



The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

April 2021

tehcc.org

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

Celebrating 75 Years!

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Roan Mountain

From the Chair – Hiking Program Update

Submitted by Kyle Haas (Steering Committee Chair)

The hiking program has officially started, and we look forward to seeing those who are able to join! I want to emphasize to continue to look at the event schedule in the newsletters and the calendar on our website (TEHCC.org) for further updates! We are aiming to lead hikes almost every weekend.

If you are planning on joining in on a hike, we would like to continue to utilize the “booking” function on our website. By clicking on the event located in the [calendar](#), it will give an option to reserve a spot for the hike. We started this last year and it has worked out great in tracking attendance and sending out any last minute updates!

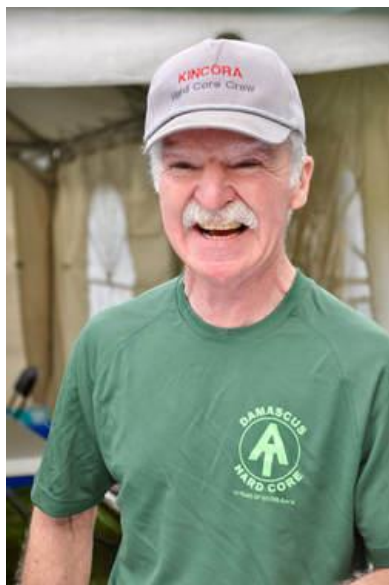
If you would like more information about the program or are interested in leading a hike of your own, please, let Kyle know! (kyle.haas@eastman.com)

Important Note: *With the program, the club wants to make sure that we continue to do this safely and responsibly during the pandemic. We ask that you do not come to any hike or event if you are showing any signs of illness, have had contact with anyone with COVID, or have any concerns with your own risk factors. We will continue to NOT organize carpooling and will meet at the trailheads instead. We also ask that you bring your own sanitizing supplies, drinking water, and PPE for preventing virus transmission (masks are not required but encouraged to have available). Social distancing and at least 6-feet of separation will be encouraged as well.*

Recollections for Club's 75th Anniversary – Bob Peoples and Hard Core

Submitted by Vic Hasler

Continuing our 75th anniversary memories, this month is about a significant ambassador for the Appalachian Trail, Bob Peoples, and the Hard Core crew program. After retiring from aircraft maintenance for the U.S. Air Force in 1988, Bob began to help maintain the Long Trail in Vermont for the Green Mountain Club of which a portion is also the A.T. He has shared that “The trail offers the same fast friendships as the military, but also grants you solitude.” A decision to open a hikers' hostel led him to spend weeks scouring backroads along the Appalachian Trail seeking a plot of land close to its path. In 1994, Bob and his late wife Pat purchased a cabin in Dennis Cove near Hampton, TN to establish the legendary Kincora Hostel. At the time of this story, just under 25,000 A.T. section and thru-hikers have received Bob's gracious hospitality there. Over the years, some jokes popped up in the A.T. hiker culture, such as “Mice bring food to Bob Peoples” and “Bears hang Bob Peoples bags” out of respect for his kindness.



Bob can be seen quite frequently maintaining the Appalachian Trail on his adopted section near the Kincora Hostel in the Laurel Fork Gorge with its spectacular waterfall, or with the regular crew on Thursdays maybe at another of his favorite spots, Round Bald in the Roan Highlands. Over the years, he has contributed over 10,000 hours to the A.T. with the Tennessee Eastman Hiking & Canoeing Club. More importantly is his life-long ambassadorship of regularly inspiring hikers to help with trail maintenance to give back, especially with the former Damascus Hard Core events as will be discussed further in this article. For these reasons and others, Bob Peoples was inducted into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame in 2018.

In 2001, a thru-hiker with trail name “Forest Phil” loved working on multiple trips on Round Bald so much that he organized a work event to help TEHCC with a trail project. The first “Hard Core” event occurred right after the Damascus Trail Days festival in May with two days of moving 15 tons of gravel by bucket brigade with 27-34 people to harden the trail on the Hack Line side of Carvers Gap where the path was muddy during wet periods. Bob Peoples, along with Ed Oliver and Bruce Cunningham, arranged the logistics. In subsequent years, Bob championed outreach efforts to contact hikers to volunteer for the Hard Core crew. These events were held from 2001 thru 2015, typically engaging 120-130 current thru-hikers, returning alumni hikers, club members, and friends to tackle difficult and challenging maintenance tasks on the Appalachian Trail. Many were significant relocations to address big

erosion problems associated with going straight up and down mountains. The event included nightly feasts, typically barbeque or spaghetti, along with the presentation of very nice synthetic t-shirts (different color for each year) and patches with yearly rockers. The current A.T. thru-hikers were able to give back to the Trail before they resumed their adventure. Hard Core's accomplishments, over the years, are shared in the next paragraphs.

