



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

P O Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

July 2017

APPALACHIAN TRAIL MAINTENANCE July 8 – Saturday

This work-trip will involve backpacking mulch to the Double Spring shelter and then performing trail maintenance on the return to the trailhead, including trimming back vegetation along the trail corridor, cleaning waterbars and drains, and performing other trail maintenance as needed. Participants should bring a moderate to large backpack (larger than a typical daypack if possible) in addition to their usual trail essentials (e.g., water, lunch, rain gear, etc.). A few additional backpacks will be available for those who may not have their own packs. Other tools will be provided. Hike: 6 miles RT, rated difficult. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 8:00 am for carpooling, or at the Clingmans Dome parking area at 9:30 am. **Pre-registration is required to ensure that we have appropriate tools.** Contact: Don Dunning, dedz1@aol.com, 865-705-2154.

DRINKWATER POOL OFF-TRAIL July 9 – Sunday

After hiking four trail miles to Ramsey Cascades, we'll follow a route beyond the top of this 80' cascade and continue upstream (in the river, ankle to waist-deep) about a half-mile to another large, cascade called Buck Fork Cascade by Harvey Broome. We'll continue about another half-mile to Broome's Drinkwater Pool, then return via the same route. (See Broome's entries for 7/7/55 & 7/7/57 in Out Under the Sky....) Wear waterproof boots & gaiters to keep feet dry, or wear mesh boots and settle for wet feet, or do both. **To register for this hike (and to learn the meeting place and time), email hike leader Greg Hoover at ghoover@cn.edu.** Total trip: 8 trail miles and 2 off-trail (river) miles, 8 hours, rated Strenuous. Drive: 90 miles RT {@4¢=\$3.60}. Leader: Greg Hoover, ghoover@cn.edu, and Greg Harrell.

EASY HIKE: FORKS OF THE RIVER WMA July 9 – Sunday

This will be a 5 mile walk in an urban wilderness in south Knoxville. Meet at the **McClure Lane parking area <see list>**, 3140 McClure Lane (off Island Home Pike in south Knoxville), at 1:00 PM. Leader: Don Dunning, dedz1@aol.com, 865-705-2154.

WEDNESDAY HIKE: ROUNDTOP TRAIL July 12 – Wednesday

This hike will follow the Roundtop Trail from Metcalf Bottoms to the Townsend Wye, 7.5 miles. Add one mile to walk from the Bottoms to the trailhead. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 8:00 am or at Metcalf Bottoms at 8:30 am. This will require a car shuttle. Wading the Little River required, so bring water shoes. Drive: 60 miles RT {@4¢=\$2.40}. Leader: David Grab, 671-5779, digrab@aol.com.

MOUNT STERLING/BAXTER CREEK July 15 – Saturday

For this challenging but beautiful hike, we will use a car shuttle, parking several vehicles at our Baxter Creek hike terminus in Big Creek. We then shuttle to begin our hike at Mt Sterling Gap and Trailhead. We climb 1900 ft. in 2.7 miles on a well graded trail, to the fire tower on Mt. Sterling. Climbing the fire tower offers fabulous panoramic views. For our return, we will hike down Baxter Creek Trail, a 4100 foot descent in 6.1 miles, observing the interesting ecosystem changes with altitude change. Hike: 9.2 miles, rated difficult. Meet at **Comcast on Asheville Highway <see list>** at 7:30am (earlier departure time to set up shuttle) or at Big Creek hiker parking lot at 8:30 am. Drive: 140 miles RT {@4¢=\$5.60}. Leaders: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com or 931-224-5149 and Cliff Caudill, skogsc3@me.com.

WEDNESDAY HIKE: LAUREL FALLS TO ELKMONT July 19 – Wednesday

We will hike from the Laurel Falls Trailhead to Elkmont by the old road to the Little River Trail to Huskey Gap Trail to Sugarland Mountain Trail to Laurel Falls Trailhead. Hike: 9 miles, rated moderate. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 8:00 am or at the Laurel Falls Trailhead at 8:45 am. Drive: 65 miles RT {@4¢=\$2.60}. Leader: David Grab, 671-5779, digrab@aol.com.

