



February 2018

Appalachian Trail Maintenance: Remember, No First Saturday Work Trip in February.

A.T. Work Trips from 12/18/2017-1/15/2018

ATMC Meeting February

Plans are being made for an A.T. Maintainer's Committee meeting in February, date TBD. Topics so far to be included on the Agenda are: the Spence Privy project, Shelter survey project, initiating planning for NTD which falls on Saturday, June 2 this year, recruitment needs, and any other items of interest. If you have a potential item for the Agenda, please send it to George Ritter at rittergeo@gmail.com

12/18 - Keith Mertz, Judy Wade - Fontana Dam to Route 28 - Cut back encroaching vegetation (greenbrier, blackberry, rhodo, and azalea). Hand sawed out two small blowdowns on YC Rd./Cable Gap section. Inspected blazes for deterioration, repainted two blazes. Tossed limbs off trail. Inspected Cable Gap privy, filled one five gallon bucket with leaf litter. Other two buckets were being used as waste baskets for wastepaper and wet wipes. Fontana section - @ 300 yards South of Fontana shelter, large root ball from blowdown partially obstructing trail. Blazes OK. Lopped rhodo branches and dead hemlock limbs. Removed limbs from trail.

AT Cooperative Management Call 12-13-17

On Dec. 13, we participated in an A.T. Cooperative Management Call which included Wendy Janssen, Superintendent of the Appalachian Trail NP, Ron Tipton, the outgoing President/CEO of the ATC, and Suzanne Dixon, the incoming President/CEO. Ms. Dixon comes to the ATC from the National Parks Conservation Association as Senior Director of Regional Operations. There were additional representatives on the call from the ATC and multiple maintaining Clubs from south to north. Broad areas of discussion included budget and funding issues, both federally and for the ATC, (always a challenge), visitor use management, law enforcement along the A.T., conservation and landscape protection, and much else. One important topic of discussion was proposed legislation to allow mountain biking in federally designated Wilderness areas. Please see next page for an expansion on this issue, and how you can make your opinion heard. We welcome Suzanne Dixon to the ATC, and extend our gratitude and best wishes to Ron Tipton going forward!

And that's all we have for Work Trips this month! Winter is here!



Thank you for ALL the trail maintenance efforts! We enjoyed crossing paths with your maintainers.



**House Resolution 1349 to amend the
Wilderness Act of 1964- Action Needed!**

In March of 2017, Federal Rep Tom McClintock (R-Calif.) introduced a bill “to amend the Wilderness act to ensure the use of bicycles, wheelchairs, strollers, and game carts is not prohibited in Wilderness areas, and for other purposes” on behalf of the Sustainable Trails Coalition (STC- a mountain biking coalition based in Colorado set up specifically to support legislation to allow Wilderness mountain biking). The much larger and more representative International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) does not support H.R. 1349. Wheelchair access to Wilderness areas is already provided for by the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. The ATC, as well as many other outdoor conservation organizations, presented testimony against the passage of this bill, which would directly violate the intent of the 1964 Federal Wilderness Act, violate the National Trails System Act of 1968 (designating the A.T. as well as the P.C.T. as protected “footpaths”), and cause a major impact on the hiker experience of Wilderness areas and the A.T. Currently, the A.T. crosses 24 designated Wilderness areas (Although this bill certainly doesn’t limit itself to just the A.T.; it includes all U.S. designated Wilderness!). There would be significant impact on ecosystems to allow mountain biking, trail damage and erosion, safety issues and significant maintenance issues. H.R. 1349 passed the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands on 12-13-17 and could well come up for a vote in the House this year. We have been urged by the ATC, in a recent e-mail, to call or write our Federal Representatives to voice objection to this bill. To find out your Federal House Representative’s contact information, for where you live, as well as a link to an editable template letter use:

<http://www.appalachiantrail.org/home/conservation/advocacy/conservation-current-issues-full-story/advocacy---current-issues/2017/12/15/new-house-bill-could-allow-mountain-bikes-in-wilderness-areas-on-the-appalachian-trail>. Please make your voice heard!

Maintenance ‘Mindors

Spring will be here soon, as will the season for blowdown removal.

Guidelines for Trail Clearing

Blowdowns- Cleared annually with an opening 2-4 ft. in width, preventing damage from users making new trails around the obstacle. Blowdowns on Trail sections where damage by off-road vehicles is a problem may be left uncut on the ground, if easy to step over. *Cut notches in all blowdowns that are too big for volunteers to safely clear.

Grass and Briars- Cut twice per year; both sides in flat areas, mostly on the uphill side of sidehill sections.

Limbs and Saplings- Cut once per year, leaving a passage 4 ft. wide by 8 ft. in height; on both sides of the Trail in flat areas, mostly on the uphill side of sidehill sections. Limbs should be trimmed flush with trunks, and saplings uprooted or cut below ground. Cuttings should be moved below the Trail, leaving desirable and fragile plant life undisturbed. “Feather” the edges of cut areas, since straight-line trimming looks unnatural. It is easier to reach high branches when facing downhill. *Remove all saplings and trees growing in rock or log retaining walls both above and below the Treadway; their roots will push these structures apart. *remove all cut trees, branches, brush and briars completely from the Trail. Disperse cuttings hanging in trees and piles of brush out of sight of the Trail.

Hazard trees- should be checked for at least once per year at overnight sites and areas where hikers stop, and removed as necessary. (Hazard tree removal should usually be done by your agency partner.) Consider cutting dead or broken trees or limbs at the sides of the Trail that are likely to fall on the footpath.

Vistas- Should be cleared once every two years or as needed for an unimpeded view.

(Appalachian Trail Conference. *Appalachian Trail Fieldbook: Maintenance and Rehabilitation Guidelines for Volunteers*. Harpers Ferry, WV: ATC, 2003. Print.)

Please send any items of interest, **photos**, and event notifications for the ATMC Newsletter to Diane Petrilla at petrillad@gmail.com. Thank you for **ALL** of the work you do!