



# The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

February 2026

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[TEHCC.org](http://TEHCC.org)

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View from the A.T. north of Moreland Gap Shelter  
From Aaron Raulerson on Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> maintenance trip

## Save the Date: TEHCC Spring Dinner, Friday, April 24, 2026

The club would like to invite you to the 2026 TEHCC Spring Dinner on Friday, April 24. It will start at 5:30 pm with Happy “Trails” hour in the Eastman Lodge banquet room. There will be recognition by USFS for annual service hours (rockers) and club for OTY plaques as appropriate. The guest speaker will be Allen Buckles. Allen retired from Eastman as an electrical technologist supporting Technology in early 2025. He took a non-standard flip-flop hike in 2025 on the Appalachian Trail traveling as “Mountain Boomer” (derived from a popular nickname for the small, noisy American red squirrel) along with April Busby as “ZenBee.” They started mid-April heading NOBO from Springer Mountain, GA up to Harpers Ferry, WV, then flipped to Mount Katahdin, ME returning SOBO to Harpers Ferry by late September. Come hear about their adventure!

Enjoy fellowship with other club members and volunteers. Dinner menu and pricing will be posted in the March newsletter to collect reservations and payments.

## Event Schedule – Next Two Months

For the latest, up-to-date information, see [tehcc.org/schedule](http://tehcc.org/schedule).

For APEs events and information on APEs/TEHCC paddling events, see <http://www.riverapes.org/events>.

Date	Description	Contact	Telephone
February 11	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	<a href="#">Riley Kapanjie</a>	
February 13	TEHCC Maintainers Kickoff Dinner, 5:30 pm	<a href="#">Renee Messina</a>	423-384-6650
February 21	Bays Mountain Park Trail Maintenance, 9 am – 2 pm	<a href="#">Tony Messina</a>	423-677-6650
March 11	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	<a href="#">Riley Kapanjie</a>	
March 21	Bays Mountain Park Trail Maintenance, 9 am – 2 pm	<a href="#">Tony Messina</a>	423-677-6650

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## Details of Upcoming Events

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### Recurring Events

#### **TEHCC Steering Committee Meeting, Second Wednesday of Each Month, Noon to 1:00 pm**

The Steering Committee guides the general program for the club. The committee normally meets at lunchtime on the second Wednesday 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.

#### **Weekly A.T. Trail Maintenance, Most Thursdays**

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

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

Contact: [Tony Messina](mailto:TonyMessina@tehcc.org), 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 Event

#### **TEHCC Maintainers Kickoff Dinner, Friday, February 13, 2026, 5:30 pm**

Contact: [Renee Messina](mailto:ReneeMessina@tehcc.org)

The annual dinner to kick off our 2026 trail maintenance season will be held at the Eastman Lodge banquet room. The event will start at 5:30 pm with a social time, followed by dinner at 6 pm. After the meal, we will present awards and discuss various issues related to maintaining TEHCC's section of the Appalachian Trail. All maintainers or individuals interested in maintaining are invited to attend. The TEHCC A.T. Committee has agreed to cover the cost of dinner, being Phil's Dream Pit barbecue. Please notify Volunteer Coordinator Renee Messina ([atmaint@tehcc.org](mailto:atmaint@tehcc.org)) by Monday, February 9, if you plan to attend, so we can get an accurate head count for the meal.

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## Club Membership Benefits

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Are you a TEHCC Club Member, but don't remember exactly what the benefits of club membership are? Benefits of Club Membership include:

**Publications:** Library of books and maps

**Discounts:** 10% discount on non-sale items at sporting goods stores to members who present their membership cards

**Organized events:** Hiking, paddling (joint with [APEs](#)), camping, maintenance, and seasonal programs

**Training:** Organized courses to enhance trail skills, paddling skills, orienteering, safety, first aid and CPR, Leave No Trace

**Resources:** Access to a variety of information—hiking, paddling, equipment, and suggested hikes

**Awards:** Hiker of the Year, Paddler of the Year, Maintainer of the Year, Stan Murray Award, and other special recognitions

