

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club



July 2023

A.T. Maintenance Work Trip- Saturday July 8

This work trip will support the annual A.T. Konnarock Trail Crew in the National Forest. Each year volunteers from across the country sign up for this ATC Sponsored summer trail crew for a week at a time, over a 2-week period. The crew will be building a new trail relocation adjacent to the Fontana Marina. Participants will need to wear sturdy footwear, bring work gloves, lunch, snacks, and plenty of water.

Meeting times and locations: Maryville Walmart at 2410 US-411 S at 7:30 am or at the Fontana Marina parking lot near 40 Fontana Dam Rd, Fontana Dam, NC 28733 at 9:00am. Roundtrip travel is approximately 110 miles.

Also note that the crew will be on location for several days, the weeks of June 24-30 and July 8-14, and will base camp in the area. Volunteers that participate for 3 or more days on the project will receive an ATC Trails Crew T-Shirt. Club members that want to overnight in the area can utilize the Fontana Hilton Shelter, near the TVA picnic area.

Please contact the work trip leaders to sign up for this event: Franklin LaFond: ox97game@aol.com
678-464-3380 Randy Bullock:
jrbperfusion@gmail.com

2023 S.W.E.A.T. Crew!

Rachel Cheatham has sent us the information below about the S.W.E.A.T. crew this summer. S.W.E.A.T. crews of course help us with our A.T. maintenance needs in the most remote sections of the Trail in the GRSM.

The crew lead this year is Randy Hughes. He is assisted by Tim Sollenberger. Crew members consist of Murray Lamb, Megan Faimon, and Kacy Hirschfeld. Together, this crew has a wealth of diverse experience to which they have proved a functional, creative, and collaborative team thus far.

The crew leads will submit a post-hitch report following their 8-day stints in the backcountry. They will follow this schedule:

Hitch	Sect#	Hitch Dates	Hitch Section
1	1	June 1 - June 8	Doe Knob to Russell Field
2	3	June 15 - June 21	Spence to Starky
3	4	June 29 - July 5	Starky to Welch Ridge
4	7	July 13 - July 20	Mt. Chapman to Camal Gap
5	6	July 27 - August 3	Pecks to Mt. Chapman
6	5	August 10 - August 17	Mt. Chapman to Camal Gap

Although we are not coordinating volunteers to work the full week alongside this crew this year, we would like to solicit mid-hitch resupply support. In other words, if you would like to hike out to visit the crew and help pack in some of their food mid-week, let Rachel know and she will coordinate it! Contact rcheatham@appalachiantrail.org.



National Trails Day Event Held June 3!

The 26th annual SMHC/ATMC National Trails Day event was held on Saturday, June 3. 51 volunteers contributed nearly 600 total hours to improving the hiker experience along the Appalachian Trail between Welch Ridge and Sweat Heifer trail junctions.

The volunteers arrived early for sign-in, distribution of T-Shirts, announcements from GSMNP, ATC, and SMHC representatives before breaking into their teams to start the work day. Volunteers were treated to coffee and donuts, provided by Dunkin Donuts of Pigeon Forge, and each volunteer was provided a sack lunch.

The largest project this year was the replacement of the opaque roof panels at the Mt Collins Shelter. This is the first shelter to receive the upgraded roof panels as replacement for the original, thinner material which has worn and is causing leak issues. The team used this as a learning opportunity to determine logistics, materials, tools, and manpower required to complete the roof panel replacement. This knowledge will be used to plan for the roof panel replacement at the 7 other shelters in the park that use the same original material.

5 teams were tasked with installation of new log steps and drainages along the section between Collins Gap and Newfound Gap. Logs were cut and split from the supply at the Soak Ash facility and transported to the trailhead locations the previous weekend. These teams installed a total of 69 new log steps in this area.

3 teams focused on treadway improvements, removing trip hazards, widening the treadway, obstructing rogue pathways, cleaning and rehabbing water drainages, and pruning back intrusive vegetation.

After the work was completed, the volunteers gathered at Metcalf Pavilion where they enjoyed a picnic dinner catered by Dead End BBQ. A raffle style drawing for door prizes ended the day's activities.

A huge shout out to all the crew leaders and many volunteers that made this year's event another

huge success! *Franklin LaFond (and thank you to Franklin who provided NTD organizational muscle this year!)*



Leaders and crews getting ready at Sugarlands!

All NTD-related work trip reports received are published below.

5/21 - Franklin LaFond - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Collins Gap - Flagged project areas for National Trails Day at Collins Gap and Indian Gap.

5/27 - Franklin LaFond - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Collins Gap - Cut, split, 25 locust log and 25 stake pieces. Transported logs to Indian Gap to be used as steps for National Trails Day crews.

5/29 - Franklin LaFond - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Cut and split 40 logs and 25 stakes and transported to Fork Ridge and Collins Gap for use by National Trails Day crews. Added 2 log steps and widened treadway at Fork Ridge trailhead to improve access for materials headed to Mt Collins Shelter on National Trails Day.

6/1 - Philip Royer, Betty Royer - Community Events - Design, coordination and purchasing of the 2023 National Trails Day T- shirts.

