

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club



June 2021

SMHC A.T. Work Day- Saturday June 5: *We still need volunteers!*

Last year, NTD was cancelled due to COVID. This year, we are having a “modified” 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 will have more than one crew! We will not have a morning gathering or an afternoon picnic, but 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 general 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 as soon as I hear from you. **Come on out and help us!!**

Trail Skills Workshop Lake Winfield Scott, Suches GA September 25 & 26, 2021

The Trail Skills Workshop (TSW) is a training event focused on teaching the most current trail construction and maintenance methods applicable for Eastern landscapes. These classes are for new and experienced trail workers. Skilled instructors are provided from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the United States Forest Service (FS) and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC).

The \$30.00 fee includes: all courses, a T-shirt, 2 nights camping and Saturday BBQ.

105: Essential Trail Maintenance:

This course focuses on improved modern methods of maintaining the Appalachian Trail. Main subjects include: safety, corridor clearing, drainage structures and tread realignment.

215: Drainage Design and Drain Dips:

An intermediate to advanced course that gives in-depth field instruction explaining the use, application and modern design of drainage structures and other devices.

325: Moving Big Stuff:

Explore mechanical advantage techniques working with a Comealong and Maasdam to move large rocks and bucked trees.

335: Rock Construction:

Lead by the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew, this advanced course focuses on sound design of rock staircases, guide features and retrofitting aging structures.

Sign up now at

<https://forms.gle/5GBSMz5fdKuYnVy1A> to be advised when registration opens in early July.

Please direct questions to Jay Dement,

jay@jayDphotos.com.



COVID 19 guidelines for A.T. volunteers

You are probably aware that for a variety of reasons, ATC has determined that long-distance hiking on the A.T. is now considered to be a safer activity and that the 2000 miler recognition program will be reinstated. See <https://appalachiantrail.org/official-blog/may-11-covid-19-update/>

Over the last 2 months, we have published updated guidelines on shelter and privy work for maintainers, approved by the ATC, GRSM and NNF. Group size, mask wearing and carpooling guidelines have not changed at this time; decisions must be guided by the ATC's Adaptive Recovery Plan, the GRSM current guidelines, and NNF guidelines. The counties most pertinent to evaluating COVID case rates for us are Sevier, Cocke, Blount, Swain (NC) and Haywood (NC). We will work on further clarification and forward movement on guidelines over the next weeks and months.

Phase 1: Are COVID-19 cases increasing or are not decreasing in your area and worksite? If, yes, then:

- Trail maintenance and emergency response is only for requested workers
- Work activities should focus on:
 - Health, Life and Safety

Phase 2: Have local, county-level (home and worksite) COVID-19 cases been mostly diminishing for 14 days.

- All staff and volunteers can re-engage with trail maintenance and fieldwork with no more than four staff or volunteers working together while maintaining social distancing.
- Work activities should focus on:
 - Trail Planning/Scouting
 - Health, Life, and Safety
 - Maintaining Trail Access
 - Identify and Document Resource Damage

Phase 3: Have local, county-level (home and work site) COVID-19 cases continued to diminish or not increase?

- All staff and volunteers can work with social distancing measures for groups up to 10 people.

Spence Log Installation

The logs airlifted to Spence Field, north and south of the shelter, have been cut to length, and several are split to usable size. ***Volunteers are needed to help with installing as steps and water drainages between Spence shelter and Jenkins Ridge Trail.*** Please contact Amanda Beal at amandaw455@gmail.com or Franklin LaFond at OX97game@aol.com for details on how to help.

Reminder: Fontana Village Trails

The ATMC of the SMHC continues to have temporary responsibility for the trail system that is part of the NNF in Fontana Village (approx. 10 miles) It is time for the initial summer trimming of weeds and briars. Please contact Franklin LaFond at OX97game@aol.com for details on how you can help!

