

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club



July 2021

A.T. Maintenance Work Trip- Saturday July 10

This year, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Konnorock crew will be working in the Nantahala National Forest July 9/10/11. **Smoky Mountains Hiking Club maintainers are encouraged to come out and volunteer with them!** Work will be 1.5 miles south of Locust Cove, building nock staircases and doing treadway rehab. There are overnight camping options available for Friday and/or Saturday nights. Please contact Franklin LaFond if you are interested in helping or need more information at 678-464-3380 or at OX97game@aol.com.

Reminder: Fontana Village Trails

The ATMC of the SMHC continues to have temporary responsibility for the trail system that is part of the NNF in Fontana Village (approx. 10 miles) It is time for the summer trimming of weeds and briars. Please contact Franklin LaFond at OX97game@aol.com for details on how you can help!

Privy Bin Cleaning Training Opportunity

On Monday July 12, Chloe Decamara from the ATC will conduct a privy bin cleaning training class for our maintainers who are interested in learning. If you have a privy on your section, you might want to consider this. The privy we will work on, and the meetup time are TBD. Please contact Diane Petrilla at petrillad@gmail.com or 931-224-5149 if you are interested.

New SMHC website going live

When you go to the SMHC website now, you will notice its brand new appearance! For maintainers filing work trip reports, you will be asked to log-in to access the "Report Your ATMC Work" form, from the drop-down menu under the tab "A.T. Maintenance." As the website goes live, you should receive an email giving you a link to click on and create a password for yourself (be sure to check your Promotions box, if necessary, for this email.) We will no longer have one user name and one PW for everybody to file work trip reports. You can also log into the SMHC website by using your Facebook or Google (Gmail) account logins, if you have one of those. By the time this newsletter reaches you, we should also have completed the process for everyone to receive work trip reports again, as they are submitted. If you have any difficulty, please email Scott Walker at swalker.dev@gmail.com or Amanda Beal at amandaw455@gmail.com. Scott and Amanda have created a beautiful new public interface for the Club, with hundreds of hours of work- we are deeply grateful.



So much accomplished June 5, 2021 Appalachian Trail Work Day!

Our “modified” National Trails Day event to work on the A.T., was held on Saturday June 5 in the Great Smoky Mountains NP. We had 61 participants, divided into 14 teams. There were 11 teams working on the A.T. from Icewater Springs to Silers Shelter, 1 mulch hauling team to Double Springs, and 1 crew each, out of Davenport Gap and Cosby. **A total of 423 hours of work alone was done on this day by all of the volunteers involved!** After the event was over, a Zoom door prize drawing was conducted by Trail Day committee members Kristi Knight, Diane Petrilla and Cindy Spangler. We are proud to say that almost every participant received a door prize! I am deeply grateful to the A.T. Work Day Committee, Philip Royer and Karen Brackett for designing the commemorative patch, and to Kristi Knight, Cindy Spangler and Kristi Weatherbee for invaluable help in planning and getting sponsorship for our bagged lunches and door prizes. I am thankful to Taylor Weatherbee and Bill Pyle for prepping the locust logs we were able to use for step and waterbar installation, and to Christine Hoyer and Nick Yarnell of the National Park for making this possible! Also thanks to Steve Dunkin for getting and returning tools. Thank you SO much crew leaders! Finally, we had crucial sponsorship from the companies below. Please remember them with your shopping dollars!

REI - Knoxville
REI - Pigeon Forge
Publix Super Market-Pigeon Forge
Foothills Milling Company Restaurant-Maryville
Little River Trading Company-Maryville
River Sports Outfitters-Knoxville
Food City-Bearden
Food City-Seymour
Ham 'N Goodys-Knoxville
Sawdust and Other Things/Artist Michael Grizzle
Home Federal Bank, Knoxville
Hot Rods Restaurant-Maryville
Blount Wellness Center, Maryville
NOC, Gatlinburg
Uncle Lem's Outfitters, Pigeon Forge
Starbucks, Pigeon Forge
Todd White/Froschauer Fine Catering-Knoxville
Dunkin Donuts - Pigeon Forge

SMHC A.T. Work Day 6-5-2021 Reports and Photos

6/5 - Cindy Spangler, David Gall, Melanie Harmon, Lori Garufi, Tanya Haas, Mia Prater - **Mt Love to Clingmans Dome** - Cleaned 41 water bars, installed 2 water bars, cut multiple roots and trip hazards. Four members of this crew then carried 80lbs. of mulch to Mt. Collins, filled mulch buckets and swept privy. Bin is about 80% full now.



