

APPALACHIAN TRAIL MAINTAINERS COMMITTEE SMOKY MOUNTAINS HIKING CLUB



January 2024

Saturday January 13- ATMC Work Day at Soak Ash Facility

The Soak Ash house, located near Greenbrier, but within the boundary of the GRSM National Park, has been leased to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) for a number of years for use as a base camp for A.T. crews and personnel that have crucial roles in the Park. In addition, many members of our own volunteer maintainers helped extensively with renovations to the structure in years past, to make it usable for its purpose.

ATC is currently preparing the Soak Ash facility for occupancy by seasonal Ridgerunners in February 2024 and, in the spring and summer, Trail Crew staff and volunteers. ATC is excited to welcome seasonal staff back to Soak Ash after the facility's temporary closure due to mold. The mold issue has been fully mitigated and, recently, the ATC was issued a certificate of occupancy by Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Although the facility has the green light for occupancy, there are still a few tasks that need to be completed. These tasks are primarily indoor in nature and include things like furniture reassembly and moving; gear and first aid inventory; supply stocking and discarding of old gear and supplies; and the hanging of maps, photos, and general information inside.

A workday is planned for Saturday, Jan. 13 with a backup date of Saturday, Jan. 20 in case of bad weather. Soak Ash is located at 199 Soak Ash Creek Rd., Gatlinburg, TN. The road is 8.8 miles from Gatlinburg. Once you turn onto Soak Ash Creek Rd., go all the way to the end, through a gate, to the house. Plan to meet at 9 a.m. and wrap up by 2 p.m. Lunch will be provided. For questions, please contact Anne Sentz, ATC's Regional Manager in the Smokies and NC, at asentz@appalachiantrail.org. You may register with Anne, or go to smhclub.org to register.

You Can Volunteer for the Appalachian Trail even if you don't work on the Trail!

The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club has been a maintaining club for the Appalachian Trail for decades. Volunteerism related to the A.T. is one of our cornerstone missions as a Club, and the hours our volunteers contribute, whether on the Trail or off, are important to garner matching federal funds for the Great Smoky Mountains NP, Nantahala NF, and the National Appalachian Scenic Trail.

Most maintainers enjoy digging waterbars, clearing limbs, trimming vegetation and just being outside working. But the Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee of the SMHC needs folks who can help with some organizational tasks. Again, hours spent on this still count towards our fiscal volunteer hours we submit each year.

Examples of more "organizational" tasks we need help with are:

Supervisors (2) needed for AT north and AT south of Newfound Gap in the GRSM . This position involves answering maintainer questions, and coordinating with committee chairs on the ATMC about projects planned. You would learn which maintainers have which sections, north and south in the Park, help fill vacancies with folks who volunteer, and answer questions. *You would be trained.*

Volunteer Recruitment. This is easier than it sounds! We regularly get inquiries about working on the A.T. through our website. These inquiries would be directed to the coordinator, who would be sure the new recruit receives introductory information and discussion of possible roles, in conjunction with the Trail supervisors. *You would be trained.*

National Trails Day Coordinator. On the first Saturday in June each year, our flagship A.T. maintainer event is National Trails Day. Volunteers sign up to work on crews for a day, and are treated to



a picnic afterwards. The NTD coordinator would work on communications about NTD, crew leader recruitment and crew volunteer assignments, as well as solicitation of donations to cover costs of the picnic and our iconic NTD T-shirts. This is all done by a an NTD committee- it's not a one-person job! You would be trained.

If you might have some interest in one of these positions, please contact Franklin LaFond, at ox97game@aol.com. Thank you!

Fiscal Volunteer Hours Report- 2023

From October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023 (Fiscal 2023), the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club AT maintainers reported a total of 5173 volunteer hours. This included work hours of 3634 and travel hours of 1539. About 75% of the work/ travel was in the National Park, and 25% in the Nantahala NF. Congratulations and well done to all of our volunteers!

SMHC ANNUAL AWARDS

2023 SMHC Recognition of Appalachian Trail Maintainers

Submitted by Philip Royer

Our hiking club recognizes the efforts of our Appalachian Trail (A.T.) maintainers every year at the Installation Banquet. Our maintainers devote many volunteer hours to maintaining over 100 miles of trail. We remove blowdowns, improve drainage, trim vegetation, supply mulch to privies, and tackle large projects, all with a deep sense of stewardship for the trail and a desire to "give back."

Below is a list of our SMHC maintainers who have achieved special levels of performance during 2023.