The 2002 Hard Core crew remodeled the Clyde Smith Shelter. The hikers carried new construction materials, even bags of concrete, two miles up a temporary trail and then hauled the old shingles back down. Since a limited number of skilled carpenters could work on the shelter, others installed waterbars along the A.T. near the shelter. Roughly fifty hikers stayed at the Kincora Hostel both Sunday and Monday evenings filling ever available space - even truck beds.

The 2004 Hard Core crew built a sidehill relocation to remove a steep and eroding section in the Bitter End to Dennis Cove. They also installed two bog bridges to get the new trail over a stream and boggy area. In 2005, Hard Core returned to work in this section, but in rainy weather.

In 2006, Hard Core built a portion of the Mountaineer Falls Shelter with the sweat equity of a 143 hikers and 28 club members.

The 2008 Hard Core crew tackled relocations on Little Bald Knob and Grassy Ridge towards Stan Murray Shelter. For the latter section, Bob Peoples and his apprentices, Otto and Camo, did excellent rock work. In 2009, Hard Core constructed a trail relocation in the Big Laurel Branch Wilderness, which is a significant drop in grade shortly after entering the wilderness compared to the previous route. The next day, the crew returned to the Grassy Ridge-Stan Murray Shelter section to build two rock staircases.

The 2010 Hard Core crew consisted of 115 hikers and 39 club members and friends who addressed the worst section of the A.T. on Pond Mountain on a hot, humid Sunday. On Monday, the crew began a relocation north of Hughes Gap to replace a very steep grade. In 2011, Hard Core returned to Pond Mountain, completing two relocations involving an extensive amount of rock steps and cribbing – plus rain. Hard Core was back again in 2012 to finish a new side-hill trail for the final Pond Mountain relocations. The next day, the 2012 crew moved to a different location to begin a major project near Cloudland.

In 2013, Hard Core employed the crew to work just south of Dennis Cove with rock and log steps on Sunday and then on the north side of White Rocks Mountain on Monday. The Monday crew replaced a very steep and rocky path that was full of roots with a sidehill route involving a series of eight switchbacks – one with 17 rock steps.

In 2014, Hard Core split into two projects. The first group, over two days, successfully built 1600 feet of trail to replace 600 feet of a steep rocky climb to the Little Rock Knob vista. The second group finished eight relocations north of Ash Gap. Both projects put the Appalachian Trail on a much better grade that is more resistant to erosion.

As you can see, fifteen years of Hard Core accomplished many big trail projects which greatly improved how the A.T. lies on the mountains along the TN/NC border. The program was discontinued for TEHCC when there were no longer projects requiring these large work crews. The construction skills honed during these years are now being employed on other trails in Cherokee National Forest and Rocky Fork State Park by the East Tennessee Trails Association (for example, the Whitehouse Cliffs Trail in Rocky Fork SP) and in Bays Mountain Park (a new switchback on the Firetower Trail).

75th Anniversary T-Shirt Order Form

Submitted by Kyle Haas (Steering Committee Chair)

TEHCC is continuing to sell short-sleeve and long-sleeve t-shirts through the month of April as part of our 75th Anniversary celebration. Prices will be \$10 for short-sleeved and \$15 for long-sleeved. If you are interested in ordering, please fill out the form [here](#). We will continue to have the order form open until April 30th!



*Orders will be placed in the first week of May and shipping can take two weeks. You will be able to pick up your shirts in the employee center (B310 / Toy F Reid Building).

2021 Roan Mountain Hikerpalooza

Submitted by Vic Hasler

Hikerpalooza will return to Roan Mountain, TN (41st A.T. Community) on Saturday, May 8th. However, due to the pandemic, this year will have a Hiker Hospitality event instead of a Hiker/Community celebration. Two local hostels have special meals for their hikers. The community park will also be open for hiker camping with access to fresh fruits, toiletries, etc. at no cost. The Roan Mountain community will be dedicating two A.T. informational panels posted on the back of the park stage. One describes the community's relationship to the Appalachian Trail and Leave No Trace concepts, while the other identifies key organizations who take care of the A.T. and highlights the efforts of the Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club.

