senior moment and there was no such large blowdown. (It was actually on another trail.) But I found two more blowdowns that were easy stepovers about a half-mile from McQueen Knob. We were running out of daylight, so returned without removing the last two.

Reporting: Blettye Boone

Date: 3/1/2023

Purpose: Spring check of entire section

Location: Section 15a, Carvers Gap to Cloudland Hotel NC

People: Blettye Boone, Saylor Fox

Summary: We walked the entire section. We cleaned numerous water diversions, cut back vegetation, removed 8-10 blowdowns (2 with Silky), and painted all blazes (N & S). At the shelter, we picked up trash, dismantled a fire ring, and left a new broom and journal. We checked the water source and found that one was running well. We plan to fix the other water source later (someone stole the PVC pipe). We brushed in numerous short-cuts. We found 2 leaners requiring a sawyer to remove (south of Carvers, just past the fourth switchback). Of major concern are the decaying logs on one side of the shelter.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/1/2023

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 10, Pond Mtn Wilderness (Laurel Fork)

People: Tony Messina, Van Hovey

Summary: Tony and Van hiked in from Dennis Cove to crosscut a 12-to-14-inch blowdown in the Wilderness at MM 422.2. The tree had been reported by hikers via Joe Morris. We went in via the high-water trail and corrected an incorrect metal "water" sign at the shelter. It indicated taking the blue-blaze back to the A.T. rather than the water trail. More blazing is needed in that whole area, especially near the shelter.



Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/1/2023

Purpose: Inspect trail

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

People: Kevin Sedgwick, Gloria Sedgwick

Summary: It was a pretty day for a spring walk through the section. We dismantled two fire rings, rehabbed 8 feet of trail, and cut back a lot of multiflora rose (it's waking up!!). I lost count of blowdowns that I could cut with a hand saw; 12 maybe. There are four blowdowns and one hazard tree that will require a chainsaw. We also cleaned out waterbars. We met two thru-hikers. I'm guessing the forest service brought in boulders. They placed them just south of Isaac's Cemetery where there is ATV activity.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 3/2/2023

Purpose: Thursday maintenance

Location: Section 11b, Canute Place to Bitter End Moreland Gap Shelter

People: Tim Stewart, Carl Fritz, Dan Firth, Elzear Lemieux, Bill Murdoch

Summary: Everyone went in different directions today. On my section, we travelled to the new access point. Because of all the recent rain, we parked at the gate and hiked an additional 1.3 miles to the A.T. Carl and I went north toward Canute Place; while Elzear, Dan and Bill hiked south back to Bitter End. We were all in search of blowdowns. Although we did not make it all the way to Canute Place, Carl and I had over 30 blowdowns, mostly minor, but a few required some extra effort. The others had 14 to contend with. They made it to Bitter End hours before me and Carl, so they had to wait. Overall, it was a long day, but much was accomplished and this section is mostly cleared of blowdowns. I'll have to check down to Canute Place to see what is left.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/2/2023

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 12b, Elk River to Walnut Mountain Road

People: Greg Kramer, Joe Morris

Summary: Greg and I removed 9 blowdowns between Elk River and Walnut Mtn Rd. The section is clear and the tent area near Mountaineer Falls Shelter did not have any visible hazard trees. There are some rehab opportunities and a need for water diversions in and around MM 402.2 North.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/2/2023

Purpose: Rehab and construct steps

Location: Section 12d, Campbell Hollow Road to US19E Buck Mountain Rd.

People: Scott Huskey, Tony Messina, Bob Peoples

Summary: Bob, Scott, and Tony, along with Brandon and Luke of USFS, installed 5 log steps with side logs covering about 20 ft of trail near Buck Mountain Baptist Church. We hauled the logs with Brandon's truck (dragging one long one) along the road from the Campbell Hollow trailhead area where I knew there were locusts.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/2/2023

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 12a, Bitter End to Walnut Mountain Road

People: Van Hovey, Kevin Sedgwick

Summary: From the Walnut Mtn Rd trailhead, Van and Kevin started in around 10 am. They cut six 6-to-8-inch blowdowns, and one tangle with a 14" tree in the middle of the tangle. They also lopped and cut back approximately a dozen or more encroaching rhodos of various sizes. They covered the 3.2-mile section and it is now clear.