SMHC Awards- Hours for One Year Ending 9/30/2023

New awards are underlined; (*) indicates awards in prior years. **Bold** indicates they did it again this year. Platinum and Gold repeaters receive an ATC pin for their cap

Platinum (200 hours): **Pete Berntsen***, **Randy Bullock***, Ed Fleming*, Dick Kettle*, **Franklin LaFond***, Randy Mitchell, Diane Petrilla*, Bill Pyle*,

Steve Reagan*, Janet Snyder*, Mark Snyder*, Stewart Taylor*, **Taylor Weatherbee***. 17 maintainers have won this award previously.

Gold (100 hours): Amanda Beal*, **Sunaree Bullock***, Rick Hughes*, Terry Martin*, Keith Mertz*, Philip Royer*, Neil Snett*, Jerry Troxler*, Rick Waggener*. 28 maintainers have won this award previously.

Silver (50 hours): Adam Beal*, Tim Bigelow*, Jack Bray*, **Jonny Bruce***, Mark Buckles*, **Ann Farrar***, **David Gall***, Kathy Gardner*, **Patti Grady***, Melanie Harmon*, Mike Harrington*, John Lee, Peter Lloyd, **Charlie McDonald***, Cindy Mease, **Jim Rugh***, Judy Wade*, Elizabeth Weikert*, Ernie Wiles*. 60 maintainers have won this award previously.

Bronze (25 hours): Barbara Allen*, Debra Barton*, **Patricia Bryant***, **Kelly Conway***, Elizabeth Davis*, Gene Desrosiers*, Aenan Fee, Brian Groenhout*, Debbie McDonald*, **Scott Medlyn***, **Randy Rainey***, Karen Reagan, Betty Royer*, Tim Ryan*, Nicole Samu*, Jay Schmid*, Mark Shipley*, **Lisa Sumter***, Yugong Tan*. 103 maintainers have won this award previously.

ATC Awards- Hours since 10/1/2000

(Start of the Database; only new awardee maintainers are listed)

ATC Vest (1000 cumulative hours): These maintainers have provided the greatest and longest commitments over the history of our A.T. involvement and have our deep gratitude: Randy Mitchell. 28 maintainers have previously earned the ATC Vest.

ATC Cap (500 cumulative hours): Randy Bullock, Patti Grady. 27 maintainers have previously earned the ATC cap.

ATC Patch (100 cumulative hours): Jonny Bruce, Kathy Gardner, Melanie Harmon, Doug McFalls, Karen Reagan, Jim Rugh. 147 maintainers have previously earned the ATC patch.

ATPO Awards- 250 hours since last eligibility date, to earn National Parks Pass for 1 year

Maintainers who have become eligible are contacted individually to choose whether they want the Pass. **34** maintainers are eligible this year; many have earned this Pass more than once.

Chainsaw Refresher Course sponsored by USFS

There will be a chainsaw refresher class on the Tusquitee Ranger District on February 17, 2024 (and the 18th if a second day is needed for field evaluations). It can accommodate a maximum class size of 20 people. Priority will be for those folks whose saw cards have expired or will expire in 2024, second priority are new sawyers wanting certification, third priority will be all others who expire after 2024.

In your email to Heath Emmons, **include your name, email address, and volunteer group name** for the folks that will need to take the saw class. **A response is needed no later than January 30th, 2024.** Email heath.e.emmons@usda.gov.

Regarding new sawyers, please do not attempt to qualify if you are not comfortable handling a chainsaw or if you do not have any prior experience. Current First Aid and CPR will be required prior to the class.

A. T. Work Trips From 10/17/2023 to 12/10/2023

10/17 - Stewart Taylor - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Walked to Mt. Collins shelter and checked shelter and privy, both were clean, middle bin at privy was 1/3 full and bin on each side were full. cleaned the ditch in front of shelter and all drainage ditches and water bars from shelter to the Fork Ridge Trailhead sign.

10/18 - John Lee - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Cleaned water bars

10/18 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - re-engineered 2 drains/water bars as taught by my Jeffe, Ox

10/19 - Tim Ryan, Jay Schmid, Ken Hughes, Richard Ward - Boulevard Tr to Sweat Heifer - Cleaned water bars and drainage areas, repaired stone water bars, added rebar for stability, trimmed limbs.