MAX PATCH TO ROARING FORK SHELTER July 22 – Saturday

We will begin our hike in the Max Patch parking area. We will circle around the bottom of the hill connecting with the AT and summit the top, depending on the weather/ visibility we may meander a while at the top before proceeding to the shelter. We will then follow the AT to The Roaring Fork shelter, which is approximately 3 miles from the summit of Max Patch. We will either eat lunch at the shelter or if we arrive too early we may venture beyond the shelter for a while to find a lunch spot. We will then retrace our steps back to Max Patch. If visibility was low in the morning, hopefully by the time we get back to the top there will be better viewing opportunities. Hike: about 9 miles, rated moderate. Meet at **Comcast of Asheville Hwy <see list>** at 8:00 am. Drive: 140 miles RT {@4¢=\$5.60}. Leaders: Ron Blessinger, 813-310-8457, and Jon Richey, jon.richey.spsu@gmail.com.

Visit our website: www.smhclub.org

SMHC Newsletter Editor: Don Dunning 865-705-2154

Send hike write-ups & photos to: dedz1@aol.com.

Please include preferred contact method (email, phone).

MOUNT LECONTE VIA BOULEVARD & ALUM CAVE July 29 – Saturday

This car shuttle hike will begin by driving hikers from the Alum Cave trailhead to Newfound Gap. The hike follows the Appalachian and Boulevard trails past the Jumpoff to Mount LeConte. After lunch at LeConte Lodge (pack your own lunch), we will descend along the Alum Cave trail back to the cars we left behind. Hike: 13.5 miles, rated difficult. Depart 7:00 am from **Comcast on Asheville Hwy <see list>** or 8:00 am from the Alum Cave trailhead. Drive 100 miles RT {@\$0.04 = \$4}

Leaders: Steven Miller, samiller71@rocketmail.com, 865-318-9882; and Bill Heaton, bheaton8@yahoo.com, 865-924-0095.

MEETING PLACES: **Alcoa Food City** = On right between 3rd & 4th stoplight (on Hall Rd., TN 35), a block before Big Lots. [Map Link](#). **Comcast on Asheville Hwy** = From Exit 394 ramp off I-40 go left (east) on Asheville Hwy, US-11E/25W/70, to signal light at top of hill; turn right, down into Comcast lot, 5720 Asheville Hwy; park to left of entry, about 2 lanes over toward the exit end of lot. [Map Link](#). **McClure Lane at Forks of the River WMA** - From I-40 Exit 388A to James White Parkway, TN-158W, to Sevier Ave/Hillwood Ave exit, left onto Anita Drive to Hillwood Drive, right onto Island Home Ave, to Island Home Pike, left on McClure Lane to 3140 McClure Lane. [Map Link](#).

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Karen Hackett, emerbrains@gmail.com,
4305 Barber Drive, Knoxville, TN 37918
David Huntley, David@MooreHuntley.com, 508-740-5309,
9026 Fox Lake Drive, Knoxville, TN 37923
Cullen Porter, jcullenporter@comcast.net,
P.O. Box 944, Clyde, NC 28721
Gwenell (Mitzi) Reynolds, jenmild@yahoo.com, 865-200-8288,
6375 Sky Song Lane, Knoxville, TN 37914

COMING EVENTS – AUGUST 2017

5 Saturday	AT Maintenance
6 Sunday	Charles Bunion
12 Saturday	Breakneck Ridge to Three Forks OT
19 Saturday	Election Picnic
26 Saturday	Spence Field and Rocky Top

NEWCOMER TO HIKING WITH SMHC?

