

# Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

## Smoky Mountains Hiking Club



June 2017

### NATIONAL TRAILS DAY June 3 – Saturday

Join us to celebrate this 24th Annual National Trails Day. It will be SMHC's 21st annual NTD event! We will meet early at Sugarlands Visitor Center and carpool to the Smokies crest for trail work. The day will be capped by a picnic where we can brag about our day's work. Please bring work gloves in addition to normal hiking gear; no open-toed shoes please. Please see [www.smhclub.org](http://www.smhclub.org) for more information, and to download and submit the registration form [\(NTD2017 Registration Form\)](#) as soon as possible. **Pre-registration is required in order to plan work teams. Meet at Sugarlands Visitor Center (bus parking lot) at 7:30 AM** (unless your team is instructed otherwise). [ntd2017@aol.com](mailto:ntd2017@aol.com), 865-705-2154.

### GROUP WORK TRIP May 27 – Saturday

The Chicago Hikers Meetup group is returning to the GSMNP over the Memorial Day weekend. This group came last fall and plan to make this a regular event for them. The group will be camping at Cosby campground Fri, Sat, and Sun nights. We will hike up Low Gap trail and do trail rehab between Low Gap and Sunup Knob. The crew will also take a side trip over to Mt Cammerer Fire Tower. Meet at Cosby Campground parking lot at 9am to begin the hike to the worksite. Contact Franklin LaFond 678-464-3380 [ox97game@aol.com](mailto:ox97game@aol.com) for more details.

#### Maintainers Retire

Steve and Donna Higdon and Pete James, three long-time AT maintainers have retired. Steve claims to be too old and Pete needs to care for a bad back. Steve and Donna maintained the section from Newfound Gap to Indian Gap for 29 years and have been members of SMHC for 39 years, including two with Steve as Club President. Pete also has a long record of service. He joined the Club in 1994 and started AT maintenance in 1998. He maintained the ATMC database for many years and he served on the multi-club committee for the 2013 Biennial at Cullowhee, NC. His most recent responsibility was the section on the north side of Newfound Gap.

#### WORK TRIPS - From 3/24/2016 to 5/13/2017

**3/24 - John H Gassler - Davenport Gap to 1 mi N of Cammerer** - Cleared several downed trees and vines from trail, cleared and re-dug several waterbars, cut back vegetation overhead and on uphill side of my section, cleaned Davenport shelter and surrounding area of all trash and cleaned ashes from fireplace.

**4/10 - Franklin LaFond, Orren Gardner - Sassafras Gap (Pk) to Fontana Dam** - Cleaned out waterbars; 98 ft of sidehill rehab. Added 3 step rocks, 3 log steps, and 1 waterbar. Installed 43 ft of log cribbing and 8 ft of rock cribbing. Removed 6 small blowdowns.

**4/15 - Randy Mitchell, Russell Redden - Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top** - Cleaned all water bars in section. Cut and removed large beech blowdown from trail at top of Cosby Knob. Cut and removed hemlock overhanging trail near Low Gap. Filled one mulch bucket at Cosby Knob privy. The other bucket was already full. Shelter, privy and cables in good shape. There was no trash to be found.

**4/18 - Carl Smith, Mike West - Cody Gap to Brown Fork Gap** - General trail work and talked with thru hikers.

**4/20 - Don Dunning - Boulevard to Sweat Heifer** - Cleaned all waterbars and drains between Sweat Heifer Trail junction and Boulevard Trail junction,



removed blowdowns and debris, performed other routine trail maintenance.

**4/22 - Don Dunning - Mulch Operations -** Packaged mulch for trail rider transport to Spence Field, and packaged mulch for backpacker transport to Mt. Collins, Icewater Spring, and Double Spring.

**4/22 - Pete Berntsen - Gap W of Masa Knob to Newfound Gap -** Identified work projects from Newfound Gap to 0.5 mile NE of NFG for one team on National Trails Day. Added one rock step near 0.5 mile NE of NFG. Cleared all water control devices and removed one small blowdown between The Boulevard and Icewater shelter. Filled two mulch buckets at privy. Found trash bag hung on bear cable. Filled trash bag with other trash from in and around the shelter and carried out about two pounds of trash.

**4/23 - Franklin LaFond, Mark Buckles - Sassafras Gap (Pk) to Lewellyn Branch -** Cut 7 blowdowns, 35 ft of sidehill rehab, light pruning, cleaned out waterbars from Shuckstack to Sassafras Gap.

**4/21 - 4/23 - Jacob Fondren, James Fondren, Tom Howard - Pecks Corner to False Gap -** Hiked Bradley Fork turn around to Pecks Corner maintenance shed. Cut two blowdowns between shed and Pecks Corner privy, carried 3 bags of mulch from shed to bins, cleaned privy and filled 3 buckets with mulch, checked shelter. Cut 13 blowdowns from junction of Hughes Ridge to False Gap. Hiked from Shed to Bradley Fork turn around.



*Jacob, James and Tom*

**4/25 - Diane Petrilla - Indian Gap to Road Prong Lead -** Completed clearing of all waterbars. Placed deterrent branches and logs where hikers have widened trail.

