

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club



June 2023

National Trails Day Saturday June 3, 2023!

Plans are well underway for the 26th annual Smoky Mountains Hiking Club- Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee National Trails Day to be held Saturday June 3, 2023. Volunteers will meet at Sugarlands Visitor Center at 7am for an orientation and dispersal of tools for the day, and then carpool to their designated trailheads by 8:30am. We will provide a bagged lunch, a free commemorative T-shirt, and prizes! There will be a picnic at the end of the day.

Help is still needed for morning registration, starting with set-up at 6:30am until 8am. We also still need help with the afternoon picnic setup starting at 4pm. Please contact Franklin LaFond ASAP if you can help, at Ox97game@aol.com or 678-464-3380. Even if you can't do trail work on NTD, your assistance with these other tasks is very valuable!

Registration deadline is Friday May 19 (now).

You can register by:

Going to smhclub.org and clicking on the link displayed on the home page **or**

E-mailing Franklin LaFond directly at ox97game@aol.com.

Thank you for coming out for National Trails Day!



A. T. Work Trips From 4/6/2023 to 5/17/2023

4/6 - Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Rebuilt a collapsed 8ft locust log step; removed loose rocks from trail; removed branches from trail; cleaned waterbars/drains.

4/8 - Randy Mitchell - Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top - Walked the section from Low Gap to Cosby Knob to check on a blowdown near Cosby Knob Shelter reported in the April 2 Ridgerunner report. I was able to clear it (Blowdown #5 on report) with a handsaw. Swept our shelter, cleared the fireplace and fire ring and picked up trash in the shelter. Packed out about 1/2 gallon of trash and discarded gear. Filled mulch buckets in privy and swept floor. Spring was flowing really well. Continued south towards Camel Gap. Cleared a blowdown just north of Ross Knob and another just north of Camel Gap.

4/9 - Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Two days of heavy rain on April 7 & 8 has made it easier to see which waterbars/drains are draining well and which ones are in need of improvements. Also, I was able to identify where 2 additional waterbars were needed. Spend some time cutting out an area of dead roots, then added 1 new waterbar. The second area will need rocks moved, then a new rock waterbar built (good NTD project). Cleaned and improved many waterbars/drains; reset 1 rock waterbar; removed loose rocks from trail, removed many branches and one large limb; backfilled 1 locust step with stones/dirt.

4/10 - Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Today was a day of Trail Magic!!! Eight Trail Angels provided assistance today. In the a.m. a Trail Angel helped me slide the heavy limb (.6 mile) over the side of trail. Another Trail Angel helped me remove the large rock that had rolled from hillside.



In the p.m. a Trail Angel father and his Trail Angel son moved the two washed out large rocks off the trail (just over the edge should we need the rocks later). I added small rocks and dirt to fill in the 2 holes, will need to watch this area. Another Trail Angel helped me reset a rock waterbar (one of the rocks was too heavy to manage by myself). His family watch with interest & pride, then off they went to Charlies Bunion. I cleaned more waterbars/drains; reset 1 rock waterbar; cut trip roots; and removed loose rocks. On my way back to NFG, I met 3 thru-hikers. They carried the very heavy tree limb a short distance up the trail where we used it for gargoyles to block off a social trail.

4/10 - Patti Grady - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Walked in to Diane's work from last week. Worked from that point north clearing 21 more waterbars. Also used some large limbs and a large rock in three different areas to keep hikers on the trail. Chatted with about 20 thru hikers. They were all very appreciative of the work we do on the trail.

4/10 - Randy Mitchell, Elizabeth Davis, Bill Pyle, Taylor Weatherbee - Clingmans Dome to Miry Ridge - Removed 19 blowdowns between Clingmans and Miry Ridge, some small, some rotten and lifted off the trail, some substantial, including one 30 inch diameter tree removed skillfully by Elizabeth after multiple cuts. Car shuttle required.

4/11 - Peter Lloyd - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - Cleaned out water-bars; constructed three side channels with rocks to funnel water from seeps off the trail; cleared some debris off trail.