Some hints: Our 'difficulty ratings' are gauged to SMHC members with some experience with our hikes, not to the general public, nor to sometime or flatland hikers who are all likely to find our 'easy, moderate, or difficult' seem to under-rate the difficulty. Always be prepared for worse weather (wetter, colder) than expected. Wear adequate boots. Bring rainwear, water, spare food. Each carpool rider should reimburse driver about 4¢ per mile. Doubts? Call a leader.

And please note: No dogs or firearms are permitted on any Club hikes, whether inside or outside of GSMNP

FOR THE RECORD

White Oak Sink

4/29/2017

On a beautiful day, with temperatures in the 80's and a great breeze, 19 members hiked into White Oak Sink, some for the first time. Upon our arrival, we were met by several friendly Park volunteers who cautioned us to take care of the special vegetation zone in the Sink. Signs and fencing helped reinforce that message. Also, the Blowhole Cave and the Rainbow Falls area are fenced off to provide protection for the bats that live there. Even with these limitations, we were able to stroll through the bottom of White Oak Sink and continue to the Bluebell Sink, where we had our lunch. The Bluebells were through flowering as were most of the Blue Phlox. We saw a few Shooting Stars still in flower along with Pink Lady slippers, several species of Trillium, Violets, and other early spring flowers. Some of the late spring flowers were beginning to flower, such as Synandra, Golden Alexanders, Green Violets, Largeleaf Waterleaf, and Downy Carrion Flowers. On our return trip, we passed several old home sites, where families once lived. We walked some old roads out, passing old machinery parts. Retracing our steps, we went up Schoolhouse Gap and exited the Park at Schoolhouse Gap. An easy downhill walk led to our cars and the end of a great walk. This was my first time as a hike leader for SMHC, and thanks to all, especially the "Super Group" of hikers.

Allen Sweester



Virgin Falls

5/7/2017

Seven hikers began the trek to Virgin Falls in the Virgin Falls Pocket Wilderness outside Sparta. The weather was perfect for hiking and we enjoyed our walk through the beautiful wilderness area. As happens on every hike the unexpected befell a member of the group. While crossing a wide stream on a hand cable the hiker decided to take an early morning bath in the stream. No injuries were sustained but the weather was a little chilly so three hikers decided to return to the warmth of their car. The four remaining hikers journeyed on and enjoyed several waterfalls and an outstanding overlook where we eat lunch (side note: if you want directions to this overlook do not ask Billy Heaton). The trail was crowded with families and dogs. We passed several backpackers, including a Boy Scout Troop. A great trip with a little adventure included.

Steve Dunkin and Brad Reese

Cumberland River Trail Loop

5/13/2017

Eleven club members and one visitor toured the backcountry of Kentucky's Cumberland Falls State Park and the Daniel Boone National Forest on the Cumberland River Trail. We enjoyed plentiful views of the river on both its placid section above the falls and the wild, rocky gorge below the falls. Along the way we also climbed to the restored CCC-era fire tower on top of

Pinnacle Knob for more panoramic vistas. A vintage car show displaced us from our anticipated trailhead parking, but gave us some very unusual trailside visuals on our return.

Hiram Rogers and Jean Gauger



Horse Creek, AT, Middle Springs Ridge Loop 5/20/2017

Six members and three visitors spent a great day in the Cherokee National Forest hiking above the Horse Creek Recreation Area near Chuckey, Tennessee. While it was super hot in Knoxville, the hikers enjoyed most of their day in temperatures hovering in the mid-70s. We got to cool off with several creek crossings to start our day, but then we had a slow, relentless climb to get to the AT. We were teased with a few flowers at our first lookout, but along the Middle Springs Ridge Trail, the flower show was amazing. At the highest elevation were dozens of Catawba rhododendron. As we started our descent, we saw fly poison and a stand of pink lady slippers. Showy flame azalea were present too, but the mountain laurel stole the show. We probably walked close to a mile through endless stands of laurel. We even saw a new variety (at least it was new to us). About a half a mile from our hike's end, we relaxed on the deck of the A-frame cabin on Squibb Creek while some of us cooled our feet off in the nearby stream. Rain was in the forecast, but it didn't fall on us! We had an amazing day.