6/2 - Taylor Weatherbee, Dick Ketelle, Philip Royer - Mount Collins Shelter - Carried new roofing materials to the shelter in advance of the National Trails Day roof repair project. Surveyed the existing roof for unanticipated needs.

6/3 - Philip Royer - Mount Collins Shelter -

Planning and purchasing of roofing and miscellaneous materials for the repairs to Mount Collins Shelter.

6/3 – Betty Royer, Crystal Burnes, Julie Labhart, Carlos Amaya, Taylor Weatherbee, Philip Royer - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap -

Our National Trails Day crew renewed a section of turnpike that was constructed approximately 20 years ago. The tread had eroded over time, leaving staked cross-steps completely exposed and creating trip hazards. We excavated the ditch parallel to the turnpike, and mined one pit under a root ball for new material to build-up the tread. We removed several cross steps that were unnecessary, and we repositioned multiple crib logs that had fallen into the ditch. We added 4 new steps, using locust material staged prior to NTD. We also improved several locust waterbars south of the turnpike.

6/3 - Dick Ketelle, Edward Fleming, Jack Bray, Taylor Weatherbee, Mark Buckles - Mount Collins Shelter -

Our National Trails Day group replaced the skylight roof panels in the Mt Collins Shelter. Materials had been carried in the day prior to NTD to simplify the efforts on Saturday. We removed the old skylight panels that had a couple of cracks. Then the new panels that are 2X the thickness of the old ones were installed. Old panels were downsized for easier carry out to the trailhead for proper disposal. After our work at the shelter was finished (approximately 2.5 hours) we walked out to join Team Royer to assist on the AT tread work near Fork Mountain Trail.

The next 3 photos show the installation of the new skylight panels on Mt Collins shelter roof.



The Royer/Weatherbee crew!

6/3 - Billy Bloys, Janet Gallardo, Fred Jones, Josh Mangers, Nikki Reuter, Aenan Fee, Randy Mitchell

- Newfound Gap to Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr -

National Trails Day. Installed 17 new locust logs and 2 found locust logs as steps and cribbing. Cleaned out a couple of water bars as a source of fill dirt to cover exposed roots. Reset several stakes on older steps that presented a trip hazard.



Randy Mitchell's crew doing some great work!

6/3 - Franklin LaFond, Jim Culbert, Rachel Cheatham, Tasha Kennedy, Jacqueline Lee, Kathy Mahan, Jim Stokely - **Collins Gap to Mt Love -**

Installed new 18 log steps, cleaned out and groomed water bars, removed trip rocks from treadway.

6/3 - John Lee, Adam Monroe, Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder, David Shepler, Ed Specht, McKenzie Specht - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap -**

Installed 3 new large drains (no log). Improved 6 waterbars by lowering and resetting exposed logs, widening the exit of the drain and drain pan. Reset 2 loose step logs. Benched and shaped backslope on 25 In ft of trail around large rootball that pulled out the trail. Added crushed rock to slick tread surface. Removed and smashed dozens of loose large rocks and many more small rocks throughout the section. Crushed in voids left behind. Removed dozens of tripping roots and low hanging branches throughout section.





The Monroe/Snyder crew at Newfound Gap



Beth, Pete and James (Patti taking photo)

6/3 - Patricia Bryant, Charles Bruns, Ben Alford, Bill Eversole, Ray Fuehrer, Peter Lloyd - **Mt Love to Clingmans Dome** - Rebuilt 12 waterbars ensuring that there was an earth ramp ahead of the waterbars per instruction from Greg Ritson and the SWEAT team; cut back several overhangs/trail encroachments; brushed in a trail diversion; re-built run-off at one intersection and removed stones to reduce tripping hazard. Tremendous assistance provided by Trail days Volunteers Christie Bruns, Ben Alford, Bill Eversole and Ray Fuehrer. Greatly appreciated your help.

6/3 - Pete Berntsen, Patti Grady, Beth Buffkin, James Wedekind - **Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead** - Added five new steps; replaced one waterbar; removed at least four trip hazards; dug up and lowered and/or turned 7 steps; moved a leaning tree so that hikers don't have to duck under it; filled in a step; removed log and knocked down berm and then moved this log up near another step; widened and removed obstruction rocks from ten feet of trail; moved a log deeper into bank and reset; reset multiple stakes; added a rock step below a log step.



A problematic area....



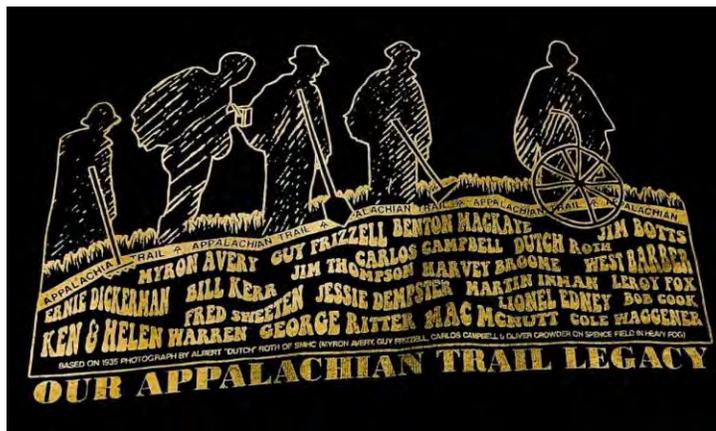
The Berntsen/Grady crew made great trail improvements!