A. T. Work Trips From 4/15/2021 to 5/15/2021

4/15 - Franklin LaFond, Barbara Allen - Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail - Cut logs, stripped logs, and carried south on the A.T. for planned replacement of water logs and steps. Greeted 15 thru hikers and amazed at the number who camped illegally on the trail due to the closure of Cosby Shelter. Several stated they camped in the Mt. Cammerer Firetower.

4/15 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - Performed minor brush cutting and removal of five trip roots in the area. Rehabilitated just over 80 feet of trail which included adding one traditional water drain, one reverse grade dip drain, and three rock steps. Also removed several trip-hazard rocks.

4/17 - Andy Zimmerman - Boulevard Tr to Sweat Heifer - Cut one small 4" blowdown that was partially blocking the trail and used it to block off a social trail around the blockage. Buried some TP at the junction with the Boulevard Trail. Picked up some micro trash. Built a waterbed north of the Boulevard junction. Cleared about 30 waterbars but there are still about the same amount left.

4/17 - Randy Mitchell, Russell Redden - Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top - Did inventory of tool bin located at Cosby Ranger Residence and carried one shovel to tool bin at Cosby Knob Shelter. We were doing a loop hike involving the AT and Camel Gap trail so were going to pass by the shelter. An inventory done by ridge runner Yael indicated that there was no shovel at the Cosby Shelter tool bin. On the A.T. we inspected the trail and did only superficial maintenance. There were a large number of northbound backpackers. The exact count was lost but in 2.5 miles from Low Gap to Camel Gap we encountered over 40 northbound backpackers. Cosby Knob Shelter was closed due to aggressive bear activity but there were a dozen or more hikers there taking a lunch break. A "bait" tent was set up near the shelter with a game camera directed on it. We were unable to check the mulch buckets at the privy as it was in use and there appeared to be a queue to use it. The only trash seen was an orange peel and an abandoned shirt which I packed out. The tool bin at the Cosby Ranger residence still had a key lock. After removing one round nosed shovel the following tools were still in the tool bin: Pulaski (2), Shovel (2), Fire rake (1), Swing blade (6), Bucket (2), Loppers (2), Bow Saw (1), File (1).

4/17 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Cleared & deepened all water bars from Icewater shelter to Bunion. Worked to keep Icewater spring from running down the trail. Stacked brush to close 2 social trails. Hauled rock & stacked to repair the Bunion spur sign that was down (again).

4/18 - Bob Williams - Wesser to NOC - Cleared waterbars, recut some, trimmed lots of vegetation and cut 3 fallen trees from across the trail.

4/18 - Brent Gregory, Taylor Weatherbee - Lewellyn Branch to Fontana Dam - Trimmed vegetation along the trail, cleared waterbars, and conducted trail rehab on 65 foot portion of the trail.

4/19 - Franklin LaFond, Amanda Beal - Spence Project - Conducted an initial assessment for log sizes needed. Cut most of the remaining 8 ft logs that were flown to location in 2019. Now have piles of 8 ft, 6 ft, 5 ft, 4 ft, 3 ft, and staking materials

between Squire and Jenkins Ridge Junction. Split several of the 4 ft logs and stacking in prep for log installation. Roughly 40 log segments are now usable size. Roughly 40 logs left that need to be split.

4/19 - Scott McClure, Levi McClure - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Cleaned out water bars and ditches for approximately 1 mile north of Spruce Fir Parking area @ Clingmans Dome. Cut some over growth that's leaning into the trail. Cleaned up some debris from a blow down and raked the trail clean @ that area.

4/25 - Dick Ketelle, Pete Berntsen, Houston Phillips - Dry Sluice Gap to Gap W of Masa Knob - Made use of remaining red spruce blowdown to install two robust log steps at a difficult location on northern side of Masa Knob. Scoped tread repair projects for possible National Trails Day activity.

4/26 - Patti Grady - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Cleared 12 waterbars, repaired a step that is washing out, cut out some trip hazards, and blocked areas where hikers are walking around the steps. Spoke with several thru hikers and made sure they knew Cosby Knob Shelter is closed. They were all very appreciative of the trail work.