**Networking/Socializing:** Meet others with your interests

**Rental Equipment:** Backpacks, tents, sleeping pads, bear canisters, kayaks, and a canoe

**Monthly Newsletter:** Updates on activities and events available to you

#### **Membership Discounts:**

- [Mahoney's](#) (830 Sunset Dr, Johnson City, TN) – 10% discount on hiking gear and footwear
- [Mountain Sports, Ltd.](#) (1061 Commonwealth Ave, Bristol, VA) – 10% discount
- [Mount Rogers Outfitters](#) (110 Laurel Ave, Damascus, VA) - 10% discount
- [Shoe Station](#) (3211 Peoples St, Johnson City, TN) - 10% discount
- [Nolichucky Outdoor Learning Institute](#) (2 Jones Branch Rd, Erwin, TN) – 10% discount on training classes

**Club Mission Statement:** The mission of the Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club is to provide a program of hiking, paddling, and similar outdoor recreational activities. The Club also seeks to establish and expand area hiking trails and provide education in outdoor skills and safety.

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## Bays Mountain Tribute to Tony Messina

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*Reprinted with permission from Facebook post by Bays Mountain Park & Planetarium, January 20, 2026*

This year we're taking the time to highlight the amazing volunteers who dedicate their time and effort into making sure Bays Mountain Park is a great place to visit for everyone.

Today, we're introducing Tony Messina - Top Tier Trail Crewman!

The Missouri native earned his BS, MS, and PhD in Chemical Engineering and worked as an Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering at Texan A&M before taking a job at the then Eastman Kodak Company in 1982. In 1999, he made his way east to TN, where he continued working in R&D, Engineering, and Operations until his retirement in 2018, with over 36 years of service.

Since retirement, Tony has divided his time between backpacking sections of the Appalachian Trail (AT), refereeing soccer, and helping maintain parts of the AT. Now, he and Renee, his best friend and wife of over 48 years, are dedicated volunteers to both Bays Mountain Park and the AT. He is the chainsaw coordinator for the TN Eastman Hiking & Canoeing Club, a regular volunteer with Holston Habitat for Humanity, and officially accomplished section-hiking the entire AT in 2024! His team of "Trail Gorillas" have worked nearly every month since 2020 on rehabbing our trails, including Fire Tower, Lakeside, Holly, Dolan Branch, Fern, Barred Owl, and Cherry Knobs trails.

Bays Mountain Park is grateful for Tony's attention to details when one of our trails needs maintenance, and his dedication to the craft of creating safe and fun hiking trails for visitors who come explore the park!



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## TEHCC/APEs/NOLI Wilderness First Aid and Responder Courses

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*Submitted by Andy Steffan*

Have you considered what you would do if you were on a hike or maintaining a trail and the unthinkable happens to you or someone else? Are you prepared? If you want to be an asset to yourself and others by being prepared to treat injury and illness when help is not close at hand, these classes are for you. The normal venues for NOLI classes have been wiped out by Hurricane Helene. To help out, TEHCC has partnered with APEs and NOLI to host a few classes early in 2026, as follows.

- Wilderness First Aid: Feb 28 – March 1 (CPR optional as an Add-On) [Wilderness First Aid Course - 2 Days](#)
- Wilderness First Responder: March 21-28 (includes CPR) [Wilderness First Responder Course - 8 Days](#)

All the specifics, including curricula, certification, packing list, class times, etc. are at the links above. Registration is available at the links also. Using the discount code TEHCCSPECIAL, TEHCC members can receive 15% off each of the classes, including the optional CPR classes. If there are any questions/concerns, feel free to reach out to [NOLI](#) or [Andy Steffan](#).

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## Hiking with Tools! – Change in Leadership for 2026

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Tim Stewart is passing the leadership for these introductory trail maintenance outings to Tracy Harris (along with several others agreeing to be part of the team for the monthly outings). Check future TEHCC newsletters for details. Also note that Hiking with Tools! email notifications will come from Tracy (kahonuharris@yahoo.com). If you don't see any by the first outing in March, remember to check your spam folder. We thank you for your support and volunteer efforts. Tim plans to attend when available. Please continue the same support to Tracy and the team.

