



February 2023

**No Regular First Saturday Work Trip in February**

There are no regular first Saturday work trips for December, January and February. Regular monthly work trips will resume on March 4, 2023, with work planned in the Nantahala National Forest, so please save the date. As weather and Trail conditions allow for the rest of the winter, and of course as you desire, sections can always use work, no matter what time of year! **Stay safe, healthy and warm!**

**New Volunteer Orientation Meeting**

The AT Maintenance Committee will be conducting a virtual meeting for **new Volunteer Orientation** on Wed, Feb 1, from 7 to 8pm.

This session is intended to provide an overview for new and prospective volunteers. Agenda topics include:

- Understanding of the 101 miles of the Appalachian Trail that the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club maintains
- The type of volunteer work that is performed
- Safety concerns related to trail maintenance
- Review of required forms
- Filling out volunteer work reports

Zoom Meeting link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83474312414?pwd=bG9pcGw4YUdkWjFYNnBUQldwUm5ldz09>

If you have any questions prior to the session, **please reach out to Franklin LaFond, 678-464-3380, [ox97game@aol.com](mailto:ox97game@aol.com)**

**Welcome Back Andrew Downs!**

With the departure of Drew Ball as Southern Regional Director for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Andrew Downs has been appointed Senior Director for the Southern Region of the AT/ATC. Andrew graduated from Appalachian State University with an undergraduate degree in Cultural Resource Management and North Carolina State University with a Masters Degree in Natural Resource Management after completing research on the A.T. in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Andrew was hired by ATC in 2006 to serve as the Associate Regional Representative in Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee and worked with the SMHC on 8 shelter projects. In 2013 he began serving as Central and Southwest Virginia Regional Director, a position that was expanded in 2017 to include all of Virginia and West Virginia and in 2019 to include a diversity of leadership responsibilities throughout the southern half of the Trail. He will now serve as Senior Regional Director in the South. We look forward to working with Andrew.

Rachel Cheatham remains as our Southern Regional manager for the AT in the GRSM and NC, and Sarah Adams as Southern Regional Manager for Georgia and the NNF.



Andrew Downs



**Seeking Committee Chair for National Trails Day,  
June 3, 2023**

Diane Petrilla, who has been in charge of NTD for the last 3 events since 2019, is taking a break this year. We are hoping someone can step up to help organize the event for 2023. Diane is happy to teach the outline of tasks, orient a new Chair to use of the NTD database if that is desired, etc. Planning usually starts in February. If you are interested, or just want to get an idea of what's involved, please contact Diane Petrilla at [petrillad@gmail.com](mailto:petrillad@gmail.com), or Franklin LaFond at [OX97game@aol.com](mailto:OX97game@aol.com).

**Recent Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee Meeting**

An ATMC Meeting was held on Wednesday January 18<sup>th</sup> via Zoom, chaired by Franklin LaFond. Highlights from the meeting include:

- **Still seeking Volunteer Recruitment Chair.** Contact Franklin LaFond, [OX97game@aol.com](mailto:OX97game@aol.com).
- Volunteers in the Park (including maintainers) will receive a parking tag as part of the Pay it Forward parking fee program in the GRSM. Details are TBD. For more information, please go to: <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/fees.htm>
- New Ridgerunners (2 short season and 1 long season) will start work on February 13<sup>th</sup>, so our trail condition reports should start being transmitted after that. More on our new RRs in the next newsletter!
- Rocky Top will revert to an all-volunteer model this year, with S.W.E.A.T being an ATC managed group.
- The Shelter sub-committee has developed a plan to fix the leaking skylight at the Mt. Collins shelter, and will order the materials needed. TN License plate grant monies have been applied for, by Dick Ketelle. If the fix is successful, materials for all of the shelters to do similar repairs will be ordered. In addition, the Silers shelter has been identified as one of the high-priority shelters needing repairs of various types in the near future.
- **NTD 2023 Chair needed** (see above)
- The ATMC approved endorsing a grant request to the NC Horse Council by the Backcountry Horsemen of NC to assist with diesel fuel costs

for 2023. Our support of the request is helpful in its approval since we are one of the major stakeholders in getting mulch to the remote A.T. shelters. The endorsement does not involve any monetary contribution on the part of the ATMC.

- An AT Visitor Use Management update was given by Morgan Sommerville. Taylor Weatherbee has assisted with compiling data for the ATC on visitor use.
- The ATMC Finance Committee has approved a \$5000 distribution from the ATMC Trust to the Friends of the Smokies to specifically support the Ridgerunner program.
- Future ATMC meetings will be held on an approximately quarterly basis.

**A. T. Work Trips From 1/8//2022 to 1/18/2023**

1/8 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock, Franklin LaFond, Cindy Mease - **Yellow Creek Gap to Brown Fork Gap** - Cleared 8 trees that have been known to us, size over 50"-over 100" in diameter. In two areas, the tree size and location caused hikers to side trail. Both areas were cleared and treadway issues were addressed.

1/9 - Dick Ketelle - **AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin** - Prepared TN License Plate grant application for replacement roof skylight material for Mt Collins shelter.

1/18 - Franklin LaFond, Randy Bullock, Diane Petrilla, Pete Berntsen, Taylor Weatherbee, Tim Ryan, Rick Hughes, Terry Martin, Dick Ketelle, Ann Farrar, Jim Rugh, Randy Mitchell, Phyllis Henry, Rick Waggener - **Club Mgt, Mtgs & Admin** - ATMC Meeting to discuss multiple issues for 2023.

**And Welcome Jim Rugh.....**

As our new maintainer for Sunup Knob to Low Gap! Jim is an expert maintainer, and already takes care of Clingmans Dome to Goshen Prong, but was interested in taking on another section! Thank you Jim!

Please send any items of interest, **photos**, and 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!