**4/25 - Jay Schmid, Tim Ryan - Sunup Knob to Low Gap -** Because of the recent heavy rains we spent most of our efforts on clearing waterbars and drainage areas. In addition, we drained standing water from several flat areas near the ridgeline. We also cut some vegetation and removed debris. There were no blowdowns.

**4/26 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer**

**to Newfound Gap -** Cleaned water bars, cut dead trip roots, cut overhead branches and removed potential "widow maker" from above the trail.

**4/27 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap -** We inspected the trail south of NFG to Indian Gap to verify reports of a large blowdown on the trail. Sure was an accurate report, 6 tenths of a mile south of NFG. We sawed many roots off the downed tree. This allowed the hiker a path along the outside edge. We later called Dick Ketelle about tree. (Dick et.al. did remove tree from trail, they also named the blow down, ask Dick.) After walking back to NFG we continued to clean waterbars, cut dead trip-roots, trimmed overhead and upslope branches

**4/28 - Dick Ketelle - False Gap to Gap W of Masa Knob -** Hiked out to look for location where reports indicate trail is undermined. Found location in Sawteeth where a CCC wall has failed on vertical north slope. Placed brush over failing area and opened adjacent corridor on safe ground so hikers can safely pass. Cleared waterbars on section between Dry Sluice Gap and saddle south of Massa Knob.

**4/28 - Mark Shipley - Cosby Knob Top to Camel Gap -** Cleaned out waterbars, trimmed vegetation, and restocked mulch at the privy at Cosby Knob Shelter

**4/28 - Edward Fleming - Mt Cammerer Side Tr to Sunup Knob -** Cleared water bars and drainages, trimmed back encroaching vegetation, removed fallen limbs from along trail, scattered one fire ring, picked up some litter.



*Ed and Mark*

**4/28 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap -** Cleaned waterbars, cut dead trip roots, trimmed overhead, up-slope branches and blackberry growth. Reinstalled large branch/log to hold edge of trail with rebar and back filled with dirt and rock to even trail

**4/29 - Dick Ketelle, Pete Berntsen, Jim Gehlhar - Clingmans Dome to Miry Ridge -** We assembled a

small team with a crosscut saw and cut the numerous blowdowns off the trail. Although we didn't make a rigorous count we estimate approximately 15 trees that required sawing. We encountered one Ridge Runner and a lot of thru-hikers as well as a good number of park backpackers. The weather was fine but grew quite warm as we made the nearly 1800 feet of climbing that it takes to get back to the starting point.

**4/29 - Franklin LaFond, "Hopeful" Powell - Lewellyn Branch to Fontana Dam** - Added 6 log steps and 2 log waterbars. Replaced one rotted waterbar. Completed 30 ft of sidehill rehab. Rehabbed several waterbars. Removed a large rotted stump from trail and filled in with crushed rock. Removed several small blowdowns. Pruned vegetation.

**4/29 - Taylor Weatherbee, Crystal Burnes, Matt Moran, Cathy Taylor, Trevor Taylor, Ryan Taylor, Betty Royer, Philip Royer - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Our group cleaned all water bars along the section. We also cut early growth briars and re-set one log step that had slipped out of place. We brushed in several new shortcuts. It was encouraging to note that the trail north of Mount Collins summit, where we have concentrated our NTD efforts for a couple of years, was in better shape than the trail south. This is proof that trail work, such as water bars and steps, has a lasting impact. We planned a couple of good projects for National Trails Day.

**4/30 - Franklin LaFond, "Hopeful" Powell - Route 28 to High Pt E of Walker Gap** - Added 3 new log stair steps and 6 ft of log cribbing, Cleaned waterbars. Removed 2 blowdowns.

**4/30 - Jack Bray, Alec Holtzclaw, Dan Schmiesing, Josh Talley, Carter Talley, Cade Collins - Derrick Knob to Thunderhead** - Cleared waterbars, and dug a few new ones. Cleared several minor blowdowns, and one major blowdown near Sugartree Gap. Re- opened original AT trail at the Sugartree Gap blowdown, from a hiker-established walk around.

**5/2 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Cleaned waterbars and rebuilt one collapsed waterbar. Cut dead trip-roots and crushed jutting up trip-rocks. Trimmed overhead and upslope branches and berry vines. Removed a widow/widower maker. And transported a tired hiker back to his car at Alum Cave Trailhead.



*Janet*

**5/3 - Don Dunning - Mulch Operations** - Restocked mulch supply at Mt. Collins shelter privy with ~200 lbs mulch. Then packaged ~300 lbs mulch for backpacking to Double Spring or Icewater Spring by Georgia Southern students next week. Previously packaged and delivered ~250 lbs mulch for trail rider transport to Spence Field.

**5/3 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Cleaned waterbars, re-installed a locust waterbar that was torn out of ground and thrown over the side. Assisted by hikers who volunteered to help, these people lived in D.C. and maintain the AT in Maryland, part of the Potomac Club. It's fun to share with maintaining clubs. Took over an hour just to correct what the vandals had done. Reset a loose locust step, used rebar and back filled the step. Added stone and dirt to locust step where tread was low so water can drain over step rather than pool. Again, we removed another widow/widower maker and cut dead roots. Transported a thru-hiker into Gatlinburg.