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## TEHCC Welcomes New Members

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Isabel Pan  
Drew Zink

Jason Pan  
Michael Morel Jr.

Ashley Kearney  
Katherine Verboom

Lucas Anson



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## A.T. Maintenance Reports

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**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 10/17/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Maintenance

**Location:** Section 4a, US421 to Double Springs Shelter

**People:** Ed Speer

**Summary:** This report is for three solo work days on Section 4a. Ed removed blowdowns, installed water diversions, and repaired treadway while hiking south from Low Gap/US421. The work days were: 10/17, 10/20, and 11/7.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 10/22/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Trail Maintenance

**Location:** Section 4b, Double Springs Shelter to TN91

**People:** Ed Speer

**Summary:** This report is for three solo work days on Section 4b. Ed removed blowdowns and repaired the treadway while hiking north from Cross Mountain/TN91. The work days were: 10/22, 10/25, and 11/4.

**Reporting:** Dennis Whittington

**Date:** 11/3/2025

**Purpose:** Clear blowdowns

**Location:** Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US321, MM 428.9 - MM 432.0

**People:** Dennis Whittington

**Summary:** I cleared numerous blowdowns between MM 428.9 and MM 432. I also picked up trash around Shook Branch entrance and brushed in short-cuts around MM 430 stealth campgrounds.

**Reporting:** Dennis Whittington

**Date:** 11/17/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Maintenance

**Location:** Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US321, MM 432-433.3

**People:** Dennis Whittington

**Summary:** I cleared blowdowns, picked up trash around stealth campsites, and refreshed blazes from MM 432-433.3.

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**Reporting:** Tim Stewart

**Date:** 11/22/2025

**Purpose:** Install new border signs

**Location:** Section 1, TN/VA state line

**People:** Tim Stewart

**Summary:** The old signs lasted for 15 years. I joined the Mount Rogers A.T. Club to replace them.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 11/24/2025

**Purpose:** Remove blowdowns

**Location:** Section 1, Backbone Rock Blue-Blaze Trail

**People:** Scott Huskey, Steve Perri, Ed Speer, Steve Wilson

**Summary:** We hiked up the Backbone Rock blue-blaze trail to cut blowdowns. Most of the blowdowns were the result of Hurricane Helene's winds, but were a low priority for removal since this is a seldom used side-trail. The hike up this blue-blaze trail is almost 3 miles with roughly 1,300 feet of elevation gain. We had two sawyer teams and were able to remove over 20 blowdowns, with the main focus being the three large blowdowns near the junction with the A.T. The large blowdowns were so big that they required hikers or maintainers to divert off the trail, but they have now been removed. This blue-blaze trail is now clear of blowdowns.



**Reporting:** Michael Sink

**Date:** 11/29/2025

**Purpose:** Inspect trail condition

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

**People:** Michael Sink

**Summary:** I completed an assessment of my section. I also cleared a few small blowdowns with a handsaw and cut back some branches that were at head height. There is a drainage issue with the spring at MM 382.8. I picked up trash around the shelter and packed out some abandoned gear. Overall, the section is in good shape.

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 12/4/2025

**Purpose:** Trail Rehab and Helene Recovery

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

**People:** Carl Fritz, Steve Perri, Dan Firth, Gerald Scott, Jim McGuire, Bill Murdoch, Todd Gray, Van Hovey, Tim Stewart, Michel Denizot, Richard Good, Ed Speer, Joe Morris, Tony Messina

**Summary:** The Thursday crew continued rehab near Jones Falls. Significant improvements have been made and one more week should complete the Helene Recovery in this area.