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/2/2023

Purpose: Clear blowdown

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

People: Van Hovey, Kevin Sedgwick

Summary: Van and I were part of the Thursday crew. We finished with them early, so we had time to drive over and get a blowdown that I found the day before. We came in on Roby Miller Rd to the top of Bishop Hollow. The forest service part of the road is getting petty bad; getting overgrown and with holes of water and mud. I'm glad I had 4wd. We walked in on Old Woods Rd and cut out a nice size tree and a tangle of poison ivy. We met a thru-hiker going to the hostel above Bishop Hollow.

Reporting: David Cook

Date: 3/4/2023

Purpose: Section Maintenance

Location: Section 1, TN/VA state line to Backbone Rock Trail

People: David Cook, Jessica Cook

Summary: We started at the Backbone Rock parking lot and cleared the Backbone Trail up to the A.T., removing blowdowns, and repainting blue blazes. From the Backbone Rock/A.T. junction, we went to the TN/VA border, clearing blowdowns and cleaning out water diversions. Signage at the TN/VA border is all in good condition. The Forest Service trail marker at the A.T. junction had broken; we reinstalled and used rocks to keep it in place.

Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 3/4/2023

Purpose: Search for blowdowns and clear trail

Location: Section 16b, 2.5 miles from Iron Mountain Gap toward Greasy Creek Gap

People: Tom Sahlin

Summary: I searched for blowdowns to the top of Iron Mountain where the pinnacle of rocks are located. Only one blowdown was found and removed. I removed branches and sticks of many sizes from Iron Mountain Gap to the top of Iron Mountain rocks. I searched to the top of the mountain and removed a small blowdown on the way back. The trail is now clear.

Reporting: Scott Huskey

Date: 3/4/2023

Purpose: Trail Maintenance

Location: Section 12c, Sugar Hollow to close to Jones Falls cutoff

People: Scott Huskey

Summary: I took my gas-powered weed trimmer with me on this trip. Starting at Sugar Hollow, I cut weeds to the point where the A.T. begins its ascent up the hill toward Campbell Hollow Road. Using a bow saw, I cut a couple small blowdowns. There are at least two blowdowns on this section that require a chainsaw. However, neither is a serious obstacle for hikers.



Reporting: Greg Kramer

Date: 3/4/2023

Purpose: Spring Maintenance

Location: Section 5, TN 91 to Iron Mountain Shelter

People: Greg Kramer

Summary: With a lot of hills and a lot of waterbars! Two blowdowns were removed that blocked the trail. I left 6 blowdowns because they're walkovers. The tree at Iron Mountain Shelter (see photo) has continued to die. It may be time to ask our Forest Service associates to help fell this. The trunk is 30" by 25" and heavily side-weighted toward the other large tree behind the shelter.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 3/4/2023

Purpose: Spring chores for section

Location: Section 20b, Temple Hill Gap to No Business Knob Shelter

People: Vic Hasler

Summary: This was my spring walk-thru per the Maintainers Kickoff training. First, I was delighted to discover the Maintainer Regulars had installed locust crib and rehab back in December which addressed one of the two significant tread issues I had reported. The flagging remains for many more tread-repair opportunities, including some planned for 2024 Konnarock

Crew. Second, I want to thank Joel, Yong, Ed, and Adam for their hike-turned-maintenance trip, as I could clearly see where several blowdowns were removed, especially at a sharp bend in the trail. And finally I want to thank Ken and Lotta for removing the big blowdown north of the shelter with a chainsaw.

The hard storm yesterday had dropped four more blowdowns on the trail, which I was able to drag off the path or clear with a Silky handsaw. A large dead hemlock fell right at Temple Hill Gap where, in the past, I have observed tents. I removed the top to allow those on the A.T. to pass without a stepover. I expect the rest of the limbs will be used for campfires here. A hazard tree check at the NBK campsite observed one dead tulip poplar that leans away from the camping area. The two water channels on this section were cleaned. With the very hard rain, the wet places could be reviewed. I will send a message to the Project Coordinators for advice about one short stretch that could benefit from some improvement. NBK shelter was observed to be in good condition. The USFS posting is about bear activity and does not specifically mention the now-lifted camping closure. I lopped and sawed away at some rhododendron growth; however, the section is in good condition for this aspect. The few blazes between Temple Hill Gap and the split for Mine Flats Trail could use some brightening; otherwise, there is sufficient blazing on this sidehill section with no other intersections. Two local trail runners (one is a club member) were heading south from Chestoa to Spivey Gap.