4/27 - Cindy Spangler - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - After the mulch haul to the Icewater Springs privy, I drove to my section to remove a medium-sized blowdown. It required a lot of sawing but I was eventually successful.

4/27 - Debra Barton, Bill Hemmerly, Paula Hemmerly, Steve Hill, Randy Mitchell, Diane Petrilla, Cindy Spangler, Ernie Wiles - Icewater Springs Privy - Another great mulch team packed in 180 lbs. of mulch to storage boxes at Icewater. So grateful for this group!



A beautiful day to haul mulch! (L to R, Randy, Cindy, Paula, Bill, Steve, Ernie and Debra)
(photo courtesy of Diane Petrilla)

4/27 - Diane Petrilla - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead- Cleared more waterbars on the section after doing mulch haul to Icewater. More to go.

4/27 - Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Hauled Mulch to Icewater Springs shelter/storage bin. Added 40lbs of mulch to bin furthest from the Privy. On the return to NFG we retrieved our stashed tools and started clearing the vista at .5 mile N of NFG.

4/27 - Stewart Taylor - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Cleaned all water bars and drainage ditches from Mt. Collins Shelter to just past the Fork Ridge Trailhead going north.

4/27 - Taylor Weatherbee, Jeff Osler - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Obtained 3 logs from downed trees and installed 3 steps where a step was too high, or where a rock step was not stable. Also cleared the rest of the water bars on our section north of Mt Collins summit. Went down to the Collins shelter and worked again on the leak in the roof on the left side of the skylight when facing the shelter.

4/28 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - finished clearing vista of berry fronds that obstruct view. Came back south and began to build a smoother trail bed to induce hikers to stay on the desired trail bed. The Trail was

elevated by utilizing a locust fence post collected from above the NFG restroom on the A.T. The fence post was sawed just above the concrete, still in the ground, and left by the trail. Thanks for not hauling these posts away. We have used 3 posts and one rail in our maintenance of the A.T. If the Park has other posts going to be discarded we could use them. We used a hardwood fallen tree for the remainder of the elevated section. Added much dirt, rocks/stones to this section. Used sledge hammer to break up larger rocks to hold the tread way.

4/28 - Pete Berntsen - Gap W of Masa Knob to Newfound Gap - Cleaned silt from drainage devices from The Boulevard to 0.1 mile SW of the shelter. Also dug out and reset two large steps in this area. Helped trail maintainers (Mark and Janet Snyder) set a rock step in their section that had been dislodged and sent down the hill.

4/29 - Jerry Troxler, Randy Rainey, Franklin LaFond - Spence (Bote MtTr) to Russell Field - Cleaned out all of the water bars. Checked the privy, knocked down the cone, filled the mulch buckets. On the way down Anthony Creek, we cleared 5 blow-downs. Anthony Creek is now clear.

4/29 - Jerry Troxler, Randy Rainey, Franklin LaFond - Spence Project -Franklin split some logs and cut some to size, and carried out the chain saw and gear. We put in 10 steps; 7 new and 3 replacements.

4/29 - Rick Hughes, Bill Pyle - Collins Gap to Mt Love - Cleaned all water bars on this section. Cleared several areas that were cluttered by fallen limbs and logs that hindered an easy passage on the trail.

4/30 - Dick Ketelle - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Put the finishing touches on a set of log steps that we installed on 4/24. flattened the tops of the logs and cut in a crosshatch pattern to help traction on the wood.

4/30 - Jerry Troxler, Tom Howard, Paul Ruble, Stewart Taylor - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Put in 3 steps about 1 mile from trailhead where there was a large eroded area and finished cleaning all the rest of the water bars and drainage

ditches on my entire section. Thanks to Jerry Troxler, Tom Howard and Paul Ruble for their help.

4/30 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Finished the project of rebuilding the trail to a more level tread way. Much dirt was added and numerous buckets of crushed rock from trail North was carried back to serve as fill. By using the sledge hammer on protruding boulders in existing path, not only was this used as fill, but the trails ruggedness was softened. Prior to going to the A.T., we returned the two empty mulch bags from earlier mulch mule trip.

