

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club



June 2022

SMHC A.T. Work Day- Saturday June 4: National Trails Day!

This year, we were able to register with the American Hiking Society to offer a more traditional National Trails Day event! The format is similar to last year. Crew leaders will meet at 7am at Sugarlands Visitor Center (except for crews working out of Davenport Gap, Cosby and Spence). After instructions and a safety talk by Ranger Christine Hoyer, we will meet our crews at 8:30 am at Newfound Gap and at Clingmans Dome, or as otherwise instructed by crew leaders. Bagged lunches will be provided, as well as a large variety of door prizes. We will be giving all participants a custom-designed free commemorative T-shirt. Registration is nearly full. If you want to participate, please email petrillad@gmail.com directly to discuss. We are looking forward to getting lots of good work accomplished on NTD! Thank you to all crew leaders and crew who have registered thus far!

Thank you Amelia Cary and David Schafer!

Amelia and David will soon complete their Ridgerunner seasons. It's hard to believe that time has come! We are deeply grateful for their hard work, kindness, and professionalism. Ricky Vandegrift will continue as the long-season RR, and we welcome his additional time and work here. We certainly hope to see Amelia and David in the future!

**Thank
You!**

Icewater Privy Closes

The privy at Icewater shelter has been closed. All bins are full and none are fully composted, so none can be emptied yet. Signs have been posted about the closure and about proper waste disposal at that site. Mulch will not need to be transported there for the time being. We do not have any estimates at this time as to when a bin will be "cooked" or composted enough to empty and disperse.

Recent Cross-Cut Training and Upcoming Class

We are proud to congratulate several of our ATMC maintainers who certified or re-certified in cross-cut training at Harmon Den in the Pisgah National Forest. They are:

Recertifications: Dick Kettle, Bill Pyle and Taylor Weatherbee

New certifications: Amanda Beal, Jonny Bruce, Randy Bullock, Rick Hughes, Kristi Knight, & Randy Mitchell.

Elizabeth Weikert also recertified in April in a different class.

What a great group!! (See a photo in work trip reports below).

There will be a chainsaw class on August 12 and 13, 2022 taught by Dennis Helton. Details on location, times, etc. are not yet available. Please contact Bill Pyle if you are interested, at wcpyle@comcast.net.



Special thanks to all of our Sawyers during the chainsaw window, and to our equestrian colleagues

During the recent chainsaw window between mid-April to mid-May, our ATMC maintainers, spent over 200 hours scouting and removing blowdowns on the A.T. between Fontana Dam and Newfound Gap (and beyond). This work involves hard hiking time with heavy loads. Many also spent hours of travel and personal time in cross-cut recertification or certification classes as described above.

Our equestrian colleagues, at the request of the GRSM NP, spent over 1800 hours clearing blowdowns from multiple access trails at the east end of the Park, as well as from the A.T. itself. They also got 500 lbs. of mulch to Cosby, and a smaller load to Tricorner.

The SMHC is deeply grateful for the incredible dedication of all of these volunteers. All of you help our Club fulfill its duties as one of 31 maintaining Clubs for the Appalachian Trail, a mission we have proudly had for almost 100 years.



May 13 SMHC/ATMC Sawyers at work



Taylor at work (both photos above courtesy of Bill Pyle)



Backcountry Horsemen of NC (Photos courtesy of MaryJo Twh Krutak)

A.T. Work Trips from 4/14/2022 to 5/15/2022

4/14 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Repaired the locust step that Rick Waggener reported and fixed another step that was coming loose. Fixed the loose locust step, where erosion had finally rendered the step "more harmful than good," which was the primary reason we worked today. Attempted to move a large boulder off the trail that had recently been dislodged. Should have left it alone as the boulder was bigger than the tools we had. After much work, the boulder was just partially on the trail. The day had started with a young man, hiking with his family, who had just passed us, when our rock bucket inadvertently was bumped off the trail. Down the hill the bucket went, dodging all trees or shrubs which might have brought the bucket to a halt, but nooo.... the bucket just picked up more speed as it grew visibly smaller, stopping just short of the Cherokee city limits. This young man volunteered to retrieve the bucket, and before I could voice any objection, over the side he went with the nimbleness of a mountain goat. It truly was poetry in motion. In a flash he had the bucket back on the trail. We thanked him and his family. The look on his face was that of pride for helping two people older than his grandparents.