4/12 - Mike Harrington - Sassafras Gap (Pk) to Lewellyn Branch - Cleared water bars.

4/12 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Stekoah Gap to Locust Cove Gap - Spring brush out, cut and removed 3 small trees from corridor. Met 20 or so northbound hikers.

4/15 - Barbara Allen, Peyton Allen - Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail - Cleaned water drainages, swept shelter and picked up small

amount garbage, checked water source which is running well, checked toilet area and buried two clumps toilet paper. Encountered 28 thru hikers and 8 day hikers/ over-nighters on trail. Short distance up trail encountered a couple with dog. Educated them about dogs on trail after they said they did not know.

4/15 - Dick Kettle, Amanda Beal, Edward Fleming, Randy Mitchell, Bill Pyle, Kelly Conway - Gap W of Masa Knob to Newfound Gap - Removed one 18-ish inch diameter blowdown at about 1.5 mile north of Newfound. Added one more step to a 4 step rise about 200 yards south of Charlie's Bunion. Cleared several water drains on Rick's section below Icewater Spring and repaired on set of rock steps in the same area.

4/15 - Mark Shipley - Cosby Knob Top to Camel Gap - Cut vegetation.

4/17 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Yellow Creek Gap to Cody Gap - Cut two large trees that had fallen across the trail in an area with significant downslope. Notched both trees so as to make the trail safe and passable, but not to cause future disruption from the larger tree sliding downhill into already limited corridor.

4/17 - Taylor Weatherbee - Mulch Operations - Carried 120 pounds of mulch to the Collins mulch bin, swept out the privy and shelter, filled the 3 mulch buckets in the privy, knocked the cone down, and removed branches from the drainages from Fork Ridge to the shelter.

4/18 - Randy Bullock - Fontana Dam to Route 28 - Walked future relo with members of forestry and Konnorock.

4/20 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Tool box lock code is evidently no longer 1652; I was unable to access tools. Walked section; cleared rock dislodged by frost/thaw. Cleaned out Icewater shelter & fireplace. Scattered illegal fire pit at tenting area.

4/21 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Cleaned out water drainages.

4/22 - Dick Kettle, Randy Mitchell, Bill Pyle - Pecks Corner to Newfound Gap - We removed all

blowdowns reported by Ridgerunner and many "bonus trees" that were small stepovers or low overhead trees that were in the process of coming down into the trail corridor. On 4/21 we cleared to the Hughes Ridge Trail junction that involved several very large diameter dead spruce logs. We overnighted at the Hughes Ridge trail maintenance cabin and on 4/22 we headed back up to the AT and cleared one Ridgerunner reported blowdown about 0.6 mile north the Hughes Ridge Junction plus a couple of other small tree as before hiking down Bradley Fork Trail to the car we had place there on 4/21 to allow the one-way hike through this AT section. It was a strenuous trip and we saw many AT northbound thru hikers.



4/22 - Randy Bullock, Franklin LaFond, Randy Jenkins - Doe Knob to Fontana Dam - Removed 8 trees from the trail corridor, making tread repair as necessary. Inspected campsite 113, no observable variations at this time. Water source flowing with each access. Cut locust that had fallen along the trail for future needs.

4/23 - Bill Pyle, Kelly Conway, Taylor Weatherbee - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Cut 3 blowdowns off the trail.

4/24 - Bill Pyle - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - I returned to large rootball that we assessed on Friday 's trip. I trimmed two feet of roots and dirt from both ends to make passage more open.

4/24 - Charlie McDonald, Debbie McDonald - Mulch Operations - Transported 12 bags of mulch to the bins at Sugarlands Maintenance Shed. Current inventory is 32/20lb bags. While at the mulch tent we bagged 15/20lb. Current inventory at the tent 25/20lb. Also added 10 wheelbarrows of wet mulch to the tent. Thank you to all that have returned the empty bags. Friendly reminder: please report any mulch taken from the bins.

