



The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

April 2024

tehcc.org

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

In This Issue

[Letter from the Chair](#)

[Event Schedule – Next Two Months](#)

[Details of Upcoming Events](#)

[TEHCC Spring Dinner in Review, March 15, 2024](#)

[Vic Hasler, ATC Southern Region Volunteer of the Year](#)

[Craig Haire, 25+ Years as a Trail Maintainer](#)

[Roan Mtn Day Use Area/Rhododendron Gardens to Be Closed](#)

[Franklin Tate, ATC SORO Assistant Director](#)

[TEHCC Welcomes New Members](#)

[A.T. Maintenance Reports](#)



Spring wildflowers – Bloodroot

Letter from the Chair

Submitted by [Eric Dobbs](#) (2024 Steering Committee Chair)

Happy Spring Everyone! The weather is warming up, the flowers are sprouting, and the sun is finally coming out. It finally feels like spring in NETN! That means that tick season is also here. Yuck! I figured it would be a good time for a reminder of tick prevention methods when spending time in the outdoors.

- Wear long sleeves and pants when hiking. Tucking in your shirt and tucking pant cuffs into your socks is a good idea as well.
- Wear repellent such as picaridin or DEET, or treat clothes with permethrin. If using permethrin, make sure to follow the safety guidelines on the container!
- Wear bright colored clothes to more easily spot ticks that may have hitched a ride.
- Avoid or take caution in tall brush and overgrown trails.
- Check yourself and pets for ticks after being outdoors. Notable places to check include: Under arms, inside and around ears and belly button, back of knees, on your head/in your hair, and between legs.
- If you do get a tick, use a tick removal tool or tweezers to gently pull the tick out, making sure not to detach the head. Don't squeeze or try to smother the tick. Make note of the type of tick, where it attached, and when you found it. Go to the doctor if you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing the tick.

More information about ticks and tick prevention can be found on the EPA and CDC websites.

Lastly, our hiking program will be starting this month! April 13th is the first scheduled hike and will be a joint hike with EPDC. Details are given in this newsletter.

Kayak and canoe trips will be starting soon. TEHCC recently acquired a new sit-on-top kayak; so we have added another vessel to our fleet!

Now get out there and (safely) enjoy the great weather and the great outdoors! Happy spring and happy trails!

[Back to Top](#)

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/events>.

Date	Description	Contact	Telephone
April 13	Hiking with Tools! US 421 to the Berry Fields, 9:30 am – 2 pm	Tim Stewart	
April 13	Whitetail Trail at Warrior's Path, 10 am – 12 am	Josh Hayes	270-585-5929
April 13 -14	APEs Kayaking Fundamentals	Trey Moore	
April 18	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	Eric Dobbs	303-915-9208
April 26	Garlic Mustard Pull, Devil's Creek Gap, 9 am	Greg Kramer	
April 27	APEs Boone Lake Cleanup and "Spring Fling"	TBD	
April 27	APEs Lower Nolichucky Paddle Meetup, 2:30 pm – 8 pm	Joe Poehlmann	
April 27	Sill Branch and Pine Ridge Falls, 9:30 am – 11:30 am	Andy Steffan	919-928-4738
May 11	Hiking with Tools! US19E to Campbell Hollow	Tim Stewart	
May 16	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	Eric Dobbs	303-915-9208
May 18 - 19	APEs French Broad Sections 9 and 11 Paddle Meetup, 10:30 am – 4 pm	Joe Poehlmann	

Details of Upcoming Events

Recurring Events

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

Contact: [Eric Dobbs](#), 303-915-9208

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 Kayak Roll Practice, Tuesdays, 7:35 – 9 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.

[Back to Top](#)

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

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

This event is family friendly across all of 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

Whitetail Trail at Warrior's Path, Saturday, April 13, 2024, 10 am – Noon

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

Level: Easy/Moderate

Location: [Whitetail Trail](#), Warriors' Path Mountain Bike Trailhead, 1425 Freeman Rd, Blountville, TN 37617

Note: It has been reported that the trail is poorly marked, so there is the possibility of some added time.

Enjoy this 2.8-mile loop trail near Blountville, Tennessee. Generally considered a moderately challenging route, it takes an average of 1 hour 12 minutes to complete. This is a popular trail for birding, hiking, and mountain biking, but you can still enjoy some solitude during quieter time of the day. The trail is open year-round and is beautiful to visit anytime. Dogs are welcome and may be off leash in some areas. Meet at Trailhead by 10 am.



Hike the TEHCC A.T. Saturday, April 20, 2024, 7 am – 4 pm

Contact: [Tim Schaefer](#), 423-302-0846

Rating: Hard

The date is a placeholder. I am thinking of repeating my section hikes of the TEHCC maintained portion of the A.T. The plan is to have enough people and cars so we can "thru hike" each section. Depending on access and sizes of groups, this will be with either car shuffling before and after the hike, or key swaps.

If you would like to participate, please contact [Tim Schaefer](#), so we can begin discussing specific weekends, section, and plans. For reference you can review [the previous \(non-completed\) 2016 plans](#).

Garlic Mustard Pull, Friday, April 26, 2024, 9 am – 2 pm

Contact: [Greg Kramer](#)

The club and ATC jointly continue to diminish the seed bank for garlic mustard growing in the Devil's Creek Gap along the Appalachian Trail. We're removing this invasive species to protect the desirable wildflowers in the area, such as showy orchids, blue cohosh, gay wings (fringed polygala), and jack-in-the-pulpit. I believe there's some black cohosh at that site as well.