Rental Equipment Ready for 2021

Submitted by Jonathan Shumaker, Rental Equipment Coordinator

A small group of TEHCC Steering Committee members met on March 5th to evaluate the condition of the rental equipment that is available for checkout from the club. In the past, we have been able to have this event open to all club members, but due to capacity restrictions, the Steering Committee decided to complete this with a smaller group. We hope that next year we can open this back up for the club, because it is a great opportunity to look at a lot of the equipment and gain tent set up skills!

For our evaluation, we looked at all the comments made on the checkout cards to see if any damage was noted. We set up all tents that were checked out in 2020 and a few others that were new or were noted to have issues in previous years. The sleeping pads that were checked out in 2020 were opened up to see if repairs were needed. All the hiking backpacks, camping gear, and canoeing gear were also looked at and were found to be in good condition.

All equipment is ready for the 2021 hiking/backpacking/canoeing season! We hope that you can take advantage of all the great gear we have available. If you want to see what is available, check out the website: <http://tehcc.org/rentals/>. You can also stop by B310 and see it in person from 7:30am-4:00pm M-F.

Thanks to Josh Hayes, Jacob Lustik, Chantel Roberts, Andy Steffan, Tim Schaefer, and Vic Hasler for helping with the equipment evaluation.

TEHCC Welcomes New Members

Michael Gilson

Stewart Hale

Ashley Newton

Jessica Shaffer

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 now viewable at http://tehcc.org/wiki/Recent_Hikes. See the following table for hikes that were added to the Trail Wiki in March.

Date	Trail(s)	Hike Distance	# of Hikers	Tags	Reported By
05-Feb-2021	Sinking Waters Warriors' Path State Park	1.75 mi	2	Cats	Jshumaker
	Comment: Was a great evening for a hike right before sunset.				
19-Feb-2021	Sinking Waters Warriors' Path State Park	2.14 mi	2	Cats	Jshumaker
	Comment: Great cool evening hike. Waters weren't sinking because of how saturated the ground was.				
21-Feb-2021	US19E to Dennis Cove Rd	10.5 mi	2	AT	Jshumaker
	Comment: Was a wonderful day for a hike. The waterfalls were flowing and had ice on them!				
07-Mar-2021	Chimney Top	3 mi	7		YogiHiker
	Comment: Nice clear day to for this short but intense hike. Very windy at the top. You can walk the ridgeline in both directions coming off the trail at the top. Amazing views, well worth the climb. Property o... more				

Event Schedule – Next Two Months

For the latest, up-to-date information, see tehcc.org/schedule.

For additional information on APEs/TEHCC paddling events, see <http://regions.worldkayak.com/tri-cities/category/regional-events/> or <http://www.riverapes.org/calendar.html>.

Date	Description	Contact	Telephone
April 10	Second Saturday, Hiking with Tools!	Tim Stewart	423-483-9329
April 10	A.T. Hike: 19E to Big Hump Mountain	Jacob Lustik	704-956-5938
April 15	Steering Committee Meeting	Kyle Haas	423-229-5869
April 17	Bays Mountain Hike: Bays Ridge Rd and Lake Rd	Jonathan Shumaker	417-389-6987
April 24	A.T. Hike: Denis Cove Trailhead to Horseridge Gap	Kyle Haas	423-229-5869
May 1	A.T. Hike: Carver's Gap to Roan High Knob	Andy Steffan	919-928-4738
May 8	Second Saturday, Hiking with Tools!	Tim Stewart	423-483-9329
May 20	Steering Committee Meeting	Kyle Haas	423-229-5869
May 22 – 23	APEs Summer Kick Off	Andy Steffan	919-928-4738

Details of Upcoming Events

Recurring Events

TEHCC Steering Committee Meeting - Third Thursday of Each Month, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Contact: [Kyle Haas](#)

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. We are using teleconferencing due to Eastman's directions to current employees. If you want to listen/join in, please contact me.

Sunday Afternoons: Johnson City Roll Practice, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

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

Come join the [J.A.W.](#), [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. Click [here](#) for more information.

Most Thursdays: Weekly A.T. Trail Maintenance

Contact: [Carl Fritz](#), 423-477-4669, atvolunteer@tehcc.org

Join a group of maintainers who work somewhere on our 133.8-mile section each week, usually on Thursdays.

Second Saturday of Each Month: Hiking with Tools!

Contact: [Tim Stewart](#), 423-483-9329

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. Some minor tasks might include: cleaning waterbars and steps, lopping rhododendron, dismantling fire rings, or painting blazes or shelters. All tools will be furnished and no prior experience required! All are Welome, so come on out, meet some new hikers and join the Fun...and maybe get your hands a little dirty!