10/21 - Diane Petrilla - Mulch Operations - Prior to starting trail maintenance, Petrilla delivered 40lbs. of mulch to Mt Collins to assess supplies there before CD Rd. closes on Dec 1. Will communicate w/ Mulch Team leaders (Mike Harrington and Terry Martin) about status. Filled all mulch buckets and swept privy. Following section work, Petrilla delivered Mulch Team leader supplies to Mike Harrington in Maryville.

10/21 - John Lee - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Reset rock step @ 1.2mile up. Removed rubble from trail (sticks and rocks).

10/21 - Lisa Sumter - Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail - Cleared all water bars & drainages. Clipped vegetation in some of the drainages for better access. Removed downed branches from trail. Checked the shelter area & water source. Packed out trash from shelter, fireplace & fire ring.

10/21 - Pete Berntsen, Diane Petrilla - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Cleared all waterbars (many!) on this section, improved drainage in several places. Oriented Pete to the section, which he is assuming leadership of.

10/22 - Taylor Weatherbee, Crystal Burnes, Betty Royer, Philip Royer - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - We cleaned all water bars and trimmed encroaching vegetation from Collins Gap north to the summit of Mt Collins.

10/23 - Steve Reagan - Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead to Spruce Fir - Cleaned drainage. Many leaves. Installed one piece of spruce and rock fill due to erosion.

10/24 - Randy Rainey, Jerry Troxler - Spence (Bote Mt Tr) to Russell Field - Cleaned out all of the water bars. Picked up litter around both shelters but they were in good shape. Swept out the the privy and filled the mulch buckets.

10/25 - Peter Lloyd, Michael Sutton - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - Cleared water-bars; cut back overhangs and cleared vegetation

10/25 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Took 2 bags of mulch to the Collins privy. After filling the buckets in the privy, the mulch bin is still at around 80% full. 2 hikers had camped in the flat area between the shelter and the trail, and found some broken glass protruding from the ground. I dug up the remains of 3 green glass bottles and carried it out, along with 4 socks and a nasty wrist guard. Greatly appreciated Stewart Taylor's work on the water bars from the AT to the shelter. I cleaned out those from the shelter to the water source, then cleaned those from the junction of the AT and the trail to the shelter, and Mt Collins summit.

10/27 - Stewart Taylor, Jerry Troxler - **Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr** - Cleaned out water bars and drainage ditches

10/29 - John Lee - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Worked for a few hours with the Snyders filling in a hole next to the trail from a downed tree. Installed 3 Steps and removed rocks and level trail. Cleaned water bars. Blocked split sections in trail using rocks sticks and leaves. 3 spots. Fill in around roots to help level trail.

10/29 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - **Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap** - Worked with Johnny Lee for the first few hours securing the side of the trail, and backfilling the hole that was created when an old dead tree fell downhill, thank goodness the trunk went down away from the trail After this was accomplished Johnny went to Sweat Heifer to complete his maintenance of the first 1.7 mi. N from NFG. Trip roots were cut, sledged sharp edges of rocks protruding upward in the trail. Rebuilt one rock waterbar, shored up a locust step and a rock step. Cut out dead roots and widened the trail about three feet. Cleaned all waterbars as well as raked leaves 10 feet above each waterbar.

10/29 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock, Keith Mertz, Raymond Karr, Kelly Karr, Patti Barrows, Cindy Mease - **High Pt E of Walker Gap to Yellow Creek Gap** - Brushed out and cleared trees on this 4 mile section.

10/30 - John Duffy, Charlie McDonald, Taylor Weatherbee - **Mulch Operations** - Charlie McDonald gave a mulch tutorial to John Duffy and me. We then bagged 8 40 pound bags of mulch that we delivered to Sam Tillery, to be delivered to Spence. We then filled a few more bags to fill the bins at Sugarlands, and for me to deliver to Collins. The rest of the mulch outside of the tent was moved inside to dry.

10/31 - Taylor Weatherbee - **Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap** - Delivered 80 pounds of mulch to the Collins privy mulch bin (now around 90-95% full). Then went to Collins Gap and cleaned out the drainages in the 400 yds or so between the Pyle/Hughes section and the Royer et al section.

11/4 - John Lee, Randy Mitchell, Tracy Xu - **Other Work** - Remove all tools from shed and gang box. Sweep floor and move tool rack. Count clean and put tools back on reconfigured rack.

11/4 - Kelly Conway, Bill Pyle - **Collins Gap to Mt Love** - cleared waterbars and removed encroaching vegetation on upper half of section.

