



The Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Paddling News

March 2026

Co-Editors – Terry Oldfield and Katelynn Thorne

TEHCC.org

In This Issue

[TEHCC Spring Dinner, Friday, April 24, 2026](#)

[Event Schedule – Next Two Months](#)

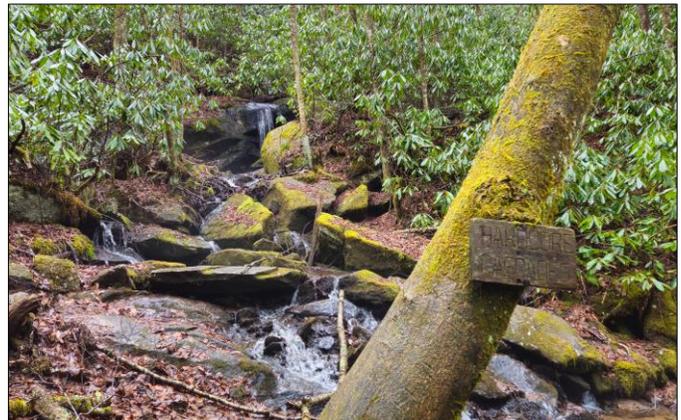
[Details of Upcoming Events](#)

[Bear Canisters in TEHCC Rental Fleet](#)

[Erwin Outdoor Supply Club Discount](#)

[TEHCC Welcomes New Members](#)

[A.T. Maintenance Reports](#)



Hardcore Cascades on the Appalachian Trail

Photo by Tim Stewart on 2/19/2026

TEHCC Spring Dinner Meeting, Friday, April 24, 2026

In early 2025, Allen Buckles retired from Eastman as an electrical technologist supporting Technology. He took a non-standard flip-flop hike 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 northbound from Springer Mountain, GA to Harpers Ferry, WV, then flipped to Mount Katahdin, ME returning southbound to Harpers Ferry by late September. Come hear about their adventure!

Dinner is **\$15/person**, which includes the meal, beverages, and dessert. Attending only the program is free. We need a paid headcount to properly size the food order. Please let Steering Committee Treasurer [Joseph Sengeh](#) know by **Tuesday, April 21st**, if you plan to attend. Make checks payable to Joseph and mail to:

Eastman Chemical Company
 200 South Wilcox Dr.
 Building 162, Rm. 132, Attn. Joseph Sengeh
 Kingsport, TN 37660

Event	Time	Details
Spring Dinner Meeting April 24, 2026	5:30 pm	Location: Eastman Lodge, Main Banquet Hall 404 Bays Mountain Road, Kingsport, TN
Happy “Trails” Hour	5:30 pm – 6:30 pm	Donations accepted for beer and wine, or BYOB

[Back to Top](#)

<i>Dinner – Fajita bar with chips & queso, plus tea, lemonade, or water, coffee, and dessert</i>	<i>6:30 pm – 7:15 pm</i>	<i>Barberitos Beverages and dessert by the Steering Committee (\$15 per person)</i>
<i>Club Business</i>	<i>7:15 pm – 7:30 pm</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Update of club activities</i> <i>USFS Volunteer Recognitions</i>
<i>Program: Allen Buckles</i>	<i>7:30 pm – 9:00 pm</i>	<i>“2025 Flip-Flop A.T. Journey”</i>

Event Schedule – Next Two Months

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

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

Date	Description	Contact	Telephone
March 8	Laurel Run Park Hike, 2 pm – 4 pm	Vic Hasler	423-416-3166
March 11	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	Riley Kapanjie	
March 14	Hiking with Tools! Shook Branch, 9:30 am – 2 pm	Tracy Harris	
March 21	Steele Creek Park Hike, 10 am - Noon	Alex Mason	
March 21	Bays Mountain Park Trail Maintenance, 9 am – 2 pm	Tony Messina	423-677-6650
April 8	Steering Committee Meeting, Noon – 1 pm	Riley Kapanjie	
April 18	Bays Mountain Park Trail Maintenance, 9 am – 2 pm	Tony Messina	423-677-6650
April 20	Annual Garlic Mustard Pull, 9 am – 3 pm	Greg Kramer	423-429-3443
April 24	TEHCC Spring Dinner Meeting, 5:50 pm	Joseph Sengeh	

Details of Upcoming Events

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

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

Hiking with Tools! Usually, the Second Saturday of the Month, through November

Contact: [Tracy Harris](#)

Hiking with Tools! is an opportunity to enjoy a day hike on our beautiful section of the A.T. while helping out with some routine maintenance. Typical tasks 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 Tracy for details and to sign up.

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

Contact: [Tony Messina](#), 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.