Mary Anne Hoskins and Steve Madden



Slide Scar on Balsam Corner Creek Off-Trail 5/20/2017

On the third Saturday in May, eleven of the usual suspects gathered under a beautiful blue sky for an off-trail excursion up Straight Fork and Balsam Corner Creek to visit an enormous scar formed by a violent thunderstorm that visited the west flank of Balsam Mountain on July 15, 2011. The route had been well scouted by the leaders and thus hikers had no trouble deciphering the courses of anglers' trails and old railroad grades as far as feasible before plunging into the stream. The adventure of wading deep pools and negotiating boulder formations left in the wake of the raging torrent was a fitting prelude to the astonishment of beholding a natural scar so large that it is visible by satellite from outer space. The hike continued up Balsam Corner Creek and into the gloom of a boreal forest to reach the Balsam Mountain Trail, which afforded a nice easy stroll back down the mountains.

Mike Harrington and Ken Wise



Memorial Day Hike with CMC

5/29/2017

Five SMHC members joined eight hikers from the Carolina Mountain Club on our annual joint hike, this time a long loop in the Big Creek area. After the steep climb to Mt. Cammerer two hikers decided it best to backtrack the way we came up instead of continuing on the AT to Low Gap for a total of about 16 miles. The rest of the group enjoyed the remainder of the hike, though we didn't have the opportunity to interact a lot with our Carolina brethren. This long, hot hike was a good test of early season hiking fitness.

Brad Reese

VOLUNTEER NEEDED: SMHC HIKER DATABASE DATA ENTRY

A volunteer is needed to take over SMHC hike data entries. The job requires a monthly task of about 30-45 minutes to enter the names and addresses of hikers at each outing into a database, using the sign-up sheets that will be provided. Requires a PC, not a Mac, and free Access runtime software. Please contact George Ritter at rittergeo@gmail.com or 865-483-9758. Many thanks to Hiram Rogers and Jean Gauger, who have generously maintained this database for as long as we can remember!

PROPOSED MOUNTAIN VALLEY PIPELINE OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline would carry fracked natural gas for over 300 miles through the Virginia and West Virginia countryside, crossing over dozens of water sources, through congressionally designated protected areas, and breaching the corridor of the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy has serious concerns that this proposed pipeline would have very negative impacts on the Appalachian Mountains and would threaten the unique hiking experience that the Appalachian Trail provides on an unprecedented scale. The ATC strongly opposes the proposed pipeline: *"The proposed pipeline would tear down mountaintop forests in southern Virginia, dramatically scarring the scenic landscape of the AT, irreversibly damaging local ecosystems, and potentially causing local cities and towns that rely on outdoor recreation-based tourism to lose significant revenues."* The SMHC Board of Directors is in full agreement with the ATC position.

More on ATC's position can be found at www.appalachiantrail.org/MountainValleyPipeline, along with contact information and sample letters for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the U.S. Forest Service, and Virginia officials, if you would like to express your opinions.

TRAIL CLOSURE & CAUTION UPDATES

Rainbow Falls Trail - A 2-year trail rehabilitation project on the Rainbow Falls Trail kicked off in May under the Trails Forever endowment program. The Rainbow Falls Trail will be closed every week on Monday through Thursday until November 17, 2017. Due to the construction process on the narrow trail, a full closure is necessary for the safety of both the crew and visitors. The trail will be fully open each week on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and on federal holidays. The parking lot at the Rainbow Falls trailhead area will remain open (after June 15) so users can access the Old Sugarlands Trail and the Trillium Gap Trail connector trail.

