

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

January 2021



FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021

We wish you a Happy and Hopeful New Year!

The BOD of the SMHC wants to take this opportunity to wish you and your family and friends a **wonderful** Holiday Season and Happy New Year! We thank you for your patience and good practices during this extraordinary time. We are very hopeful that 2021 will gradually bring a progression towards "normalcy" and safety in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. Never has the outdoors and our mission as a Club been more important: to foster the enjoyment of hiking and the appreciation, education and conservation of the outdoors.

Best wishes to all,

Board of Directors, SMHC

MASKS UP!!!!

"The COVID Committee of the SMHC would like to respectfully remind everyone to have "Masks Up!" when congregating at trail junctions or other stops, not just at trailheads. In addition, with rising COVID case numbers this winter, if any hike leader feels uncomfortable leading a hike, please notify spangler@utk.edu."

OVER NINETY DUES CHANGE

The SMHC Board of Directors voted on December 7, 2020, to waive membership fees for anyone 90 years and older, effective January 1, 2021.

SMHC Hiking Guidelines During COVID

- 1. One hike leader will serve as pre-registration contact, with e-mail and phone # available in the write-up. Pre-registration is required for all hikes.
- 2. No more than 10 total participants may be on a hike (including leader, co-leader). Registration will have to be halted when there are 10 participants.
- 3. All meetups will be at the trail head, so adjust meetup drive time accordingly.
- 4. No carpooling except for people in their trusted "bubble."
- 5. Hikes will be chosen to avoid crowded trailheads and crowded trails.
- 6. Events should be no more than a 2-hour drive from the Knoxville area.
- 7. Avoid hikes that will involve a key swap or shuttle.
- 8. Hikers must sign a release form, with accurate contact information.
- 9. Inform hikers if anyone becomes ill with in a few days of the event, with symptoms concerning for COVID-19, to contact the hike leader immediately. (In addition to the usual pre-hike info). For regular pre-hike prep, see

http://www.smhclub.org/outingpreparation.htm.

- 10. All participants must have a face mask, to use at trailhead meetup, and then if needed, when distancing on the trail from other hikers is not feasible.
- 11. Maintain 6 ft. of distance between hikers, and if possible 10-12 ft.
- 12. Stop at junctions to be sure group is all present, given the spacing out.
- 13. All participants should have hand sanitizer or wipes.
- 14. No sharing of food.
- 15. If leader(s) or any participant feels sick, please stay at home.
- 16. If leader(s) need to alter planned activity, please contact an SMHC Board member ASAP to discuss proposed changes.

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MEET YOUR 2021 BOARD MEMBERS

Beginning with this issue we will feature a member of your 2021 Board of Directors. This month Board member is the Club President Diane Petrilla.



I was born in Staten Island, NY, and moved with my family (including two younger brothers) many times while growing up due to my father's job as a Westinghouse project manager. From about 12, I knew I wanted to be a physician; I have no idea why, since there were no doctors in my family. But all of my subsequent education (University of Chicago undergraduate and Georgetown University School of Medicine) helped me reach my goal. After a Family Practice residency in Huntsville, AL., my husband (also a physician) and I began private practice in Sewanee, TN. Both of us were committed to practicing in an underserved area, and Sewanee was adjacent to Grundy County, one of the poorest of Tennessee's 95 counties. Being a primary care physician in a rural setting with a small hospital meant much work- from office practice, in-patient care, nursing home care, and serving as Director of The University of the South's Student Health Service for many years. I managed many chronic health conditions and took much pleasure in working with patients over time to control their hypertension, cardiovascular disease risk, and diabetes, among many other things. In between, I would intermittently have to run across the parking lot to the hospital to take care of a cardiac arrest or a gunshot wound, a chainsaw laceration, or a copperhead bite! And much more. I saw my first case of lead poisoning in private practice from a moonshinemaker who distilled their mash through an old car radiator! I also traveled with University students to Haiti five different times to work with people there and open eyes (including my own) to global poverty issues. My husband and I raised three wonderful children in Sewanee, Joe, Allyson, and Adrianne.

