

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club



September 2023

A.T. Maintenance Work Trip from Cosby Knob Shelter to Camel Gap- Saturday September 9

Participants will clear vegetation and water bars along the Appalachian Trail from Cosby Knob Shelter to Camel Gap.

Please contact the leader about meeting time and preparations. You may also register at smhclub.org. Hike to work area is strenuous. Hike distance is up to 10 miles in total.

Leader: Mark Shipley at shipleymark57@gmail.com.

Crucial Volunteer Opportunities- PLEASE consider helping

As of the end of 2023, we have several very critical volunteer positions open.

Mulch Bagging: Charlie McDonald is retiring after 4 years of steady work to prep our 20lb. mulch bags (hikers) and 40lb. mulch bags (horses) to get mulch to our composting privies on the A.T. This position involves going to the mulch tent at Elkmont (we'll show you where) and bagging mulch, as well as spreading additional mulch out to dry under the tent. It involves 6-8 trips a year, usually lasting 2-3 hours per trip. Charlie will train you. This job is foundational to keep Mulch Ops running. Contact: petrillad@gmail.com.

Annual ATMC Awards Distribution: Diane Petrilla is moving to the west coast in 2024, and transitioning our volunteer database to other leadership. However, one critical function of the yearly reports is generating the list of Club and ATC Awards that are presented at the Christmas banquet. Our new database manager will give this volunteer the data on Award recipients each

October, and our new volunteer makes sure we have awards on hand. The ATMC Chair usually presents them at the banquet. Diane Petrilla will train you on reading the Awards report, how to order Caps when needed (we have a good supply now), and how to order ATC Awards (patches, caps, vest, pins and National Park passes). The work involves the prep for the banquet, then getting awards to maintainers after the banquet by mail when necessary, so this is a job that lasts just few weeks, but is reportable as volunteer hours, and of course *greatly* appreciated by our volunteers! All costs are reimbursed by the ATMC of course. Contact: petrillad@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Again, with the departure of the current newsletter publisher, Diane Petrilla, next year, we would love to see the ATMC monthly Newsletter continue to be published. This Newsletter always includes the monthly work trips, as well as information from the Park, NNF, and ATC that is not published in the SMHC newsletter. It also highlights our work trip reports. If you enjoy working with Word (or any other document-creating platform), creating the Newsletter is a wonderful way to be creative yourself, and keep the communications lines open for our maintainers. About 4-6 hours per month. Contact: petrillad@gmail.com.

Tools Manager: Steve Dunkin will be assuming the role of SMHC president in 2024. He has been our ATMC Tool manager for several years. This job involves gathering and providing tools for National Trails Day each year (first Saturday in June) and leading a tool-cleaning and sharpening work day the first Saturday in November. We have a beautiful new tool shed near Park Headquarters. Contact: jsdunkin1302@gmail.com.



Farewell to Rachel Cheatham.....

Rachel Cheatham, our ATC Regional Manager, is moving to New England and getting married! We are excited for her, but sad to see such a wonderful ATC liaison go. Her last day was 8-18-23. We wish you the best Rachel, and are grateful for your communication skills, work, and wonderful attitude!

And Welcome Anne Sentz!

Anne grew up near the Appalachian Trail in Western North Carolina, and she has fond memories of exploring the Appalachian Mountains as a child and as a young adult. Her love of the Trail led her to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in 2013, when she first became a volunteer within the A.T. Community Program, working as a community ambassador in Hot Springs, NC. Later that year, she joined the ATC staff as a full-time member of the Communications team.

Anne has held several different positions during her time at the ATC, which has helped her develop a varied skillset that includes marketing and public relations, program management, network building, and fundraising. Now, she is excited to work in closer proximity to where her passion lies: the Trail! She is looking forward to working alongside such dedicated volunteers and partners to advance the continued protection and stewardship of the A.T.

Anne holds undergraduate degrees in Journalism and Technical Photography from Appalachian State University and a Master's in English from Western Carolina University. In addition to her role with the ATC, she sits on the Board of the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing volunteer-based stewardship in America's Wilderness areas. She is a long-distance hiker and is also sawyer certified.

Anne lives in Marshall, NC with her husband and their two dogs. She can be reached at asentz@appalachiantrail.org.