11/4 - Shari Jardina, Melony Dodson, Leanne Butler, Linda Nowak - **Clingmans Dome to Goshen Prong Tr** - Checked out condition of this section of the AT on way to work on the Goshen Prong Trail.

11/4 - Taylor Weatherbee - **AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin** - Attended the fall RPC meeting

11/5 - Cheryl Sanchez, Kelly Conway, Bill Pyle - **Collins Gap to Mt Love** - Cleared water bars and removed vegetation on lower half of section

11/6 - Steve Reagan, Karen Reagan - **Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead to Spruce Fir** - Cleaned drainage. Moved some good dirt.

11/8 - Steve Reagan - **Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead to Spruce Fir** - Finished leaves for the season. Cleaned long turnpike.

11/9 - Randy Bullock - **Yellow Creek Gap to Cody Gap** - Jerry Kyle and I looked at this section, identifying areas to be rehabbed by Konarock volunteers this summer.

11/12 - Pete Berntsen - **False Gap to Dry Sluice Gap** - Cleaned water bars, water drains, and grade dips and removed berm to permit water to flow from the trail. Removed small debris from trail and cleared a couple of areas where small debris was hanging over the trail. Did minor brush trimming. It was a good way to spend Veterans Day following a free breakfast.

11/12 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - **Yellow Creek Gap to Cody Gap** - Walked the forestry road below the AT to look at potential camping areas for summer Konarock crews. Sent com and photos to ATC regarding.

11/12 - Terry Martin - **Mt Cammerer Side Tr to Sunup Knob** - Cleaned out waterbars and removed tree limbs off trail. Build up side of trail in two spots.

11/13 - Aenan Fee, John Lee, Randy Mitchell - **Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top** - Cleaned all waterbars in the section. Cut 7 in beech tree limb that had fallen into water drainage on trail. Was able to roll another large trunk off the trail. Filled mulch buckets at Cosby Privy. Raked leaves from Cosby Shelter roof.

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Celebrates 100 years in 2024!

On the third Saturday of October 1924, a group of twenty organized under the auspices of the Knoxville YMCA climbed to the summit of Mount Le Conte for an overnight stay at a provisional camp high under the lee of Cliff Top. At some point while enjoying the panorama from Cliff Top, the twenty agreed to form the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club. Come October 2024, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club will have been in continual existence for one hundred years - a momentous achievement. To celebrate this achievement, the Club will have Centennial events each month. The Centennial events will be listed in the appropriate newsletter, and are also listed at SMHClub.org under the Centennial tab and in the Club Handbook. ***Our maintainers are a proud part of our history- please join in as you can!***



To all SMHC maintainers.....

Have a safe and happy holiday season and may the New Year be healthy for you and all those you care about!



11/13 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - cleared all water bars/drainsthis was much easier for the drains that were re-engineered last month under the supervision of El Jefe of the Treadway [Franklin LaFonde]. Thanks to all who helped.

11/15 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Wright Gap to Wesser - Cut a tree reported a few weeks ago blocking the trail at Grassy Gap.

11/16 - Patricia Bryant, Peter Lloyd - Mt Love to Clingmans Dome - Cleaned out water-bars, cut back some overhang areas, dug-out side channel at one of the seeps.

11/19 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock, Cindy Mease, Dick Evans - Swim Bald to Wright Gap - Brushed out the corridor starting at the gap and ended approx. 1/2 mile south of Grassy Gap. This section needed mountain laurel cleared in 2 areas as its growth habit had greatly narrowed the trail corridor. Brush also narrowed the trail in this section for most of its length. We worked 6 hours in this section.

11/20 - John Lee, Randy Mitchell - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Removed and replaced double rock stairs. Location 2. Installed new stair. Removed trip rock-roots. Blocked off small side trail with sticks-rocks. Cleaned water bars.

12/6 - Randy Bullock - Stekoah Gap to Locust Cove Gap - Cribbed and filled a 4ft section of trail after a tree had fallen on the downhill side narrowing and causing an erosion concern. Using fallen locust and rock, I shored up and filled the damaged area to good as new.

12/7 - Jeff Osler, Taylor Weatherbee - Mulch Operations - Used a lightly used(and free) 12X16 tarp to cover the hole in the roof of the mulch tent. Secured the edges to avoid displacement by wind. 2 fairly large holes were successfully covered.

12/8 - John Duffy, Melita Duffy - Mulch Operations - Shoveled and raked the mulch inside the tent to enable drying

12/10 - Betty Royer, Philip Royer - Club Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Maintainer Awards for 2023