Please join us at the location starting at 9:00 am or carpool from Kingsport (I-26, Exit 6 Rock Springs Rd). Either way, please let Greg Kramer know you're coming.

Sill Branch and Pine Ridge Falls, Saturday, April 27, 2024, 9:30 am – 11:30 am

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

Level: Easy, 2 miles round-trip (1 mile for each trail), 269' and 170' elevation gain

Location: Clark Creek Recreation Area, Clarks Creek Road, Erwin, TN 37641

We plan to do two Erwin waterfall hikes in one day (maybe more exploring if desired). At least two for the price of one: 20' falls and 25' falls. Only one stream crossing.

Don't worry, they are both short hikes and the trailheads are within 0.2 miles of each other! You're always welcome to attend only one, too. We will meet in the parking lot of the Sill Branch Falls trail at 9:30 am to begin the hike, and should be off the trail before lunchtime. The parking lot is on the right after 3.1 miles on Clark's Creed Rd, with the last 2 miles being usually well-maintained, gravel. Please bring water and snacks, as we may sit and enjoy the waterfalls for a little while before returning to our cars. Open to carpooling. Please reach out with any questions. Hope you are able to join us and do a rain dance so we can see good flows!

[Back to Top](#)

TEHCC Spring Dinner in Review, March 15, 2024

Submitted by Vic Hasler; Photo by Tim Schaefer

About 60 members and guests gathered at the Eastman Lodge for our club's Spring Dinner. After fellowship during "Happy Trails Hour," a meal from Olive Garden was served along with desserts and coffee. Leftover t-shirts from the 2023 AT Vista were "free to good homes" with the remaining small size to be donated to a thrift store. Instead of door prizes, two folks took advantage of a discount offered on the soon-to-be-published third edition of the Cherokee National Forest Hiking Guide, which our speaker, Dean Walker, contributed to the Holston Mountain section.

Several recognitions were shared. The pint-glass incentive from our 75th anniversary (2021) highlighted at least 40 field hours of A.T. maintenance contributed by 14 volunteers. Dr. Craig Haire was presented with ATC's Silver Award for 25 years of service (see article below). Bob Fuller was given the Gold Award for 50 years of ATC membership, including involvement with the NY-NJ Trail Conference, Green Mtn Club, Appalachian Mtn Club, and UVA Outing Club. Terence Rose, the new Watauga District Ranger, attended, and Chad Ingle presented USFS rockers for 50 to 800 volunteer hours in 2023. Tara Wu, Pisgah NF Appalachian Ranger District, arranged for 24 members to receive certificates for 1000+ hours cumulative service (see picture), each signed by USFS Chief Randy Moore. As nominated by TEHCC/CMC, Jen Barnhart is the SORO Agency Partner of the Year, while Vic Hasler was chosen as the SORO Club Volunteer of the Year (see article below). Joe Poehlmann was recognized as TEHCC's Paddler of the Year, Josh Hayes as Hiker of the Year, and Elzear Lemieux as Maintainer of the Year. A listing of all club awards can be found at tehcc.org/membership/awards/.



Dean Walker engaged the audience with a review of the trails on Holston Mountain, including some historical paths such as the pre-1954 A.T. route. He then transitioned into the litany of aircraft crashes along Holston Mountain with the tale of searching for the fate of Southeast Airlines Flight 308. This was a DC-3 aircraft that crashed on January 8, 1959, while trying to land at Tri-Cities airport. Dean, with a crew of friends, pieced together various clues, rejecting some as wrong, to find the front landing gear which remains on the mountain.

Vic Hasler, ATC Southern Region Volunteer of the Year

Submitted by Steve Perri

Vic was selected as the 2023 ATC SORO Volunteer of the Year awardee, which was presented at the Spring Dinner Meeting. Vic has had a long history of volunteer contributions to TEHCC and ATC. Most recently, he has guided the club's engagement in the Visitor Use Management (VUM) project for the Roan Highlands team. As a result of his leadership and commitment to the club and the A.T. partnership, Vic was selected as this year's awardee.

Vic has been an A.T. maintainer since 2002, contributing over 2,400 volunteer hours – a large number considering he also has a full-time day job. Vic has taken on several leadership roles in the club as a trail section maintainer, Past Steering Committee Chair, co-lead of the 2023 AT Vista held in Johnson City, A.T. Trail Guidebook editor for TEHCC, ATC Alternate Regional Partnership Representative, and the TEHCC A.T. Committee Chair.

Vic has done an outstanding job in managing a large number of different roles and activities. As an Engineer, he brings attention to detail as he coordinates and plans tasks. This was especially apparent in his roles as guidebook editor and A.T. Committee Chair. TEHCC engages in several activities with the USFS and ATC. These often require Vic to be the point person to represent the club's leadership as a personal contact and in written communications. Vic brings a great deal of skills and passion to his role in many of the administrative responsibilities he undertakes. The role of A.T. Committee Chair is both demanding and rewarding. TEHCC is fortunate to have someone as committed as Vic as the A.T. Committee Chair for over 7 years.

Vic is now providing leadership in collaboration with SAHC, ATC, and the USFS, developing a VUM plan to address visitor-use impacts along the A.T. in the Roan Highlands. While it has taken more than two years to bring this to the attention of ATC and the USFS, Vic's persistence has finally gotten this project underway. Hopefully, VUM will bring new ideas to address the complexities of the balds, while providing sustainable options to mitigate the increasing visitor impacts. While this project is just getting started, Vic has certainly been a driving force to get the process going, and will bring organization and solutions to the partnership to protect and enhance the visitor experience along the A.T. in the Roan Highlands. Congratulations Vic!