4/15 - Taylor Weatherbee - **Clingmans Dome to Thunderhead** - In prep for blowdown work, picked up radios and InReach devices. Next day, picked a key for the Clingmans Dome gate in light of an anticipated road closure 4/19.

4/17 - Franklin LaFond - **Spence Project** - Added 16 log steps, replaced 3 rotted or missing log waterbars. Refurbished 3 waterbars. Rehab of the side trail from the AT junction to the shelter has been completed. Majority of the rehab between Eagle Creek junction to Mt Squire is now completed.

4/20 - Elizabeth Davis, Rick Hughes, Bill Pyle, Taylor Weatherbee, Kristi Weatherbee, Sandy Merriman - **Clingmans Dome to Thunderhead** - 4 hardy (?foolish) maintainers finally accessed the Dome road with help from Christine, initially facing 19 degree temperatures and strong winds. We cleared one blowdown on the bypass trail, then around 12-15 between Clingmans and Derrick, including a large uprooted spruce tree on the way to the water at Double Springs. After tenting overnight at Derrick, we cleared 7 more trees, ending near Starkey Gap. We then came out by way of Greenbrier Ridge Trail to Tremont. A new maintainer, Elizabeth Davis, came with us on the first day. She is a 5-star recruit, and we hope to see more of her in the future! Logistical support provided by Kristi Weatherbee

and Sandy Merriman, to deliver us to Clingmans and leave my truck at Tremont.

4/20 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock - **Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap** - Cleared trail corridor, inspected water source and privy at Brown Fork Gap. Packed out trash. Refilled leaf buckets. Water source clean and running reliably.

4/20 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Once again cleaned waterbars that have been cleaned 2-3 times already (wind and rain). Trimmed back a leaning rhodo, and removed a leaner right where Pete had ribboned the need for a water diverter to be placed, which was accomplished. Thanks to the maintainers who keep us posted as to the needs of our section. Repaired the old waterbar and widened the point of drainage. Moved the boulder from our previous work day attempt. We had the tools this time and a friend completing his hike happened to come by and offered to help. Janet was our trail eyes as Dave and Mark used rock bars to place the boulder off the trail in a position to block the south end of a social trail. The north end of the social trail was blocked by using a downed tree from the uphill side and sawing and dragging to downhill side where social trail begins. We rebuilt an older water bar, by lowering stones and widening the drainage area. We also continued to block the downhill social trail that was formed. Hikers do not wish to take turns when the trail narrows. The good news of our day was much got done; the sad part is this was all done in a short span of 150 yards. Such is life on the trail.

4/21 - Ernie Wiles - **Clingmans Dome to Spence (Bote Mt Tr)** - From starting point to Welch Ridge trail blazes need repainted and waterbars cleaned. Welch Ridge Trail to Thunderhead Mountain blazes need repainted add more blazes added. Thru hikers comment on lack of them. Thunderhead Mountain to Bote Mountain, trail blazes need repainted. From start to finish vegetation and blowdowns did not seem to be a problem.

4/21 - Pete Berntsen - **False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap** - Cut and removed 8-inch diameter (measured top side after cutting) tree from across trail located 0.2 mile SW of False Gap. (Apr 16 RR report; "Single tree across the trail 7 inches in diameter. Easy to step over, causing widening in trail.") Used large rock, 18 x 18 x 9-inches to harden the trail. About 0.1 mile further SW, the end of another blowdown had its pointed butt-end extending almost half-way across the trail. Cut 19-inch diameter end from blowdown using my 12-inch saw. Cleared water drainage devices on this entire section of trail.

4/24 - Franklin LaFond - **AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin** - Attended ATC Southern Partnership Meeting which includes delegates from 12 maintaining clubs, the ATC regional offices, the Forest Service Districts, the National Park units, and AT Trail Communities that cover the section of the AT from Springer Mountain GA to Natural Bridge VA.

4/24 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Stekoah Gap to Locust Cove Gap** - Hiked to locust cove to repaint blue blazes that had faded with time. Inspected water source.

4/24 - Taylor Weatherbee - **AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin** - Attended 2022 spring ATC SORO RPC meeting as the SMHC RPC alternate.

