APPALACHIAN TRAIL MAINTAINERS COMMITTEE
SMOKY MOUNTAINS HIKING CLUB

December 2020

No Regular First Saturday Work Trip in December

We take a break now from our regular first Saturday work trips for December, January and February. Clingmans Dome Rd. will close for the winter on Dec. 1. As weather and Trail conditions allow, and of course as you desire, sections can always use work, no matter what time of year! Stay safe, healthy and warm!

ATMC (Club) Awards and ATC awards to be announced in next Newsletter

Normally this year at the December Installation banquet, we would announce the awards earned by our maintainers for hours worked from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020. This year of course, the SMHC Holiday banquet was cancelled due to COVID. Knowing all of you, I know that awards are not the reason you do what you do! It is still a pleasure to honor you in this small way, for your incredible work. So, those awards will be announced and listed in the next ATMC newsletter published.

In the meantime, here is some information from the ATC regarding volunteerism Trail-wide this year, with the pandemic:

"Thank you to all A.T. Club record keepers and A.T. club volunteers whose work they reported! In federal fiscal year 2020, from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020, the A.T. benefited from 3,562 volunteers contributing 111,565 hours of work. People will likely recognize this as a decrease from recent prior years. It is a 60% decrease in volunteers and a 53% decrease in hours from the same period a year earlier. This data is also reflected in a recent survey of A.T. clubs on COVID-19 volunteer reengagement in which these volunteer coordinating groups share the percentage of volunteers that resumed work on the Trail at any point after March 2020; the median of all responses is 60%. If there’s one thing we can gather from this unusual year that COVID has given us, thereby limiting episodic volunteerism, is that we have around 3,500 volunteers annually who are consistent, dedicated, recurring volunteers! Hurrah for their perpetual work for the A.T.!!"

Highlights from ATMC Meeting November 18, 2020 including COVID

- ATC has issued safety recommendations for 2021 thru-hikers. See https://appalachiantrail.org/official-blog/a-message-to-all-a-t-hikers-in-2021/
- COVID safety guidelines remain in force for maintainers, including no shelter or privy maintenance except filling mulch buckets (with gloves and mask please).
- No tarps on shelters this year to permit air circulation (GRSM).
- At this time, Ridgerunners are slated to start end of February 2021. Scope of work TBD.
- **Section help needed:**

  Lower Mt. Cammerer Tr to 1 mile N. of Cammerer, 1.1 miles [John Gassler temporarily unable to work his section; help for his carefully cared for section would be greatly appreciated],

  Lewellyn Branch to Fontana, 1.8 miles [new section leader needed],

  Doe Knob to Sassafras Gap, 3.1 miles [new section leader needed].

Please contact petrillad@gmail.com if you want more information.
**A. T. Work Trips From 10/8/2020 to 11/15/2020**

10/8 - Kristi Knight - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Worked on rerouting small section of trail that had migrated down slope over time, back to original location. Started digging out trail reroute, clearing out roots.

10/14 - Stewart Taylor - **Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr** - Cut downed wood on the side of the trail to use for steps and waterbars. I then moved the cut wood up near where they will be installed. I checked the shelter and found it to be very clean.

10/15 - Kristi Knight - **Mount Collins Privy** - Picked up and then hauled 110 lbs of mulch to Collins shelter over several trips.

10/15 - Rick Hughes, Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle - **Collins Gap to Mt Love** - Cleaned all the water bars on this section and added a new stone water bar. Thanks to Taylor and Rick for their efforts to accomplish this goal.

10/19 - Joseph (“Randy”) Bullock - **Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap** - Cut back briars and weeds encroaching trail near Stecoah Gap. Will continue clearing as necessary toward Browns Fork Gap shelter later this week.

10/20 - Pete Berntsen - **False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap** - Rehabilitated 85-feet of trail and added one water drain in area 1.25 miles NE of Dry Sluice Gap. (That is just over 5.6 miles NE of Newfound Gap.) Filled two buckets of mulch at Icewater privy. Both mulch bins are about 1/2 full. Removed leaves from Icewater Spring drain to keep water from the trail. Drain requires improvement. At water crossing trail about 0.2 mile NE of the spring, did minor drain repair to attempt to control further erosion 10 feet beyond the water crossing the trail. Drain needs major work soon. (Last week near Dry Sluice Gap, cut previously installed rebar to proper length and used portion removed to further secure.)