[Back to Top](#)

Scheduled Events

Laurel Run Park Hike, Sunday, March 8, 2026, 2-4pm

Leader: [Vic Hasler](#), 423-416-3166

Rating: Roughly 2-3 mile in/out trip with 600' elevation change

A bridge has been installed! The upper stream crossing is no longer a challenging rock hop (or wading without shoes), so let's go see it. Our gathering point is at the park (364 Laurel Run Park Rd, Church Hill, TN 37642), back near the shelters at the trailhead at 2 PM. This hike will go up the hollow, first crossing a footbridge over Laurel Run built as an Eagle Scout project in 2020 and continuing to the second/new bridge plus the waterfall. Group choice on whether to continue uphill to a few abandoned homesteads. Bring a hiking stick, drinking water, and snacks.



Hiking With Tools! Shook Branch, Saturday, March 14, 2026, 9:30 am – 2 pm

Leader: [Tracy Harris](#)

We will be lopping rhododendrons and other encroaching vegetation. Lunch and turnaround point will be the old Watauga Lake shelter site. All are welcome, tools and protective gear will be provided. For more information contact Tracy Harris.

Steele Creek Park Hike, Saturday, March 21, 2026, 10 am – Noon or so

Leader: [Alex Mason](#)

This scenic route in Bristol climbs to the top of a wooded ridge before looping around the lake, offering a peaceful mix of elevation and water views. Multiple trails intersect throughout the park, providing opportunities to customize the route. Blaze markings have been added throughout the area to aid in identification. We will meet at the trailhead at 10:00. The hike will be around 2 hours at a normal pace, possibly up to 3 hours depending on the pace of the whole group. The route is 4.6 miles, and the address for the trailhead is 1278 Vance Dr, Bristol, TN 37620.

Annual Garlic Mustard Pull, Monday, April 20, 2026, 9 am – 3 pm

Leader: [Greg Kramer](#), 423-429-3443

Location: Devils Creek Gap, Off US-19W, Ramseytown, NC 28714

TEHCC has done a great job in suppressing Garlic Mustard at Devils Creek Gap. Besides removing Garlic Mustard, there is a large variety of native wildflowers blooming. We will meet at the Dollar General Store parking lot off Rock Springs Road near I-26 exit. at 9:00. We will get to Devils Creek Gap at 10AM if you want to meet there. Bring gloves, there are lots of thorny plants near where we are pulling. Bring Lunch and rain gear. Contact Greg Kramer 423-429-3443 for further information and to sign up.

Bear Canisters in TEHCC Rental Fleet

The official recommendation by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and US National Forests is to use a bear-resistant food storage container for all backpacking trips in the region. To enable this policy, the club has two BearVault Solo canisters, each suitable for three to four days and now a Backpackers' Cache, good for six days. The current purchase price runs between \$80 to \$90, but TEHCC rents them at \$4 for a weekend and \$6 for a week to enable members to use this insurance against losing your food and smellables. Rental equipment is available for check out from the Eastman Recreation Center, B310.



HA-5/6 BearVault 450
8.7" dia. X 8.3" high
2.1 lb



HA-11 Backpackers' Cache 812
8.8" dia. X 12" long
2.7 lb

[Back to Top](#)



Erwin Outdoor Supply Club Discount

Submitted by: Andy Steffan

TEHCC have recently partnered with Erwin Outdoor Supply at 151 River Rd, Erwin, TN 37650! In case you weren't aware, they recently moved from their downtown Erwin location and joined forces with Uncle Johnny's Nolichucky Hostel Cabins and Camping. They are offering a 10% discount during checkout for TEHCC club members if you show your valid membership card and mention Uncle Jackie. Please help support local businesses as they continue to recover from Helene and shop local!

TEHCC Welcomes New Members

Aaron Qualls

Garrett Bailey

Stephen Cobaugh

Adam Bean

Veronica Mendez Gonzalez



A.T. Maintenance Reports

Reporting: Michael Sink for SAWS (Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards)

Date: 1/12/2026

Purpose: Remove blowdown

Location: Section 9a, US321 to Pond Flats, Pond Mountain North

People: SAWS staff

Summary: We removed a 12" blowdown across the trail with a crosscut saw.



Reporting: Michael Sink for SAWS

Date: 1/13/2026

Purpose: Remove trash

Location: Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US321, Shook Branch

People: SAWS staff

Summary: We picked up trash around the A.T. recreation sites near Shook Branch.

Reporting: Vic Hasler

Date: 1/26/2026

Purpose: TEHCC A.T. Committee Meeting

Location: Eastman Recreation Center

People: Carl Fritz, Renee Messina, Tony Messina, Steve Perri, Steve Wilson, Greg Kramer, Tim Stewart, Rebecka Powell, Tracy Harris, Vic Hasler



[Back to Top](#)

Summary: The TEHCC A.T. Committee gathered primarily to discuss 2026 work plans for Helene recovery effort, cutting weeds, and overnight site repairs/improvements. We also discussed the transition for Hiking with Tools! and the Maintainers Kick-Off meeting. The next A.T. Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 22nd.



