



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

June 2021

President Message

Dear SMHC Members,

We are very happy to bring you, in this issue of the SMHC Newsletter, updated and revised guidelines regarding our activities in the setting of COVID. The guidelines lift many restrictions we have had in place for over a year and have been voted on and approved by the SMHC COVID Sub-Committee. They are based on CDC guidelines found at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>.

We are fortunate that what we do as a Club involves primarily outdoor activities. There are settings, however, in the context of what we do (carpools, shuttles, key swaps, crowded trailheads) *where we would expect unvaccinated participants to continue to wear a mask, as per the CDC guidelines*. We will continue to keep an eye on trends in case rates and, of course, CDC recommendations moving forward. Overall, however, this is a BIG day! We are so happy to share this with you.

Please mark your calendars for our August 14 Election Picnic, which will be held at GATOP Gardens in Knoxville. For those of you who have never visited Dr. Alan Solomon's magical 23 acre wooded and landscaped gardens with fabulous trees, ferns, native and rare plants, waterfalls, and sculptures, this will be a true pleasure and privilege. We are so grateful to Dr. Solomon for giving us this opportunity. More details will be coming from the Social Committee.

As always, stay safe, and I am *so* grateful for the actions you have taken since March of 2020 to keep yourself and others healthy.

All my best,

Diane Petrilla M.D.

President

SMHC Hiking Guidelines During COVID

1. One hike leader will serve as pre-registration contact, with e-mail and phone number available in the write-up.
2. **Pre-registration is still required for all hikes.**
3. **Group size may now be up to 20.** Higher numbers of registrants should be split into two groups.
4. **Meet-up locations with carpooling to the trailhead, shuttles, and key swaps are acceptable.** Hikers may still choose to drive to the trailhead independently, depending on their comfort level.
5. **Unvaccinated individuals should wear a mask for carpooling, shuttles, or key swaps, and at crowded trailheads. Masks are not required for fully vaccinated people. In the GRSM NP, people that are unmasked are assumed to be fully vaccinated.**
6. Hikers must sign a release form with accurate contact information.
7. Inform hikers if anyone becomes ill within a few days of the event, with symptoms concerning 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>.
8. All participants should have hand sanitizer or wipes.
9. If the leader(s) or any participant feels sick, please stay at home.
10. If the leader(s) need to alter planned activity, please contact an SMHC Board member ASAP to discuss proposed changes.
11. Guidelines for A.T. maintainers will have to be reconciled with the National Park, National Forest, and ATC, particularly in regard to group size.

For those who begin meeting at specified locations for carpooling, please expect the re-institution of \$.05/ mile car-pooling fee for the drivers to the trailheads.

Greenbrier Area Reopened

Great Smoky Mountains National Park officials announced that the Greenbrier area of the park reopened to all public use at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, May 7. The area has been closed since January 11 to replace the Ramsey Prong bridge and the Porters Creek culvert. Construction crews were able to complete the repairs before the anticipated opening date of May 15. All trails, roads, and facilities in the Greenbrier area are now fully accessible to the public.

Abrams Falls Trail Rehabilitation

Great Smoky Mountains National Park officials announced that a Trails Forever rehabilitation project in Cades Cove will begin next week on Abrams Falls Trail. The trail and associated parking areas will be closed May 10, 2021, through November 10, 2021, excluding federal holidays, on Monday mornings at 7:00 a.m. through Thursday evenings at 5:30 p.m. weekly. The trail will be fully open each week on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Road Closures

Cades Cove Loop Road- Vehicle-free Wednesdays May 5-Sept 1, 2021

Cades Cove Loop Road- Fully Closed for resurfacing Sept 7-Sept 27, 2021

Forge Creek Road- through July 31, 2021

Newfound Gap Road- Intermittent delays through Nov 30, 2021 Bridgework Replacement

Meet Your 2021 Board Members

This month's board member is the Club's Recording Secretary, Steve Dunkin. Steve has been an SMHC member since 2010. He has served on the Board since 2016. Steve is a retired Marine and a retired special education teacher. He currently teaches as an Adjunct at Pellissippi (History) and has less than 100 miles to finish his first "map." Steve maintains the section of the AT between Clingman's Dome and Goshen Prong. He also volunteers in the park, maintaining the two backcountry campsites on the Big Creek trail.



Reminder for Members: Dues for 2021 are due. If you have not paid your dues for this year, please do ASAP. Dues are important in the operation of the club. COVID has resulted in a delay in collecting dues for 2021. For information about membership and paying your dues visit <http://www.smhclub.org/membership.htm>

"Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread."

~ Edward Abbey

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club WANTS YOU

Have you wanted to lead a hike? Have you wanted the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club to schedule a specific hike that you enjoy? Have you wanted input into the hikes that the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club schedules each year?

Ken Wise and the Program Committee are looking for hike leaders to lead one or more hikes in 2022. The Program Committee would like to include new leaders and new trails for 2022, but **your input** is needed. If you are interested in leading a hike in the Smokies, or any of the surrounding National Forests, National Parks or State Parks, you need to respond to this request immediately. Email Ken at kwise@utk.edu and **put Hikes 22 in the subject line**. Suggest what hike or hikes you would like to lead and when. You should include in your email a brief write up of the hike similar to upcoming hikes in this newsletter.