10/21 - Rick Hughes, Bill Pyle, Taylor Weatherbee - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Cleaned out 124 water bars and 2 turnpikes. Removed a few limbs that were encroaching.

10/22 - Kristi Knight - **Mount Collins Privy** - Hauled 105 lbs of mulch to Collins Shelter. Mulch bin is full now. Used three 15 lb bags and three 20 lb bags to finish filling bin today. (Total of nine15 lb bags and four 20 lb bags used to fill bin.)

10/23 - Liz Ehr, Melanie Harmon, Kristi Knight, Diane Petrilla, Neil Snepp, Cindy Spangler, Joan Tomlinson - **Mulch Operations** - With 6 other fantastic mulch mules, we carried 155 lbs. of mulch to the bins at Icewater, and made sure the privy buckets were full. Both mulch bins now 80% full and are in good shape until the Spring. My gratitude to all who helped. :))

10/23 - Tim Ryan, Pete Berntsen, Jay Schmid, John Harrison - **Sunup Knob to Low Gap** - Dug out two large, flat, boggy areas under Pete Berntsen's guidance and participation. Moved the drainage of these areas to one side. Cleared and enlarged several drainage areas and waterbars. Removed several rocks from the treadway.

10/25 - Mike Harrington, Ana Teper, Roman Teper - **Sassafras Gap (Pk) to Lewellyn Branch** - Cleared water bars, trimmed vegetation, removed blowdown debris.
10/25 - Terry Martin - Mt Cammerer Side Tr to Sunup Knob - Cleaned out water bars. Was happy to see the new one I created last trip was still intact. I dismantled a fire ring and placed logs across the side trail they were making to get to the illegal campsite. I cleaned out two muddy spots in my section, roughly 16 feet of muck. For the bigger muddy area, I created a waterbar on the east side of it to try and divert water off sooner and placed stones on the high side of the of the muddy area.

10/28 - Jerry Troxler, Randy Rainey - Spence (Bote Mt Tr) to Russell Field - Moved the privy. Filled the mulch buckets. Cleaned the privy. Cleaned all waterbars except the last half mile north of Russell. Found 3 blow downs. We were able to remove 2 of them but one located about 1.5 miles south of Spence was about 14" and was too big for the equipment we had available. It needs to be removed, as it is a crawl-over and not a step-over. The shelter was free of litter but we carried out all we could of abandoned gear and there is still some left there that needs to be removed. There are leaks in the roof, mostly on the left side of the shelter. The locks are all combination. No tarp on the shelter but there is an old ragged one in the gear box that needs to be removed. Most of the work was done in the pouring rain and this was the best that 2 old Marines could do.

10/28 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Took 2 locust logs from a stash at Fork Ridge to Collins Gap. Placed one at a site that had been partially prepared last week. Cut the other into 2 pieces to make 2 steps, then a third stone step. Tried to get to the A.T. early to avoid the rain. Failed miserably!

10/30 - Jerry Troxler, Stewart Taylor - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Jerry Troxler and I cleaned all the water bars/drainage ditches in my section. Thanks for Jerry coming to help get my trail ready for winter.

10/30 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - I found the pipe moved away from Icewater Spring & water running down the trail; reset the pipe & protected it with large stones; directed water off the trail. Cleared several water bars in difficult locations - with all the rain, Kephart has water running off everywhere. Just above freezing, gusting wind, fog & drizzle - and still spoke to more than 75 people on this busy stretch of trail.

10/31 - Bob Williams - Wright Gap to Wesser - Cleared water bars, trimmed vegetation, cleared large fallen branches from trail. Identified a number of fallen tops of trees (snags) hanging in canopy that spanned the trail. The highest of these was about 30 feet up; the lowest was about 7 feet above the trail. The lowest of these were the most unstable. Also, a section hiker said there were fallen trees in the next section, on the north side of Wright Gap. I now have a 2-hour drive time one way to the section so I had less time available on the trail. I intend to come back next time and walk in from Watia Road (Wright Gap) and check things out from there.