[Back to Top](#)

Craig Haire, 25+ Years as a Trail Maintainer

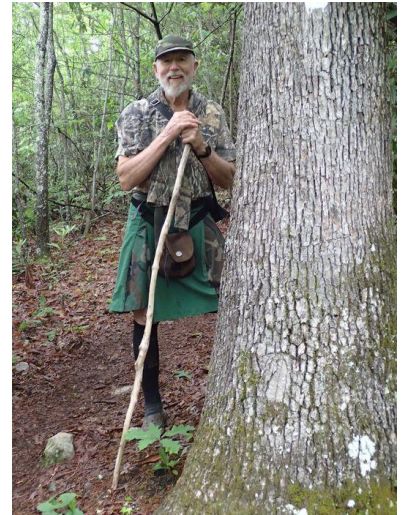
Submitted by Vic Hasler



Since 1995, Dr. Craig Haire has maintained the Appalachian Trail section between the Nolichucky River at Chestoa south to Temple Hill Gap, accumulating more than 1400 volunteer hours. The first reference to Craig in the club newsletter was for earning a t-shirt and a year's free membership to ATC (then the Appalachian Trail Conference) for at least five days working with the 1995 Konnarock Crew, completing a series of relocations on Cliff Ridge near Erwin. Joining Craig in this honor were Frank Williams, LuAnn Mack-Drinkard, Ed Oliver, and Joe DeLoach. Winter '97-'98 must have been hard, because the February newsletter has multiple reports about removing many blowdowns. A crew working in the Chestoa area met Craig who was steadily clearing up the mountain south of the river. In 2000, while Craig was on a 10-month hike, Bruce Cunningham, Bill Elderbrock, and Ed Oliver performed spring maintenance and declared the section was in excellent shape. As part of the Adopt-A-Trail initiative

for the club, Craig made many (up to 14-16 per year) 1-to-5-hour trips to the field for a cycle of weeding, maintenance, and blowdown removal. Even when the club's system for collection of maintenance records was improved to allow descriptions of the work, Craig's were succinct, rarely over a couple-dozen words. Craig is an early adopter of electric-battery tools, such as the older weed whacker shown in the picture. He shares that his current trimmer is a Kobalt model with an 80V battery. He also has been a hike leader for the Mid-Appalachian Hiking Club that performs maintenance for the Iron Mountain Trail.

At the club's 2024 Spring Dinner at the Eastman Lodge, Craig was presented with the Silver Award plaque for 25+ years of service from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.



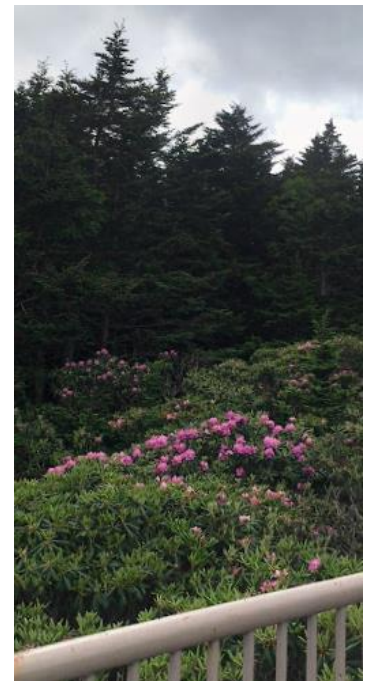
Roan Mtn Day Use Area/Rhododendron Gardens to Be Closed

Submitted by Vic Hasler, from March 21 USFS announcement

Pisgah National Forest announced that the Great American Outdoors Act is funding major improvements to Roan Mountain Recreation Area, which will be closed during the renovations occurring in 2024. Therefore, the access gate will not be opened at the end of May – and likely not the entire year. Work scope includes drilling a new well and replacing the current water distribution system, road surface improvement, replacing curbs and fences, rehabilitating picnic sites, replacing flooring in the visitor center, new interpretive signs, and repairing damage on the observation decks. The closure notice is for the rhododendron gardens, Cloudland parking area and restrooms, and the Cloudland Trail to the overlook at Roan High Bluff. The limited parking area and bathroom at Carver's Gap will remain open, as well as the Appalachian Trail passing through the area. In a separate project, the Roan High Knob Shelter will be closed (dates have not yet been set) to replace the rotting base logs. The adjacent campsite will be available.

Some alternative hiking experiences to consider during the gate closure:

- **Carolina Hemlocks Recreation Area:** Scenic picnicking on the South Toe River near Burnsville, NC. Opportunities for fishing, hiking, and tubing/wading in the river. Open April 15 - October 30 and has a daily fee of \$5 per vehicle (\$2.50 seniors).
- **Craggy Gardens Picnic Area:** Off the Blue Ridge Parkway (Milestone 367.6) with a large parking lot, picnic sites, and chance to hike and view rhododendron, azalea, and mountain laurel blooms.
- **Beauty Spot:** Scenic overlook in the Cherokee National Forest off TN395/NC197 near Erwin, TN. The site has mountain views and rhododendron easily accessible by vehicle.



[Back to Top](#)

Franklin Tate, ATC SORO Assistant Director

Submitted by Vic Hasler



Franklin Tate was recruited to be the new Assistant Director for the Southern Regional Office (SORO) based out of Asheville, NC. He has worked extensively in the non-profit conservation and education field in both the Eastern and Western US, overseeing all aspects of program development including fundraising, marketing, project management, and strategic planning. Prior to directing Trout Unlimited's Headwaters Youth Program, he was a Dean of Service-Learning at Warren Wilson College. Franklin has a B.A. in English from The Citadel and an MFA in Fiction Writing from Warren Wilson College.