Reporting: Jeffrey A Hatling

Date: 3/4/2023

Purpose: Inspect condition of the trail and remove small blowdowns

Location: Section 14c, Yellow Mountain Gap to Stan Murray, along with the USFS road to the Barn site

People: Jeff Hatling and his dog Merle

Summary: A couple of trees are down on the USFS road to the Barn site. Also, water diversions and some repairs are needed on the blue-blaze trail. Some step-over blowdowns need to be cut, along with a tree blocking the trail just south of Stan Murray. A new white board is needed at Stan Murray.

Reporting: Elzear Lemieux

Date: 3/5/2023

Purpose: A.T. Maintenance

Location: Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US 321

People: Elzear Lemieux, Emily Lemieux

Summary: We cleared 6 blowdowns between 4-10" using a handsaw. We also cleared additional smaller blowdowns. We located a section of trail that has significant water issues 0.4 miles north of the A.T. parking area at Shook Branch.

Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 3/5 – 3/6/2023

Purpose: Locate and clear downfalls

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

People: Tom Sahlin

Summary: This was a trip to find blowdowns from the recent high winds. It was two days because I did not finish the first day, plus I needed to get a requested log diameter. I found 5 blowdowns the first day and another on the second day. The first one just inside the woods, I did not touch because it's too big for my bow saw; also I did not have time for a step-over. The dead tree logs are about 10 and 7 inches. The second blowdown was a hickory tree with thick limbs that hikers had a hard time getting through. The first day I cut branches and trunks enough to step over. The second day I finished cutting it all out after sharpening my saw. The third blowdown, I also did not touch since it was a step-over and I needed to measure the fourth blowdown before dark. The fourth blowdown, I did not touch because it was too big. I think it is a poplar. The log diameter at the base is about 13 inches. There are two logs laying perpendicular on top of each other. The location is about half way up Rich Knob after the double springs. The last log, about 0.1 mile from the shelter, is about 6 inches and laying across the trail as an easy step-over. I think it's a red oak. I didn't have time to work on it. There is one more that is a step-over that was broken, so I was able to walk it around and drop it off the trail. The first day I also removed limbs of all sizes off the trail that would roll or trip a hiker. I met three thru-hikers at the shelter the second day. The shelter was clean and in good shape. I carried out their trash as well as a couple pieces found on the trail. I thought about trying to work on the first blowdown since it is laying over a live tree. The live tree dropped a foot from the first to the second day. It may live if the dead tree is removed. These were two long days walking out in the dark.

Reporting: Van Hovey

Date: 3/6/2023

Purpose: Clear blowdown

Location: Section 19b, Curley Maple Gap Shelter - Nolichucky River Jones Branch

People: Van Hovey, Wade Hrdlika

Summary: Primary purpose was to clear a reported blowdown past bridge 2. We cleared the blowdown and cleared surrounding issues. On the walk out, we cleaned a few water diversions and cut back a few rhodies. We met one NoBo thru-hiker Tom, who was slack packing for the day. It was nice to give Wade an intro to trail maintenance.

Reporting: Bill Fuller

Date: 3/7/2023

Purpose: Scouting trail

Location: Section 9a, US 321 to Pond Flats

People: Bill Fuller

Summary: I got in a little maintenance after work. I hiked about 1.5 miles up the trail from Shook Branch until I started to lose daylight. Primarily I wanted to check the trail after the heavy winds, but I also cut a lot of encroaching vegetation along the way. There are two large step-over blowdowns that I'll go back to clear. One is at 0.6 miles (near the wilderness kiosk), and the other is at 0.8 miles.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/8/2023

Purpose: Remove blowdowns; locate locusts

Location: Section 4b, First couple of miles north of TN 91

People: Carl Fritz, Tom Sahlin, Ed Speer

Summary: We adjusted the initial gate latching mechanism (Ed had replaced one of the primary posts previously) so it would be



ready when cattle are introduced. We cleared a double blowdown with a chainsaw. Ed and Carl checked around the pasture for some large locusts to harvest. Ed and Tom finally hand sawed a 14-inch blowdown.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/8/2023

Purpose: Measure bridges and search for locusts

Location: Section 5, First mile south of TN 91

People: Carl Fritz, Ed Speer

Summary: We measured bog bridges and checked for some large locusts to harvest. We also cut some small locusts for turnpikes.

