



# The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

November 2024

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

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9/27/2024 Unicoi County Hospital (TN Emergency Mgmt)

## Hurricane Helene!

Near the end of September, Hurricane Helene stalled over eastern TN/western NC to cause massive damage by flooding and wind. As of publication of this newsletter, [the Appalachian Trail Conservancy cites](#) that the A.T. within Pisgah National Forest (NC) remains closed, while Cherokee National Forest has been able to reopen the trail except between US19E and US321 (Dennis Cove). USFS warns that “portions of the Appalachian Trail remain closed or inaccessible with hundreds of trees per mile blocking the route.”



Panoramic View at Temple Hill Gap



Chestoa Bridge Gone (WJHL)



Jumbled Mess (Tim Stewart)



Missing Footbridge just South of US19E

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External Use

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# Appalachian Trail Damage: Volunteers Needed!

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Submitted by [Tim Stewart](#)

The Helene damage to the Appalachian Trail is extensive and widespread, especially in Tennessee. It is going to take a long time to remove blowdowns and make repairs. TEHCC has tentatively come up with a work schedule to include Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month (all weather dependent). At this time, all work will be ONLY in Tennessee, as Pisgah National Forest has not yet reopened for volunteer efforts. Any and all Volunteers will be welcome to join.

Tasks during these outings will likely differ somewhat from our normal routine. Chainsaw sawyers will require Swampers to help with assessments, safety observance, and removal of cuts. The trail will need to be temporarily relocated around large entanglements with ribbon placement and perhaps blazing in some longer relocations. Of course, there is a lot of debris that requires removal with our standard loppers and handsaws. There is no shortage of things to do.

Standard safety equipment will be required. The blowdown entanglements are difficult to navigate, sometimes over and under and through. As a reminder, some items to bring in a day pack:

- work gloves, safety glasses, hearing protection, hard hat if you have one (otherwise provided)
- plenty of drinking water and lunch
- appropriate work clothes and boots/shoes
- appropriate cold weather/rain gear.

It may take literally years to get back to normal from this unprecedented event. The entire operation is likely to change and evolve, as required. Please contact [HeleneVolunteer@tehcc.org](mailto:HeleneVolunteer@tehcc.org) for additional information or to volunteer.

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## Event Schedule – Next Two Months

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

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

Date	Description	Contact	Telephone
November 9	Hiking with Tools! (Location to be determined)	<a href="#">Tim Stewart</a>	
November 21	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	<a href="#">Eric Dobbs</a>	303-915-9208
November 23	4 <sup>th</sup> Saturday Helene Cleanup (Location to be determined)	<a href="#">Tim Stewart</a>	
December 19	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	<a href="#">Eric Dobbs</a>	303-915-9208

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## Details of Upcoming Events

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### TEHCC Steering Committee Meeting, Third Thursday of Each Month in 2024, 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, Most Tuesdays, 7:35 – 8:45 pm\*

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

\* Note: This event is cancelled on December 3 and January 7 due to swim meets.

Otherwise, 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 confirmation or questions regarding the facility.

### Weekly A.T. Trail Maintenance, Most Tuesdays and 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. **Note that Tuesdays have been added to the schedule for Helene cleanup work.** On-the-job training, tools, and protective gear are provided to allow everyone to quickly engage with the trail. Carpooling is available.

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## Hiking with Tools! Second & Fourth Saturdays

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. **Note that Helene cleanup has now been scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays, weather dependent.** Typical tasks might include lopping rhododendrons, cleaning water diversions, clearing trail obstructions, painting blazes, etc. All tools will be furnished, and no prior experience is required! All are welcome; so, come on out, meet some new hikers and join the fun...and maybe get your hands a little dirty! Email Tim for details and to sign up.

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

Contact: [Tony 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.

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## Jeff Siirola: 50-Year A.T. Volunteer

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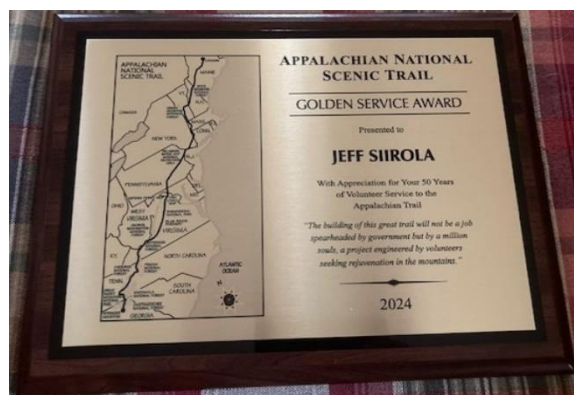
*Submitted by Vic Hasler*

At the club's 2024 Fall Dinner, the Golden Service Award plaque for 50+ years of service was awarded to Jeff Siirola, whose primary residence is now in Indiana. This summary, compiled from the club's newsletter archive and Jeff's input, confirms the depth of his involvement and service over the years.