He has already attended the 2024 Southern Partnership Meeting at Hungry Mother State Park and met more club members at the A.T. Partnership Meeting for CMC/TEHCC at the Appalachian District office.

TEHCC Welcomes New Members

Josh Starks

Jason Vittori

Deep Bhattacharya



A.T. Maintenance Reports

Reporting: Bettye Boone and Saylor Fox

Date: 2/5, 2/6, 2/7/2024

Purpose: Download data from counters and prepare for VUM (Visitor Use Management) Committee

Location: Section 15a, From Carvers Gap, South and North

People: Bettye Boone, Saylor Fox

Summary: Bettye and Saylor downloaded data from the three Roan Highland VUM counters. Bettye then prepared for the VUM Committee meeting.

Reporting: Bettye Boone

Date: 2/26 and 2/27/2024

Purpose: Prepare for and attend VUM meeting

Location: Section 15a, Carvers Gap, South and North

People: Bettye Boone

Summary: I prepared for and attended the VUM meeting. I took notes and made suggestions.

Reporting: Scott Huskey

Date: 2/29/2024

Purpose: Routine section maintenance

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

People: Scott Huskey

[Back to Top](#)

Summary: I used my bowsaw to remove two blowdowns in the vicinity of Mile 451.9 and cleaned two diversions near Mile 451.5. A large diameter, dead tree is leaning over the trail at Mile 451.1. It is probably not an issue anytime soon, but it might be later (see picture).

Reporting: Joe Morris

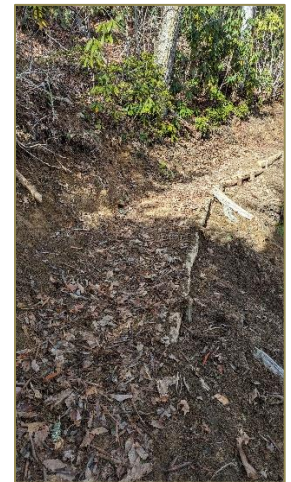
Date: 2/29/2024

Purpose: Rehab trail

Location: Section 20c, No Business Knob Shelter to Spivey Gap, Devils Creek Gap

People: Van Hovey, Joe Morris, Jeff Hatling, Elzear Lemieux, Carl Fritz, Bill Murdoch, Tim Stewart, Tony Messina

Summary: The Thursday Crew and Forest Service personnel rehabbed 285 feet of trail, 171 feet of which was locust cribbed. Tony and Van, also, did a walk through from Spivey to Devils Creek Gap and conducted a trail assessment for future maintenance opportunities. An additional seven areas were identified and flagged north of Devils Creek for a future outing.



Reporting: Steve Wilson

Date: 3/5/2024

Purpose: Annual Spring Trail Maintenance

Location: Section 2b, From McQueen's Gap to three miles north

People: Carl Belcher, Steve Wilson

Summary: We cut blowdowns, lopped briars, and cleaned water diversions on the trail section starting at McQueens Gap and hiking north for three miles. Fourteen blowdowns were removed with a chainsaw. We plan to come back to remove a 22-inch step-over blowdown that was just past Abingdon Gap Shelter. It's on a side hill and an easy stepover, but will be a challenge to remove due to its size and inclination on the sloping hillside. A bigger crew will be needed to move the cut sections and a shovel to repair the trail. We saw two thru-hikers on this sunny spring day. The Abingdon Gap Shelter looked good, but the graffiti board needs its annual repainting. The trail is in good shape for the spring thru hikes.

Reporting: Dave Allen

Date: 3/5/2024

Purpose: Scout trail and clear blowdowns

Location: Sections 2a and 2b, Backbone Rock Trail to McQueen's Gap

People: Dave Allen

Summary: I walked in from McQueen's Gap, then scouted entire section. Cleared 9 blowdowns with a handsaw. No chainsaw work was needed, so section was cleared.

Reporting: Jim McGuire

Date: 3/5/2024

Purpose: General Maintenance

Location: Section 12c, Sugar Hollow Creek to Campbell Hollow Road, Elk River Forrest Service Access

[Back to Top](#)

People: Jim McGuire

Summary: I completed general maintenance of my new trail section assignment. I drove in on the FS road from Elk Falls. Along the river, I collected two bags of trash and two old tents. The water at Sugar Creek was flowing strongly. I cleared rhododendrons around the creek for easier access. One blowdown along the river was too big for me to tackle. There were many blowdowns from the river up to Campbell Road. I cleared the small and medium blowdowns. However, five blowdowns were too big for me to tackle. One, in particular, was interesting. Someone cut the tree down with a chainsaw, seemingly on the trail on purpose. I cleared branches from around the blowdowns I could not remove to allow for easier passage. I also removed the little spikes on the trees that could hurt a hiker. I saw four hikers and talked to three of them. One was a NOBO thru-hiker. The other two were doing a section hike from Erwin to Glasgow. See pictures of two larger blowdowns that I cleared.



Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/7/2024

Purpose: Remove hazard trees, repair fence and harvest locusts

Location: Sections 4a and 4b, US 421 to Osborne Farm

People: Carl Fritz, Ken Costello, Bill Murdoch

Summary: Brandon and two FS men joined us. They felled 3 hazard trees near Double Springs Shelter. We felled additional locusts around Osborne Farm. And we delivered a half truck load to Watauga Work Center. There are many to gather. We made some minor repairs to cattle fence around the pasture.