Reporting: Phyllis Cairnes

Date: 3/8/2023

Purpose: Maintain shelter and scout trail

Location: Section 3, Low Gap to Abingdon Gap Shelter

People: Rolla Wade, Phyllis Cairnes

Summary: It was a wonderfully cold day to check the trail and the shelter; 36 degrees at the beginning, 44 at the end. Due to recent winds, we found 6 blowdowns across the trail. All could be crossed over easily. I took photos and screenshots on FarOut and will send them to Renee. They were between mile 456.7 and mile 459.9. We lifted and moved smaller limbs off the trail. Abingdon Gap shelter was in pretty good shape with minimal trash. There were several water spots on the floor where the roof must be leaking in one place. A photo of that will be sent to Renee. We left a new shelter log, painted the graffiti board, shoveled the fire ring, and cleaned the gutter. We met two thru-hikers: a young woman from Finland, who was also loving the cold, and later a young woman from Brevard, NC. At McQueen's Gap Road we talked with a young man in his truck who was having grad school dilemmas and needed listening therapy. An unlikely place, but there you go.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/9/2023

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 4a, Low Gap to 1.5 miles south

People: Ed Speer, Tom Sahlin

Summary: Tom and Ed cleared the trailbed and removed two small blowdowns. They removed one 11-inch blowdown that took two hours. (We are working to loan them better hand saws.)

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/9/2023

Purpose: Rehab and construct steps

Location: Section 17, Iron Mountain Gap to FS 230 switchback, Beauty Spot

People: Elzear Lemieux, Tim Stewart, Greg Kramer, Bob Peoples, Bill Murdoch, Tony Messina, Renee Messina, Carl Fritz, Joe Morris

Summary: The Thursday crew evaluated two areas flagged for relocation and opted to build steps on the existing treadway. On the first relo, seven rock steps were added and 48 feet rehabbed. The second area was evaluated, and the crew decided to add water diversions as opposed to the relocation. Due to reports of bicyclists riding on the trail, we installed 3 Carsonite USFS posts identifying that the A.T. is for foot travel only.

Reporting: Scott Huskey

Date: 3/9/2023

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 12c, Sugar Hollow Creek to Campbell Hollow Road

People: Scott Huskey

Summary: Overall, this section is in good shape. I cut back vegetation along the entire route; so, it should remain clear for awhile. Secondary purpose of today's hike was to get better intel on blowdowns. There are four blowdowns, which need to be removed with the help of a chainsaw. I will number them from one to four going from the direction of Campbell Hollow Road to Elk River. Number three and four are the same two I mentioned in my last report.

- 1) Roughly an eight inch diameter hardwood across the trail at Mile 400.7.
- 2) A twelve inch rotted pine across the trail at Mile 400.9.
- 3) Two pieces of the same tree, maybe 14" in diameter, blocking the trail at Mile 401.1.
- 4) This telephone pole-sized tree crosses the trail; however, it is about 10 feet above the trail. It is located at Mile 401.3 (see photo).

Finally, I ran into three thru-hikers at different times and each mentioned a blowdown somewhere along Section 12D. They could not provide a definite location, but all three thought the tree was close to US 19.



Reporting: Bill Fuller

Date: 3/9/2023

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 9a, US 321 to Pond Flats

People: Bill Fuller

Summary: I hiked a little over two miles up the mountain. I cleared two large rhododendrons that were blocking the trail. I also cleared one 6" knee-high blowdown and another 12" blowdown. I cut some encroaching veggies while hiking. I ran into one thru-hiker who told me there was a large blowdown near Pond Flats.

Reporting: Van Hovey

Date: 3/9/2023

Purpose: Clear reported blowdowns

Location: Section 19a, Curley Maple Gap

People: Van Hovey, Carrie Hovey

Summary: Primary goal was to clear blowdowns as previously reported by freeloader just north of CMG and one just south of CMS. Spot on with reporting! I located and removed all blowdowns, 4 total; cut 3 but was able to muscle aside one with the titanium. I checked the shelter, cleaned a bit, and left a new log book. The shelter was in good shape. I was surprised to find the existing log book has been there for 6 months. Let's see how long they last. Along the way, I cut back a few rhodies and some overhanging clusters. I met one day hiker, Wayne from Alabama. It was a nice day out.

Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 3/10/2023

Purpose: Remove blowdown

Location: Section 4a, Two miles from Low Gap (US 421)

People: Tom Sahlin, Ed Speer

Summary: We removed branches and sticks from the trail to prevent falls on our way to find a large blowdown. We found the large blowdown which was recorded by Ed Speer. I think it was 12 inches of red oak. We removed the section over the trail and rolled it below the trail. Any slight movement of the heavy log resulted in binding of our saws. It took a stout limb to lever the log off the trail.



Reporting: Lori Mirrer

Date: 3/11/2023

Purpose: First check of section for 2023

Location: Section 15b, Cloudland Hotel to Ash Gap

People: Lori Mirrer

Summary: There was still snow and ice on the trail, but at least I got an initial look at how things are. Well... I got a look at half of it (up to where the giant boulders are). It took me 2 hours just to get down to that spot (approx 0.7 mile from Cloudland). So the rest will be checked on the next visit. I removed 4-5 blowdowns; nothing major. Given that most of the ground was frozen, I didn't work on water diversions. I plan to get back up to my section in early April.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 3/11/2023

Purpose: Hiking with Tools!

Location: Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US 321, Watauga Lake Shelter site

People: Tim Stewart, Russell Fleming, Caleb Trivett, Nicole Perez, Austin Fink, Jessie Sullivan, Matt Rogers, Joe Schmissrauter, Bud Schulte, Alice Ashburn, Jack Geiger, Rebecka Powell, Lyndsey Lawson



Summary: Sandwiched in between two lousy weather days, the Hiking with Tools! season began, albeit with a chilly morning. The sun did appear and made for a pleasant hike around Watauga Lake. With a larger turnout than normal, I was able to introduce trail maintenance to 12 volunteers, 8 of whom were new attendees (patches issued). We cut back encroaching vegetation, picked up trash, repainted blazes, and removed one minor blowdown. At appropriate times, I was able to discuss other maintenance tasks that might be encountered, some of which are normally done by the Thursday group. It was a good day and I think everyone enjoyed themselves.

Reporting: Steve Perri

Date: 3/12/2023

Purpose: Attend ATC Southern Partnership Meeting

Location: Lake Junaluska, NC

People: Vic Hasler, Steve Perri

Summary: This meeting brings together volunteers from Georgia to Northern Virginia, USFS and Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy personnel to discuss activities, policies, training and future priorities. Noteworthy information and learnings are listed below.

The Appalachian Trail Park Office transferred \$2.7M to ATC for support in 2022. A new comprehensive A.T. management plan is being revised since the last one was in 1981. This may be timely with a new park superintendent search underway. A new food storage safety order is coming from the USFS along the A.T. entire corridor with importance (but not requirement) to encourage the use of bear canisters rather than relying on traditional hanging of food while camping overnight. ATC is developing a new Stream Crossing and Bridges policy that will help clubs consider when to install or replace bridges and what design elements are suitable. ATC has an active project assessing the current collaboration model among the partnership. It is entitled Shared Stewardship and will be an involved effort for at least another year to capture where to go from here. Time was spent prioritizing ideas. A new Hazard Tree training is coming since a number of structures and congregating areas seemed to be missed during routine maintenance. TEHCC nominated three people for awards and all three were chosen by the committee. These include: Tim Stewart (Volunteer of the Year), Chad Ingle (Agency Partner of the Year), and Scotty Bowman (Partner of the Year). We had a detailed discussion about Konnarock and generated a list of strengths and opportunities. Matt Drury from ATC shared some of the grants he has available for doing restoration work in the Southern region. He has one restoration project for \$11M over 10 years. He'll be hiring a seasonal person for 36 months to work on the project. Vic gave an update on the Vista meeting scheduled for Aug 4-7 in Johnson City. The Southern clubs have an active list of projects from TN, NC, and GA, funded by A.T. license plate programs. TN may have surpassed the \$1M milestone in late 2022.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/14/2023

Purpose: Transport bog bridges

Location: Section 14d, Carvers Gap to Round Bald

People: Joe Morris, Greg Kramer, Bob Peoples, Tim Stewart, Bill Murdoch, Van Hovey, Carl Fritz

Summary: Rekindling memories of snow cats and below zero wind chills, this group of willing volunteers transported 23 bog bridges, 6x6s, 4x6s, and rebar from Carvers Gap to Round Bald. Without the help of USFS personnel - quite simply - no way this is accomplished. Conditions at Carvers: snowy, 17 degrees, and sustained winds over 20 mph. Mission accomplished - materials are staged for installation when the weather is, perhaps, the antithesis of arctic tundra. Thanks to Gilbert, Brandon, Taylor and the rest of the Forest Service crew.