Cindy's great crew! L to R, Lori, Tanya, Mia, David and Melanie. (photo courtesy of Cindy Spangler)

6/5 - Diane Petrilla, Lee Barron, Jennifer Kelley, Ben Gans, Kathy Gardner, Dale Gerhardt, Larry Johnson - **Mulch Operations** - Packed 200 lbs. of mulch to bins at Double Springs. Filled mulch buckets and swept privy.



Above, the Mulch Mules! L to R, Diane, Dale, Jen, Lee, Ben, Larry, Kathy.



At the mulch storage boxes. (Photos courtesy of Diane Petrilla)

6/5 - Mark Shipley - Cosby Knob Top to Camel Gap
 - Cut vegetation along trail

6/5 - Edward Fleming, Pamela Fleming, Jack Grant, Ray Fuehrer, Franklin LaFond - Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail - Added 6 new log steps, replaced 4 deteriorated log steps with new logs, replaced 3 deteriorated or missing water bars with new logs, added 2 new cribbing logs, cleared several drainages, cut back encroaching vegetation, reset shelter signpost, and packed out some abandoned gear.



The Davenport Gap crew! L to R, Ed, Ray, Jack and Franklin (Photo courtesy of Pam Fleming)

6/5 - Dick Ketelle, Davis Wax, Katie Oliver, Rick Parks - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Our NTD crew worked on improving tread drainage in the 1/4 mile north of the spring. We replaced rock waterbars with larger rocks, set a massive rock step that is a piece of quartz vein rock about 10 inches thick and 2 to 3 feet across, added rock to a small retaining wall below the drainage gully, moved an old log waterbar to better handle drainage, set temporary rock steps in the social bypass gully at the "rock bluff" location, and dug out drainage channels in rock-choked drains further down the trail.



Davis and Katie, hard at work! (Photo courtesy of Dick Ketelle)



Pam filling in behind a new step! (Photo courtesy of Franklin LaFond)

6/5 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder, Alan Day, Mark Buckles, Kelsey Headrick, Steven Epps - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Carried 5 locust logs to site of work. Had a great crew and was able to get all 5 pre-cut and split logs to site in one attempt. On return trip to vehicle to get tools and webbing, we were able to dislodge a large flat stone from its slanted position in a collapsing waterbar and gather other small flat stones to take its place. After getting the tools and laboriously dragging the large displaced stone down the trail to its new location, we split into two groups to place the stone in its new step location and rebuilt the waterbar. The work crew worked hard and without complaint. Dirt was removed from below the trail and tossed to the surface where it could be used as fill around the rocks being placed in trail. Large boulders were moved to serve as directional barriers to keep hikers from going below the trail. Large flat boulders were placed in center of trail to serve as firm ballast as trail was rebuilt. (It needs to be noted that one large flat stone 6 ft. below the trail was brought to the surface, requiring 4 peoples' efforts. True Grit.) All told, about 45 feet of trail was rebuilt. This effort on NTD has eliminated two side trails and thus left only one narrower trail. And it needs to be noted, the work made it a SAFER trail.



Incredible work here! (photos courtesy of Steven Epps)

6/5 - Mike Waters, Scott McClure, Becky Emmerson, Bert Emmerson - **Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead to Spruce Fir** - Cleaned some water bars and drainage swales. Mostly worked on building a rock and Locust retaining wall all a large drainage area. We built up a rock wall approximately 18" tall then used existing locust poles to bring the wall up to the desired height. We then backfilled the wall with rocks and compacted dirt.

6/5 - Nancy Biddle, Nancy Dunning, Don Dunning, Rachel Taylor, Jeannette Gilbert, Chloë De Camara - **Boulevard Tr to Sweat Heifer** - Cleared ~25 waters and cut back minimal overgrowth.



Another great crew! F to B, Alan, Kelsey, Mark B. Mark S. and Janet





So happy to see these faces! Above, L to R, Don, Chloe, Rachel, Jeannette, Nancy B. and Nancy D. Below, Crew leader Chloe, leading by example. (photos courtesy of Jeannette Gilbert)



Jeannette, proving how young she really is!

6/5 - Pete Berntsen, Brian Schloff, Elizabeth Weikert - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Made multiple locust stakes from 1 foot sections of locust logs. Locust log Steps installed with Locust stakes: #1 - Added new 6 foot log step and improved drain. #2 - Added new 6 foot log step. #3 - Replaced old log step with new 6 foot log step. #4 - Added 4

foot log step that was removed on previous work trip. #5 - Removed rotten log from third step from top of staircase. #6 - Removed log from top of staircase and placed where #5 was removed. #7 - Placed new 8 foot log step at top of staircase. Hikers must now use the step. Found local log to use with rocks to add temporary step where there was only 1/2 of a log step. Improved associated drain and used rocks on the new step. Added best portions of three old locust log steps to create check-dams for three of the fastest running drains in the area. Did minor brush trimming in this area. Volunteers did an outstanding job with work in the area. We enjoyed ourselves but all were worn and ready to head home after a hard day of work. Thank You!