Reporting: Tony Messina, Jim McGuire

Date: 3/7/2024

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 12c, Sugar Hollow Creek to Campbell Hollow Road, 1.4 miles N of Campbell Hollow Rd

People: Tony Messina, Jim McGuire

Summary: The Thursday crew broke up today, so Jim and I chased blowdowns he had documented on his section. We cleared five significant blowdowns, leaving a couple behind in key locations to deter four-wheelers. We also documented future work that can be done by the Thursday group on the section. We saw one section hiker and one thru-hiker who was star struck by meeting Bob Peoples further back on the trail. We used two cars, with a shuttle, and hiked from Campbell Hollow road NOBO past the Elk River access and down slightly past the fence stepover gate near the river. It was a gorgeous day and a very good time.



Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/7/2024

Purpose: General Rehab

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

People: Joe Morris, Van Hovey, Tim Stewart, Bob Peoples

Summary: The day started with a plan to reposition the bog bridges in Bishop Hollow, but large volumes of water in multiple places on the trail, changed the plan. We created a large water diversion and built a 40-foot locust turnpike.

[Back to Top](#)

Multiple seeps, erosion control issues, and mud bogs will keep us busy in the hollow for multiple weeks. An abundance of locust are in the area, but Roby Miller Road is almost impassable.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 3/9/2024

Purpose: Hiking with Tools!

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

People: Tim Stewart, Tracy Harris, Skip Benton, Rebecka Powell, Jessica Powell



Summary: It rained ... fortunately it held off until we were finished! We began the Hiking with Tools! season with a hike around Watauga Lake. Several others signed up for the hike, but the threat of rain must've changed their minds. After introducing the various tools that we routinely use, we journeyed around the lake. Typical tasks were encountered: overgrown brush, rhododendrons, trash, and a couple of minor blowdowns. The step-over culvert we created last year was working nicely. The former Watauga Lake Shelter site was our lunch destination, after which we hiked back to the trailhead. Overall the trail was in good condition. The rain possibility didn't dampen our spirits and it ended up to be a good outing!

Reporting: Steve Perri

Date: 3/8 to 3/10/2024

Purpose: ATC Spring Regional Partnership Meeting

Location: Hungry Mother State Park, Marion, VA

People: Steve Perri

Summary: The annual Regional Partnership Committee (RPC) Meeting is a collective meeting bringing together USFS, ATC, APPA (Appalachian National Scenic Trail NP) and A.T. Clubs to discuss recent policies, legislation, activities, events, and strategies that the partnership faces in the short and long-term basis. Below is a summary of some of the happenings across the partnership.

ATC is preparing a number of events in 2024 to prepare for the 100-year anniversary of the conservancy, established on March 9, 1925. A number of events will be identified, some at the state level and others more regionally. ATC is refilling a number of staff positions with changes in personnel. A review of the 40-year-old comprehensive plan revealed recommendations that NPS will make to update the plan to better reflect changes in culture and responsibilities that have occurred over 40 years.

ATC has developed a checklist for clubs called a "vitality index." It highlights a number of organizational, administrative, and functional characteristics to help clubs be more effective and to develop a leader legacy circle. The list will be available on the website as a resource to ID gaps where ATC can help.

Training was discussed during the breakout session for the southern region. Sawyers are expected to complete 4 steps before they operate in the field: First Aid and CPR training, Sawyer safety training, evaluation by a qualified trainer, and a Sawyer certification step. First Aid must be completed before Sawyer certification. After certification, the final authorization step is required by a land manager before a Sawyer can operate a saw on public land. ATC offers up to \$65 reimbursement for First Aid. Clubs are using local universities, American Red Cross, retired physicians in their clubs, and local health care systems for training. The ATC website is a resource for replacement equipment. The USFS now has resources available for Sawyer training, and clubs are encouraged to use these as a first choice vs a contractor. ATC is also launching a new capital project and Konnarock form. It replaces the earlier complex form and is expected to allow more electronic routing and improved tracking. Clubs are encouraged to use the new forms to submit capital projects. The new forms which will be posted on the ATC website. Konnarock notifications are expected to go out April 15-30th.

TEHCC is one of the few clubs up-to-date on ATC MOU and volunteer service agreements with the USFS partners. The club has been able to benefit from the TN and NC license plate program. In TN, only \$16,000 was requested and so there is another \$10,000 available for further needs. NC requests came in close to the \$34,000 that is available this year.

[Back to Top](#)

ATC is developing plans for high-use impact areas, including heavily visited trail sections, overnight sites, and parking. An assessment identified 387 heavy-use overnight sites and more than 5,500 sites total for the whole trail. ATC is using the Visitor Use Management (VUM) Process to develop long term plans to help mitigate expanding impacts. Currently there are 15 areas using the 14-step VUM process. The Roan Highlands section from Hughes Gap to 19E is the area where we started a VUM process in 2022. Currently, we are on step 7 of the 14-step process. ATC is launching the use of a GIS system called RIMS to capture visitor-use field data. ATC is seeking feedback by April 5 on policies being developed for energy structures, such as structures for wind energy, pipelines, and solar arrays.

APPA is helping to fund sanitation facilities on USFS lands in VA. A universal design based on a 2-bin moldering privy will be available, along with funds to add more of these to A.T. sections in Region 8. Funds of \$3.1M from NPS and ATC are for the Triple Crown VUM process. Funds for large projects can be made available as VUMs identify needs.

USFS was well-represented at the meeting. At the regional level, the Great American Outdoor Act (GAOA) is being used to help fund maintenance for 5 years. Upgrading the Konnarock facility in VA is at risk of missing funding in this round, but hopefully will be funded in the next round. USFS will launch a new program called Reimagining Recreation on May 6. The program is linked to the 100-year ATC anniversary.