His first hike on the A.T. was in 1972 from Cross Mountain to Watauga Dam Road with an overnight in a tent behind Vandeventer Shelter. A whippoorwill perched adjacent called out (loudly) all night.

Jeff says Ray Hunt got him involved with the Tennessee Eastman Recreation Club (TERC) in Spring 1973. When he started doing trail work, Collins Chew was responsible for Regular Maintenance and Ray Hunt coordinated Special Projects. For 1977, Jeff was listed as being on Dick Ardell's crew, maintaining 9.6 miles from Watauga Dam Road to Turkey Pen Gap. At that time, club dues were just \$1. In 1978, the A.T. maintenance sections were rotated to allow volunteers to experience more of the trail; so, Dick's crew shifted to the 10.2 miles from Abingdon Gap to Damascus. In 1987, Jeff replaced Ray coordinating Special Projects. Later, when Ted Malone replaced Collins, the club shifted to allowing volunteers to adopt specific trail sections. In 1993, Jeff and Ted Malone worked on the 2.4 miles between Temple Hill Gap to No Business Knob Shelter.

Jeff led a group of five on a 7-day 70-mile hiking trek among the ridges, basins, and glacial moraines of the Uinta Mountains in Utah in August 1981. In 1982, Jeff was recognized as our Hiker of the Year for being prolific in leading and participating in club hikes. Also, during 1982, he worked on the Doll Flats Relocation led by Frank Williams.



In the 1980s, Jeff served as the chairman of the Maintenance and Special Project Committee, and in 1991 he was the first recipient of the club's Stan Murray Award. According to the newsletter, the award was for "service above and beyond the call of duty" for his work the past nine years handling his many responsibilities.

Jeff started keeping the regular and special project records in 1987 and has continued ever since. In 1992, he started a double-entry index card system (one card per event; one card per maintainer per year). That system was replaced by the current Access database on January 1, 2000, with each maintainer's total hours since 1992 added in. The system reached 200,000 total hours in 2016; 220,000 in 2018; and 250,000 in 2022. Recently, Jeff shared that he had made the 8000<sup>th</sup> entry for 271,364 total hours by 6,475 different maintainers. Jeff has continued to maintain the record system even after retiring from Eastman in 2011. He retired as a Technology Fellow with 39 years of experience, and then moved on to become a Professor of Engineering Practice at Purdue University. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Carnegie Mellon and still teaches part of their Senior Design course remotely during Fall semesters. His summers are for grandkids, with two of them in California.

The club expresses great gratitude for the long-term involvement of Jeff in the club and maintenance of the Appalachian Trail.

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## Jim Foster: Presidential Award for 4000+ Hours

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*Submitted by Vic Hasler*



Starting in 2004, Jim has been a regular maintainer of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, particularly on his adopted section of 5.6 miles between Hughes Gap and Greasy Creek Gap. He has also joined larger trail maintenance projects when the Konnarock Crew is in the area. He finished hiking the entire A.T. in 2006, and then completed the South Beyond 6000 peak challenge in 2012. His hiking experience familiarized him with the desirable features of trails, especially in rugged terrain.

Jim is also a member of the Johnson City Hiking Club which maintains the A.T. section south of Iron Mtn Gap, and he sometimes does impromptu trail maintenance during their scheduled hikes.

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## For the Record

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### Global Innovation Summit: Bays Mountain Park, Sunday, October 27, 2024

*Eric Dobbs reporting*



*Fall Color (Manjari Jayendran)*

Recently, Eric Dobbs and Vic Hasler were given the opportunity to lead a hike for the 2024 Eastman Global Innovation Summit (GIS). The GIS had planned a variety of fun weekend social activities leading up to the week of the summit, and this hike was just one of many.