Above, Elizabeth, and below, Brian, with some of their hard work! (photos courtesy of Pete Berntsen)

6/5 - Philip Royer, Betty Royer, Lynda Bryan, Jim Quick - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Working in the same vicinity of Taylor Weatherbee's crew, we concentrated our efforts on the heavily used, uppermost half mile of Sugarlands Mtn Trail, which is access for the Mt. Collins Shelter. We moved 10 locust logs from Fork Ridge to our project sites. Jointly, our crews installed 6 new locust waterbars, 2 new locust steps, 2 new stone steps and 1 new stone waterbar (a single awesome rock). We rebuilt one existing stone waterbar and dug out 8 existing waterbars or drainage dips.

6/5 - Taylor Weatherbee, Kristi Weatherbee, Kristi Knight, Mark Lampley Hiker, Boston Brian Hiker, Boston Paul Hiker - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Picked locust logs staged by tool shed near Sugarlands. Picked up lunches and paperwork from Diane. Dropped off logs at NFG and Indian Gap. Met up with Philip Royer's crew and worked on the section of trail between the AT and the water source below the Mt Collins shelter. See Philip's report for details of work done, which included installing new locust steps and water bars, and some rock steps and water bars.



Kristi (front), proving that strength doesn't depend on your size! Taylor (back) with another precious locust log.



The Mt. Collins crews! L to R, Philip, Kristi K., Betty, Lynda, Taylor, Jim and Kristi W.



Lynda and Jim, who have attended every Trails Day since 1998! (3 photos above courtesy of Lynda Bryan)

6/5 - Randy Mitchell, Russell Redden, Neil Snett - **Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top** - Cut back annual growth at Low Gap. Cleaned some water bars. Returned swing blade to Cosby Shelter tool bin. Filled mulch buckets. Installed three new water bars and repaired tread near Cosby Knob. Reset one step that had come completely dislodged.

6/5 - Rick Hughes, Allen Schultz, Mary Schultz - **Collins Gap to Mt Love** - NTD work. Rick Hughes, joined by Allen and Mary Schultz, on the Collins Gap section, cleared all waterbars and did needed vegetation clearing. In addition, we enlarged some of the narrow waterbars, and trimmed some vegetation allowing more complete waterbar access.



Mary and Allen on Rick's beautiful section (photo courtesy of Rick Hughes)

6/5 - Scott Medlyn, Brad Sites, Chris Darnold - **Goshen Prong Tr to Welch Ridge Tr** - Cleared waterbars and cut back vegetation
 6/5 - Steve Dunkin, Ernie Wiles, Carolyn Reeves - **Clingmans Dome to Goshen Prong Tr** - Cleaned numerous water bars from Bypass Trail to Goshen Prong Trailhead



Previous column, Lynda Bryan's quilt made from NTD T-shirts since 1998, and above, our A.T. Work Day patch for 2021.

See you next year!

A.T. Work Trips May 11- June 13 (Plenty of other work getting done!)

5/1 - Tom Howard, James Fondren, Paul Ruble - **Newfound Gap to Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr** - Cleaned waterbars, reset some steps and trimmed back vegetation.

5/11 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap** - Cleared hiking corridor, removing small limbs and cutting back briars. Cleared water bars. Browns Fork Gap shelter in good condition with reliable water supply.

5/17 - Ernie Wiles, Steve Dunkin - **Goshen Prong Tr to Welch Ridge Tr** - Cut vegetation from Goshen Prong Trail to Welch Ridge Trail. Surveyed trail from By-pass Trail to Welch Ridge Trail for club work day June 5. Stayed the night and checked Privy and tool box for tools (need shovels) and thank you to who ever fixed the tool box roof, job well done!!!!

5/18 - Pete Berntsen - **Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead** - Installed rock step approximately one mile SW of Indian Gap. Checked leaning trees over trail at 0.9 mile out. The trees are not a threat at this time as the spruce tree is still growing even though half of the root ball is out of the ground. The trees are still sturdy. Remaining work was in the first 0.15 mile from Indian Gap. Found two locust logs near the trail. Installed one new step. Second locust log was used to replace a short log step that hikers were avoiding by using the inner

bank. Removed and installed two other log steps into the bank. Removed berm from majority of steps to thin water flow. Removed and installed log step that had moved from initial installation position.