TEHCC's Vic Hasler was selected as the SORO Volunteer of the Year! A framed plaque was presented to the club to present to Vic. Congratulations Vic!

The next RPC meeting will be November 2, 2024 at the ATC Socash facility.

Reporting: Jennifer Baird

Date: 3/11/2024

Purpose: Check trail condition

Location: Section 10, Hampton trailhead to Dennis Cove Road

People: Jennifer Baird

Summary: I hiked from Dennis Cove Road to Hampton trailhead via the high-water trail and came back by the falls. The trail is in good shape; only small twigs and one small branch on the trail. I removed a small bag of trash from the shelter. This was my first time at the shelter since the rehab on the water trail. It looks great! Thanks to those who did such a great job! I will return on a warmer day to refresh the blazes. I saw a total of six day-hikers and one dog out enjoying the day.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/12/2024

Purpose: Rehab trail

Location: Section 13, US 19E to Doll Flats

People: Carl Fritz, Joe Morris

Summary: We headed south from 19E to remove a hiker-reported blowdown. We found the tree(s) 2 1/2 miles from 19E adjacent to the water source. We encountered 11 thru-hikers, 2 LASHs, and 2 day hikers. (See before/after pics.)



Reporting: Jim McGuire

Date: 3/12/2024

Purpose: General Maintenance

Location: Section 12c, Sugar Hollow Creek to Campbell Hollow Road, Elk River Forrest Service Access

[Back to Top](#)

People: Jim McGuire, Cindy McGuire

Summary: I returned to Elk River to paint blazes and clear a drainpipe. The blazes are in excellent shape from the river up to Campbell Hollow Rd, but they needed touching up along Elk River. I repainted about 12 blazes. Last week, Tony pointed out the need to clear a drainage pipe at mile 401.0. It was almost completely clogged with dirt and leaves. I used a hoe to clear the pipe. We collected 2 bags of trash along the river section. I did a trash run just last week. There is a lot of littering going on out there. It was a beautiful day. We saw 12 day-hikers and no thru-hikers.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/14/2024

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

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

People: Tony Messina, Van Hovey, Jeff Hatling, Joe Morris

Summary: The crew broke into teams at Moreland Gap Shelter with this group heading north. Thru-hiker Julie had reported a pine tangle north of the shelter, which we found and removed 1.5 miles from the shelter. We walked to Canute Place and cleared 13 trees (mostly step-overs) and two hazard trees adjacent to camp sites.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 3/14/2024

Purpose: Thursday maintenance

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

People: Tim Stewart, Bill Murdoch, Greg Kramer, Elzear Lemieux, Jim McGuire

Summary: It was decided to go in search of a reported large blowdown. One group went north of Moreland Gap Shelter and the other group went South. After painting the graffiti board and some other minor tasks at the shelter, my group hiked south. We removed 19 minor blowdowns and other trail obstructions. The bridges we built last year were in great condition. The forest service road is in bad shape with numerous potholes. The trench at about mile-marker 4 continues to degrade and is a challenge to navigate. It was a great weather day. We also saw several NOBO hikers on their way to Maine.

Reporting: Bettye Boone

Date: 3/16/2024

Purpose: Check our section for needed maintenance

Location: Section 15a, Carvers Gap to Cloudland Hotel

People: Bettye Boone, Saylor Fox

Summary: We checked the entire section from Cloudland to Carvers. Hikers at Cloudland heading north said the trail between Hughes Gap and Cloudland (Sections 15b and 15c) had no blowdowns. On our section we found two blowdowns that we were able to handle with our small Silky saw; one between Cloudland and Toll House and one headed up to the Roan High Knob Shelter. We successfully removed both. The shelter is fine with very little trash. We left a new journal and brought back the old one. We tried to clean the graffiti board with alcohol, but it didn't work. We will have to take another cleaner for the new metal board; please advise on the best cleaner. The blazes looked good throughout the section; we will refurbish this summer. We cleaned all water diversions needing maintenance. There are 2 leaners between the 4th and 5th switchback from Carvers headed south; too large to handle with our small Silky. I wish we could take our battery powered Ego, which would handle it in a few minutes. I will communicate the need for a Sawyer to Joe and Greg.

Reporting: Russell Fleming

Date: 3/17/2024

Purpose: First maintenance of 2024

Location: Section 15c, Ash Gap to Hughes Gap

People: Russell Fleming

Summary: I removed blowdowns, trimmed, and cleared the water source. See picture of the cleared trail.

Reporting: Richard L Ramsey

Date: 3/17/2024

Purpose: Check trail condition after storm



[Back to Top](#)

Location: Section 14a, Doll Flats to Bradley Gap

People: Richard Ramsey, Nancy Mick, and dogs

Summary: We attempted to clear all the blowdowns and to fix the go-arounds. The only blowdowns that are left can easily be stepped over. With having to hike in from 19E, I tried to limit our equipment to the Silky, loppers, and a short rope. It was a 10-mile day. Larger scale work is needed on a wet and muddy section about 1.5 miles above Doll Flats.

Reporting: Bettye Boone

Date: 3/18/2024

Purpose: Prepare for meeting regarding trail counters in Roan Highlands

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

People: Bettye Boone

Summary: I prepared for a meeting regarding VUM Committee Counter Data. The meeting never took place due to problems with Microsoft Team meeting and Doodle poll. I reviewed the last VUM meeting notes and minutes, and communicated with Greg Kramer and Monica Mogilewsky. I also communicated with Greg Kramer and Joe Morris regarding two leaners on our section (15a, Carvers to Cloudland).