**Reporting:** Tom Sahlin

**Date:** 12/7/2025

**Purpose:** Inspect and clear trail, inspect spring

**Location:** Section 16b, From Iron Mountain Gap to Apple Orchard

**People:** Tom Sahlin

**Summary:** Inspection of trail showed some use but not as much as the A.T. normally gets. I removed fallen branches and removed stalks of weeds that had fallen onto the trail. I inspected the spring which was flowing slowly at about a gallon per one-to-two minutes. The signs installed for the re-route are still intact and readable. The orchard does not appear to have had anyone stay overnight, but the fire ring had recently had a small fire in it.

**Reporting:** Ted Allen

**Date:** 12/7/2025

**Purpose:** General Maintenance

**Location:** Section 15c, Ash Gap to Hughes Gap

**People:** Randy Allen

**Summary:** This was a general walk through. I cleared leaves off the steps, cleared water diversions, and picked up a small amount of trash. At the spring, new piping is working well, still flowing and no blockage. At the Ash Gap spring,

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someone had pulled the pipe out and tossed it into the woods. After finding it, I reinstalled it. I would like to rebuild/re-pipe like the other spring was done with Bill's magic pipe.

**Reporting:** Dennis Whittington

**Date:** 12/10/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Maintenance

**Location:** Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US321, MM 428.9 - MM 431

**People:** Dennis Whittington

**Summary:** I weed whacked overgrown vegetation, worked on a rootball, and picked up trash from MM 428.9 to 431.

**Reporting:** Ted Allen

**Date:** 12/10/2025

**Purpose:** Clean up blowdown

**Location:** Section 12d, Campbell Hollow Road to US19E

**People:** Randy Allen

**Summary:** I had a report from a hiker of a fresh blowdown just above the bridge at Bear Branch Rd. I went to confirm and used a handsaw to clear enough of it to pass. I will need to go back with a chainsaw to finish.

**Reporting:** Van Hovey

**Date:** 12/13/2025

**Purpose:** Assess condition of trail

**Location:** Section 19b, Curley Maple Gap Shelter to Nolichucky River, Chestoa

**People:** Van Hovey, Carrie Hovey

**Summary:** Our primary objective was to assess the trail condition from Chestoa to USA Raft. Along the way, we cut out and removed a couple of small blowdowns with a Katanaboy saw. There are some minor rootball issues that need attention, but they are easily navigable. We walked back along Jones Branch Road, which has been repaired. I don't know if it is "officially" open, but it is safely passable in a car. It was the first day in months that Carrie was able to get out and walk the 2.5 miles!!

**Reporting:** Tom Sahlin

**Date:** 12/17/2025

**Purpose:** Inspect trail for blowdowns and signs, inspect spring

**Location:** Section 16b, From Iron Mountain Gap to Apple Orchard

**People:** Tom Sahlin

**Summary:** From Iron Mountain Gap, I inspected the trail in the snow for use. It appeared to be only local traffic; one person with a dog and another person probably earlier in the day. There were other prints in the orchard that went on to the re-route. The sign that I added in the orchard was still there. The existing forest service sign was still there. No one has camped in the orchard during the snow. I checked the spring which is flowing about a gallon in 2-to-3 minutes. I cleared many weeds in the orchard that had been pushed over the trail by deer. I checked the trail down toward Weedy Gap; there were no new blowdowns. I turned around because of an approaching storm. I saw no hikers.



**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 12/18/2025

**Purpose:** Rehab trail

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

**People:** Joe Morris, Aerin Miller, Sam Ensor, Tim Stewart, Nathan Speegle-Snell, Michael Sink, Richard Good, Van Hovey, Ed Speer, Dean Baird, Steve Perri, Michel Denizot, Dan Firth, Greg Kramer, Todd Gray, Bill Murdoch, Dewey Fuller, Tony Messina, Carl Fritz

**Summary:** We had a great turnout for our final large-group outing of 2025. The Thursday crew finished the rehabilitation between Campbell Hollow Road and Elk River: 723 linear feet of A.T. rehab including 280 feet of locust crib, over one-dozen locust steps, 22 rootballs rehabbed, and rehabilitation of the Jones Falls blue-blaze trail and intersection with the A.T. Another amazing accomplishment by our extremely dedicated group of volunteers. However you celebrate the season - Happy Holidays to you and yours. Thank you.