Life brings changes, however, and in 2010 I left Sewanee after 25 years of practice. I did traveling physician work for one year and had the great adventure of working with the IHS on the Navajo reservation in Ft. Defiance, Arizona, for six months as one of my assignments. I could order a Medicine man consult on the computer. In 2011 I moved to Oak Ridge, where my parents had settled since 1975. I re-married (my re-discovered high school sweetheart!) and worked as a hospitalist for Roane Co. Medical Center and the Summit Medical Group. I volunteered at the Free Medical Clinic in Oak Ridge for five years, then retired from medical practice in 2018, after 30 years.

Visit our Website: www.smhclub.org

My great joy now is spending time with my family, including two granddaughters, and of course, HIKING. My father, George G. Ritter, instilled a great love of hiking and backpacking in myself and my children, beginning three decades ago, and I feel that we live in one of the richest outdoor areas in the country. My bucket list of trails yet to be hiked is long- I look forward to many more adventures! And it is an incredible privilege to share that love of the outdoors with people I volunteer with and hike within the

~Diane Petrilla

UPCOMING HIKES Meeting Places

Pre-registration with the leader is required for the hike and to ensure you know when and where to meet. We request that you cancel your registration ASAP if unable to hike to allow someone on the waiting list to take your spot. Please familiarize yourself with the Club guidelines in this newsletter.

Abrams Falls via Cades Cove Saturday — January 2

The eight-mile round-trip hike to Abrams Falls in winter is a favorite of the SMHC. We will meet at the Abrams Falls trailhead in Cades Cove and hike to the falls and back. The falls in the winter has a different feel than in the summer. Contact the hike leader Steve Dunkin for details and to sign up for the hike. Numbers will be limited for the hike.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Steve Dunkin, 865-202-3286, jsdunkin1302@gmail.com

Cumberland Trail Anderson Mountain Segment Saturday — January 9

This segment of the Cumberland Trail starts in the New River Valley. From the trailhead along Norma Rd, the trail climbs steadily. There are occasional views of the New River. We pass several coal mining remnants and some rock formations along the way. There are some excellent views of more distant mountains and Buffalo Mtn windmills at higher elevations. Near the top of Anderson Mtn, there are open meadows, more views, and remnants from coal mining long ago. We will retrace our steps back down to the valley. Before returning to the cars, hike a short way down to the river for an up-close look. Hike 8.5 miles with 2000 ft elevation gain. It is rated moderate to difficult, depending on the weather. If winter weather makes the steep drive over the mountain to Norma Rd difficult, we may choose to hike to Cross Mtn at the other end of the segment. Drive 70 miles RT from Oak Ridge caravan location. *Pre-registration with the leader is required*.

Leader: TIm Bigelow bigelowt2@mindspring.com 865-607-6781

Digital Newsletter Suggestion

Thanks to those who changed from the print version to the digital newsletter. If you are receiving the newsletter by mail, consider going digital. Check out and review the club digital club newsletter at http://www.smhclub.org/index.htm under Outings on the menu bar. If you have a printer you can print out a personal copy from the online pdf. Email smhcnewsletter@gmail.com to make the change.

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Snake Den Ridge/ Appalachian Trial/ Low Gap Wednesday — January 13

This beautiful, challenging loop hike is rated difficult (13.3 miles; 3,942 ft. elevation gain). We hike up Snake Den Mountain and along the ridge-top, past spectacular views, to the Maddron Bald Trail junction at mile 5. (Some hikers may opt to turn back here for less distance). After lunch, we climb to the A.T., near Inadu Knob (5,780 ft., mile 5.7) and follow a scenic ridge-top down to Camel Gap and up (~400 ft. elevation gain) toward Cosby Knob. The shelter makes a good rest stop. It's downhill to the Low Gap Trail, then 2.9 miles along Cosby Creek to the trailhead and parking lot. (If there is snow in the mountains near Cosby, we might take a low-altitude, alternate hike from the same parking lot: Lower Mt. Cammerer Trail past Campsite #35 to Groundhog Ridge and return.) Meet at Cosby Campground hiker parking lot ready to hike at 8:00 am (Group #1) or 8:30 (Group #2). *Pre-registration with the leader is required*.