5/19 - Barbara Allen, Pete Berntsen, Jack Bray, Don Dunning, Meg Gill, Dick Ketelle, Kristi Knight, Franklin LaFond, Terry Martin, Randy Mitchell, Diane Petrilla, Philip Royer, Cindy Spangler, Rick Waggener, Taylor Weatherbee - **Club Mgt, Mtgs & Admin** -

Appalachian Trail Maintainer's Committee meeting. 15 maintainers in attendance, as well as Morgan Sommerville, Stephen Eren, Chloe DeCamara from ATC and Christine Hoyer from GRSM. Many issues discussed; meeting minutes will be distributed.

5/20 - Diane Petrilla - **Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead**- Finished spring cleaning of waterbars. Admired Pete Berntsen's re-done log steps, and new rock step. Very educational to me to see how Pete angled trail edge on downslope side to promote water run-off.

5/22 - Diane Petrilla - **Tri Corner Knob Privy** - Loaded 1080 lbs. of bagged mulch into my Subaru Outback (yes, it can hold that!) on 5-20, obtaining and returning key to BCO that day. On 5/22 drove mulch to Cosby hiker parking lot to deliver to horse/ mule teams. Some delay in second mule team arriving. Helped with mules and mulch. Total of 2 horses and 10 mules made an impressive team with their 4 riders. They delivered 920 lbs. of mulch to Tricorner. Many, many thanks to David Michael of Backcountry Horsemen of NC, and Mike Toberer of Mountain Mule Packer Ranch in NC, as well as Terry Seebode and Faith Toberer.



*The horse and mule teams on their way to Tricorner!
(photos courtesy of Diane Petrilla)*

5/22 - Franklin LaFond - **Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail** - Split locust logs around shelter that had been cut in April. All split logs were transported to the shelter trail junction with the AT so they would not become firewood. Split a couple other larger logs that had been previously staged between the shelter and the trailhead. Removed 1 small blowdown 150 yards South of Davenport Shelter that hikers reported to me while I was working at the shelter.

5/22 - Keith Mertz, Melanie Harmon, David Gall - **Yellow Creek Gap to Cody Gap** - Brushed out about 60% of trail between the two gaps. Pulled two small blowdowns off trail.

5/22 - Russell Redden, Randy Mitchell - **Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top**- At Cosby campground ran into Diane Petrilla and the Backcountry Horseman group as they were preparing to haul mulch to TriCorner. We chatted for a while and were relieved that they were going up Snake Den and that we didn't have to follow the mule pack train. Did some light cutting of annual growth at Low Gap. Cosby Knob Shelter is still closed due to bear activity. Inspected the shelter which was empty and clean. Entries in the shelter log were from hikers stopping in for lunch or water. None indicated any bear encounters. One writer expressed sympathy for the Park Service employee that had to go through hours of footage on the camera trained on the decoy tent near the shelter. So "Joy" though it would be entertaining to flash the camera according to the log entry. We filled the mulch buckets leaving the mulch bin about 50 % full. We continued south near the end of the section where we removed a water bar that didn't fully extend across the trail. Hiker traffic was bypassing the water bar. In addition the



trail had eroded close to the bank and the tread had shifted towards the edge of the dropoff. We installed a new water bar and saved the short one to use later as a step. Then we filled in the eroded area with rocks covered with dirt and packed it down. Additionally I cut a two foot section of a smaller diameter locust log and spit it to make stakes for future use. Hiker traffic was much lighter than on the previous work trip. The hikers that we did encounter were very appreciative of our work.

5/23 - Meg Gill, William Gill - Chestnut Br Trail to Lower Mt Cammerer Tr - Cleared waterbars of debris (mostly leaves). Rearranged logs and stones found at an unauthorized campsite (the same area as the last time when we did our maintenance work).

5/24 - Pete Berntsen - Dry Sluice Gap to Gap W of Masa Knob - Trimmed grass and vegetation in area. Minor clearing at head of many water drains. OTHER: Removed leaner 2-inch diameter tree located about 50 feet SW of Dry Sluice Gap. Removed leaner 4-inch diameter tree located about 100 feet SW of Indian Gap.

5/25 - Stewart Taylor - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Put in steps and water bars

5/26 - Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle - Other Work - Prepped locust logs to be used on NTD

5/27 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Reset a few steps and water bars, installed a rock water bar where the wooden one rotted out, and cleaned a few water bars

5/31 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Cut numerous trip roots. Installed one stone step. Began work preparing for National Trail Day. Prepared the site where work was to take place on NTD. Cutting roots and gathering smaller stones and larger rocks for top dressing.