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 3/19/2024

Purpose: A.T. Partnership Discussion

Location: Appalachian Ranger District Office

People: Carl Fritz, Vic Hasler, Greg Kramer, Joe Morris, Steve Perri, Tim Stewart

Summary: Representatives, 32 in all, from various organizations gathered at the Appalachian RD office. Attendees included Franklin Tate (ATC/SORO Assistant Director), Terence Rose (CNF/Watauga District Ranger), Blake Garrison (SAWS/Field Crew Coordinator), Jesse Laramie (USFS/Cherokee/ Field Crew), Kaitlin de Varona (SAWS/Executive Director), and Halley Bureson (Wild South/Volunteer Coordinator).

2024 TEHCC work plans for the A.T. were shared, including log replacement on Roan High Knob Shelter, side slope correction south of Temple Hill Gap with Konnarock Crew, steps improvement north of Yellow Mtn Gap, and high steps and wet areas south of Stan Murray Shelter. Our update of the Volunteer Service Agreement was submitted to the USFS districts. Open Area Management for Buchanan Tract between Beauty Spot and Beauty Spot Gap could be mowed and treated to mitigate locust and blackberries. One prescribed burn is planned in 2024 for 404 Acres Cedar Gap right up to the west side of the A.T. at the Coon Den Falls Trail. GATC is developing more detailed training modules for trail maintenance. The USFS staff is considering using the modules for certification of specific roles and skills. The next A.T. Partnership meeting is on Tuesday, October 15, in Unicoi, TN at either the renovated Watauga District offices or across the street at the town hall.

Reporting: Steve Wilson

Date: 3/19/2024

Purpose: Remove blowdown with a chainsaw

Location: Section 2b, Low Point 2 miles N of Abingdon Gap Shelter to McQueen's Gap, Abingdon Gap Shelter

People: Carl Belcher, Steve Wilson

Summary: The focus of this trip was to remove a 22" diameter step-over blowdown that was a quarter mile north of Abingdon Gap Shelter. We saw three thru-hikers on this cool, but sunny spring day. This trail section is in good shape and ready for the spring-time thru-hikers.

Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 3/21/2024

Purpose: Check trail for blowdowns and paint blazes.

Location: Section 16b, Iron Mountain Gap to 2 miles to gap below pinnacle of rocks on first tall knob

People: Tom Sahlin

Summary: Starting from Iron Mountain Gap, I searched for and repainted blazes. Some were so faint, I wasn't sure they were there, but I painted them if it seemed needed. I didn't paint dead trees that looked like they would come down soon; instead painted another close by. I added only a couple blazes where a forest service road intersection was confusing. I saw about 8 to 10 thru-hikers and a couple of section hikers. The spring was running well. I cleared leaves from the pool below the pipe. I made it to the gap below the first tall knob where the pinnacle of rocks are located and

[Back to Top](#)

caught the end of a nice sunset; then returned to the trailhead. I discovered painting blazes on thick, rough bark is difficult, and it's hard to get them to show up from a distance.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/21/2024

Purpose: Rehab trail and construct steps

Location: Section 20c, No Business Knob Shelter to Spivey Gap, Devils Creek Gap (Can Lot)

People: Joe Morris, Van Hovey, Lotta Murray, Jim McGuire, Ken Murray, Greg Kramer, Jeff Hatling, Elzear Lemieux, Bill Murdoch, Tim Stewart, Scott Huskey, Carl Fritz

Summary: The Thursday crew split into two teams going north and south from Devils Creek Gap, accessing the A.T. from the Can Lot. The southbound group rehabbed 55 feet and installed 6 new locust steps, while the southbound crew rehabbed 240 feet (96 cut bench - 144 crib and fill with locust or rock), and installed two steps. The rehab in this area is complete for the foreseeable future - 980 feet of trail rehab completed in 3 trips.

Reporting: Gerald N Scott

Date: 3/22/2024

Purpose: Routine Spring Maintenance

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

People: Gerald Scott, Harold Wexler

Summary: We cleared several blowdowns, the largest being around 10 inches in diameter. We left one blowdown too larger for Silky saws. It was 15-20 inches in diameter and located about one mile trail south of Mountaineer Falls (see picture). High winds had blown treetops on top of rhododendrons in several places, pushing them down. We removed treetops and lopped the rhodos back. Water drainage looked good on the whole section. No ATV damage was seen. We encountered several thru-hikers and a few section hikers.



Reporting: Bettye Boone

Date: 3/24/2024

Purpose: Check and download Trail Counter data

Location: Section 14d, Carvers Gap

People: Bettye Boone, Saylor Fox

Summary: We downloaded data from 3 trail counters; then uploaded the data to DataNet.

Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 3/24/2024

Purpose: Check section for blowdowns and paint blazes

Location: Section 16b, From Greasy Creek Gap to knob at pinnacle of rocks

People: Tom Sahlin, Marlene Simpson

Summary: I met Marlene at noon at the trailhead with the intention that she would be just hiking, but I managed to suck her into helping me. I'm glad she agreed, or it would have taken me much longer. She not only painted a few blazes, but helped find and clean blazes. We even had a thru-hiker paint a blaze who expressed the desire and wanted to feel involved. We met 8 or more really nice thru-hikers and a couple more that didn't stop. We made it to the pinnacle of rocks about the time the wind picked up and the temperature dropped. We planned to rest there, but it was too cold, so we headed back to Greasy Creek Friendly painting blazes that we missed on the way up. It was a chilly day, but productive.