Leaders: Eric Sundstrom, <u>sundstrom.eric@gmail.com</u>, or text 865-406-8794; Ron Brandenburg, <u>ronb86@comcast.net</u>, or text 865-898-7602 to register.

Panther Creek State Park Saturday — January 16

Hiking Panther Creek State Park in the winter offers many clear views of Cherokee Lake and its islands. We will hike a scenic loop comprising several of the park's trails while avoiding those frequented by bikers and horses. The trails will include the flat Panther Path and Recycling trails plus the hilly Ore Mine and Pt Lookout trails. It is rated moderate due to steep but short climbs over 7 miles. Meet at the Swimming Pool parking area at 9 am. *Pre-registration with the leader is required*.

Leaders: Steven Miller 865-318-9882

<u>samiller71@rocketmail.com</u> Claudia Dean 865-206-0145

claudiadean0@gmail.com

Big Creek Trail to Backcountry Campsite 36 Saturday — January 23

Join us for this 12-mile round-trip hike up Big Creek to BCS 36 (passing BCS 37) and back. The Big Creek Trail passes the Midnight Hole swimming location and follows a gradual incline up an old lumber company railroad bed to one of the most popular backpacking sites in the Park (BCS 37). We will walk past BCS 37 for a mile to the next campsite. Often you can see the remains of lumber era iron artifacts scattered around this site. We will meet at the Baxter Creek Trailhead parking area. Contact Steve Dunkin to pre-register for the hike. *Pre-registration with the leader is required*.

Leader: Steve Dunkin, 865-202-3286, jsdunkin1302@gmail.com

SMHC Newsletter Editor: Dale Potter

Send hike write-ups to smhcnewsletter@gmail.com. Please include both email and phone contact information. Please submit photos from your hike if available. Submit photos from your hike to the above email and to Website Manager Michael Vaughn mvaughn@knology.net.

Ramsey Cascades Wednesday — January 27

This popular hike, rated moderate (8.0 miles), starts on an old logging road, goes through a beautiful, old-growth forest, and ends at a cascade with a 90-foot drop. Doris Gove's trail notes describe it as the highest waterfall accessible by trail in the park. We follow the Middle Prong, then Ramsey Prong, ascending ~2,200 feet. The last mile is rocky and slow going. Return the way we came. (If there is snow in the mountains, we might take a low-altitude, alternate hike from a nearby trailhead: Old Settlers Trail to the cemetery at mile 4.5 and return.) Meet at the trailhead at the end of Ramsey Prong Rd. Ready to hike at 8:30 am (Group #1) or 9:00 am (Group #2). Pre-registration required. Leaders: Eric Sundstrom, sundstrom, eric@gmail.com or text 865-406-8794; Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602 to register.

Blanket Mountain Hike with a History Slant Saturday — January 30

We plan to go to numerous homesites of various people who lived in the Elkmont area as we work our way up Jakes Creek. We will visit the homesites of Lem Ownby's siblings and will have photocopies to share with the group. We will then hike to the Avent Cabin with a side trip to the homesite of the Avent's daughter's cabin and then on to Sam Cook's, etc. After viewing these sites, the hike will follow the trail to Jakes Gap and then the old jeep road to the fire tower location. Logging history will be pointed out. Due to safety, snow, ice, and the water level will prevent some of the explorations yet will save us from briars galore.

Park at the upper lot for Jakes Creek, ready to leave at 9 am. Total mileage is 9 miles and rated strenuous due to steep elevation gain; however, the leaders will maintain a slower pace. *Pre-registration with the leader is required*.

Leaders: Mark and Janet Snyder, (865) 448-1183

Reminder for Members: Dues for 2021 are now due. For information about membership and paying your dues visit http://www.smhclub.org/membership.htm



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Black Mountain Hike

November 7

With deep blue skies, colorful fall leaves, valley vistas, and monolithic rocks all around, we 7 hiked an unusual route through and around the Black Mountain crest. We took overlook photos, descended the stone steps (I reminisced how back in the day before it was the Cumberland Trail, we scooted down between the leaf-filled crevasses — so much more fun!), then played at climbing the rocks before going to the campsite for lunch. On the way back, we left the CT and hiked along the bluff base, learn a little geology, and ascended another trail where we found a hole in the rock, a CCC foundation and chimney and spring house, and then back to the car. Beautiful day and great fun with a really fun group.