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**Reporting:** Dean Baird

**Date:** 12/20/2025

**Purpose:** Inspect and maintain trail

**Location:** Section 9b, Hampton Blue Blaze Trail and South Pond

**People:** Dean Baird, Jennifer Baird

**Summary:** We decided to find a location for the first annual Pond Mountain Greenbriar Festival, and we found several. Additionally, we trimmed other foliage, pulled two small blowdowns off the trail, cut a 9" blowdown at MM 424.0, and removed a small bag of trash. The spring at the top of Pond was flowing very well. Overall, the trail is in good condition. There are some places with "trail creep" to the lower side of the trail, but this is not unique to Pond. This is the first time that we have been on South Pond that we did not see anyone else on the trail.

**Reporting:** Dean Baird

**Date:** 12/20/2025

**Purpose:** Remove reported blowdowns

**Location:** Section 10, Hampton blue-blaze trail to Laurel Fork Falls

**People:** Dean Baird, Jennifer Baird

**Summary:** At the Hampton parking area, we talked to a trail runner who reported two blowdowns located in the gorge just south of the second bridge. We found them: an 8" double-trunk and a 7" single-trunk, both hemlocks, and cut them off the trail. We also found another log between the bridges that had been on the ground for some time, but had somehow shifted out into the trail. We cut this very wet, heavy, and undamaged hardwood log and removed it from the trail.

**Reporting:** Tim Stewart

**Date:** 12/20/2025

**Purpose:** Hiking with Tools! on-the-job training

**Location:** Section 12a, Bitter End to Walnut Mountain Road TN/VA border

**People:** Tim Stewart, Tracy Harris, Rebecka Powell

**Summary:** I did some on-the-job training (OJT) with Tracy and Rebecka. Tracy will take the lead for Hiking with Tools! next year with the assistance of Rebecka and several others.

We drove to the various trailheads off of Buck Mountain Rd in Roan Mountain while discussing various aspects of the second-Saturday outings. I also transferred some of the tools to Tracy. Some of the unused tools will be returned to Carl. Some additional tools might be ordered: 10 loppers, 5 manual hedge trimmers, 5 small handheld clippers. It would be convenient if at least two of the maintainers could store some tools for the outings. It was a productive outing. Another OJT session will probably be scheduled next year. I was also able to distribute a few more Helene t-shirts.

**Reporting:** Steve Perri

**Date:** 12/20/2025

**Purpose:** Trail Maintenance

**Location:** Section 2a, Backbone Rock Blue-Blaze Trail

**People:** Ed Speers, Steve Perri

**Summary:** We hiked up the blue-blaze trail about two miles to clear a rootball on the trail. We borrowed a rope and equipment from Carl Fritz and took a handsaw and Pulaski. Ed had already stashed a shovel and hoe up there. After removing some roots and clearing the rootball sides, we tried to reposition the rootball to get to the larger roots under the trunk. There were at least two large legs of the tree we couldn't get to. On the back side of the rootball there were two large rocks we could dislodge. We tried to move the rootball at different angles, but it wouldn't budge. So we trimmed the side of the rootball in the tread way by cutting the accessible roots and removed soil to make it more passable. On a future trip, the trunk could be cut back another two feet to make it more clear of the trail, but today it is easy to walk around it.



**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 12/24/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Trail Maintenance

**Location:** Section 4a, US421 to Double Springs Shelter

**People:** Ed Speer

**Summary:** Ed Speer hiked from Low Gap/Hwy 421 to Double Spring shelter and removed blowdowns. He spent quite a bit of time picking up litter in the parking lot at Low Gap.