Scheduled Events

A.T.: 19E to Big Hump Mountain, Saturday, April 10, 2021

Leader: [Jacob Lustik](#), (704) 956-5938

Rating: Moderately strenuous with elevation gain of 2,719' to Big Hump, Length 10.5 miles

Time: 8:30 am – 2:30 pm

Location: 19E – Pull off where the A.T. crosses US 19E east of Roan Mountain TN short of the TN/NC border. Use [AllTrails Link](#), Carter County

Come enjoy a Saturday morning hike to enjoy the panoramic views atop Big Hump Mountain. Meet at the trailhead to climb south-bound on the Appalachian Trail to spin around on the open bald. Dress in layers to adjust as the temperature will rise as the day proceeds, but drop with the elevation gain. Note: There is parking on both sides of the highway, but be careful crossing.

Bays Mountain Park, Ridge Road to Lake Road, Saturday, April 17, 2021

Leader: [Jonathan Shumaker](#), 417-389-6987

Rating: Easy to moderate, 3 miles, 450 ft elevation gain

Time: 8:30 am - 10:30 am

Location: Bays Mountain Park parking area, 853 Bays Mountain Park Rd, Kingsport TN 37660

This will be a short hike up Bays Ridge Road and then back down to Lake Road; around 3 miles. We might increase the length of the hike if the group is interested. This is an easy to moderate hike with some loose gravel and about 450 ft of elevation gain. We will meet in the parking area at 8:30!

A.T.: Dennis Cove Trailhead to Horseridge Gap, Saturday, April 24, 2021

Leader: [Kyle Haas](#), (812) 746-7119

Rating: Moderate, 8 miles, 1447 ft of elevation

Time: 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Location: [Dennis Cove Trailhead](#), 1410 Dennis Cove Road, Hampton, TN 37658

A.T.: Dennis Cove Trailhead to Horseridge Gap (cont'd)

This is another great A.T. hike in the area! We'll start from the Dennis Cove Trailhead and go past Laurel Falls on our way to Horseridge Gap. The hike should be about 8 miles total and have about 1400' of elevation gain. Parking may be limited at the trailhead, but there is a neighbor close by that has set up a dirt, paid-parking area just down the road.

A.T.: Carver's Gap to Roan High Knob, Saturday, May 1, 2021

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

Rating: Moderate, 4.5 or 6.9 round-trip, 1200 ft gain

Time: 10 am – 1:00 pm

Location: [Carver's Gap](#), State Road 1348, Bakersville, NC 28705

We will be hiking from the Carver's Gap parking area up to, or near, Roan High Knob. Round-trip will be about 4.5 miles, but could extend to 6.9 miles round-trip if the group is up for it to view another overlook. The hike will be on the A.T., through the fir forest, past the Cloudland Hotel remains, and past an A.T. shelter. Bring plenty of water and lunch/snacks.

APes Summer Kick Off, Saturday and Sunday, May 22 – 23, 2021

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

When: Saturday, May 22nd – 23rd, 10 am start on 22nd

Where: Riverside Park, Elizabethton, TN

This two day paddling event will kick off Summer the right way! This will be a time for club members to reunite for another great year of paddling and will allow newcomers to meet more of the paddling community and make friends/connections. This event has something for everyone and is intended to include something for all types of paddling, from whitewater kayakers, whitewater canoers, to inflatable rafts and rec boats. All participants will need to bring their own gear, but some loaner gear could likely be rounded up if notified ahead of time; please reach out to me or another APes member to work that out. Cost is free for all APes members, or \$25 for non-members (cheaper to get a year's membership for \$15 and enjoy a year's worth of club benefits). [Signups](#) begin April 2nd.

Rough schedule:

Saturday will consist of intro, club updates, skill sessions around river safety and first aid, lunch, and boating activities in the afternoon, which will include basic strokes and skill sessions for newcomers to the sport. Different levels of activities will likely be offered based on experience and types of boats for people attending.

Sunday will consist of 2 river trips to have fun and practice, likely a Class II trip and a Class III trip.

For the Record

Rattlesnake Ridge Trail, Saturday, March 13, 2021

Jacob Lustik reporting



For the first scheduled TEHCC hike of the year, I chose Rattlesnake Ridge for its steady incline, respectable length, and most of all, its panoramic views of the Unaka mountains and beyond upon reaching the summit. Though the day started off on the dreary side, it became apparent about 3 miles along the 4.5 mile trip to the summit that the cloud cover would clear enough to get a good view of the surrounding area... and it did not disappoint.