4/25 - Cindy Spangler, Patricia Bryant, Peter Lloyd - **Mt Love to Clingmans Dome** - Cleaned 44 water bars, covered up a social trail, moved a large wobbly rock off the trail, trimmed back overhanging vegetation, picked up one discarded soft drink bottle, added rock support to some locust logs. Transitioning this section to new leaders, Peter and Patricia.

4/25 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Removed many small rocks that had been dislodged (many still to go) and three large rocks, almost boulder end of driveway size, using two rock bars. With the rain and traffic, it appears that many large sized rock are being dislodged from the trail or the uphill side of the mountain and ending up on the trail. At 1.1 mile built up the downhill side of the trail, by adding rock and dirt, created two new steps to help. Tried to wipe out a social trail just north of this location. At 1.5 mile removed tree roots and dislodged some part of an old stump to widen the trail. Lowered the locust water bar, used the rock bar to slot the shale to be able to lower the locust. Replaced the step which had been removed from earlier trip. Added some back fill on all the steps. Sawed a large downed tree to size and moved to the downhill side of steps to keep the hiker off the edges of steps.

4/27 - Bill Pyle - **Training** - Classroom portion of crosscut training.

4/27 - Dick Ketelle - **Training** - Attended SAWS crosscut saw certification classroom training sessions.

4/27 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock - **Training** - Attended 6 hours crosscut class associated with SAWS training as required.

4/27 - Randy Mitchell - **Training** - Attended online training for crosscut saw certification through Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards.

4/27 - Rick Hughes - **Training** - Crosscut Saw Course - Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards.

4/27 - Rick Hughes, Bill Pyle, Taylor Weatherbee - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Used chainsaw and crosscut (crosscut recertification and new certification this weekend) to remove large spruce and second dead tree from the trail just below the shelter to the water source. About half the tree fell into the trail so made multiple cuts with the chainsaw and 2 with the crosscut (and used an underbuck device twice) to clear the trail.

4/27 - Stewart Taylor - **Mount Collins Shelter** - I cleaned the ditches at Mt. Collins Shelter as well as the area around the shelter. I then cleaned all the drainage ditches/water bars from the shelter to the Sugarland Trailhead.

4/27 - Taylor Weatherbee - **Training** - Attended SAWS crosscut recertification courses.

4/28 - Jerry Troxler, Randy Rainey - **Spence (Bote Mt Tr) to Russell Field** - Cleaned out all of the water bars between Spence and Russell. Replaced one water bar on the south side of Spence with one of the stored locust logs. Both shelters were clean and in good shape. The leak in the Spence Field shelter appears to be repaired as there was no leak during a rainy day. Picked up litter around the privy and cleaned the privy. Knocked down the cone. One mulch box is empty and one is 40% full. Will need a resupply soon. Filled 3 buckets with mulch.

4/29 - Stewart Taylor, Jerry Troxler - **Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr** - Cleaned out the drainage ditches/water bars. Repaired one rock water bar.

4/30 - Ann Farrar - **Outreach & Education** - Captured videos and images of cross cut saw training.

4/30 - Franklin LaFond - **Wright Gap to Wesser** - Walked section to identify location of large blowdown being reported by hikers. Removed several smaller blowdowns from the trail. Removed limb debris.

4/30 - Terry Martin - **Mt Cammerer Side Tr to Sunup Knob** - Cleared out water bars. Sawed up two trees that fell over water bars and moved them out of the way. Cleaned tree litter off trail.

5/1 - Bill Pyle, Taylor Weatherbee, Rick Hughes - **Training** - Harmon's Den Field Exercises & Evaluation for Crosscut Sawyer Certification.

5/1 - Dick Ketelle - **Training** - Harmon Den Horse Camp- Attended crosscut sawyer certification training.

5/1 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock - **Training** - Harmon Den Crosscut saw certification as new B sawyer.

5/1 - Randy Mitchell - **Training** - Harmon Den Horse Camp Sawyer Training and Evaluation for Certification.



Amanda practices her cross-cut skills while Randy M. and Taylor look on. *(photo courtesy of Ann Farrar)*

5/2 - Meg Gill, William Gill - **Chestnut Br Trail to Lower Mt Cammerer Tr** - Cleared water bars of leaves; chatted with many hikers, most of them section- or day hiking.