Jason, Chris and Scott who have reunited to work at NTD for years!

6/3 - Rick Waggener, Diane Davis, Nicole Markovich, Justin Maurer - Collins Gap to Mt Love - Set 17 locust log steps. Covered several areas with exposed, awkward roots.

6/4 - Franklin LaFond - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Collins Gap - Returned tools to the shed at Sugarlands Maintenance Yard. Collected all unused logs at trail junctions between Collins Gap and Indian Gap. Pulled remaining flagging ribbon from work areas.



Rick's father, Cole Waggener, part of our SMHC Appalachian Trail legacy! Thanks to Philip and Betty Royer for this great T-shirt design.

Additional A. T. Work Trips From 5/6/2023 to 6/14/2023

6/3 - Scott Medlyn, Jason Ensley, Chris Darnold - Goshen Prong Tr to Welch Ridge Tr - Cleared about 30 waterbars from Double Springs Gap to Welch Ridge.

5/6 - Yugong Tan, Julia Wall, Tim Bigelow, Steve Duda, John Lee, Franklin LaFond - Davenport Gap to 1 mi N of Cam (4250' EI) - Team 2 worked in the mid section starting just below Lower Mt Cammerer trail and almost to the large switchback. Cleared over 55 waterbars and drains. Many were dug very deeply as they had become totally silted up and no longer diverting water. Three root knob trip hazards were removed. Light vegetation trimming performed as needed, although most of the upper portion is trimmed back quite well. Davenport shelter was checked for trash and found very clean. Team 1 added 3 locust log steps just above Chestnut Mt trail and cleared several waterbars. Taking advantage of the chain saw window, several large logs protruding near the trail were trimmed back in several locations. Added a locust log sidebar piece to improve the trail to the Davenport shelter

5/18 - Cindy Mease, Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Cody Gap to Brown Fork Gap** - Cut 4 trees and brushed out corridor.

5/23 - Charlie McDonald - **Mulch Operations** - Bagged 5/40lb mulch for Sam Tillery. Added estimated 300lb of mulch to the tent. Delivered the 5/40lb to Sam's house.

5/24 - Randy Bullock - **Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap** - Cleared water bars, cut back briars and small growth. Packed out a garbage bag of trash left in privy. Filled leaf bucket. Water source at shelter clean and running great. Met 6 hikers having a great day, all sending thankful to the club volunteers!

5/26 - Dick Ketelle, Ann Farrar - **Dry Sluice Gap to Gap W of Masa Knob** - We removed accumulated sediment, sticks, and leaves from drains and lopped branches intruding into the trail corridor.

5/29 - Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Trimmed vegetation, cut branches, removed large branch from trail, cut small sapling that was hanging downward into trail space, cut three feet off of an 18–20-inch tree trunk that had slid downhill onto trail. Repainted white blazes from NFG to .5 miles north of NFG, but didn't find the blaze with the red letters reported on Ridgerunner report 5/21 (possibly someone had scraped letters off). However, we painted a blaze where someone had written a letter 'A' in cursive.

5/30 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Stekoah Gap to Locust Cove Gap** - Cleared a large tree blocking the trail at Locust Cove. Packed out a small amount of trash left in a fire ring. Met several thru hikers making their way North.

6/5 - Rick Hughes - **Collins Gap to Mt Love** - Cleared waterbars, evaluated trail section vis a vis need for locust log repairs, replacements, and new log step treads.

6/7 - Jonny Bruce - **Goshen Prong Tr to Welch Ridge Tr** - Cut back vegetation, refilled 2 mulch buckets for the privy, and picked up a small amount of trash around shelter and privy.

6/8 - Mark Holmberg - **Wright Gap to Wesser** - Cut 2 blowdowns with a Katanaboy saw and smaller handsaw. I did not cut a third blowdown that was too dangerous to cut by myself.

6/12 - Taylor Weatherbee - **Other Work** - Drove from Walland to Philip Royer's to get a template of the material used to replace the skylights on the Collins shelter, and we assume the other shelter skylights that will be replaced. I brought it home to cut it into a compact 4-inch by 14-inch section that Chris said he would use to check the other shelters so we will be 100% certain that that is the product required for the other shelters before ordering it. Christine said she would get the template to Chris, hopefully before his next stint.

6/13 - Keith Mertz, David Gall, Melanie Harmon, Debra Barton - **Yellow Creek Gap to Cody Gap** - Brushed out, lopped intruding rhodo, blackberry canes, and greenbrier. Rehabbed 50' of trail that was slipping down the hill.

6/14 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Cheoah Bald to Swim Bald** - Removed 2 trees, did minor brushing, packed out a garbage bag of trash from the shelter. Refilled leaf buckets. Talked to 20 hikers including a group of scouts on merit badge trip.

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