Despite the very wet conditions over the past couple weeks and the trail's proximity to creek runoff, the trail is still in very good condition with few mud patches or difficult-to-navigate sections. The only thing that could give you some grief if you are not on the lookout for them are the occasional stalks of thornbushes which are found crossing over the trail.

Unfortunately, this hike was a solo mission. Nonetheless, I would wholly recommend that anyone who hasn't explored this trail yet to do so. It would be a great way to spend part of a day over the weekend!

The hike came in at 8.55 miles, 2442 ft of elevation. The trail condition was good, a few thorn bush stalks crossing the trail towards the top of the trail. No access issues. Attendees: Jacob Lustik

A.T.: Carver's Gap to Hughes Gap, Saturday, March 20, 2021

Kyle Haas reporting

This hike was inspired with the goal of continuing to section hike the A.T. On the day of the hike, it was decided as a group that it would be worth it to change the section to go to Hughes Gap instead of Yellow Mountain Gap. Attendees were Kyle Haas, Jonathan Shumaker, Teni Butler, and Alex Lyttle.

If you go: The trail was in relatively good condition but beware of the slick spots currently along Roan High Knob. We experienced a lot of ice and snow on both the descent and ascent; however, it was manageable to continue completing the section.



A.T. Maintenance Reports

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/4/2021

Purpose: Harvest locust logs for steps and side logs

Location: Cross Mountain

People: Dean Baird, Richard Carter, Carl Fritz, Van Hovey, Elzear Lemieux, Tony Messina, Joe Morris, Bill Murdoch, Kevin Sedgwick, Ed Speer, Tim Stewart

Summary: We have depleted our supply of locust logs for trail rehab. Today we restocked. We cut, debarked, and hauled some great, dead locust logs for steps and side logs. We had three trucks plus a trailer loaded.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/5/2021

Purpose: Clear blowdowns

Location: Section 12b, Mountaineer Falls to Elk Falls Access

People: Tony and Renee Messina

Summary: Renee noticed several blowdowns in this section when she hiked it last week; so we went in to clear things up. Apparently, Jim or someone had already cleared quite a bit of what she saw....she was impressed with how much he had done without the benefit of a chainsaw! We had the DeWalt saw with us and were able to clear several other step-over, step-around, or step-under logs. The worst were four duck-under tangles where 8 to 10-inch pine or locust trees had fallen on top of over-arching rhodos. The trail is in excellent shape, except for rutted areas near Splash Dam Falls where 4WD vehicles have torn up the trail a bit. It was a glorious day to be outside, sunny and breezy with temps from mid 30s to mid 40s.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 3/6/2021

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 7, Wilbur Dam Rd and north to spring

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: It was a great day to be out on the trail. I cleared a treetop and vines that had fallen and blocked the trail. I cut out a 10-inch blowdown that had dropped to just under 6-feet above the ground, and finished cutting a smaller one from earlier in the year. I repainted blazes and replaced a couple that were lost over the years to downfall. I was only able to get about 3 miles in before it was time to turn around and head out. There were several folks out taking in the splendor of Big Laurel Branch. The TN 91 to Wilbur Dam Rd is becoming a popular section for trail runners.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 3/6/2021

Purpose: Learn access route to Temple Hill Gap



Location: Section 20b, Temple Hill Gap to Spivey Gap, FS Roads 189/189A (Granny Lewis Road) and 1865 (Temple Hill Road)

People: Vic Hasler

Summary: Carl Fritz mentioned that Ken and Lotta Murray had requested breaking out the Temple Hill Gap to No Business Knob Shelter portion of Maintenance Section 20b since it was difficult for them to cover the entire section. The northern end (Temple Hill Gap) is four miles uphill from the Nolichucky River and southern edge is two and half miles from the USFS road crossing at Devils Creek Gap. The "2020 TEHCC Appalachian Trail Maintenance Assignments" section list has this 2.3-mile portion listed separately, but it wasn't adopted. In the past, a high clearance 4x4 vehicle could reach Temple Hill Gap via the forest service roads stated in the Location for this write-up. Per Seong Hopkins (Unaka District Recreation Program Manager), FS Road 189 will be maintained at Level 2, while FS Road 1865 is being closed past the private structure. Currently, the culvert at their juncture is being replaced – just waiting on weather and the contractor.