5/2 - Patti Grady, Pete Berntsen - **Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead** - Walked the entire section identifying and flagging work projects for NTD..Cleaned 25 waterbars. Blocked social trails. Accomplished much trimming and trip hazard removal.

5/2 - Taylor Weatherbee - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Cleaned water bars and reset one stone step. Did a little scouting for NTD.

5/3 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Lowered water bar at about 1.55 mile north of NFG, and added downed limbs to both ends to force hiker to stay on the path. At about 1.5 mile finished lowering two steps and reset the six remaining steps that had become slanted over time. A thru-hiker asked to help and we asked that he carry gravel/dirt. Three full buckets later, as opposed to half buckets 6 times by us, we thanked him for being a trail angel and he was on his way. Scouted out other projects to do. The NTD work at the end of our section is done which is good as we have much work to be done in the first half mile. Hopefully we get the locust logs for water bar work.

5/4 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap** - Cleared waterbars, cleared corridor, checked shelter and water source. Looked for blowdowns reported.

5/5 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Stekoah Gap to NOC** - Hiked 14 mile section making note of downed trees or other areas needing

maintenance. The club has scheduled a weekend to both clear trees and provide an opportunity for new crosscut sawyers to work with experienced sawyers later this month.

5/5 - Randy Mitchell - **Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top** - I responded to a Ridgerunner report of a dislodged step south of Cosby Knob Shelter. For the walk up to the shelter I carried a swing blade to cut weeds and briars. It really was not needed as spring is just now moving up the mountain. At Cosby Knob I swapped my swing blade for a pulaski. The dislodged step was about .25 miles south of the shelter, near the end of my section. I reseated the step and added a couple of stakes that I cut from one of the old locust logs left near Cosby Knob. I made mental notes about possible projects for National Trails Day and did a quick tool inventory.

5/5 - Taylor Weatherbee - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Cleaned out remaining water bars and 2 turnpikes. Replaced one rotten water bar with a rock one. Reset one water bar that was dislodged. Scouted some NTD work.

5/6 - Jonny Bruce, Ernie Wiles, Diane Petrilla - **Goshen Prong Tr to Welch Ridge Tr** - Transitioning this section to new section leader, Jonny Bruce. Not a primo weather day, but the 3 of us hiked mulch and tools out to Double Springs, and delivered 60lbs. of mulch. We dug out a number of waterbars, instructing Jonny on this, as well as many other aspects of section maintenance. Jonny received safety packet, ATC Maintainers Fieldbook and JHA. Appreciate all previous work on this section by Ernie Wiles and Steve Dunkin.

5/7 - Franklin LaFond, Train Silvers Hiker - **Fontana Dam to Cody Gap**- Cut 2 large blowdowns between Fontana Marina and Fontana Shelter. Pruned woody vegetation between Yellow Creek and Cody Gap while walking section to locate large blowdown that hikers had been reporting. Cleared a lot of small limb debris from the trail.

5/7 - Tim Bigelow, David Gall, Kathy Gardner, William Sharp, David Shepler, Yugang Tan - **Davenport Gap to Mt Cammerer Side Tr** - Cleared and dug out many water bars particularly above Lower Mt Cammerer trail Trimmed vegetation. Worked on additional repairs to trail blow out where a large trail-side tree has fallen slightly south of Lower Mt Cammerer trail. (this may have already been reported) A very nice trail was already dug around the pit by other maintainers. The soil below the trail is very spongy and has a steep wall so collapse might be possible. Some temporary cribbing was added using logs on hand and work started to fill in the large pit

using soil from the root ball. Some steps were added to reduce slipping hazard on the steeper dug out area. A thru hiker lent a hand for a few minutes.



Work Day crew, L to R, David, Kathy, William, David and Yugang.



Big area of trail repair needed (photos courtesy of Tim Bigelow)

5/7 - Tracy Kressler, Gene Desrosiers, Randy Mitchell, Terry Martin, Hiram Rogers, Nicole Samu, Mike Harrington, Diane Petrilla - Mulch Operations - This incredible team came out of a drizzly, foggy, chilly (read: miserable!) day to hike mulch out to Double Springs. After returning to Clingmans Dome parking lot, we traveled a few miles by car and hiked additional mulch into Mt Collins. 260 lbs. delivered to DS, 200 lbs. to Mt Collins. All mulch buckets full and privy's swept. DS

mulch boxes are 100% and 30% full. Mt Collins box is 100% full (counting tarp and tools also stored in there).