5/1 - Diane Petrilla, Jack Grant, Tim Bigelow - Davenport Gap to 1 mi N of Cam (4250' EI) - removed one 6" blowdown just above Davenport Shelter and several other smaller protruding branches along entire route covered- cleared most waterbars and trail side drains from Lower Mt. Cammerer side trail up to "The Bunion" (about 0.5 mi below Mt Cammerer Side trail). Other waterbars looked good up to this point. Cut back a significant amount of doghobble, rhododendron and blackberries up to Bunion. Cut back some emerging blackberries and greenbrier in lower sections. Cleaned out the fire pit and Davenport Gap trail shelter.



Jack Grant getting that blowdown!
(photo courtesy of Tim Bigelow)

5/6 - Taylor Weatherbee – Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Cleared water bars and installed one water bar.

5/7 - Jack Grant, Steve Hill, Diane Petrilla - Mulch Operations - After meeting at SVC and obtaining Elkmont mulch gate key, we went to the mulch tent and packed 23/ 40lb. bags of mulch and 12/ 20lb. bags. Spread out more mulch under tent to dry. Took the 12 bags to the maintenance shed (total 25 there now). The main objective of this trip was to train Jack and Steve in the process of bagging mulch. They did a great job and I am thankful for their help. I delivered 8/ 40lb. bags of mulch to Sam Tillery for mulch haul to Spence.

5/7 - Randy Mitchell - Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top - Cleaned 36 waterbars from north of Cosby Shelter to Low Gap. Carried a swing blade but there was virtually no annual growth to trim. Did cut back some dog hobble and rhododendron encroaching on trail. Sawed off a trip hazard root and a couple of sharp tree limbs at the edge of trail. Filled mulch buckets at privy. Checked Cosby Shelter. It was still closed due to aggressive bear activity. Shelter was clean. Bin 1 at privy appears to be full and cooking. Bin 2 is in use and nearly full. Bin 3 is empty.

5/8 - Franklin LaFond, "Hopeful" Powell - Fontana Dam to High Pt E of Walker Gap - Removed 2 blow downs. Installed 5 log steps and 2 rock steps. Rehab of 54 ft of side hill that had slipped downhill. Crushed gravel to improve footing in a rocky area. Split locust logs that had been staged

5/8 - Pete Berntsen – Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead- Surveyed work locations for the modified National Trails Day. Identified 14 building projects for NTD and expect that there will be a few more such as leaning trees beyond the area hiked today. Cleaned top area of waterbars and reinforced two waterbars with rock to limit washing out. Hammered down waterbar and step logs support stakes. Performed minor brush cutting. Cut and removed branches (2-inch diameter) from two trees that were hanging low over the trail. Removed one log step that had one end dislodged and reset. Fortified two small steps with rock from a fallen tree.

5/11 - Patti Grady - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Cleaned 17 waterbars. Continued to work to deter hikers from bypassing the steps. Cut and staged a downed tree to use as a deterrent on the next trip. Back filled some muddy spots.

5/13 - Diane Petrilla - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead- Continued clearing water bars. One more trip should do it!

5/13 - Rick Waggener, Scott Edwards - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Built a new water bar. Trimmed back blackberry canes, though they're not too bad yet. Inspected function of all waterbars that were cleared last trip. Removed surprisingly large amount of trash from Icewater shelter [since the Ridge Runners keep them so clean]. Talked to 4 separate dog owners about their dogs today.

And for Your (Belated) Viewing Pleasure.....

On April 14 and 15 (last month), Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle, Dick Hughes (aided by Hiker McQueen), cleared blowdowns between Clingmans Dome and Derrick Knob. The mileage for those sections is about 8 miles one way! Carrying chainsaw equipment! (Whew!). Below are some photos from all of this great work.



Thanks for all of this incredible work!