Reporting: Michael Sink for SAWS

Date: 1/29/2026

Purpose: Remove blowdown and conduct SAWS crosscut certification class

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

People: SAWS staff

Summary: The SAWS staff cut a large blowdown to make the trail passable. We will go back with rigging to secure the rootball and cut another tree at a later date. We also used the blue-blaze high- water route as a crosscut field examination site for new SAWS staff.

Reporting: Randy Allen

Date: 1/30/2026

Purpose: General Maintenance

Location: Section 15c, Ash Gap to Hughes Gap

People: Randy Allen

Summary: This was a general walk-through. I removed a lot of smaller limbs and fresh items on trail. There are 3 or 4 fresh larger blowdowns, but luckily, they all missed the trail. There is one hanging over the trail 100 yards before the first spring. Hopefully mother nature will help bring it down. Both springs are still flowing.

Reporting: Dennis Whittington

Date: 2/9/2026

Purpose: Routine Maintenance

Location: Section 8, Wilbur Dam Road to US321, MM 428.9 to MM 433.3

People: Dennis Whittington

Summary: This trip was for routine trail maintenance after recent heavy snow and ice storms. I remove miscellaneous branches, picked up trash, and checked water sources that have recently been dry. (Note: I ran into the Old Timers Hiking Club on a routine Monday hike.)

Reporting: Tom Sahlin

Date: 2/09/2026

Purpose: Inspect trail, remove blowdowns, check signage, and check spring.

Location: Section 16b, From Iron Mtn Gap to Weedy Gap

People: Tom Sahlin

Summary: At the trailhead, there were two new sets of footprints in the snow and two old sets of hiker footprints and dog prints. One new tree is down just past the forest service gate, but it's easy to walk under by bending over. Limbs from trees coming down slowly were trimmed back, and some fallen limbs removed. My mission was also to inspect reroute signs for damage, but both the forest service sign and a sign I made had been removed, and the reroute trail had been brushed in to stop hikers from taking it. Since I did not know who did it, I did not remove the brush. No footprints were on the reroute. The spring in the orchard was flowing, but slowly at about a gallon in 2 minutes. The orchard had been used, but only for a stopover, since no tent impressions were found. Footprints were southbound coming from Weedy Gap. I inspected almost to Weedy Gap, but wind and 26-degree temperature turned me around for the day. I saw no hikers.

Reporting: Jim Foster

Date: 2/10/2026

Purpose: Cut blowdowns and check trail

Location: Section 16a, Hughes Gap to Little Rock Knob

People: Yong Li, Jim Foster

Summary: Yong removed two blowdowns with his chainsaw, and quite a bit of other stuff that was impeding the trail with his handsaw. The trail was snow covered and slick, but the air was warm and we had a great day.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 2/12/2026

Purpose: Rehabilitate trail

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

People: Joe Morris, Ed Speer, Van Hovey, Dan Firth, Carl Fritz, Todd Gray, Jim McGuire, Michel Denizot, Tim Stewart, Tony Messina

Summary: The Thursday crew rehabbed 115 feet of trail. A locust staircase was rehabbed, and three other stone step areas were rehabilitated. This section is in pretty decent shape for the season.

Reporting: David Cook

Date: 2/14/2026

Purpose: Cut vegetation and remove trash

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

People: David Cook

Summary: I continued cutting back vegetation and used a scythe to mow green briar. During my last maintenance trip, I found a discarded car tire approximately one mile in from Indian Grave Gap. I cut the tire into pieces and packed it out. I also noticed significant trash around the Indian Grave Gap parking area and ended up collecting and bagging three bags of refuse, as well as discarded construction supplies.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: 2/17/2026

Purpose: Inspect trail for rootball holes

Location: Section 16b, From Greasy Creek Gap, south 1.3 miles

People: Yong Li, Carl Fritz

Summary: We checked south of Greasy Creek Gap for potential trail rehab for Konnarock Crews. There was minor rehab within 0.1 miles, but most started a half-mile out and continued to 1.3 miles out. There were about 17 rootball holes that need repair. About 14 will take time-consuming work. See picture at 0.6 mile south of Greasy Creek Gap. Much of the trail corridor needs to be cleared, so we can cut briars. We marked some locusts with orange flagging. With handsaws, we (mostly Yong) cut out some minor branches and logs impinging on the trail, a 12-inch poplar at waist high and a hazard tree at the tenting site. The water source at Greasy Creek Gap was running well.