The hike was a simple 4-mile hike up Bays Mountain, consisting of the Lakeside Trail Loop and Fire Tower Trail. The event gathered around 26 participants, with folks coming from as far as China, India, Great Britain, and Belgium! The weather ended up being perfect for the hike; cool temperatures, starting with mostly cloudy skies, but quickly changing to only partly cloudy. The colors of the leaves were nearing their peak, providing a dazzling display of color for all to enjoy. Folks were able to marvel at the beauty of the autumn forest and admire the northeast Tennessee landscape from the top of the old CCC tower.

Eric and Vic split the visitors into two groups to abide by Leave-No-Trace principles and better space out the participants. Vic's group was the first to head out and were regaled by interesting tales about the history of Bays Mountain. Eric's group was last and went at a more leisurely pace, while he explained some of the interesting natural features around them (like beaver

chews and counting tree rings). Both groups went across the dam along the SW side of the Lakeside Loop. Once we all made it to the summit, many of us climbed to the top of the tower. Some chose not to venture to the top, but were still impressed by the views and amazing colors of the trees.



*View from the Fire Tower (Eric Dobbs)*



*Vic's Group (Flavio Longo)*



*Eric's Group (Ali Perry)*

After everyone had a turn up the tower, it was time to hoof-it back to the visitor's center. Eric's group had waited behind at the beginning to catch any stragglers, so they were a bit behind schedule and had to descend quickly. Fortunately, everyone was in good spirits and made wonderful time back to the visitor's center. Despite the quick pace, the groups still made time to stop for photos and admiring the forest.

Overall, it was a wonderful trip. Many folks were thrilled at what they experienced and expressed their joy about the hike. It was quickly apparent that it was a huge success for both the GIS and TEHCC; so, a hike for the next GIS will almost certainly be happening. TEHCC will be looking forward to leading another amazing hike!

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# TEHCC Welcomes New Member

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Marcus McDavid



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## A.T. Maintenance Reports

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### TEHCC AT Maintenance Factoid provided by Jeff Sirola

The 8000th record has been entered into the A.T. Maintenance Database since 1 January 2000 (24.75 years).

Total of volunteer hours: 271,364

Number of People-Events: 35,015

Number of unique Individuals: 6,475 (all of us - right?)

Annual reports were recently sent to ATC and USFS.

### Hurricane Helene Recovery

Bays Mountain Park is now officially up and running at full capacity thanks to the Bays Mtn Park Trail Gorillas (including many TEHCC maintenance volunteers). The Gorillas invested 515.5 hours to cut an estimated 265 trees on the trails and habitats over roughly two weeks. Without this contribution, the park would likely still be closed for the clean-up.

### TEHCC.org Maintenance Reporting Form

On October 25, Tim Schaefer fixed the computer bug impacting the Reporting Form on the club's website. The issue was unsupported plugin software used to display the last six weeks of submissions on a webpage, and which also allows Terry Oldfield (newsletter editor) to create the summaries in the newsletter. Our fingers are crossed that it does not break again.

**Reporting:** Tom Sahlin

**Date:** 9/22/2024

**Purpose:** Remove encroaching vegetation, check for blowdowns, check waterbar conditions

**Location:** Section 16b, From Greasy Creek Gap to 1/4th mile past first tall knob

**People:** Tom Sahlin

**Summary:** From Greasy Creek Gap to one fourth mile past first tall knob, I check waterbars and kicked out the worst ones. From Greasy Creek Gap, I removed weeds focusing on stinging nettles and white snake root on the trail, as well as those close enough to lean into the trail. White snake root is toxic, so I remove it, because hikers will break stems as well as strip leaves off as they go by. If they touch their eyes or mouth, I read they will contact the poison which causes burning and stinging. White snake root, also known as milk poison, has killed a lot of children and adults from the milk and from the meat of poisoned cattle. I saw no hikers, nor animals, and only heard a few birds.