I parked at the gate for FS 189A and proceeded to walk the roadway clearing the limbs to allow open vehicle passage; only two blowdowns requiring chainsaw removal remain. I reached Hollybush Gap to realize that I was on the wrong leg of the parallel roadways! The ATC topo map had indicated gated access. Backtracking, I was able to drive the rough gravel road to the culvert work site. The gate indicated here on the map was not observed. The steep path is open for walking to Temple Hill Gap; thus success on today's goal. During the return, I picked up two bags of trash from along the trail, including cans which appear to have been tossed in the 1990s. During the drive out, I also retrieved many beer and soft drink cans for scouts to recycle.

Communication sent to Seong Hopkins stated that FS Road 189 could be improved by running a boom mower to cut back the brush (as was done for FS Road 189A). Also, part of the gravel load for the culvert project could be used to fill any water-containing potholes. With a bumpy ride, this access route is viable for future trail maintenance trips.

Reporting: Dan Firth

Date: 3/6/2021

Purpose: Section Maintenance

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

People: Dan Firth, Michaela Hofbauer

Summary: We obliterated the fire pit built under the eve of the shelter such that no sign of it remains. We also cleaned out and rebuilt the fire ring at the shelter and cleaned the fire ring at the campsite north of the shelter. We cleaned water diversions, cut encroaching branches and briars, picked up trash, and finally cleared two blowdowns.

Reporting: Richard Ramsey

Date: 3/6/2021

Purpose: Assess trail condition

Location: Section 14a, Doll Flats to Hump Mountain

People: Richard and Cheryl Ramsey

Summary: We assessed the overall trail condition in preparation for increased use this spring. We only needed to cut out a few small blowdowns. Doll Flats had a good amount of trash that had to be carried out.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/8/2021

Purpose: Check trail for blowdowns

Location: Section 10, Dennis Cove to Laurel Falls

People: Bob Peoples

Summary: A hiker reported a number of blowdowns from Dennis Cove to the falls. Bob scouted but apparently some day hikers cleared the minor blowdowns that had been there.

Reporting: Richard Carter

Date: 3/8/2021

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

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

People: Richard Carter

Summary: I walked the section primarily to check for blowdowns after the recent wind and snow events. I did some minor clearing by picking up numerous fallen sticks and brush and cutting a few roots. I also cut two four-inch blowdowns. I checked the shelter and removed trash including two large tarps. The spring is running very well. On the way out, I had time to reposition the plastic webbing which was put up last year to discourage people from going off-trail on the south side of Jane Bald. It appeared to have been vandalized and usage of the off-trail paths was evident.

Reporting: Scotty Bowman

Date: 3/10/2021

Purpose: Repaint blazes

Location: Section 7, Vandeventer Shelter to Wilbur Dam Rd

People: Scotty Bowman

Summary: It was the perfect day to finish refreshing the blazes along the section, and now they are complete. At Vandeventer Shelter, I cleaned out the gutters, replaced the journal, and cleaned out the fire ring. There was a new fire ring and campsite that had popped up recently next to the trail; I dismantled the fire ring and brushed in the site. On the way out, I brushed in a shortcut located on the switchbacks that used to be a section of the old trail.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/10/2021

Purpose: Inspect for blowdowns

Location: Section 3b, US 421 to Emergency Shelter

People: Ed Speer

Summary: Ed hiked from US 421 to the Emergency Shelter north of McQueen's Knob. He recorded all blowdowns and leaners. He removed small branches. There were no major obstacles, but there are a few step-overs and leaners.

Reporting: Steve Wilson

Date: 3/10/2021

Purpose: Clean waterbars; cut blowdowns and briars

Location: Section 3a, McQueen's Gap to Spring 2.3 miles N of Low Gap

People: Carl Belcher, Ted Malone, Steve Wilson

Summary: It was a beautiful day for working on the trail, but it started with a bit of confusion. When we arrived at McQueen's Gap a Forest Service employee showed up and told us that they planned a "prescribed burn" for Section 2b where we had planned to work. Our vehicle would have been in the burn zone and we would potentially be breathing smoke all day. Based upon this information, we decided to working on Section 3a instead. Then a few minutes later the same FS employee came back in a hurry and said that they were changing their plans due to a wild fire, and he quickly drove northward down the mountain. We decide to stick to the new plan (Section 3a) to avoid any potential smoke.

We spent the day cutting small blowdowns with a handsaw, cleared water diversions, and lopped briars. We had to leave one step-over blowdown and two leaning trees that are easy to walk under due to their sizes. We plan to use a chainsaw to clear Sections 3a and 3b soon. This trail section is in good shape for hikers.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/11/2021

Purpose: Harvest locust logs for steps and side logs

Location: Cross Mountain

People: Richard Carter, Dan Firth, Carl Fritz, Van Hovey, Greg Kramer, Elzear Lemieux, Tony Messina, Joe Morris, Bill Murdoch, Kevin Sedgwick, Ed Speer

Summary: We harvested and debarked many more dead locust trees for steps, side logs and stakes. On this warm day, we all tired as it often took six people to carry the larger logs. Some were suggesting that they would be asleep by 8 PM. We filled four trucks plus a trailer. The harder part will come later as we transport these logs to work sites.