If you are interested in leading hikes, but do not have a specific hike, you can email Ken and tell him where you would like to lead a hike, what time of year, and how long of a hike. For dates and possible hike you can look at some of the proposed hikes for 2022 [visit this link](#).

If a date is blank and you have a hike you would like to do on that date, email kwise@utk.edu.

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.

Chestnut Top to Picnic Table

Wednesday— June 2

An old stand-by. Maybe see some wildflowers along the trail as we head toward the picnic table where we will eat lunch then return on the same path. The first group will meet at 'Wye' at 8:30 (Tom as the leader) and the second group at 9:00 am with Ron as the leader. Nine miles. 1724 foot elevation gain. Rated Moderate.

Pre-registration with the leader. Register with Ron Brandenburg.

Leaders: Thomas J. Welch 224-944-3333, coast5588@yahoo.com; Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net text 865-898-7602.

National Trails Day

Saturday — June 5

Last year, NTD was cancelled due to COVID. This year, we are happy to announce that we can have a "limited" NTD to work on the Appalachian Trail in the GRSM. In accordance with continued guidelines for volunteers published by the ATC, and with approval by Christine Hoyer and the GRSM, we will have teams of 4 (1 leader and 3 crew members) go out on A.T. sections from Icewater Shelter to Silers Bald, and out of Davenport Gap to do general A.T. maintenance. Some sections can certainly have more than one crew! We will not have a morning gathering or an afternoon picnic, but we will tell you where to meet your Crew Leaders, close to the trailhead where you will be working, at 8:30am. We will also provide:

1. A **bagged lunch**
2. A **special patch (beautifully designed!)** to commemorate this unusual year
3. A **virtual door prize** drawing the Monday after Trails day to award some great gifts to random participants (we will notify you if you win!)

Because we cannot advertise the event to the public, we will not be officially affiliated with the American Hiking Society this year. **If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Diane Petrilla ASAP at petrillad@gmail.com or 931-224-5149** since we will be finalizing crew assignments, food orders and other arrangements by the time the Newsletter reaches you. I will send you a registration form and more information.

Injun Creek Trail to McCarter Cemetery

EASY HIKE

Sunday — June 6

We will start the hike at the Greenbrier Ranger Station on the Injun Creek trail, then follow a side trail to the E. E. McCarter cemetery. We will pass by one other small cemetery, a park phenology plot, the Indian Creek School site, numerous homesites, and some interesting rock stacks. Hike around 4 miles.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Ed Fleming, edwrdfm@aol.com 865-548-2489

Rocky Crag the Righteous Way

Off Trail

Saturday — June 12

The Rocky Crag is a classic off-trail adventure including superb wilderness, abandoned manways, bear-ways, and enough knife-edge precipices to get your fill. This excursion will include the Porters Creek Trail, the lower part of the Dry Sluice manway, Lester Prong, and a very steep up the side of the knife-edge of the Rocky Crag. The Rocky Crag, known by some as the Real Charlies Bunion, is on the state-line divide near the AT. After a short hike along the AT for a visit to the Tourist Bunion, we will return down the Porters or the Lester watershed. The total hike, including the Porters Creek Trail, is about 11 miles (3.5 miles off-trail). Hike is rated difficult and is limited to hikers with previous Smokies off-trail experience.

Pre-registration for this hike is required. Please contact the leaders for meeting place and time.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Greg Harrell, gsharrell@milligan.edu 865-719-0173 and Tim Hernandez, guitar83@juno.com, 865-607-9362.

Roan Mountain
Saturday-Sunday — June 12-13
BACKPACK

Truly one of the iconic east Tennessee hikes, this section of the Appalachian Trail, from Carver's Gap to Highway 19 offers some spectacular views from its grassy bald. Little Hump mountain will be our destination for the first day, which offers both exposed camping spots if the weather is clear, or more sheltered spots if it is not, as well as a good water supply. The second day starts with the climb up Big Hump mountain to get the blood flowing but is generally level to downhill after that. Hike is about 14 miles total, split evenly. We will park our cars at Mountain Harbor Bed and Breakfast on Highway 19, and also let them shuttle us to the Carver's Gap trailhead. The shuttle is \$10 a person and there is a \$2 fee per car to park. Rated moderate, but weather can be unpredictable. Drive: About 300 miles round trip.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Brad Reese, bradktn@gmail.com

Metcalf Bottoms trail to Little Brier Gap trail to Little Greenbrier trail and Laurel Falls trail

Wednesday— June 16

Meet at Metcalf Bottoms picnic area. We will visit the Little Greenbrier School and the Walker Sisters cabin on the way to the Laurel Falls trail. 9.2 miles. 2,064 ft. elevation gain. Those who want to can add 1 mile each way and 441 ft. elevation gain to go on up to the Cove Mountain fire tower. Moderate. Tom will lead the first group at 8:30 and Ron will lead the second group at 9:00.