**Reporting:** Karen Berry

**Date:** 12/24/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Maintenance

**Location:** Section 14c, Yellow Mountain Gap to Stan Murray Shelter

**People:** Karen Berry, Annette Vinding

**Summary:** The shelter graffiti board required an hour of work to soak glued-on fake jewels and chip them off with pruning sheers. Two dead blowdowns were cut and two remain unmovable. The two unmovable dead trees are about 1.25 mi from Yellow Gap and before the large corner trail boulder. Both are easy step-overs. Two widow makers are unmovable. One is on the blue-blaze to the old red barn meadow. The other is about 1.5 miles from Yellow Gap and beyond the large corner trail boulder.

ALERT: The gated entrance to the maintenance road is down with the post out of the ground. The barricade was in the ditch. It is obvious that vehicles are using the maintenance road to the old red barn meadow.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 12/26/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Trail Maintenance

**Location:** Section 3, McQueen's Gap to US421

**People:** Ed Speer

**Summary:** Ed Speer hiked from Low Gap/Hwy 421 to McQueens Gap and removed blowdowns. The trail is in good shape, but there is a rootball hole about one mile south of McQueens Gap that borders the trail and needs to be filled.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 12/27/2025

**Purpose:** Fill in rootball holes and repaired treadway

**Location:** Section 1, Backbone Rock blue-blaze trail

**People:** Ed Speer

**Summary:** This report is for three solo work days on the Backbone Rock blue-blaze trail where Ed Speer filled in rootball holes and repaired the tread way. The work days were: 12/1, 12/6, and 12/27.

**Reporting:** David Cook

**Date:** 12/27/2025

**Purpose:** Check and maintain trail

**Location:** Section 19a, Indian Grave Gap - Curley Maple Gap Shelter

**People:** David Cook

**Summary:** From Indian Grave Gap to Curley Maple Shelter, I cleared several blowdowns and used a handsaw to clear branches from the trail. I cleared waterbars as needed and checked established tent areas for trash. I also checked the shelter and collected trash from around both levels and the fire pit. The shelter itself is in good condition; both brooms are still there. I brushed in one shortcut on a switchback, and cut back numerous rhododendrons from the uphill side of the trail. There are two rootballs at MM 351.9 that are still passable, but will need remediation.

**Reporting:** Yong Li

**Date:** 12/27/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Trail Inspection and Maintenance

**Location:** Section 16a, Hughes Gap to Clyde Smith Shelter

**People:** Jim Foster, Yong Li

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**Summary:** We removed some barbed wire that we noticed from a previous trip, but didnt have proper tools back then. We removed some small blowdowns here and there, and took out trash from the shelter. There was one large blowdown that was high enough from the ground that hikers can walk under, but we still plan to remove it at a later time. All in all, this section is in good shape. We will check out the section from Greasy Creek to Clyde Smith in the next week or two.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 12/28/2025

**Purpose:** Routine Trail Maintenance

**Location:** Section 4b, Double Springs Shelter to TN91

**People:** Ed Speer

**Summary:** This report is for two solo work days on Section 4b, where Ed Speer removed blowdowns and repaired tread way while hiking trail north from Cross Mountain/Hwy 91. The work days were: 12/13 and 12/28. **Note:** The parking lot at Cross Mountain is rather muddy and needs gravel.

**Reporting:** Joel Zabel

**Date:** 1/3/2026

**Purpose:** Clear blowdowns

**Location:** Section 17, Iron Mountain Gap to FS230 switchback, Low Gap to Unaka summit

**People:** Yong Li, Ed Brading, Denny Samuel, John Holbrook, Joy Zabel, Joel Zabel

**Summary:** We cleared small blowdowns. The largest was 0.6 mile north of Unaka summit. It is an 8" that double-crossed the switchback, and needed three Katanaboy-saw cuts. Recent winds created a few new leaners; none are hazardous now, but will be monitored. We'll attend to a minor rootball touch-up in the spring.