Reporting: Gerald Scott

Date: 3/16/2023

Purpose: Routine Spring Maintenance

Location: Section 12b, Walnut Mountain Road to Sugar Hollow Creek

People: Gerald Scott, Eric Scott, Harold Wexler

Summary: We encountered six blowdowns too large to remove with Silky saw. Pictures were emailed for the sawyer team to use. Also, we encountered a lot of ATV damage in the area going down to Splash Dam Falls. It is worsening an already bad erosion problem. We encountered around six hikers, mostly day hikers, including a school teacher from Niagara Falls, Canada, on spring break. She was very appreciative of the beauty and the unique character of the A.T. She said hiking the A.T. was much more enjoyable than the trails in Canada.



Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 3/16/2023

Purpose: Find and remove blowdowns

Location: Sections 4a and 4b, TN 91 to US 421

People: Tom Sahlin, Ed Speer

Summary: Ed and I parked at both ends so we could walk from Cross Mountain to Low Gap. Dan Firth had report of a large blowdown on the 4b section. We wanted to walk the two sections to recheck Ed Speer's section and Dan Firth's section. We removed one blowdown on section 4b, a short distance from Double Springs Shelter. The blowdown was about 7 inches in diameter. We cut a section out of the tree and removed it from the trail. We met a hiker who said he didn't see any blowdowns except small stuff. As we moved on toward Low Gap, we found a couple of blowdowns that didn't require much cutting, but more cleanup since they crumbled over the trail. Then we ran into a couple of hikers who said they hadn't seen any blowdowns. After going less than 0.25 mile, we came to a large blowdown, 14 inches in diameter. We cut and removed it. Then headed on to Low Gap removing more limbs and sticks as we went. I conclude that hikers don't remember blowdowns unless they make their hike extremely difficult.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/16/2023

Purpose: Rehab and construct waterbars

Location: Section 17, Iron Mountain Gap to FS230, switchback Unaka approach

People: Dean Baird, John Beaudet, Van Hovey, Joe Morris

Summary: The crew installed 7 locust water diversions and two rolling grade dips out of the last saddle before starting the climb to Unaka. Also, they cut four steps and stakes (for Dr. Haire -delivered) for installation at Unaka Springs Rd. - Uncle Johnny's. We met Carrie, Lotta and friends hiking on the way out . We gave them a Katana Boy and between the groups, 3 small blowdowns were removed.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/16/2023

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 11a, Dennis Cove Road to Canute Place, Pond Mtn Wilderness (Laurel Fork)

People: Tony Messina, Scotty Bowman

Summary: Scotty and I split off from the main workgroup to address blowdowns reported in the area. We hiked about 0.5 mile south of Dennis Cove to cut a 14-inch pine with an associated tangle. The rootball had upheaved part of the trail and although the rootball settled back down quite a bit when cut, it left a dangerous hole in the treadway. (See picture of Scotty standing in the hole.) We left part of the stump in the hole to deter hikers from inadvertently stepping in and postholing. It is recommended that rehab be done as soon as possible, especially given the proximity of the trailhead. It will take many buckets of dirt and rocks.

We then went after a reported blowdown near the Pond Mtn Wilderness boundary, about 0.5 miles south of Shook Branch. Since it was reported to be in the wilderness area, we brought a crosscut saw. Turns out the blowdown consisted of two trunks, each about one-foot diameter. It was just outside the boundary, but we had only the crosscut saw, so we cleared it with that.

Afterwards we caught up with the main group working on trail rehab near Shook Branch and helped carry rubble for that repair. We then hiked in about 0.25 miles onto the Hampton Blue Line access trail from the Laurel Falls trailhead to clear a small blowdown reported by Renee (who was hiking Pond Mtn that same day). Scotty cleared that one using only an axe with a couple of well placed wacks. All in all, it was a very successful day with an abundance of sunshine.