Pre-registration with the leader. Register with Ron Brandenburg.

Leaders: Thomas J. Welch 224-944-3333, coast5588@yahoo.com; Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net text 865-898-7602.

Gregory Bald via Long Hungry Ridge

Saturday — June 19

This loop hike will begin at the Twentymile Ranger Station. We will climb Twentymile Tr 3.1 miles to Long Hungry Ridge Tr, then climb 4.6 miles to the mountain crest near Gregory Bald. There is a stream crossing on this part of the hike. After lunch on the Bald, and hopefully some beautiful flame azaleas, we will return via Wolf Ridge Tr, walking past Parsons Bald for a 6.3 mile downhill walk. After the last .5 miles of Twentymile, we will have returned to our cars. Total mileage 15.7, elevation gain approx. 3200ft. Rated Difficult.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com, 931-224-5149

Cataloochee Divide

Saturday — June 26

This hike will find us following the crest of the Cataloochee Divide along the southern park boundary to Double Gap. We will return from Double Gap and follow the McKee Branch Trail and Big Fork Ridge Trail to the road. A short shuttle will be involved. Hike is 14 miles and is rated difficult due to distance. We will meet at 7:00 am for this hike to avoid the crowds in Cataloochee.

*Pre-registration with the leader is required. **You must pre-register by June 23.***

Leader: Dale Potter, dalepotter55@gmail.com, 865.773.8114

Digital Newsletter Suggestion

Thanks to those who changed from the print version to the digital newsletter. If you are receiving the newsletter by mail, please consider going digital. If you would like a digital copy emailed to you, send me a request to smhcnewsletter@gmail.com. If you have a printer you can print out a personal copy from the online pdf. Email smhcnewsletter@gmail.com to make the change.

SMHC Newsletter Editor: Dale Potter

Send post-hike write-ups to smhcnewsletter@gmail.com. Please include both email and phone contact information. Please submit photos from your hike if available.

"I think I cannot preserve my health and spirits unless I spend four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and fields absolutely free from all worldly engagements"

~ Henry David Thoreau

For The Record

Frozen Head Wildflower Hike

April 17

One member joined the leader for this hike. The weather was partly cloudy with no rain as the sun prevailed. There was an abundance of flowers to include the most beautiful, crested dwarf iris, yellow, pink, and red trilliums, foamflower, mayapple, chickweed, wild geranium, violets of all colors and types, little brown jug, trout lily, and carpets of phlox to name a few. As we crested the top of Panther Branch, both sides of the hillside were a spectacular blanket of all types of flowers in peak bloom. This was certainly a stellar year for wildflowers in Frozen Head. No wildlife was spotted, but the trail was packed with hikers. The best wildflower hike ever, and only one person attended. Due to recent surgery, the co-leader was unable to make the hike, but she was there in spirit.

~ Jim Quick and Lynda Bryan



White Oak Sink, GSMNP

April 18

Six hikers started on the Tuckaleechee side of the GSMNP and hiked up a private road to Schoolhouse Gap on a beautiful 70-degree Sunday. We hiked down Schoolhouse Gap Trail to the entrance to White Oak Sink. Our leader Allen Sweetser and his wife Susan are experts on the wildflowers of this area. They, along with Bill Jacks who has written a book on the wildflowers of White Oak Sink, provided an unrivaled look at the location, leaves, stems, color variations, and petal size of dozens of wildflowers. The day was sunny, but not hot. The phlox was in field after field, in full bloom, and incredibly impressive. During our day, we saw shooting stars, a large bunch of yellow lady's slippers, rue-anemone, wood-sorrel, crested dwarf and spring iris, trillium, bishops' caps, wild ginger, bellwort, and showy orchis. That is just to name a few on a day filled with wild beauties and enjoyable company. Leaders: Allen Sweetser and Joan Tomlinson.

~ Joan Tomlinson



"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

~ Henry David Thoreau

Twentymile-Long Hungry Ridge- Twentymile Loop-Wolf Ridge

April 28

Two groups of 9 hikers each began this hike 30 minutes apart from each other as per Club COVID protocol. The wildflower display was spectacular for both groups! Dwarf crested iris, wild geranium, rue anemone, showy orchis, a gorgeous patch of pink lady slippers and a single flame azalea putting on a full and bright display. There were many other wildflowers! Group 1 ate at CS 95 and the other at CS 92. There were multiple creek crossings, all with foot logs or bridges. After the hike, everyone got to drive the Dragon's Tail again, with many more motorcycles and Mini-Coopers trying to go faster than we wanted to!

~ Pat Watts and Ron Brandenburg



“Walking: the most ancient exercise and still the best modern exercise.”

~Carrie Latet



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Diane Petrilla petrillad@gmail.com
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Director: Taylor Weatherbee tweatherbe@aol.com

What is the correct spelling Smoky Mountains or Smokey Mountains? Is Smokies the correct spelling? Email the correct answer to smhnewsletter@gmail.com along with why your answer is correct by June 10th.