

Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

RHKetelle

April 2024

News from the ATC

New Ridgerunner Reporting System - ATC has a new reporting system this year, and the way they share Ridgerunner data with partners has changed. ATC is now using RIMS, which is an application that was developed by the Colorado Mountain Club to help citizen scientists monitor trail conditions and use. The data is collected and then aggregated onto a virtual map. It's a different system than FastField Forms, and ATC's Visitor Use Management team is finalizing a dashboard/map view that can be shared with partners so the data can be viewed.

Currently, high priority information collected by Ridgerunners around blowdowns and the status of mulch is being circulated to the appropriate contacts. Once all data is ready to be shared, information about how to access it will be circulated, hopefully in the coming weeks.

If you have questions, reach out to Anne Sentz at asentz@appalachiantrail.org.

Introducing Franklin Tate, ATC's New Associate Regional Director - ATC has hired a new Associate Regional Director, Franklin Tate, who will work in the Trail's Southern Region. Franklin has worked extensively in the non-profit conservation and education field in both the Eastern and Western US, overseeing all aspects of program development including fundraising, marketing, project management, and strategic planning. Prior to directing Trout Unlimited's Headwaters Youth Program, he was a Dean of Service-Learning at Warren Wilson College. He is located in Asheville, NC. Franklin looks forward to working alongside all of the A.T.'s dedicated partners and will provide strategic oversight around long-term project planning, budgeting, relationship building, and more. Franklin can be reached at ftate@appalachiantrail.org.

Anne Sentz and Sarah Adams, ATC Regional Managers, remain SMHC/ATMC's contacts for on-the-ground work and programming.

Submitted by Anne Sentz

A. T. Maintenance Work Trip – Saturday April 6

The April 6th work trip is designated toward treadway rehab between Fontana Dam and Shuckstack Firetower. Specific work locations will be identified based on highest priority needs and number of volunteers that sign up. Planned work includes filling in root ball holes, some sidehill digging where tread is starting to slip downhill, pruning back encroaching vegetation, and installation of a few log steps. Tools will be provided. Carpool from the Maryville Walmart on Hwy 411 at 7:30 am. An alternate meeting point is at the Fontana Dam Visitor Center at 9:00am. RT travel from Maryville is approximately 110 miles. Participants will need to wear sturdy footwear and weather appropriate attire. Bring gloves, lunch, snacks, and plenty of water. If you have a favorite tool you prefer to use, please bring those as well.

Contact: Franklin LaFond, 678-464-3380, ox97GaMe@aol.com You can also register at smhclub.org.

SAVE THE DATE!!

National Trails Day, Saturday June 1, 2024!

Come and help out on the Appalachian Trail for a day; T-shirts, picnic and door prizes!

More information and registration form to follow soon!



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Christine Hoyer - A farewell with gratitude....



Christine Hoyer, Chief Backcountry Specialist with the GRSM, transitioned to a new position as Employee Wellness Program Analyst, Wellness and Resilience Branch, Office of Risk Management in late 2023. Christine started her career in the Smokies, serving as Trail Crew Leader, Trails and Facilities Volunteer Coordinator, and Parkwide Volunteer Coordinator, before assuming the backcountry role. It was in the latter role that SMHC and ATMC had the privilege of working with her.

Over the years, Christine was a regular presence at our ATMC and BOD meetings, to bring the National Park’s perspective to our activities. She assisted in countless projects on the A.T. that required environmental impact assessments, management decisions, and much more, as well as keeping us up-to-date on required practices for our volunteer work. In a position that required much discernment between what we wanted to accomplish on the A.T and what could be accomplished within Park guidelines, she gracefully balanced assessments and decisions.

Although Christine is still based in Tennessee, her position is a National Park Service-wide one. Christine will help develop and implement tools and interventions to prevent or reduce the prevalence of employee mental illness or mental health issues while bolstering employee education and application of techniques that promote resilience and overall emotional well-being. For anyone who knows Christine, this is a great fit!

Brian Eversole is the current Interim Backcountry Specialist while the search for a permanent employee begins.

The SMHC and ATMC are very grateful for Christine’s work with us. Fortunately, we get to see her again, as one of our speakers at the SMHC October 5, 2024 Centennial banquet. We wish her all the best in her new position!

Submitted by Diane Petrilla

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A. T. Work Trips from 2/20/2024 to 3/14/2024

2/20 - Keith Mertz, Judy Wade - Fontana Dam to Route 28 - Removed limbs off trail, clipped back some greenbrier, rhodo, and other vegetation intruding on trail.

2/22 - Taylor Weatherbee - Mulch Operations - Went to mulch tent to check out how good the roof repair was doing after placement of the 2 tarps. Tent nice and dry. No leaks. Turned over the mulch that was added last week.

2/24 - Lisa Sumter - Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail – Cleared limbs from trail & sawed broken branches protruding into the corridor. Raked debris from drainages if needed. Checked shelter.

2/29 - Taylor Weatherbee - Lewellyn Branch to Fontana Dam - Went up to work on a small blowdown just south of Shuckstack that one of our new Ridgerunners had reported, and to give some helpful hints in reading binds and clearing small blowdowns with the small handsaw she was given. Jamie “lumberjack” Carson made around 6-8 cuts to get this small (6-7 inches at its largest point) maple tree and all its branches off the trail. We also removed a bunch of sticks from the trail, and on my way back down (Jamie was just starting her hitch on the southern end of the park), I removed several branches that were poking into the trail.

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3/2 - Randy Bullock, Franklin LaFond - Yellow Creek Gap to Cody Gap - Looked at work areas identified by Konnarock for rehab later this spring. We cut or identified suitable locust logs for use as cribbing or steps in 8 areas. We cleared 6 blowdowns from the corridor as well.

3/4 - John Lee - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Cleaned water bars as needed. Picked up 2 rock slide areas. Cleaned all trip rocks. Removed 1 small blowdown. Reset 5 rock steps. Cut off small trip roots. Also packed out garbage. Removed and reset 2 log steps. Placed native items on side trail to discourage hikers from entering.

3/4 - Pete Berntsen - Newfound Gap to Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr - Removed trip roots and blowdown debris from trail tread. Performed minor brush trimming, and removed four blowdowns from 4-inch to 12-inch diameter. Cut and cleared 4-inch blowdown across trail heading north from Indian Gap. Cleared water drains on section between Road Prong and Indian Gap.

3/6 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Fontana Dam to Route 28 - Cleared a tree from the corridor 1/2 mile south of the shelter.

3/8 - Taylor Weatherbee - AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Attended the spring RPC meeting.

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



Ridgerunner Jamie "lumberjack" Carson working near Shuckstack. *Photo courtesy of Taylor Weatherbee.*



Success! *Photo courtesy of Taylor Weatherbee.*