Anne Sentz, our new ATC Regional Manager for the Smokies and NC

S.W.E.A.T. and Rocky Top

S.W.E.A.T. has completed their hitches for the summer; hopefully you have seen the Fastfield reports about all of their incredible work doing general, much-needed general maintenance on some of our most remote sections of A.T. The Rocky Top season is now here, and will be run as a pro-crew this year because of the black mold remediation situation at Soak Ash. (Soak Ash is clear of mold, but still needs some additional work and will not be used again until next year). The Rocky Top crews will be working between Mt. Chapman and Mt. Guyot, based out of Tricorner. Next year we will return to the volunteer model for Rocky Top. The schedule is listed below:

Hitch 1: Sept. 7 to Sept. 14

Hitch 2: Sept. 21 to Sept. 28

Hitch 3: Oct. 5 to Oct. 11

Hitch 4: Oct. 19 to Oct. 26

A. T. Work Trips From 7/15/2023 to 8/17/2023

7/15 - Randy Bullock, Franklin LaFond - Fontana Dam to Route 28 - Assisted Konnarock work crew and volunteers with second week of trail reroute. We finished cribbing, added steps, finished tread work, added drainage, opened each end of the trail, blazed and blocked old trail.

7/22 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Cleared vegetation, mostly grass and briars, cut down several low-hanging branches, and removed 2 small blowdowns (one was around 1/4 mi south of Collins Gap, reported by a hiker).

7/24 - Bill Pyle, Rick Hughes, Jeff Osler, Taylor Weatherbee - Davenport Gap to 1 mi N of Cam (4250' EI) - Used Helen (Bill Pyle's crosscut) to clear blowdowns reported 0.77 and 3.74 miles south of Davenport Gap, as well as 2 "bonus trees". Great day on the AT with a great bunch of guys. Then dinner at Buc-ees!

7/24 - Patti Grady, Diane Petrilla - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Completed all necessary brushing. Skim cleared all 96 waterbars.

7/24 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - Trimmed brush from Dry Sluice Gap (DSG) to one mile NE of DSG. Used handsaw to remove branches from a 14-in diameter (measured) blowdown to enable hikers to go under the tree. This blowdown took a 4-in tree down with it. The 4-in tree was removed except for a part that was cut to provide a handle to aid in getting around and up the portion of trail blocked by the larger tree. I saw four hikers get under the blowdown without having to remove backpacks. The blowdowns are located about 0.3-mi NE of Dry Sluice Gap.

7/26 - Judy Wade, Keith Mertz - Fontana Dam to Route 28 - Painted new blazes/repainted fading blazes. Brushed out trail. Lopped intruding limbs. Tossed limbs and branches.

7/29 - Taylor Weatherbee - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Sugarland Mt Tr - Cleared vegetation from Fork Ridge to Mt Collins summit, then down to the Collins shelter. Spent 3 hours with scythe around Collins shelter. clearing grass, briars, and other weeds. Should have brought a baler! Cleaned a

few water bars. Then went to get the blowdown Diane reported 0.3 mi south of Indian Gap. Took 2 cuts with crosscut.

7/30 - Lisa Sumter - Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail - Cut back vegetation focusing on the area south of the shelter to Chestnut Branch & also around the shelter. Packed out micro & fireplace trash.

8/1 - Randy Mitchell, Bill Pyle, Rick Hughes, Taylor Weatherbee - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - Cut a 16-in blowdown off the trail, a little complicated by a lot of end and top bind. Also got a "bonus" dead leaner closer to Charlie's Bunion.

8/2 - Randy Mitchell, Aenan Fee - Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top - Cut back summer growth on the trail from Low Gap to Cosby Knob Shelter. Trimmed briars and stinging nettle from around the shelter, fire ring and spring. Picked up micro trash at shelter. There was very little trash at the shelter. Filled the mulch buckets at the privy. Spent some time repairing the lower hinge on the privy door (again!). Took several photos of the door and made measurements for replacement hinges. On the way back down, we removed a 9-in diameter tree from Low Gap trail. It was easier to clear than anticipated as someone had already cut completely around the tree on the upper side but had not reached the heartwood of the tree.

8/5 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - Completed cutting brush. At location about 1.5 mi NE of Dry Sluice Gap; refurbished 123 feet of trail, cleaned ten water drains, removed 25 feet of berm to improve water flow, and repaired one rock step.