6/1 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Continued to look for trip roots in the first .5 of trail and continued to prepare site for NTD. Site preparation consisting of cutting dead roots that needed removed and moving large rock that will be in the way of reclaiming the trail closer to its original site.

6/1 - Stewart Taylor - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Continuing to add steps where needed

6/2 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - No work was begun, for as soon as we got out of the van it began to rain. Decided to wait it out in hopes of it clearing as the Weather Channel indicated. Nay Nay, did not happen.

6/3 - Dick Ketelle, Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle - Tricorner to Pecks Corner - This is a 2-day work trip and is submitted in two installments. On day 1 (6/2/21) we met Nick Yarnell of GRSM Backcountry Office at Smokemont campground at 8 a.m. for our shuttle up Bradley Fork administrative road to the Cabin Flats trail junction. Hiked up Bradley Fork Trail to the Pecks Corner GRSM maintenance cabin where we dropped our overnight gear and picked up the chainsaw and accessories previously staged. Hiked AT north to blowdown reported by Ridgerunners 1.2 mile south of Tricorner shelter and worked our way back to Pecks Corner. We removed the reported blowdowns and also removed at least twice as many "bonus trees" comprising various "Low Leaners" that were obstructions to hikers and more significantly to any trailriders electing to use this section. Arrived back at maintenance cabin at 7:30. On day 2 of our blowdown removal trip we pondered the weather and departed the Pecks maintenance cabin at about 9 a.m. hiking AT south toward Laurel Top in search of reported blowdowns. Hiking through intermittent rain showers we found the southernmost reported blowdown (which had been removed previously) and headed back. We cut a few "bonus trees" and vegetation intruding into the trail corridor which has been forcing hikers to walk off the edge of the tread. We arrived back at the maintenance cabin at about 12:45, ate our lunch hastily, cleaned up and buttoned up the cabin before heading down. Met Pam Rogers of GRSM Backcountry Office a short distance down Bradley Fork administrative road at about 4 o'clock for our ride back to Smokemont. Many thanks to Christine Hoyer, Pam Rogers, and Nick Yarnell for all the help in facilitating our blowdown removal trip into this, the most remote section of the Appalachian Trail in the Smokies. Without this valuable assistance from NPS this trail section would see very little maintenance attention.



6/8 - Steve Hill, Jack Grant - **Mulch Operations** - Bagged 25/ 20lb. Bags of mulch and 4/ 40lb. Bags. Delivered 20lb. bags to maintainer shed.

6/12 - Brent Gregory - **Lewellyn Branch to Fontana Dam** - Trimmed vegetation and cleared water bars along full length of section. Rehabbed portion of trail where a tree was uprooted and created a large crater in the trail.

6/13 - Dick Kettle, Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle - **Derrick Knob to Spence (Bote Mt Tr)** - We got a fairly early start to hike up the Lead Cove trail to Bote Mountain, AT at Spence Field, over Thunderhead to access blowdowns previously reported by Ridgerunners. We used crosscut saw and ax to remove about a half dozen blowdowns from the trail between Brier Knob and Sugartree Gap. Our exit from that very remote AT section was via the off trail route from Starkey Gap down Starkey Branch to the Sam's Creek manway and thence on down to the Tremont road trailhead parking lot where a car had been previously parked. We all agreed that this was a strenuous trip that took about 12 hours to complete. But none of us missed hauling a chainsaw over this trail section in the summer heat and humidity.



Bill and Taylor, above and below. (photos courtesy of Dick Kettle)

6/4 - Franklin LaFond - **Stekoah Gap to Cheoah Bald** - Project walkthrough with the Konnorock Trail crew leaders. Installed 2 log steps. Crushed several problem stones in rocky area and used to level treadway. Crushed rock in area 8 ft x 3 ft, x 18 inches deep to eliminate hazardous step down in area with very large rocks.

6/4 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Finished site preparation for NTD. Used rock bars to shift large rocks to become outside edge, reclaiming the trail location to its original placement. Shoveled dirt that had washed down the hill back up the hill. All this work being done prior to NTD was to make certain what will be asked of NTD participants is doable.

6/4 - Steve Dunkin - **Other Work** - Loaded tools for NTD in truck.

6/7 - Steve Dunkin - **Other Work** - Returned tools to shed in Maryville.



That's one big rattlesnake! And below, always beauty, even while working (photos courtesy of Dick Kettle)