~ Betty Glenn





"There really is no correct way to hike the trail, and anyone who insists that there is ought not to worry so much about other people's experiences. Hikers need to hike the trail that's right for them..."

~Adrienne Hall

Homesite Hike in The Copeland Creek Area Off-Trail

November 8

On an unusually warm November morning, eight members began this hike with a visit to the Frazer Cemetery. This was followed by visiting numerous homesites, the site of Evans Chapel church, and four more cemeteries on six named creek drainages. Along the ridgetops dividing these streams, there were some brilliant displays of autumn foliage. All enjoyed a great day in the woods, exploring some of the old roads and trails of the area.

~~ Ed Fleming, Hiram Rogers





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Lakeshore Trail to CS 90

November 18

Pat's report from group 1: Lakeshore Trail to CS 90.

After a soothing drive through The Dragon, 7 hikers making up Group 1 met at the Lakeshore trailhead. What a perfect day for a hike! The air was a crisp 30-something degrees with no wind, and the sky was a brilliant blue. We headed out the trail with a spring in our step (that spring was to generate a little heat). The hike write-up mentioned LOTS of rolling hills along the way, and Lakeshore really delivered. Just the first uphill pull had us shedding various layers. We easily discovered the car bodies scattered along the first mile or so of the hike. There were many views of Fontana Lake along the way, as brilliant a blue as the sky. One hiker had gone ahead to reach the intersection with Lost Cove and was already headed back to his car before we even got there. Our scintillating company was nott enough to convince him to stay and have lunch at Campsite 90. After all, he didn't need that 0.4 miles for his map. (I will admit that he had a meeting to attend and was conscious of his time). So 6 of us sat socially distance on the logs and enjoyed our time in the sun. Another hiker decided that the day was so perfect that she was going to make the loop up Lost Cove to the AT and then down to the cars so that she could mark off more miles on her map. If you have ever gone up Lost Cove, you know what a challenge she had in store. So 5 of us headed back to our cars. The rolling hills are just as bad coming back as they were going. No one complained (at least to my face) because it was such a perfect day. As we milled around our cars, here came our map marker bounding down from the AT, excited to have completed the loop. It was just another beautiful day in the mountains!

Ron's report from Group 2:

What a gorgeous day for a hike. Not a cloud in the bright blue sky. Of the four hikers gathered at the trailhead for this hike, two were club members but had not hiked with us on Wednesday. About a mile and a quarter up the trail, we saw the remains of an old car. In the next half mile, four more remains of old cars were discovered. Three of the cars were complete enough that an expert in 30's cars probably could identify them. The other two were just fragments with little to identify them. For the most part, the leaf-covered trail was in excellent condition, but there were a few rocky places. Where we ate lunch (I'm not sure it was really Campsite 90) was something to see. It is a wide-open area with lots of large rocks with Eagle Creek running around it. I suspect that if Fontana Lake were full, this area would be underwater. Since the land was dry and had some grass and other plants growing on it, it probably has not been flooded for some time. Someone went to a lot of work to build a unique fire ring. A series of seats made of large flat stones surround the fire ring. If we had discovered that earlier we would have sat there while we ate lunch. It was so pleasant sitting there in the sun on the stone seats that lunch took much longer than usual. The campsite is about 200 feet lower than the trailhead, so the hike out had about 200 feet more elevation gain than the hike in. 11.3 miles total with 1907 feet of elevation gain. Thank you, Pat, for planning a wonderful hike. Traffic on the Dragon was very light.