5/8 - Franklin LaFond - Doe Knob to Fontana Dam - Had received reports from a couple of SOBO section hikers that there were a lot of new trees that came down during Friday's thunderstorms. Walked section to identify location of blowdowns. Removed several small blowdowns and trimmed smaller branches from large blowdowns to make trail passible. Took pictures at Campsite #113 at ATC request.

5/8 - Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder - Mulch Operations - Hauled mulch to Double Springs storage box. Checked level of buckets, which were still in good shape from yesterdays run of "mulch mules". Filled box furthest away from privy, about 30% full. Also cleared the crud where the box opens, along its hinges, to keep water from wicking over the edge into the mulch box.

5/9 - Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Cleaned some water bars leading North to our work site of 1.5 mi. At site lowered a water bar, needing the rock bar to pulverize rock to create a notch three inches deeper on the uphill side. Was somewhat successful with this project. A young newlywed couple, on day two of their honeymoon, stopped to talk and offer assistance. He readily saw that the log needed back filled, and for the next five minutes he enjoyed helping create part of the trail. The young newlywed helped carry a small locust log south to where another step will be added. We told them of two other must see observation spots in addition to Charles Bunion. Widened the trail by cutting dead roots in numerous spots as much as 6 to 12". Decided to cut dead roots to create better foot placement at troubled spot about 1.45-mile N of NFG. Spent about 45 mins. prying and sawing of select roots to make the up and down easier and safer for foot placement as well as keeping hand holds for safety. Janet was so proud that after 12 years she finally had accomplished her goal of improving this impediment. About 40 yards south of the root mess we busted up two large stones as to not be trip hazards, and added another step where needed by using the locust log carried by the newly wed. Cut the log to fit to make said step, filled with much dirt and stone. Later the remaining part of cut locust was carried down the trail S, to made a step. At about 5:45 or 6:15 we heard the oddest of commotion coming up the trail heading north. Four beautiful horses came up the trail, two wranglers and law enforcement ranger (she could ride as well), with the fourth horse saddled for the hiker at Charles Bunion with a hurt foot/knee. Off the horses the two wranglers jumped, tied their mounts and chained sawed the roots off the rock face. No more foot holds or

hand holds. Janet had it for about 1 hour the way she had hoped. It was amazing to see these powerful animals go up these eroded rocky inclines. And, anyone who has ever been around horses knows, when a horse strains going uphill he/she may poop! Sure 'nuff the rock steps had road apples all the way back to NFG. Do not know when the injured got out. We as trail maintainers were very proud to see 4 massive horses did not damage our efforts.



Mark and Janet's hard work to create hand and footholds.....



Quickly dismantled by horse wranglers!



Now repaired (work trip will be in July ATMC NL) *(photos courtesy of Mark and Janet Snyder)*

5/10 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock - Yellow Creek Gap to Brown Fork Gap - Hiked this section to look at large blowdown reported by hikers between Cody Gap and Yellow Creek crossing. Removed several small blowdowns with hand saw, clipped overgrown rhodos where corridor narrowed.

5/12 - Jonny Bruce - Goshen Prong Tr to Welch Ridge Tr - Hauled 1 bag of Mulch to DS Shelter, cleared water bars, trimmed some small limbs protruding into trail, and cut back blackberry brambles near trail.

5/12 - Philip Royer, Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - We have tentatively planned for 2 groups for NTD, one headed south from the trail to the shelter, and one headed north from Collins Gap. We also scouted and flagged the short "no man's land" between our access on the north side of Collins Gap, and the Pyle/Hughes access on the south end of Collins Gap.

5/13 - Dick Ketelle, Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle - Doe Knob to Fontana Dam - Cleared all blowdowns in this section of the AT. Two areas were exceptionally memorable due to the impassable obstructions created by clusters of downed trees. Dick and Taylor have ended this agony from the trail for future hikers. Only sawdust remains to mark their good work.