11/1 - Dick Ketelle, Bill Pyle, Taylor Weatherbee, Franklin LaFond - Fontana Dam to Yellow Creek Gap - Removed 23 blowdowns, including one massive red oak. Some of the blowdowns were locust. These were cut to lengths to be used for steps and drainage structures on future work trips. Cut and prepped locust logs to be used as new bridge truss structure over the stream 1/4 N of Walker Gap.
11/5 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - Cleaned water drains in entire area. Cut and removed four small (2-4 inch diameter) blowdowns from across trail and cleared many small branches.

11/5 - Keith Mertz - Yellow Creek Gap to Cody Gap - Cleared trail of numerous limbs and branches. Clipped some greenbrier and blackberry canes. Rolled a 10' log off the trail. Hand sawed a small locust log that was laying across the trail.

11/5 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Cleared trail of dead branches and hand sawed one ten inch oak fallen across trail.

11/6 - Judy Wade, Keith Mertz - Fontana Dam to Route 28 - Cleared trail of dead branches and hand sawed one ten inch oak fallen across trail.

11/6 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Swept/cleaned about 35 waterbars/drains from Sweat Heifer southbound. Totally rebuilt-widened a rock waterbar, and added two new large rock steps. Cut numerous trip roots. Met numerous SoBo hikers and a few NoBo flippers.

11/7 - Cindy Spangler, David Gall - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - Started out with the SMHC monthly ATMC group (led by Steve Dunkin) working South and then David Gall and I moved to my section to do general maintenance.

11/7 - Franklin LaFond, Taylor Weatherbee, Diane Petrilla - AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Virtual attendance at Fall SORO RPC Meeting.

11/7 - Steve Dunkin, Houston Phillips, Elizabeth Weikert - Clingmans Dome to Goshen Prong Tr - Cleaned numerous water bars down from Clingmans Dome on A.T. Removed several small blowdowns from water bar drainage ditches. Cleaned up hundreds of small red, white and blue beads from trail in two locations. No idea what they are. Installed three new water bars on trail- one using locust log found on side of trail and two using rock in area. Spoke to and provided advice and information to approx. 20 hikers/backpackers.

11/8 - Dick Ketelle, Ann Farrar, Taylor Weatherbee - Swim Bald to Wright Gap - We removed blowdowns in at least 10 locations in this trail section. One group of 3 large oak trees just above the Grassy Gap campsite was quite a mess. Several other trees were quite large. We removed a large tree near the top of the Jump Up switchback that was a serious obstacle to hikers and was the primary reason for our trip. Also removed several large low-overhead rhododendron on the switchback section. Broke some rhododendron branches by hand that were invading the trail space. Cut a dead locust tree on our way down and sectioned into lengths than can be split to make steps for the very steep initial ascent trail-north from Grassy Gap.

11/10 - Patti Grady - **Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead** - Hiked south to end of our trail section. Worked way back north clearing 17 waterbars.

11/14 - Cindy Spangler, Diane Petrilla - **AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin** - Attendance via Zoom at ATC Volunteer Leadership Academy course, "Leadership Training for A.T. Maintaining Clubs."

11/15 - Terry Martin - **Mt Cammerer Side Tr to Low Gap** - I spent most of the time in my section. High winds knocked a lot of limbs down on the trail. I removed limb debris from trail and cut one branch chest level across the trail. I cleaned out water bars. I carried rock to one of the mud sections I had cleaned out last time out. I had time left in the day so I cleaned out the water bars in the section before mine to Low Gap as I was heading out.

This has certainly been a challenging and different year than most! Thank you all for observing COVID health and safety guidelines in 2020 to protect yourself and others, while still getting an incredible amount of work done. There is lots of hope for a "return-to-normal" beginning in 2021, but please stay safe until then. Have a lovely Holiday season!

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