**Reporting:** Vic Hasler

**Date:** 9/23/2024

**Purpose:** TEHCC A.T. Committee

**People:** Bob Peoples, Carl Fritz, Dan Firth, Steve Falling, Greg Kramer, Joe Morris, Steve Perri, Tim Schaefer, Steve Wilson, Vic Hasler, and Andy Steffan. Also, Brandon Church (USFS)

**Summary:** The A.T. Committee covered a long agenda which spanned work projects, committee management, and upcoming events. See October 2024 club newsletter for update regarding Laurel Fork Shelter. Repairs at Roan High Knob Shelter will likely not begin until June. Resolution of 2024 TN A.T. tag grants was reviewed, then ideas for 2025 identified. Partnership with Wright State University recreation is no longer active. A suggestion was discussed about splitting some maintenance sections into shorter (2-3 mile) segments; thus ideas were welcomed for where to begin after obtaining committee agreement. During review of the A.T. Club Vitality Checklist, several new A.T. Committee members were suggested. A.T. Responsibility Matrix for the club was reviewed. February 21 was agreed for the A.T. Maintenance Kickoff at the Eastman Lodge banquet room with approval of the A.T. Committee funding the meal. Monday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, was selected for the next committee meeting.

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**Reporting:** Joel Zabel

**Date:** 9/28/2024

**Purpose:** Survey Helene damage, clear trail

**Location:** Section 17, From Iron Mtn Gap south about 1/2 mile

**People:** Jim Foster, Yong Li, Stacy Fowler, Scott Thomsen, Amy Markwalter, Ed Brading, Joy Zabel

**Summary:** The Johnson City Hiking Club went to the Iron Mtn Gap end of our section to check damage from hurricane Helene. Utter devastation! It was difficult to identify where the trail went for most of the first 1/2 mile. There are dozens of large blowdowns and several large root balls taking out the trail. Yong Li had brought a small electric chainsaw; we had a Katanaboy and other handsaws. We worked hard for 2 hours to clear the small stuff, but we were completely overmatched by Mother Nature. If the rest of our section is similar to what we saw today, it will take hundreds of volunteer hours with a larger chainsaw to clear our section. We plan on going back with Yong as our sawyer and multiple swampers to work on it again soon.

**Reporting:** Dan Firth

**Date:** 9/28/2024

**Purpose:** Survey after Helene

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

**People:** Dan Firth

**Summary:** First the good news--Double Springs Shelter is intact. Now the bad news--the section between Low Gap and Double Springs Shelter is impassible due to multiple complex multi-tree blowdowns. Additionally, there are many simpler blowdowns and root ball damage to the treadway. I cleared many small blowdowns, tree tops, and branches. Much more work remains.

**Reporting:** Dean Baird

**Date:** 9/29/2024

**Purpose:** Inspect trail

**Location:** Section 9b, Hampton Blue-Blaze Trail

**People:** Dean Baird, Jennifer Baird

**Summary:** En route to checking one of our sections (10: Hampton Trailhead to Dennis Cove Rd) for post-Helene damage, we did the same for the Hampton Blue-Blaze Trail. There are several blowdowns:

-3 stepover logs on the ground that are ~ 12-14 inches (one is before entering Pond Mtn Wilderness and the other 2 are on the straight section before the trail gets extremely close to the creek)

-2 small complex blowdowns

-1 really large complex blowdown where a large oak (at least 18") has crashed across Laurel Fork from the other side

-Washout of the center of the trail in places near the parking lot where water from the Laurel Fork overflow channel entered the trail. There is an extensive amount of sand on the trail in multiple areas where Laurel Fork has overflowed into the trail in its typical fashion, but it is much more extensive than usual.

**Reporting:** Dean Baird

**Date:** 9/29/2024

**Purpose:** Inspect trail

**Location:** Section 10, Appalachian Trail from junction with Hampton Blue-Blaze to Laurel Fork Falls

**People:** Dean Baird, Jennifer Baird

**Summary:** We inspected the trail for damage post-Helene. Findings:

-Mile 422.0: 16" blowdown that can be stepped over with effort

-Mile 422.5: Washout of trail from water that washed in from perpendicular to trail

-Mile 422.7: At least 16" white oak blowdown that is a walk around

-Trail south end and north end of the more southern bridge had blowdowns and trail washout from the Laurel Fork out of its banks.

-Both bridges looked good to our non-engineer eyes, other than the washouts.

We were soaked by the time we finished the inspection (yes, more rain).