**5/7 - Bob Williams, Diane Petrilla, Rich Crompton, Jim Gehlhar, Lisa Sumter - Wright Gap to Wesser** - This was a combination Train and Work trip led by Bob Williams on his section of the



*Lisa, Rich, Jim and Bob*

AT in the NNF. Different types of tools and their uses were presented, and safety discussed. Then we worked on the section, clearing waterbars, removing trip hazard roots and trimming brush. A large blowdown was evaluated, and although it will require chainsaw removal, aspects of that decision-making process were also discussed.

**5/8 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Removed small sticks and branches from trail. Saw no large blowdowns all the way to the Boulevard. Cut berry branches and 9 small trees that the recent snow toppled over. Cleaned 3 waterbars and added stones to 2 low places holding water. Removed a fallen tree trunk just shy of the Boulevard and cut a small tree the trunk brought down.

**5/9 - Cindy Spangler - Collins Gap to Clingmans Dome** - Added 1 rock step, reset 2 log steps, added 1 log waterbar, widened trail in 4 locations, cleaned 44 waterbars, pruned vegetation. Worked with Georgia Southern students.

**5/10 - Ed Peck - Mt Love to Goshen Prong** - Removed blowdowns 1 mi S and 1 mi N of Dome.

### RECENT TRAIN AND WORK EVENT!

On May 7, a small group of relatively new maintainers had the privilege of learning tool, safety and maintenance techniques from Bob Williams, a long-time dedicated maintainer who currently maintains two sections in the NNF. After a demonstration of types of tools used, what they are used for, and safety techniques, we got to go onto Bob's section in the NNF and practice what we had learned. (see Work Trip above). It was a beautiful day, and Bob's wisdom and knowledge much appreciated! We hope to plan similar events in the future



*Tailgate Safety Meeting?*

Please send any items of interest, photos, event notifications for the ATMC Newsletter to Diane Petrilla at [petrillad@gmail.com](mailto:petrillad@gmail.com). Thank you for **ALL** of the work you do!

### University of South Dakota Crew

A group of 8 students from University of South Dakota joined the Konnarock crew when they came to the Nantahala National Forest in early May for their Alternate Summer Break excursion. This group worked at Stecoah Gap, NC. The main project was replacing the rotted and eroded railroad steps at the picnic area. The crew also added rock cribbing, crushed gravel through two rocky areas, and did a significant amount of sidehill rehab. Many thanks to Cayce Moyer and Crystal Gaddy for coming out with this group.



*Old Steps*



*Stack of Split Logs*



*Setting the First Step*



*The Finished Product!*



*Splitting Locust Logs*

## Georgia Southern University Crew

A group of 11 students from Georgia Southern University came to the GSMNP for their Alternate Summer Break excursion. This group worked in areas around Clingmans Dome, Mt Collins, and Davenport Gap. The group worked on side hill rehab, installing side hill cribbing, adding log and rock steps, and cleaning waterbars. Many thanks to Cindy Spangler, Don Dunning, and John Gassler for coming out with this group.



## MAINTENANCE 'MINDERS

In this edition of the Newsletter, we will elaborate on Basic Maintenance Task # 3 "Remove fallen trees that block the trail."

**Blowdowns-** Cleared annually with an opening 2-4 feet in width, preventing damage from users making new trails around the obstacle. Blowdowns on Trail sections where damage by ORVs is a problem may be left uncut on the ground, if easy to step over.

Cut notches in all blowdowns that are too big for volunteers to safely clear (*we tend to leave marking tape*).

**Grass and briars-** Cut twice per year, both sides in flat areas, mostly on the uphill side on sidehill Trail sections.

**Limbs and saplings-** Cut once per year, leaving a passage 4ft wide x 8ft high; on both sides of the Trail in flat areas, mostly along the uphill side on sidehill sections. Limbs should be trimmed flush with trunks, and saplings uprooted or cut below ground. Cuttings should be moved below the Trail, leaving desirable and fragile plant life undisturbed. "Feather" the edges of cut areas, since straight-line trimming looks unnatural. It is easier to reach high branches when facing downhill.

Remove all saplings and trees growing in rock or log retaining walls both above and below the Treadway; their roots will push these structures apart.

Remove all cut trees, branches, brush, and briars completely from the Trail. Disperse cuttings hanging in tress and piles of brush out of sight of the Trail.

**Hazard Trees-** Should be checked for at least once per year at overnight sites and areas where hikers stop, and removed as necessary. (Hazard tree removal should usually be done by your Agency partner). Consider cutting dead or broken trees or limbs at the sides of the Trail that are likely to fall on the footpath.

(Appalachian Trail Conference. *Appalachian Trail Fieldbook: Maintenance and Rehabilitation Guidelines for Volunteers*. Harpers Ferry, WV: ATC, 2003. Print.)