8/5 - Rick Hughes, Gerald Green, Melanie Harmon, Aenan Fee, Randy Mitchell, John Phillips, Trudy Phillips, Diane Petrilla, Terry Martin, Mike Harrington, Rob Davis, Mary Thornburgh, Neil Snapp, Bryan Voncannon, John Lee, David Gall - Mulch Operations - This group of 16 truly magnificent mulch mules backpacked 380 lbs. of mulch to the Double Springs mulch storage bins, and then 7 folks backpacked 280 lbs. of mulch to Mt Collins. We had the pleasure of welcoming several new mulch mules! We were also joined by John and Trudy Philips from the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club who are learning about

moldering privies in preparation for building one on their area of the A.T. in Virginia. When we hiked back to the CD parking lot, the traffic was crazy, and we had some maneuvering to be able to depart that lot and park at Fork Ridge. But everyone rose to the occasion and were good-natured and patient. I also introduced our 2 new Mulch Ops leaders, Mike Harrington and Terry Martin to the group, in anticipation of my move to California next Spring.



Magnificent Mulch Mules at Double Springs shelter

8/6 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap - Cleared water bars, brushing and pruning, filled leaf buckets and packed-out minimal trash at shelter.

8/7 - Charlie McDonald - Mulch Operations - Bagged and delivered 31/20lb bags of mulch to the Sugarlands bins. Current inventory in the bins 34//20lb bags. I'll be reaching out to Christine and request a mulch drop in front of the tent at Elkmont. Dried mulch under the tent is very low.

8/7 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Stekoah Gap to Locust Cove Gap - Brushing, cleared water bars.

8/9 - Mark Holmberg, Cynthia Holmberg - Wright Gap to Wesser - Cleaned water bars, removed branches and one small blowdown.

8/9 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Cheoah Bald to Wright Gap - Hiked from Wright Gap approx. 4 mi to remove a large tree that had fallen across the trail in a narrow, steep area. Cut briars

and removed small brush in the corridor as time permitted.

8/11 - John Lee - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Removed 10-in blow down and 8-in blow down. Also picked up small branches and leaves.

8/11 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Worked on drainage. Opened water bars Boulevard to gap W of Masa Knob. Cut back some of the briars between shelter & bear cables.

8/12 - Franklin LaFond, Sarah Cousineau, Maxwell Moersch, William Blohland - Newfound Gap to Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr - This was an orientation outing for some new recruits. Cleared some weedy vegetation. Pruned back woody vegetation. Cleaned several waterbars. Added 1 new log waterbar. Reset 3 log steps. Added 3 new log steps, including backfill with crushed rock. Added stakes to several steps that were starting to blow out. Pounded down several stakes that had raised due to winter frost heaving.

8/12 - Patricia Bryant, Peter Lloyd - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - Cleaned out water-bars; dug-out several side-channels to help move water from seeps off the trail.

8/12 - Pete Berntsen - False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap - Removed one two-inch and one 7-inch diameter trees from trail located about 0.1 mi SW of The Boulevard trail intersection. Removed one two-inch diameter tree hanging over the trail about 1.3 mi NE of Dry Sluice Gap. Met AT Sweat Crew at my work location near 1.5 mi NE of Dry Sluice Gap. They advised that there were no trees down out to False Gap and that storms were predicted. I rehabilitated (returned trail to proper width, removed protruding rock, fixed one water drain, added one water drain, and removed about 20 ft of berm on 91 ft of trail when distant thunder ended my work day. *(Please see photos below)*).



Before (above) and after (below) showing great Trail improvement by Pete!

8/13 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Stekoah Gap to Locust Cove Gap** - Brushed. Cleared large tree. Greeted 8 section hikers.

8/15 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **High Pt E of Walker Gap to Yellow Creek Gap** - Brushing, removed for blowdowns.

8/17 - Tim Ryan, Jay Schmid, Richard Ward - **Boulevard Tr to Sweat Heifer** - Cleared mud from several pooling areas on the trail, cleaned and extended drainage areas, repaired rock water bars, cut overhanging limbs from recent storm activity, cleaned debris from treadway.

Vastly improved drainages on Tim and Jay's difficult section of Trail to drain

Good news- Tarps will be able to be hung at shelters this year for colder weather. 😊