Reporting: Greg Kramer

Date: 3/16/2023

Purpose: Trail Maintenance

Location: Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US 321, Oliver Hollow Road

People: Greg Kramer, Bill Murdoch, Dan Firth, Elzear Lemieux, Tim Stewart, Carl Fritz, Bud Schulte, Bob Peoples, Reno Berry

Summary: 220 feet of trail was rehabbed. Water coming off Oliver Hollow Road has been washing down the hillside and because of the berm, followed the trail for 50 feet. Along more than 100 feet of trail, the vegetation, mostly multi-flora rose, was cut back at least 2 feet. A water diversion was installed where the water came off the road and funneled across the trail and into the lake. The trail was widened by raising the sides with soil, sand, and rocks. A large stump was removed to widen the trail.



Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 3/21/2023

Purpose: Spring 2023 A.T. Partnership

Location: Appalachian Ranger District Office

People: Greg Kramer, Carl Fritz, Tim Stewart, John Beaudet, Dan Firth, Vic Hasler

Summary: As required by our respective Volunteer Service Agreements, TEHCC and Carolina Mountain Club jointly met with the USFS, ATC, and SAHC partners. Twenty-six folks gathered in-person or by teleconferencing, including for the first time: Carol Young – Acting District Ranger (Watauga), Natalia Muglia - Recreation Management Specialist/Trails (Appalachian), and Luke Mason - Forestry Technician /Recreation & Trails (Appalachian). A few highlights will be shared in this trip report.

For the Overmountain Shelter NEPA, Natalia will review the 70 comments received to formulate the USFS response – after the controlled fire season is completed, a priority right now. Carl is trying to align and update the APPA and CNF bridge databases for the TEHCC A.T. section. Bridges are to be inspected every five years, thus this needs to be a priority. CMC has volunteers who have taken the USFS Bridge and Hazard Tree training, thus understand the detailed forms employed. TEHCC shared that the bog bridges for Round Bald have been built and were hauled to the area on a very wintery day. The USFS Pond Mountain Project to improve forest health had 80 comments, but no follow-up has occurred.

It was interesting to hear topics raised by CMC as there could be overlap with TEHCC. One is their plan to install bear boxes at their shelters, which is one approach for the upcoming new food storage safety order along the entire A.T. corridor.

USFS shared that a pending order will require a USFS biologist to inspect standing trees before cutting April 1 – October 15 to protect bat habitat. WRD stated the Atwood buildings have been removed and the area grassed, thus completing the land acquisition project. URD is backed up on NEPA reviews for three months due to Rocky Fork and NRHP.

The 2023 Fall A.T. Partnership Discussion is scheduled for Tuesday, October 17 at ARD.

Reporting: Steve Wilson

Date: 3/21/2023

Purpose: Annual Spring Trail Maintenance

Location: Section 2b, McQueens Gap and hiking north for 3 miles

People: Carl Belcher, Ted Malone, Steve Wilson

Summary: We cut blowdowns with a chainsaw, lopped briars and branches, plus cleaned water diversions on the trail section starting at McQueens Gap and hiking north to a gap at Guthook app mile 462.7. Ten step-over blowdowns were removed, plus some hazard trees and clutter. We saw four thru-hikers on this sunny spring day. Abingdon Gap shelter looked good, but still needs the roof leak repaired. The trail is in good shape for the spring thru-hikers.

Reporting: Ken Murray

Date: 3/21/2023

Purpose: Replace graffiti board at Roan High Knob Shelter

Location: Section 15a, Carvers Gap - Cloudland Hotel, Roan High Knob Shelter

People: Ken Murray, Van Hovey

Summary: Van and I replaced the old graffiti board with the first of the new metal graffiti boards. Installation went very smooth. The old board was literally falling apart in our hands.

Reporting: Dean Baird

Date: 3/23/2023

Purpose: Inspect and maintain trail

Location: Section 9b, Hampton blue-blaze trail to Pond Flats

People: Dean Baird, Jennifer Baird

Summary: We removed 6 blowdowns by sawing them and removing them from the trail, and removed an additional 2 blowdowns by pulling them off the trail. One blowdown had resulted in a downhill diversion which we brushed in. We did minor trail rehab in 3 areas and trimmed/pulled up by roots several briars. One of the blowdowns that we sawed was an approximately 8" locust that could be used for steps or sidelogs in the future. When we left the trail, there were no remaining blowdowns.....unless you count the very large red oak that is uprooted at the spring near the top of Pond Mountain. This tree has been down for several years and we have re-routed the trail around the root ball and moved a large number of rocks to make a reasonably good treadway. I am becoming increasingly convinced that this tree is the source of reports of a large blowdown near the top of the mountain, which results in many "phantom blowdown" searches.