**Reporting:** Tom Sahlin

**Date:** 1/4/2026

**Purpose:** Inspect trail for blowdowns, loose steps, remove limbs etc.

**Location:** Section 16b, Greasy Creek Gap to Iron Mountain Gap, From Red Fork Road to cemetery

**People:** Tom Sahlin

**Summary:** From Red Fork Road to the steps above the cemetery on Hwy 107, I inspected the trail for blowdowns. I had not been on this section in months, so many limbs of all sizes were down. Some were immovable, so I broke or cut the obstructing limbs away from the trail. I also removed some large grapevines over the trail that came down with trees that fell. The steps were all intact at this time.

**Reporting:** Scott Huskey

**Date:** 1/4/2026

**Purpose:** Routine Maintenance

**Location:** Section 4b, Double Springs Shelter to TN91

**People:** Scott Huskey

**Summary:** I just did a reconnaissance of this section to see if there was any need for maintenance. Everything was fine -- nothing to report.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 1/6/2026

**Purpose:** Winter Trail Maintenance

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

**People:** Carl Belcher, Ed Speer, Steve Wilson

**Summary:** On a cold and windy day, we hiked from McQueens Gap to the Abingdon Gap Shelter. The trail is in good shape with one blowdown that was removed. We also cleaned the waterbars and cut briars. The shelter is in good shape, but the graffiti board needs to be repainted. Hiking down to the shelter's water source, we found it flowing at three liters per minute from the new gray pipe that we installed last year. The two older pipes further down the hill were not flowing, so the new pipe is useful. The distance down to the spring was measured as roughly 900 ft with a measurement wheel.

**Reporting:** Ted Allen

**Date:** 1/6/2026

**Purpose:** General Maintenance

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

**People:** Randy Allen

**Summary:** I was at Ash Gap on this nice day; so I cruised up the section. I found one blowdown, most of which I cleared with loppers. The section was in good shape.

**Reporting:** Ted Allen

**Date:** 1/6/2026

**Purpose:** General Maintenance

**Location:** Section 15c, Ash Gap to Hughes Gap

**People:** Randy Allen

**Summary:** This was a general walk through. I cleared a few limbs and cleared winter gruff off the steps. I checked the springs, and cleared the pipe at Ash Gap. I found no trash.

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 1/6/2026

**Purpose:** Inspect shelter

**Location:** Section 17, Iron Mountain Gap to FS230 switchback, Cherry Gap Shelter

**People:** Joe Morris, Steve Domagala

**Summary:** We hiked to the Cherry Gap Shelter site to check the dimensions of the pad for a pavilion proposal. The shelter continues to collapse; the back wall is now cracked in the center of the structure top to bottom. Steve installed a new chain on the gate at FS 230D and we closed the gate to the best of our ability. We found evidence of vehicle traffic all along the route heading up to the A.T.

**Reporting:** Phyllis Cairnes

**Date:** 1/7/2026

**Purpose:** Maintain shelter

**Location:** Section 4a, Double Springs shelter

**People:** Phyllis Cairnes, Lori Krause

**Summary:** We tidied up around the shelter, picking up trash, re-painting the graffiti board, shoveling out the fire ring, and leaving a new logbook. All appeared to be in pretty good shape and it was a great day to be outside.

**Reporting:** Steve Domagala

**Date:** 1/7/2026

**Purpose:** Assess section

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

**People:** Steve Domagala

**Summary:** Since I was away for 2 months, I took the opportunity to review my section. I cleaned the water diversions, trimmed back some encroaching vegetation, and removed trash left at the shelter. I identified a total of four blowdowns needing to be removed.

**Reporting:** Steve Domagala

**Date:** 1/8/2026

**Purpose:** Remove blowdowns

**Location:** Section 20b, Temple Hill Gap to No Business Knob Shelter, MM 340.1, 339.1, and 338.4

**People:** Steve & G-Man (Jerry). (G-man, not a member of TEHCC, just went along for the ride and hike.)

**Summary:** We returned with the proper equipment, PPE and a +1 to remove the blowdowns found the previous day.

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 1/8/2026

**Purpose:** Rehabilitate trail

**Location:** Section 11b, Bitter End to Canute Place



**People:** Ted (Randy) Allen, Tim Stewart, Michael Sink, Heather Waldroup, Aerin Miller, Michel Denizot, Greg Kramer, Dan Firth, Gerald Scott, Carl Fritz, Bill Murdoch, Aaron Raulerson, Joe Morris