**The following seven reports are incomplete due to the glitch in the reporting system. Tim Schaefer has requested the omitted information.**

**Reporting:** Scotty Bowman

**Date:** 10/8/2024

**Purpose:** Trail Assessment

**Reporting:** Scotty Bowman

**Date:** 10/12/2024

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**Purpose:** Trail Assessment

**Reporting:** Dave Allen

**Date:** 10/20/2024

**Purpose:** Trail Damage Assessment

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 10/21/2024

**Purpose:** Bridge rehabilitation

**Reporting:** Jim Foster

**Date:** 10/23/2024

**Purpose:** Survey for storm damage

**Reporting:** Jim Foster

**Date:** 10/23/2024

**Purpose:** Survey trail for storm damage

**Reporting:** Rick Lott

**Date:** 10/23/2024

**Purpose:** Assess Trail Condition after Hurricane Helene

**Reporting:** Greg Kramer

**Date:** 10/24/2024

**Purpose:** Roan High Knob Shelter Stabilization

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 10/24/2024

**Purpose:** Mitigate root ball damage

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

**People:** Joe Morris, Tim Stewart, Olga Hunter, Michael Sink, Bill Murdoch, Dean Baird, Van Hovey, Yong Li, Sherri Millard

**Summary:** Four significant root balls were created during Helene storm damage near USA raft in a 200-ft section. This area was rehabbed and is easily walkable. Additional work is needed in the area.

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 10/25/2024

**Purpose:** Remove blowdowns

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

**People:** Van Hovey, Joe Morris, John Beaudet

**Summary:** We removed 34 blowdowns to within one mile south of Curley Maple Shelter.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 10/25/2024

**Purpose:** Remove blowdowns after Hurricane Helene

**Location:** Section 2b, McQueens Gap to 3/4 mile north

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

**Summary:** We removed blowdowns and broken limbs on the trail section starting at McQueens Gap and hiking trail north toward Abingdon Gap shelter. As expected, we found several blowdowns. We focused on cutting the blowdowns that were less than 12 inches in diameter and left the big blowdowns that were “step-overs” or ducked under due to limited fuel and time. Our goal was to cut a path to Abingdon Gap Shelter to check its status; but we were only able to make it three quarters of a mile in—without bushwhacking. We stopped at the end of the side hill section just before the rocky ridge section due to running out of fuel. We found 19 blowdowns in the 3/4 mile stretch with 8 blowdowns greater than 12 inches in diameter. The blowdowns were often tree tops with several leafy branches and required cutting with loppers to reach the main limbs before one could start cutting with a chainsaw. Although we saw several fallen trees with root balls, we didn’t find any significant tread way damage...so far. We estimate that it will take two more chainsaw-crew days just to clear this 1.1 mile of trail to the shelter of all blowdowns; then we’ll continue cutting north.

**Reporting:** Michael Sink

**Date:** 10/27/2024

**Purpose:** Assess trail damage

**Location:** Section 9a and 9b, Shook Branch to Hampton trailhead

**People:** Michael Sink

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**Summary:** I removed several blowdowns that were forearm size or smaller. I also documented 36 blowdowns of various sizes that still need to be removed. The top of Pond Mountain from mile 425.5 to 425.7 is impassible and requires bushwacking to get around it.

**Reporting:** Steve Wilson

**Date:** 10/28/2024

**Purpose:** Remove blowdowns and check Abingdon Gap Shelter after Hurricane Helene

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

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

**Summary:** We continued to remove blowdowns on Section 2b starting at McQueens Gap hiking north. We had two sawyers, three swampers, and plenty of gas and oil this time. Having two chainsaws was important due to the chance of twisting and binding with the large logs. By the end of the day, we had cleared all blowdowns from the gap to the shelter. We were relieved to find the shelter was unharmed and the tent camping areas were clear. A large 30-inch oak tree fell 150 feet below the shelter down the blue-blaze trail and was removed; but there are additional large blowdowns down the hill before the water source. Several root balls were created by blowdowns, but there was no damage to the foot path.

**Reporting:** Jon Heidrick

**Date:** 10/28/2024

**Purpose:** Assess storm damage and clear a path

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

**People:** Jon Heidrick, Rick Lott, Jim McGuire, Michael Watts

**Summary:** There are many uprooted trees, root balls, and holes in the trail. We cut and cleared some overhanging branches. We have pictures and locations to send in a separate email.

**Reporting:** Joe Morris

**Date:** 10/29/2024

**Purpose:** Rehab section

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

**People:** Joe Morris, Tim Stewart, Steve Domagala, Randy Allen, Van Hovey, Jon Heidrick, Olga Hunter, Jim McGuire, Sherri Millard, Michael Sink, Tony Messina, Carl Fritz, Gerald Scott

**Summary:** The Thursday crew gathered for planning purposes and clearing the trail of many challenging blowdowns.