We also re-set 2 of the sign posts (the ones that are located at each end of the unofficial "high water" trail) placed by USFS. They were loose and wobbly, and leaning to one side. We added cement and tamped this with soil around the base of the posts, then placed rocks at the base of the posts. The sign at the Pond Mountain Wilderness boundary is still wobbly; we will try to fix it later. The 2 signs that are closest to the trailhead have the incorrect mileage for the distance to Laurel Falls and to Dennis Cove Road. Two groups of hikers asked us about the mileage problem on the signs. So.....I am going to contact USFS and ask if we can get the signs replaced with ones that have the correct mileage and offer to place them. We added several rocks to the mudhole adjacent to the creek where the high water trail adjoins the HBB making, basically, a "cobblestone" treadway. We also removed a bag of trash.

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Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/23/2023

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 12b, Walnut Mountain Road to Elk River access

People: Tony & Renee Messina

Summary: Renee and I split off from the Thursday crew to clear blowdowns. We had two cars: Carl drove one to Elk River and we took the other to Walnut Mtn Road. The blowdowns had been reported by Gerald Scott. We cleared about six blowdowns along the way, the largest and most complicated was at the end of the water trail for Mountaineer Shelter. Starting about one mile north of Sugar Hollow, we saw evidence of trail damage from ATVs all the way down to the Splash Dam Falls access. There is a muddy creek crossing at mile 402.5 that might be a candidate for a bog bridge or two. A turnpike on the south side is very muddy and damaged by ATVs. The north side is very muddy as well. There are several areas along the whole section that would benefit from some side hill digging. We met up with the Thursday crew near the Splash Dam Falls access and enjoyed a delightful lunch at the edge of Splash Dam Falls.



Reporting: Greg Kramer

Date: 3/23/2023

Purpose: Rehab near Splash Dam Falls

Location: Section 12c, Sugar Hollow Creek to Campbell Hollow Road, Splash Dam Falls

People: Greg Kramer, Elzear Lemieux, Van Hovey, Carl Fritz, Bill Murdoch, Tim Stewart, Cole Anson

Summary: The ATVs were damaging the trail near Splash Dam Falls. We decided not to move the trail, but to widen the trail so both ATVs and hikers can be on the trail. There are no Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers. So we decided that until law enforcement can deal with the problem, we would allow the ATVs some space. We rehabbed 105 feet of trail by adding side logs and fill to isolate the trail from the ATVs. We widened the trail so ATVs can get beside the trail but can't get on it. We rehabbed 6 waterbars and built one new one to get water off the trail. Places where the trail was a mud hole, we dug drainage ditches to get water off the trail. We felled a tree going north to stop ATVs going in that direction. Farther up north, we have more damage to be repaired next week. We will return one more time to cleanup what was left unfinished. We plan to screw all stakes to side logs to secure them and to make them much harder to move. We met a half-dozen or so thru-hikers. Two young women stopped to help move rocks to fill in one of the mud holes and I presented them with our A.T. patches.



Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/23/2023

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 12d, Bishop Hollow to US 19E

People: Bill Murdoch, Elzear Lemieux, Kevin Sedgwick, Carl Fritz

Summary: Kevin was aware of some problems on this section. After working near Splash Dam Falls, we stopped to clear these. Elzear cut out a 20" locust that was a big obstacle. The crew was able to push another stump off the trail that had fallen on it. Also, the crew made some span measurements of Bear Branch Bridge.

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/27/2023

Purpose: Remove blowdown

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

People: Kevin Sedgwick, Gloria Sedgwick

Summary: We removed a blowdown south of Isacc's cemetery; then walked north in case there were anymore in the area. We found a small one. The section should be clear of blowdowns for now. We cut back a few nasty rose. A few thru-hikers went by. Rocks placed by the Forest Service seem to be keeping ATV traffic off the trail heading south from the cemetery.