4/25 - Bill Pyle, Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Cleaned out the rest of the drainages on my section, including all those on the trail to the shelter. Worked around the Collins shelter to clean out the drainage ditches around the shelter, built a new drainage ditch to keep water draining in the trail to the privy to move away from the privy. Also filled the 3 mulch buckets and swept out the privy. There is another leak in the Collins shelter skylight, dang it! We will hopefully be replacing the skylights on NTD, but I may try to go up some day when it is not raining to do a temporary repair.

4/25 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - I cleared debris from the entire trail section. I also cleaned water drainage systems from False Gap to one mile SW of the gap.

4/29 - Randy Bullock, Franklin LaFond - Cheoah Bald to Wright Gap - Corridor clearing and assessment of areas needing future work to control erosion and trail creep. Cut 12 trees, one large oak that had fallen at a switch back. Repaired treadway. Cut locust logs to use for future projects to improve treadway. Opened the corridor significantly where rhodos had narrowed and caused trail to deviate. Moved rocks at a water source to help with pooling.

4/29 - Stewart Taylor - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Cleaned all the water bars/drainage ditches just short of the Fork Ridge Trail Junction.

4/30 - Adam Beal, Amanda Beal - Thunderhead to Spence (Bote Mt Tr) - Cleared water bars from Jenkins Ridge intersection to Thunderhead, checked on last year's log installation, filled mulch buckets and swept floor at Spence privy, dumped mulch from 5 contractor bags into the mulch bin and packed out about 10 empty bags along with some small bits of trash from shelter.

4/30 - Dick Ketelle, Ann Farrar - Doe Knob to Fontana Dam - With improving weather made a last minute decision to take a 1-person crosscut saw to work on blowdowns on trail north of CS 113. Removed one unreported blowdown. Made better bypass around a 24+ inch diameter dead oak across trail. Chewed through an 8-inch diameter locust log and dragged top off trail. Left the 14-inch diameter locust log as stepover to be removed during some future visit with chainsaw.

5/1 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Went in hoping to fix the leak in the shelter roof reported in the log book on a prior work trip to Collins. Unfortunately, there had been snow/sleet the night before and the roof was still wet and too slippery. However, I did discover that the occupants of the shelter the prior night had trashed the shelter, leaving limes, an onion, a large rope, a bunch of tin pans, a small aluminum grill pan, a large log stuffed in the fireplace, and a spill of some tomato sludge on the wood floor. Up the trail around 100 yards was a large bag of charcoal that was full of trash. I cleaned up the best I could, and carried out the trash, which I showed to a young lady at the back country office, who told me unfortunately there was no way to track down who was there. Then gave "privy" a ride to Gatlinburg on my way home.

5/2 - Randy Rainey, Jerry Troxler - Spence (Bote Mt Tr) to Russell Field - Cleaned out all of the water bars and drains. Cleared 8 blow downs. Picked up litter around both shelters. Litter consisted of about 4lb. of gear, fuel canisters, shoes and food packaging which we carried out. Swept out the privy, refilled the mulch buckets, and knocked down the cone. Cleaned out the fireplace. Repaired the cooking table. Two boards had come loose and we nailed them back in place.

5/3 - Jonny Bruce - Goshen Prong Tr to Welch Ridge Tr - Cleared and repaired water-bars from Goshen Prong to Double Springs. Put 2 fresh buckets of mulch in the privy, picked up trash around the shelter, and cleaned out fire-ring. Lots of Thru and section hikers up there today.

5/3 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Delivered 40 pounds of mulch(now

60% full) to Collins privy, knocked down the cone, filled one bucket with mulch(others full), got on roof and applied caulking where the roof had leaked, did some poor quality cleaning of the water bars between the shelter and the water source, and brought out a small bag of garbage left by the trail.

5/4 - Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Looked over what needs done on NTD. Tagged each location with an orange ribbon, writing a brief description and number on ribbon. On a sheet of paper noted what tools are needed for each location.

5/4 - Patricia Bryant, Michael Sutton, Peter Lloyd - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - Cleaned out water bars; reinforced leading edge of water bars where practical; cleaned out existing drainage side channels. Several AT Through-Hikers and Day hikers encountered on trail. All had favorable comments about the general condition of the AT in the Smokies.