Reporting: Steve Domagala

Date: 2/18/2026

Purpose: Remove blowdowns

Location: Section 18, FS230 switchback to Indian Grave Gap, 0.7 mile trail south of Beauty Spot

People: Steve Domagala, Brandon Church - USFS

Summary: During my road walk yesterday to Beauty Spot, I was alerted to a blowdown at MM 354.5 by a hiker. On my way back down on the trail, I came across it myself. As I was already scheduled to work with Brandon that morning on a non-A.T. project, he said he would assist me afterwards to clear this blowdown, as well as one that was on Beauty Spot Road.

Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 2/19/2026

Purpose: Rehab trail

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

People: Joe Morris, Greg Morie, Heidi Wolgamuth, Jim McGuire, Todd Gray, Carl Fritz, Tony Messina, Dan Firth, Michel Denizot, Sam Ensor, Van Hovey

Summary: Thursday crew rehabilitated two staircases, removed blowdowns (including campsite hazard trees), and rehabbed treadway between Moreland Gap Shelter, MM 414.0 and 413.2. An additional outing is required in the area to finish all the rehab tasks.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 2/19/2026

Purpose: Thursday maintenance

Location: Section 11b, Canute Place to Bitter End, Hard Core Cascades

People: Tim Stewart

Summary: I had an early dentist appointment, so I was not able to meet the Thursday crew at the community park. I went in from Bitter End and hiked North. I thought I might meet the others at some point, but by 1:30 I knew that was not likely. I turned around after about 3 miles and headed back to the trailhead. Before turning around, I filled in some small rootball holes and did some other maintenance. After returning to Bitter End, I drove to the Park and waited for everyone else to return.

Reporting: Ted Allen

Date: 2/21/2026

Purpose: General. Maintenance

Location: Section 15c, Ash Gap to Hughes Gap

People: Randy Allen

Summary: This was a general walk through. I checked the trailhead, both springs, and campsites for hazard trees. None were found. There is one above the trail. We will see if snow and wind will bring it down. There is no immediate danger. I also dismantled a fire ring at the first campsite due to a large amount of downed trees nearby. I got a jump on the saw briars; about 3 areas where they are really growing fast due to canopy loss. It will not be long before the start of weed whacking.

Reporting: Tim Stewart

Date: 2/21/2026

Purpose: Recon dayhike

Location: Section: 19a, Indian Grave Gap to Curley Maple Gap Shelter, Martin Creek

People: Tim Stewart

Summary: Out for a dayhike, south of Indian Grave Gap, I noticed numerous opportunities for Thursday maintenance. Starting furthest from the gap: MM 349.7 sloughing trail - perhaps a rock ramp; MM 349.8 two areas with sloughing trail and Martin Creek Rock Ramp that we built several years ago; MM 349.9 Martin Creek - improve stepping stones; MM 350.1 unnamed creek - improve stepping stones and fallen sidelog; MM 350.4 sloughing trail; MM 350.7 overhead 8" blowdown; MM 350.9 possible viewpoint - remove dead trees (see pic); MM 351.3 unauthorized? sidetrail - noticed some ribbons heading downhill; MM 351.4 campsite access - shortcut from 395; MM 351.8 overhead 15" hazard tree; MM 351.9 rootball hole with minor damage to edge of trail, Ephriam Place Rd bridge and trench, and leaning tree with rootball right on trail; MM 352.0 rootball hole with minor damage to edge of trail, 10-ft sidelog; and MM 352.9 Indian Grave Gap. Additionally, close to the trailhead is a dilapidated registration kiosk (see pic). I suggest we seek approval to dismantle and discard debris. (Perhaps a brief topic in Partner meeting.)



Reporting: Craig Haire

Date: 2/21/2026

Purpose: Block shortcuts

Location: Section 20a, Nolichucky River to Temple Hill Gap, North end of section

People: Craig Haire

Summary: Two switchbacks at the north end, with perfectly good steps available, have been scarred by thoughtless hikers sliding down a steep bank to save a few seconds. By driving stakes into the banks and arranging dead limbs on the stakes, I have tried to make this behavior less appealing. Toward the end of my efforts, three pleasant ladies came by on their way to the Nolichucky River from Spivey Gap. They thanked me for my work. See before and after photos below.



Reporting: Joe Morris

Date: 2/25/2026

Purpose: USFS - ATC - TEHCC Field Visit

Location: Section 17, Iron Mountain Gap

People: Joe Morris, Van Hovey

Summary: USFS personnel and ATC visited the areas around Iron Mountain Gap, in order to evaluate the need for fire mitigation. Discussion also focused on the upcoming removal of debris and slash primarily near Spivey Gap, Unaka Mountain (including Upper Poplar Creek and Loggy Knob in North Carolina), and IMG North and South. There is "hope" that TEHCC rehabilitation efforts can commence on the north side of IMG sometime during the 4th quarter of 2026.