



May 2024

Konnarock Crew

ATC's annual Konnarock Crew is coming to the Nantahala National Forest from May 10–16. The crew is made up of volunteers from across the country and often includes members of other trail associations. This annual crew is utilized to build treadway structures, construct new trail segments, and perform extensive trail rehab. This is a great opportunity to learn or improve maintenance skills from trained ATC crew leaders and help improve this section of trail.

This year's project is a 1.5-mile-long rehab project, south of Yellow Creek Gap. The hike to the worksite is moderate. The crew will start at 8:30 each morning from the Yellow Creek trailhead. You can car camp with the crew behind the Forest Service gate for any number of nights. Volunteers that participate with the crew for 3 or more days receive a commemorative Konnarock T- Shirt.

Participants will need to wear sturdy footwear and bring work gloves, lunch, snacks, and plenty of water. If you have a hardhat, shin guards, and/or safety glasses, please bring those as well.

For more details, contact: Randy Bullock (realrandybullock@yahoo.com) or Franklin LaFond 678-464-3380 (ox97GaMe@aol.com)

A.T. Maintenance Work Trip – Saturday May 4

The May 4th work trip is designated for treadway rehab between Davenport Gap and Lower Mt Cammerer Trail. Planned work includes sidehill digging where tread is starting to slip downhill, pruning encroaching vegetation, and replacing log steps. Tools will be provided.

Carpool from the Cracker Barrel on Strawberry Plains at 8:00 am. Alternative meeting point is Davenport Gap trailhead at 9:00 am. Participants will need sturdy footwear and weather appropriate attire. Bring gloves, lunch, snacks, and plenty of water. If you have favorite tools you prefer to use, please bring those as well.

Contact: Franklin LaFond 678-464-3380
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National Trails Day June 1, 2024

It's Time To Register for National Trails Day, Saturday June 1, 2024!

National Trails Day is on Saturday June 1, the 27th year that the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club has hosted the event. We are looking for crew leaders and volunteers to work on the Appalachian Trail from Silers Bald Shelter to Icewater Springs Shelter and Davenport Gap to Mount. Cammerer.

Volunteers will meet at the Sugarlands Visitor Center at 7:00 AM for an orientation, donuts(!), meet-up with crews, and gather tools, then carpool to the designated trailhead by 8:30 AM. A free commemorative T-shirt and a catered picnic at the end of the day at Metcalf Bottoms will be provided along with a drawing for nice prizes. Please note that lunch will not be provided.

Please see the Registration Form that is at the end of this Newsletter. You can register by:

1. Going to this [link](#) on smhclub.org
2. Printing the registration form at the [link](#) and mailing it to the address listed at the bottom of the form.

All Volunteers, including crew leaders, must complete a registration form. The deadline to receive registrations is MAY 15. Come out and help us with a day of work and fun on the A.T!

Ridgerunners need Assistance

Please help the Ridgerunners by removing trash from the toolboxes at Silers Bald and Spence Field shelters. There are torn tarps that can no longer be used at each shelter and sleeping bags at Silers. Thank you.

Contributed by Phyllis Henry



Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

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A.T. Work Trips From 3/15/2024 to 4/16/2024

3/15 - Mark Holmberg - Wright Gap to Wesser - Cleared limbs and a small blowdown with a hand saw.

3/17 - Pete Berntsen - Newfound Gap to Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr - Cut back rhododendron and briars, removed one 15-foot, 8-inch diameter log from across the trail, used one large and several small rocks and dirt to fill in behind two log steps, removed and reinstalled two log steps, and repainted blazes on the entire section. Cleared many drains.

3/17 - Randy Bullock, Franklin LaFond - Sassafras Gap Privy - Conducted privy maintenance, replaced wire in bin, and repaired privy bin door. Added a water bar using locust logs, reset a couple of steps, reclaimed 10 feet of trail using sidehill and added cribbing, and cut 6 blowdowns.

3/19 - Taylor Weatherbee, Randy Mitchell - Cosby Knob Shelter - Applied caulk to the roof on Cosby Knob Shelter to fix a small leak. Repaired shelter tarp. Cut 25-inch downed Hemlock tree from the trail. Removed 7 smaller wind-thrown trees from the Low Gap approach trail to the AT.

3/20 - Taylor Weatherbee - Mulch Operations - Filled 12, forty-pound bags with mulch for the Cosby trip.