Reporting: Steve Perri

Date: 3/12 and 3/13/2021

Purpose: Virtual ATC Partnership Meeting and Southern Regional Partnership Meeting

Location: Kingsport, TN

People: Kayla Carter, Dan Firth, Carl Fritz, Vic Hasler, Steve Perri, Steve Wilson

Summary: The ATC Partnership Meeting, including representatives of ATC, Appalachian Trail Park Office, USFS, and NPS, took place virtually on March 12th. The state of affairs was reviewed by ATC, APPA, and USFS to convey how things are operating in the pandemic mode. ATC is developing a new strategic plan and will share details later in 2021. High visitor numbers were cited by the USFS: 81% of Americans participated in some form of outdoor recreation last year and it was the first time for 31% of those! The agency partner organizations are still operating remotely and will review protocols as things improve. Facilities remain closed for portions of the A.T. from VA northward. Clubs have identified gaps in maintenance and have a backlog of needs for training certifications. Many clubs had a reduction in volunteer hours of about 50% in 2020. Everyone is looking for improvements in the latter half of 2021.

Break-out sessions were held to discuss club submitted topics. These included: safety measures, visitor use management, unifying messages for trail users with signage and alternative hike locations to reduce the burden on heavily used areas, attitudes of long distance hikers towards ATC's stance on safety, coverage for liability insurance, club accounting methods, how clubs support JEDI initiatives, and how to support A.T. Communities during the pandemic.

Awards were presented to regional partners for 2020. Within the Southern Region the following people were recognized for their service:

- Club Volunteer of the Year: Dan Firth from TEHCC!
- Partner of the Year: Kayla Carter from NETRep!

- Agency Partner of the Year: Mike Good from Appalachian Ranger District
- 38 Yr SORO Director, to be Visitor Use Management Director: Morgan Sommerville from SORO ATC

The Southern Regional Partnership Committee was held virtually on March 13th. This meeting included representatives from ATC, USFS, NPS, TEHCC, CMC, NHC, SMHC, and GATC. We covered updates that were more specific to our region along the A.T. ATC announced plans to add regional managers to the field offices to allow better field coverage and to assist clubs. Stephen Erin will cover from Spivey Gap South to GA and a yet-to-be-named person will cover from Damascus to Spivey Gap. This will result in a person splitting their time between the Virginia and Southern Regional Partnership Committees. The change is also happening in other regions and is expected to improve communication and engagement with the volunteer clubs. Matt Drury is the interim Southern Regional Director while ATC does a search for a replacement. Matt may be among the candidates to be considered while Morgan Sommerville is transitioning to Visitor Use Management Director for the entire A.T. before retiring in 2 years. Clubs cited the desire to get sawyer certification resources from the agencies and to look more closely at structures and trees needing attention in 2021. Several break-out sessions were held to discuss clubs' engagement with under-represented groups and management of internal affairs including: finance, recruiting new members, succession planning, and liability insurance.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 3/13/2021

Purpose: 2nd Saturday, "Hiking with Tools!"

Location: Section 3b, From US 421 to the campsite before spring

People: Tim Stewart, Lori Mirrer

Summary: The day started off with a bladder problem ... water bladder, that is. Fortunately, it only resulted in a wet back and extra water was available.

The first "Hiking with Tools!" outing of the year met with success albeit with a very small group. Lori and I met at Low Gap (US 421) for some minor trail maintenance. The original idea was to hike to McQueen's Gap, but Lori noticed that from McQueen's Gap to the spring had been cleared a few days prior. The plan was therefore adjusted to go as far as the spring. We cleaned about 22 waterbars and removed a few minor blowdowns enroute. At the campsite before the spring we dismantled an extra fire ring and cleaned the larger ring of extra ash. At the campsite, we decided to turn around, so we did not make it as far as the spring. It was a good day!