**Summary:** This crew worked north of Moreland Gap shelter removing numerous blowdowns and rehabbing 141 feet of trail, including 70 feet of locust cribbing and 18 feet of rock cribbing. They also removed all of the storm-damaged tin roof material from the Moreland Gap Shelter area. Michael and Aerin cut 12 blowdowns and walked from Moreland Gap to Bitter End. They reported that the corridor cutting is not complete and there are opportunities for treadway rehabilitation. It was a great day to kickoff the 2026 maintenance season. (Photos by Aaron Raulerson)



**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 1/8/2026

**Purpose:** Rehabilitate trail

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

**People:** Sue Bonito, Ed Speer, Tracy Harris, Dewey Fuller, Tony Messina, Van Hovey, Steve Perri, Jim McGuire

**Summary:** This portion of the Thursday crew journeyed south from Bitter End to do some much needed Creekside rehab. They set four locust steps and filled a 20-foot rock crib with crush. Also, Van and Raul (prior to his long winter nap) cleared debris from the creek to keep the trail from washing out. It was a great first day of '26 maintenance.

**Reporting:** Van Hovey

**Date:** 1/13/2026

**Purpose:** Clear blowdowns, repair rootball damage

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

**People:** Van Hovey, Joe Morris

**Summary:** Our primary task was to remove two 8" blowdowns and repair rootball damage in the trail. We walked approximately 1 3/4 miles in the Jones Branch section to just past the first switch-back. We located and dispatched the blowdowns very quickly. Trail repair was more extensive than expected. We built crib-wall with stones hauled from approximately 150 yards up the trail and back-filled with dirt from the work site. The area above and below the repair can still use some treadway work; not critical, but necessary.

**Reporting:** Carl Fritz

**Date:** 1/13/2026

**Purpose:** Meeting to improve interaction processes among our partners

**Location:** Asheville

**People:** Carl Fritz

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**Summary:** Representatives of Appalachian Ranger District, ATC, Carolina Mountain Club, and TEHCC spent the day focusing on possible processes to improve our interactions. Some key processes like communication, clear expectations, training, and standards were identified. We will be trying to flesh out some details.

**Reporting:** Carl Fritz

**Date:** 1/14/2026

**Purpose:** Select potential camping and auxiliary sites at Cherry Gap

**Location:** Section 17, Iron Mountain Gap to FS230 switchback, Cherry Gap Shelter

**People:** Joe Morris, Dan Firth, Carl Fritz

**Summary:** We tried to identify areas for camping sites on hillside, as well as auxiliary sites, e.g., for bear boxes, so that environmental impact (NEPA) can be conducted on all. The features that will be installed, in addition to camping sites, can be decided later. Since Cherry Gap Shelter is collapsing, we put up caution tape and a sign, "CLOSED, UNSAFE."

**Reporting:** Steve Domagala

**Date:** 1/20/2026

**Purpose:** Remove a simple blowdown

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

**People:** Steve Domagala, G-man (Jerry)

**Summary:** I was alerted to a small blowdown by a day-hiker who I dropped off at Spivey that morning. Since G-Man and I were out tooling around, I went up and got it as I had a +1 with me.

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 1/22/2026

**Purpose:** Rehabilitate trail

**Location:** Section 12d, Campbell Hollow Road to US19E, Bear Branch

**People:** Joe Morris, Ed Speer, Jim McGuire, Tim Stewart, Van Hovey, Greg Kramer, Todd Gray, Dan Firth, Michel Denizot, Gerald Scott, Carl Fritz, Bill Murdoch, Sue Bonito

**Summary:** The Thursday crew removed 5 blowdowns and rehabbed 102 feet of trail with locust crib. The ATC Trail Specialist, Alexis de Seze, joined the crew from Asheville.