~~ Leaders Pat Watts and Ron Brandenburg





Pogue Creek Canyon

November 21

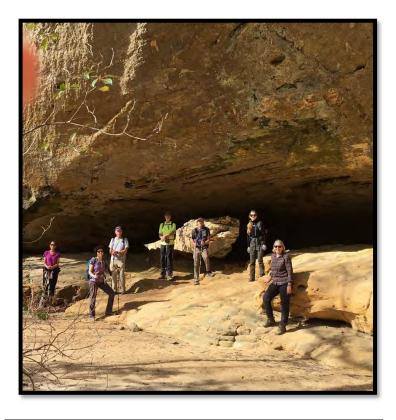
On a gorgeous sunny and cool November day, 6 SMHC members and one visitor hiked in the Pogue Creek Canyon State Natural Area. Beginning with the Overlook Loop, we walked out to a view of high sandstone bluffs typical of the Cumberland Plateau. We then picked up the Pogue Creek Canyon Trail, descending and ascending within the gorge, past cliff walls and rock formations, including arches. The leader took a "wrong" spur trail, which led to the discovery of a high and delicate waterfall plunging over the bluff (quite beautiful). However, some smart alec in the group named it "Wrong-way Falls." Further along, we found the correct spur trail to Circle Bar Arch! We continued to Kildeer Arch (seen in the photo), with its interesting bird-like shape. At the end of this trail, we ate on the saddle between 2 mesas, with another great view. The hike back was just as pleasant, and we took in the other half of the Overlook Trail. This was a great group, with lots of laughter! Pogue Creek Canyon never disappoints!

~ Leader Diane Petrilla

Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity.

~John Muir

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Big Ridge State Park

November 28

A wonderful group of 8 members started out on a cold but clear morning to explore this unique State Park which offers historic cemeteries, the site of an 18th-Century fort, a CCC dam, and lovely views of the Norris Reservoir. Many thanks to Claudia Dean who led the hike for Randy Mitchell who cancelled due to a family emergency.

~ Cindy Spangler





Welcome SMHC New Members

Bill & Roxine Behrens, Theresa & Fred Holtzclaw

Recent Loss of SMHC Member

The SMHC is sad to learn that member Margaret Matteson died on November 29, 2020. Memorial donations in her honor may be made to friendsofthesmokies.org in Margaret's name.

2020 SMHC Year End Reports

Each year at the Annual Banquet the year end reports are announced to the membership. With COVID the club has continued to be as active as possible this year. The following pages contain the year end reports for the club. This is to provide the membership with copies of what the club has accomplished this year. As you read them, remember that the club needs you to continue to help support the SMHC as we start 2021.

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2020 SMHC Year End Reports

Appalachian Trail Maintainer's Committee Report 2020

Our work as maintainers this year on the A.T. was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The GRSM NP closed on March 24. The Nantahala NF closed trailhead facilities and other access points, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, along with the National Park and National Forest, asked maintainers to stand down from their work. National Trails Day was canceled due to the pandemic. When maintainers were allowed to return to work after about three months, it was with careful guidelines about group size, masks, social distancing, and significant limitations on work related to shelters and privies. ATC Ridgerunners had been pulled from the A.T. for the season, so we also had less incoming data about Trail conditions. In spite of that, when we were allowed to work, I am very proud of the enthusiastic return to volunteer maintenance and adherence to safety guidelines we saw! Our Sawyers (particularly Dick Ketelle, Franklin LaFond, Bill Pyle, and Taylor Weatherbee) took care of multiple blowdowns in the Park and NNF with chainsaw variances and cross-cut expertise. Mulch teams got bins stocked up. The inability to be out doing general maintenance for months caused much extra work for section leaders and crews, but they got out there and took care of their sections! Saturday workdays resumed, with great leadership. Across the entire A.T., volunteer hours were down about 50% from 2019, and we were no exception.

However, we reported total fieldwork hours in the N.P. and NF of 2392 hrs. (4914 hrs in 2019), total fieldwork and admin hours N.P. and NF: 3847 hrs. (6708 hrs. in 2019) and grand total N.P. and N.F. hours with travel: 5342 hrs. (9014 hrs. in 2019). We look forward to a busy and productive 2021 and are <u>very</u> grateful for everyone's hard work under such unusual conditions this year—[Note: Maintainer Awards will be published in the next SMHC Newsletter].