Reporting: Kayla Carter

Date: 3/15/2021

Purpose: Sharing Stewardship

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

People: Kayla Carter, Samm Keys

Summary: When we arrived, there were signs of fire. We stopped to call the District Ranger to ask whether we should proceed. We were given the green light. We learned there was an alleged arson in this area on Thursday, March 11. Fire suppression efforts caused more trail work than anticipated. There were several trees that were down due to a dozer that came in to help keep the fire from spreading. The fire seemed contained between Campbell Hollow Road and the first small stream crossing. We cleared all the blowdowns on this side of Jones Falls, but did not have time for the other side of the section. On our way back, we found a wallet on the trail. We called this into the District Ranger as well and turned it in to the Carter County Sheriff's Office. I am planning another day in coming weeks to get out to the other end from Elk River Falls access. I have an extra patch to give Samm as this was her first outing to volunteer on the A.T. with TEHCC!

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/16/2021

Purpose: Work on Bear Branch Bridge and cut back rhododendron

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

People: Kevin Sedgwick

Summary: It turned out to be an ok day. The non-slip lath needed more staples from the bridge repair a few weeks ago. I finished that and started cutting back rhododendron up to Bishop Hollow. The dreaded multiflora rose is starting to bud out. There are some minor blowdowns. I had a nice talk with an early season thru-hiker. I also checked the water diversion we put in last time, which seems to be working.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/17/2021

Purpose: Inspect trail

Location: Section 2a, Backbone Rock Trail to Abingdon Gap Shelter

People: Ed Speers

Summary: Ed hiked this section and Backbone Rock Trail. There are 31 blowdowns, mostly step-overs and two leaners. Only one major obstruction was near Backbone Rock Trail. He was able to clear it with his handsaw and much of it was dead. He has sent a detailed report to Steve Wilson and Carl Fritz.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/17/2021

Purpose: Inspect trail

Location: Section 4b, TN 91, Osborne Farm

People: Ed Speers

Summary: Ed inspected the wood fences, retied small apple trees to their cages, and placed an A.T. sign at the northern stile where hikers were missing it.

Reporting: Kevin Sedgwick

Date: 3/22/2021

Purpose: Install locust post for blaze turn, cut back vegetation, and work on steps

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

People: Kevin Sedgwick, Gloria Sedgwick

Summary: It was a fantastic day to be out. We installed a new locust log with blazes for a sharp turn in the trail. The old one disappeared. With Gloria's help we found a better location. It should be better sight line when the grass is up. Gloria shuttled me and helped at the northern end. On walk-thru, I cut back vegetation. The nasty rose is starting to leaf out. I reset some wooden steps and added some rock steps to help. I also talked to a lot of hikers today and was surprised by the number.

Reporting: Steve Wilson

Date: 3/23/2021

Purpose: Cut blowdowns, clean waterbars, and cut briars

Location: Sections 2a and 2b, from McQueens Gap hiking northward for 3 miles

People: Carl Belcher, Ted Malone, Steve Wilson

Summary: We cut small blowdowns with handsaws, cleared water diversions, and lopped briars from McQueen's Gap while hiking northward for 3 miles. A gap three miles north of McQueen's Gap is proposed as a new dividing line between Maintenance Sections 2a and 2b. This section of trail from Abingdon Gap Shelter to the Backbone Rock Trail doesn't have any obvious landmarks (such as a spring or shelter), so a new section divider was picked out via topographic map information. The Guthook app shows this gap, which is the lowest elevation in the area (trail mile 462.7) on the elevation map screen. This proposed change would make our northern trail sections more manageable.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/23/2021

Purpose: Remove blowdown

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

People: Carl Fritz, Bill Murdoch

Summary: A hiker reported a major blowdown on the A.T. and another hiker reported possibly abandoned camping gear between Backbone Rock Trail and TN/VA line. Bill and I hiked up Backbone Rock then to the TN/VA line and beyond. Hikers could not remember any major blowdown south of Backbone Rock Trail. We removed some minor blowdowns mostly with handsaws. We found no abandoned camping gear. These sections of trail are in good shape. The A.T. could use some freshened blazes.

Reporting: Tony Messina

Date: 3/24/2021

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 13, First 1.5 miles South of US 19E

People: Tony & Renee Messina

Summary: Blowdowns were reported by Jim Foster via Carl. Renee and I removed five blowdowns in the first 1.5 miles south of 19E. It was a good workout for the 16-inch DeWalt as a couple of them were 18-20 inch diameter. None of them had completely blocked the trail, but a couple were very inconvenient climb-overs. We encountered about a dozen thru-hikers, most of whom seemed to be headed for hostels.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 3/25/2021

Purpose: Prepare wedges

Location: Kingsport

People: Dan Firth, Carl Fritz

Summary: Dan prepared many more wedges for handsaws. Carl painted some so they hopefully will not get lost readily.