3/21 - Mark Holmberg, Randy Bullock - Wright Gap to Wesser - Cut three blowdowns off the trail and fell a dead tree leaning over the trail.

3/21 - Taylor Weatherbee - Mulch Operations - Bagged 17, 40-pound bags of dry mulch from the tent. Filled the tent back up with wet mulch from the pile outside.

3/21 - Taylor Weatherbee, Randy Mitchell, Dick Ketelle, Bill Pyle - AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Attended chainsaw safety meeting for spring clearing with Brian Eversole.

3/22 - Bill Pyle - Other Work - Loaded, transported, and unloaded locust logs for trail projects.

3/22 - Rick Hughes, Philip Royer, Taylor Weatherbee - Other Work - With Anne Sentz, Jordan from the back

country office, and 4 ATMC volunteers, hauled around 100 locust logs from Oconoluftee to Soak Ash using 6 pickups.

3/24 - Dick Ketelle, Ann Farrar, Bill Pyle - Other Work - Cached chainsaw and other tools in the toolbox for use removing blowdowns when chainsaw window starts.

3/24 - Mike Harrington, Diane Petrilla, GRSM Consortium Group - Boulevard Tr to Sweat Heifer - The Outdoor Recreation Consortium brings students from universities all over the country to Tremont each year (for 46 years!) to learn about the Park, front country and back country management, wildlife management and much more. About 100 students come (from 6 different schools this year) and divide into "tracks" for learning. On 3/24, Mike Harrington and I met at the maintainer tool shed to gather tools, then joined the students for a talk by Ranger Boone Vandzura at Sugarlands. We then traveled to NFG and hiked north on the AT. The students worked on clearing some waterbars between Sweat Heifer and Boulevard while we discussed maintenance techniques, cooperative management of the AT, and much more. We stopped at Icewater privy and discussed backcountry waste management and then hiked to Charlies Bunion for spectacular views on this beautiful day. Most students had never been to the Smokies, so this was a special treat for them. This was my 6th year working with the students and faculty of this program; next year Mike Harrington has graciously agreed to help.

3/24 - Randy Bullock - Fontana Dam to High Pt E of Walker Gap - Cleared water bars, cut 4 trees from corridor, including trail restoration and removal of side trail around a large tree. Side hilled about 20 feet of trail in 3 areas, removing small rhododendrons and roots. Dug out numerous small trees, rodos, and briars.

3/24 - Terry Martin - Mt Cammerer Side Tr to Sunup Knob - Cleaned out waterbars and removed branches from the trail. There were a lot of day hikers.

3/25 - Randy Bullock - Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap - Retreaded and cribbed the hillside turn at the point where the contractors had connected a temporary trail



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to the existing AT. The turn uphill is at a steep angle and was showing erosion. It will most likely collapse with rain and increased foot traffic. I placed a 6-foot section of locust on the outside uphill and staked it securely in place. Soil was put in place to level the trail up to the existing trail. A water bar was dug in at the top to further secure the cribbing and help prevent erosion. I'll reassess the area once/week to look for any signs of soil shifting on the bottom side of the trail. At the shelter, picked up a small amount of cast-off hiker gear, trash, and spent fuel canisters. Privy is moldering along at 1/2 capacity, and I added a bucket of leaves along with refilling the leaf bucket.

3/27 - Amanda Beal - AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Attended spring clearing chainsaw meeting with NPS.

3/27 - Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Swim Bald to Wright Gap - Cleared two trees causing hikers to detour around trail along with several trees across the trail. Cut back or dug out rods in five areas where the overgrowth was causing hikers to drift downhill. We side hilled these areas after clearing, restoring the trail uphill. Dug out briars and overgrowth where needed.

3/29 - Dick Ketelle, Bill Pyle, Randy Mitchell, Taylor Weatherbee - Doe Knob to Fontana Dam - Cleared around 20–25 blowdowns, including a huge 30-inch tree with about an 8 foot diameter root ball that we were able to get off the trail. We also removed several trees that were leaning over the trail that were low enough to be a threat to horse riders.