Jakes Creek Trail in Elkmont Historic District – The Jakes Creek Trail from the trailhead to the junction with the Cucumber Gap trail will be closed on Monday through Friday until further notice due to demolition and construction work to preserve 4 structures and to remove 29 structures in the Elkmont Historic District. This construction paused during the firefly viewing period but is now back underway. Work along the Little River Trail has been completed and this trail is now reopened without restrictions.

Closures for Fire or Storm Damage – The following trails are closed due to Fire or storm damage until further notice: Chimney Tops Trail, Road Prong Trail, Sugarland Mountain Trail from Mt. Collins shelter to junction with Huskey Gap, Rough Creek Trail, and Bull Head Trail.

Trail Cautions – The AT between Low Gap and the Cosby Knob shelter is closed to horse traffic until further notice due to a compromised retaining wall. It remains open to hikers at this time, but extra caution is advised when passing through this section. The following trails have bridges washed out and require fording of streams: Cosby Nature Trail, Rabbit Creek Trail, Boogerman/Calderwell Fork Trails, and Enloe Creek Trail; these trails listed are known to have footlogs/bridges washed out and require fording of the stream, but hikers should be prepared to ford stream crossings in general. Trails throughout the Park may have downed trees due to storms which may be difficult to negotiate.

For the latest information, please contact the Backcountry Office at 865-436-1297.

EXECUTIVE ORDER FOR POTENTIAL WORKFORCE REDUCTIONS IN NPS

On March 13, President Trump issued an Executive Order that directs the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to prepare a plan to reorganize governmental functions and eliminate unnecessary agencies, components of agencies, and agency programs within the executive branch (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/13/presidential-executive-order-comprehensive-plan-reorganizing-executive>). OMB then issued a workforce reduction memo directing agencies to develop a plan over the next year to reduce their workforce and consider eliminating or merging programs and offices (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/memoranda/2017/M-17-22.pdf>). The Department of the Interior then issued a memo that directs the National Park Service to stop hiring at the higher pay grades and to not hire in DC and Denver. This is the first indication of the administration's thinking about downsizing the federal government as it relates to the NPS. These actions, and numerous comments from Secretary Zinke about restructuring and downsizing DOI agencies, are the initial steps of an effort that could threaten the park service as we know it.

While the formal public comment period ended on June 12, you still may wish to express your opinions to your elected representatives. The National Park Conservation Association suggests the following talking points for your consideration:

- Reducing park staff further only hurts an already challenged park service to meet its mission to protect resources and serve the public;
- Regional, Washington and Denver staff perform important functions supporting parks and should not be eliminated or undermined;
- Park programs outside of parks cost little and protect historic sites and facilitate recreational opportunities, all for the public good while stimulating the tourism economy. Do not undermine them;
- Privatizing park services would only cost more, lead to greater inefficiencies, provide a visiting experience devoid of the park service rangers who are deeply respected by the American public, and/or result in higher visitor fees to pay private firms to run park facilities.
- The park service is already struggling with too few staff, reduced services, and record visitation. Do not harm them further with administrative efforts to downsize, merge, streamline or otherwise undermine their ability to fulfill their mission.

In this challenging budget and political environment, all of our efforts are needed to protect our Parks, and to prevent short-sighted actions that may result in dismantling or undermining the National Park Service.

NATIONAL MONUMENTS UNDER REVIEW

On April 26, President Trump signed an Executive Order that requires the Secretary of the Interior to review 27 national monuments and recommend whether any should be altered or rescinded. The Antiquities Act of 1906 permits presidents to designate federal lands as national monuments in order to protect their historical, cultural, or scientific value and overall national significance. Nearly every president since 1906 has used this Act to protect America's cultural, historical, and natural resources at more than 150 national monuments. NO president has ever attempted to revoke a predecessor's monument designations.

Public involvement is vital in the designation and protection of national monuments and other national resources, to support the protection of these lands for their cultural, historic, and recreational value. You may wish to contact your elected representatives to express your opinions about the importance of protecting these national treasures. Public comment is open through July 9.