~Diane Petrilla

Conservation Report 2020:

Probably the most significant national conservation achievement of 2020 was the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, which our Senator Lamar Alexander had a leading role in. The Club strongly supported the Act with correspondence to our Federal Representatives and Senators, and its enactment will permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and provide funds for the maintenance backlog in our National Parks. We also wrote letters of support on other environmental issues. National issues included supporting the closure of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail at the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic, at the request of the ATC in March. On more local issues, in May, we submitted comments to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park regarding Metcalf Bottoms Access Improvements and on two occasions commented on the Park's Wears Valley Mountain Bike Trail proposal, supporting the proposal but opposing any changes to allow bikes on existing Park trails. We also provided in June comments to the US Forest Service regarding the Nantahala- Pisgah Forest plan revision that is currently ongoing and in November a letter of support for land acquisition by the State of Tennessee along the Emory River (land gap on Cumberland Trail between Wartburg and Nemo).

~Will Skelton

Trust Distributions 2020

Two trusts, a Conservation Trust and an AT Trust, are the result of generous donations from past members. (Lionel Edney and Charlie Klabunde were major contributors, via their estates.) Other members have given memorial donations, or 'donations in appreciation' to the SMHC Trusts. A process was established in 2018 to determine amounts to be donated from the Trusts, consistent with the Club's objectives and with Trust terms. The Board and ATMC designate distributions to be made from the respective trusts. The 2020 Trust Distributions were as follows:

Conservation Trust: The SMHC Board designated these distributions (made in early February): \$2000 to support the AT Ridgerunner program of the Friends of the Smokies (FOS); \$1000 to support the FOS Trails Forever program; \$2000 to Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, to support their scholarship program; \$1000 to the Cumberland Trails Conference, to support the CTC Alternative Spring Break program; \$1000 to support the Sierra Club's Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program in the Knoxville area; \$1500 to Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS).

<u>AT Trust</u>: The ATMC designated in September 2020 a distribution of \$3000 to support the **AT Ridgerunner** program of Friends of the Smokies. Some 2020 ATMC-supported activities were interrupted by Covid 19 restrictions. For 2021, several ATMC activities will be funded by carryover of prior (late 2019) AT Trust distributions. This includes support for shelter and privy maintenance, volunteer outreach and development, and National Trails Day.

~Jean Gauger

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2020 Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and AT Maintenance Committee Treasurer's Report Summary

This report summarizes the status of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club finances on December 7, 2020. The club's funds are maintained in two accounts, one for overall activities and the other for Appalachian Trail Maintenance. A significant portion of the reserves is invested with the Trust Company of Knoxville, including a memorial fund consisting of donations from members bequests plus the Life Member Dues fund. Details of the Trust Company fund donations are in a separate report by Jean Gauger. The Conservation Fund comes from donations by members above the annual dues and is used for projects supporting conservation efforts both inside and outside the club that improve hiking areas in the region. In the past year, donations totaling \$1500 were made to Cherokee Forest Voices, Legacy Parks Foundation, Foothills land Conservancy, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, and Tennessee Parks and Greenways.

SMHC Primary Account Balances

Operating Funds \$24,703.36

They are used for newsletter and handbook printing, postage, Web site, liability insurance, and other administrative expenses. The source is annual membership dues and some donations.

Conservation \$2096.41

This fund is used for AT improvements and for other conservation purposes. These funds come from dues paid in excess of the annual minimum and from other donations. Several donations to local conservations are planned this year.

Life Membership \$23,500.00

Interest from this fund is used for newsletters, handbooks, and other life membership expenses. The source is Life Membership dues. (The Life Membership funds are included in the Trust Company investments and have grown in value significantly above this amount)

SMHC Funds invested at the Trust Company \$227,435.70

(in addition to the Life Membership Fund)

Total Current Equity \$252,139.08

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee Balances

Operating Funds \$47,301.78

They are used for trail maintenance expenses, including privy construction, shelter and projects, sanitation supplies, tools, brochures, and administrative and incidental expenses. These funds come from donations and grants targeted specifically at Appalachian Trail and shelter maintenance and improvements. Sizeable donations were received from Friends of the Smokies, Monte Swanson, and National Trails Day registrations.

ATMC Funds invested at the Trust Company \$199,847.67
Total Current Equity \$247,149.67

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

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Recording Secretary: Steve Dunkin jsdunkin1302@gmail.com

Treasurer: Tim Bigelow bigelowt2@mindspring.com
Trust Liaison: Jean Gauger jeangaugerr@yahoo.com
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