3/30 - Meg Gill - Chestnut Br Trail to Lower Mt Cammerer Tr - Cleared water bars, moved branches off the trails

3/30 - Pete Berntsen - Newfound Gap to Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr - Cleaned additional water control devices and drove in over 60 rebar and wooden stakes so that most are even with the logs that they support. Rebuilt one large water drain. Reset one log step south of Indian Gap and secured with indent inside of mountain on one end and secured the other end with a rock. About 200 feet north of Indian Gap, added a paver rock in area where there was running water and diverted the water so that it leaves the trail closer to the source. A newly fallen tree fell between two other trees and broke the fallen tree into two pieces. I cut some of the protruding pieces and twisted others off and cleared the tread so that it can be easily hiked. Improved drain about 100 feet south of Newfound Gap.

3/30 - Randy Bullock, Franklin LaFond, David Gall, Jefre Cockerham, Sunaree Bullock - High Pt E of Walker Gap to Yellow Creek Gap - SMHC/NNF monthly maintainer hike. Starting at the trail at Cable Gap Shelter, we chopped out roots with pulaskis, sidehilled the trail that had deviated downhill, added 20 ft of cribbing, and leveled as intended. In two areas approx. 1/2 mile north, we added 10 and 20 ft. of cribbing and sidehilled as before in these eroded areas.

4/1 - John Lee, Brian Mason - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Removed and replaced 3 log steps. Reset 1 rock step. Installed 1 new rock step. Removed small trip rocks from the trail.

4/1 - Kathy Gardner - 1 mi N of Cam (4250' El) to Mt Cammerer Side Tr - Cleared vegetation and brush, cleaned water bars.



Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee

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RHKetelle

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4/1 - Taylor Weatherbee - Mulch Operations - Picked up mulch to be delivered to Spence at the mulch tent. While there, turned over the new mulch added to the tent since last trip. Later in the day, I learned that the horse rider who takes mulch to Spence was going to be too tied up to get mulch to Spence until after blowdown clearing. The horse rider will check in with Phyllis Henry every 2 weeks to get the best time to bring mulch to Spence.

4/1 - Taylor Weatherbee - Community Events - Went to NOC in Gatlinburg, several other stores in Gatlinburg (Starbucks, The Day Hiker, Black Bear Inn and Suites), several stores in Pigeon Forge and Sevierville (Krispy Kreme, Uncle Lems), REI in Knoxville, and River Sports in Knoxville for donations to NTD. Received 2 backpacks and 2 hydration bladders from The Day Hiker, and free coffee from Starbucks as well as promises to receive contacts from the appropriate persons from other stores.

4/6 - Franklin LaFond, Jefre Cockerham, John Lee, James Kinch, Paul Sealy - Lewellyn Branch to Fontana Dam - Repaired area where a large tree had ripped out soil and rock. Used 3 pieces of log to build a cribbing wall and widened the treadway in that area. Chopped out rock, soil, and roots from a second root ball that was encroaching the uphill side of the trail. Heavily pruned 300 ft of encroaching woody vegetation. Removed rhodo and mountain laurel in the 3 ft uphill side to reduce future overgrowth. Rehabbed 40 ft of sidehill in an area where the trail had slipped roughly 3 ft downhill. Utilized a downed oak for cribbing until a locust is available for a more permanent solution. Rehabbed a rock waterbar by digging and setting in 3 new flat rocks. Cleaned out several additional waterbars on the way out.

4/8 - Mike Harrington - Mount Collins Privy - Refilled one mulch bucket (now all 3 are full), opened the mulch storage box and estimated the mulch level in the box as 60%, estimated the privy bin fullness as (looking at bins from behind the privy): Left ~75% full, middle (throne) about 60% full, and right ~85% full. Levelled the feces cone below the throne.

4/8 - Taylor Weatherbee - Mulch Operations - Delivered 480 pounds of mulch for transport to the Cosby privy. Asked for the old bags and trash from Tricorner.

4/9 - Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle - Sugarland Mt Tr to Clingmans Dome - Scouted this section before our planned chainsaw blowdown clearing trip tomorrow. Found no blowdowns that would require a chainsaw. Cleared 5 small ones with our hand saws.

4/10 - Bill Pyle, Randy Mitchell, Taylor Weatherbee - Newfound Gap to Collins Gap - We cleared around 8 blowdowns. There were 4 trees in the 24 inch plus range, 3 of which were heavy leaners that required multiple cuts with the chainsaw. This section is now cleared although the road to NFG was closed because of high winds.