5/5 - Kathy Gardner, Randy Mitchell, Bill Pyle - Derrick Knob to Thunderhead - The team safely cleared this section of all blowdowns and had opportunity to eliminate a number of tight places that did not meet trail standards. Kathy was instrumental in protecting the work zone and identified a number of head level dangers. Randy performed all of the sawing with a battery powered chain saw. Fair weather and songbirds complemented the good company to make our trip most enjoyable.

5/5 - Patti Grady - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Walked south to last cleared waterbar and worked my way north. Cleared only 10 waterbars as they needed roots cut out and significant digging. Sawed a large limb out of one waterbar.

5/5 - Stewart Taylor, Jerry Troxler - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Jerry Troxler and I cleaned all the rest of the water bars/drainage ditches on my section.

5/6 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Cleared drainage/water bars Reset a couple rock steps Cleaned trash from Icewater shelter & packed it out. Buried several surface poos

Many thanks to Dick Kettle & others who've helped with this section, especially since the washout last Summer. And thanks to Pete Berntsen, who's always ready to help!

5/7 - Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Removed 4 of our NTD orange ribbons, completing the work needed. These were shorter task that we probably would not get to on NTD. At .3 of mile we reset displaced locust log that served as trail edge retainer, filled with dirt & stone & secured log with rebar. A 30 year old thru-hiker stopped and helped us, as we reminded him of his grandparents. He was a true trail angel, carrying tools to our next location. Then off he went to Ice Water Shelter. Around .8 miles we had 4 tasks to do. Dug 2 waterbars wider and deeper, resetting the rocks on one. Dug 1 water diverter wider and deeper. Thinking we would need to reset a rock step on NTD, we were pleased that by adding a locust stake and tapping in the old rebar the step is now secure.

5/10 - Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Cut back berry vines, cleared vista and lopped tree branches from NFG north .5 miles

5/10 - Larry Johnson, Randy Mitchell - Low Gap to Camel Gap - Walked the Camel Gap to Cosby Knob and Cosby Knob to Low Gap sections as part of a loop hike of Camel Gap. Along the way surveyed trail conditions and checked for new blow downs. Per a Facebook comment from the Ridgerunner, we topped off the mulch buckets at the Cosby Knob privy. Due to Cosby Knob Shelter being closed due to aggressive bear activity, we limited our time in the area. We learned from hiker reports and the shelter register that a hiker had been bitten by a bear on 5/9/2023. As a result, rangers responded and killed the bear. The shelter closure signs were still posted and a camera was still in place. We packed several discarded socks and a pair of jogging pants as well as some micro trash.

5/10 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - Completed cleaning water control devices in this area. Did minor blackberry trimming and removed small blowdown branches.

5/12 - Patricia Bryant, Lee Van Heuvel, Peter Lloyd - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - This was a training session held by Greg Ritson, Randy Hughes, Tim Sollenburg of the AT Trail Conservancy and to address a wet, seep area on the trail. We cleaned water bars, removed one water bar; re-orientated another water bar, debarbed several sections of trail. Built a side channel 'french drain' in seep area and cut back vegetation. Greg made several suggestions particularly with the buildup of earthen ramps ahead of the water bars which Patricia and I will work on implementing on our next maintenance visits.

5/13 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Drainage. Digging. Lots of digging. In rocks.

5/14 - Meg Gill, William Gill - Chestnut Br Trail to Lower Mt Cammerer Tr - We cleared water bars, which were pretty packed with leaves and even some fallen limbs--we blame ourselves for that sorry state. We lopped branches that were encroaching on the trail. Checked area for illegal campsites, but saw no sign of them in the common places.

5/17 - Pete Berntsen, Patti Grady - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Tagged projects for NTD. Finished clearing remaining 45 waterbars.

A Special Thanks.....

To all of our cross-cut and chainsaw certified maintainers, as well as their swampers, who helped clear the A.T. of blowdowns during the chainsaw window this year. Thanks also to the horsemen from NC and TN who cleared over 240 miles of access trails and A.T. in the GRSM this Spring, and got 600lbs. of mulch to Cosby. Way to go!