Reporting: Elzear Lemieux

Date: 3/24/2024

Purpose: Clear trail and flag future maintenance needs

Location: Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US 321

People: Elzear Lemieux, Emily Lemieux

Summary: We hiked the entire section. We removed encroaching vegetation, removed a 10" blowdown, and checked the trail for future maintenance needs. We found: Mile 431 - 50 ft of cribbing (flagged); Mile 433 - 15 ft of cribbing (flagged); Mile 433.1 - Hole next to trail and 30 ft of cribbing (flagged).

[Back to Top](#)

Reporting: Bettye Boone

Date: 3/25/2024

Purpose: Prepared for and attended meeting

Location: Section 14d, Carvers Gap

People: Bettye Boone

Summary: I prepared for and attended the Zoom meeting regarding the Trail Counters on Roan.

Reporting: Jennifer Baird

Date: 3/25/2024

Purpose: Paint blazes

Location: Section 10, Hampton trailhead to Dennis Cove Road

People: Jennifer Baird

Summary: I painted blazes on the A.T. and also the blue blazes on the high-water trail. The trail was in good condition. I also checked the shelter. Several thru hikers and day hikers were on the trail; I interacted with most of them. Minimal trash was packed out.

Reporting: Jeff Hatling

Date: 3/27/2024

Purpose: Clean water diversions, check spring, check for trash, and remove any blowdowns

Location: Section 14b, Bradley Gap to Yellow Mountain Gap, Overmountain camp site to the base of Little Hump

People: Jeff Hatling

Summary: This was my first time inspecting my new section. The old Barn camping area was very clean. It was interesting to see the use of wood from the old Barn site. It is being used to build a shelter (see first picture). Good design, with the shelter laid out to block the northwest wind from the fire pit. I cleaned out the spring to increase the flow, and cut one blowdown with a hand saw (see 2nd picture). I cleaned out 37+/- water diversions. Many just required a small amount of cleaning (see 3rd picture). On the upper section above Yellow Mountain Gap, the water diversions required a large amount of digging and fill below the water diversion steps. I brushed shortcuts to move hikers back on the trail.



Reporting: Van Hovey

Date: 3/28/2024

Purpose: Clear blowdown

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

People: Van Hovey, Carrie Hovey

Summary: Wednesday evening, I received a report of a blowdown located about a mile and a quarter in from USA Raft. I found a dead hemlock about 18" in diameter across 2 sections of the trail. I cut and cleared the blowdown and the collaterally damaged rhodies. Nice afternoon to be out Cheers

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 3/28/2024

Purpose: Scout trail and harvesting locust

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

[Back to Top](#)

People: Van Hovey, Tim Stewart, Bob Peoples, Rio Berry, Carl Fritz, Jim McGuire, Elzear Lemieux, Tony Messina, Joe Morris, Greg Kramer

Summary: The Thursday crew visited Bishop Hollow to evaluate options for trail rehabilitation and run-off mitigation. Forest Service personnel cut several locusts in the area for steps, waterbars, and side logs. Locusts were debarked and stacked. Also, several outlets were dug to eliminate water pooling on the trail. This was the first of several trips to the area.

Reporting: Steve Perri

Date: 3/28/2024

Purpose: Spring Maintenance

Location: Sections 3 and 4a, McQueen's Gap to Double Springs Shelter

People: Steve Falling, Steve Perri

Summary: Steve Falling and I hiked in and out from McQueen's Gap to conduct annual spring maintenance. We cleared the waterbars near McQueen's Gap and north of the spring with a Pulaski, lopped briars, and cut overgrown branches. The spring was flowing reasonably well this time of year. We cut out one broken tree leaning about head high. At the shelter, we picked up trash and removed debris from the rear rain gutter. The blazes are in really good shape in both directions. We picked up some minor trash and broken glass at McQueen's Gap and installed Foot Travel Only signs heading north and south from the gap. We saw 3 thru-hikers and a father and son section hiking. One hiker mentioned the trail was clear to US 421 but there might be one blow down south of US 421. Steve Falling found a quarter with the symbol of Perry's Victory. Too bad we're not related, but it was certainly a coincidental and unexpected find!

Reporting: Jeff Hatling

Date: 3/28/2024

Purpose: Check on trail, Clean and create water diversions

Location: Section 14b, Bradley Gap to Yellow Mountain Gap, Little Hump area

People: Jeff Hatling

Summary: I cleaned out 17 +/- water diversions and dug in 10 +/- new water diversions. I also reshaped approximately 40 feet +/- trail to encourage people to stay on the trail.

Reporting: Greg Kramer

Date: 3/30/2024

Purpose: Spring Checkout

Location: Section 5, TN 91 to Iron Mountain Shelter

People: Greg Kramer, Betty Kramer

Summary: We cut weeds on the final section that was left last year because of a medical issue. We found 15 stepovers and a blowdown that I created a path around. I will go back in a week or so to remove the blowdowns and complete Spring cleanup of waterbars. I'll also cutback vegetation out by the shelter. We left work near Cross Mtn Rd for Third Saturday. The shovel handle has been burned and the broom has no handle. We replaced the logbook. The graffiti board needs cleaning and painting. The graffiti board is de-laminating some, but good for another year at least.

Reporting: Steve Wilson

Date: 3/30/2024

Purpose: General Trail Maintenance

Location: Section 2b, McQueens Gap to Abingdon Gap Shelter

People: Carl Belcher, Steve Wilson

Summary: Starting from McQueens gap, we hiked north cleaning water diversion and cutting briars. The "Gastrointestinal Illness Alert" sign was posted at the Abingdon Gap shelter as requested by the NPS. It was a sunny warm day for a hike. We saw two NOBO thru-hikers and five section hikers.