



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

P O Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

May 2020

**All SMHC hikes and events are cancelled for the month of May due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
A decision regarding June hikes will be determined in early May.**

April 6, 2020

Dear Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Members and Appalachian Trail Maintainers,

It is an understatement to say we are in an unprecedented time. In the face of a global pandemic with COVID-19, my deepest wish is that all of you stay safe, healthy, and as protected as possible. I take this opportunity to speak to you about your Board's decisions around hiking and other Club activities during the pandemic, and why these decisions have been made.

I am quite sure by now, everyone is familiar with the concepts of "social distancing" and "stay-at-home." The power of these measures, as well as others recommended by the CDC, cannot be emphasized enough, as ways to "flatten the curve" of COVID-19 cases and to try to prevent a peak or surge of cases that could overwhelm our medical systems. For example, according to the University of Washington/Gates Foundation Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, epidemiologic models (using data we now have from the course of the disease in this country) show a bell curve with the peak of disease in April and continuation of disease risk into May. These models are updated constantly, depending on what is actually happening all over the country and state by state. (See: <https://covid19.healthdata.org/projections>; click on "USA" to get drop-down menu of each state). Models are not infallible of course. In addition, we have the power to improve the picture by consistently following best-practice guidelines. Which means stay at home.

The SMHC has cancelled all official hikes in April and May. Decisions for June will be made in late April. The GSMNP remains closed indefinitely. This means trails, off-trails, and Visitors Centers.

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail now has asked the Federal Department of the Interior to close the A.T. throughout its length, until at least April 30, given the lack of response to a voluntary request to stay off the Trail.

National Forests in Tennessee and North Carolina have various levels of closure implemented, including access points to the A.T. Tennessee State Parks now are closed, at least through April 14. (Editor note: these closures are now indefinite, per new info released on 4.14.2020)

As a Board, we are urging you to stay at home except for essential needs (medical, groceries), and to NOT HIKE. This is in compliance with CDC recommendations, when the risk of disease is substantial.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>

We look forward to the time when we can emerge from this difficult and challenging time, and resume activities on the trails we love. That time will come! In the meantime, please stay safe, healthy and at home.

All my best,

Diane Petrilla M.D., President, SMHC

COVID-19 and the Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is communicating regular updates on the impacts of the COVID-19 virus on the Trail and its visitors, volunteers, communities, and partners through its website, social media, email, AT Camp, and through media partners like The Trek and Guthook Guides. For the most up to date information, go to: www.wildeast.appalachiantrail.org/covid19. The patience and adaptability of A.T. clubs during this time has been incredibly heartening, especially in the move to online meetings, suspending hikes and work trips on the A.T. The Conservancy is committed to keeping the well-being of its volunteer corps, adjacent Trail Communities, and visitors safe. The ATC will continue to monitor the situation, share information on closure statuses, and provide guidance on its website.

Alivia Acosta, National Service Coordinator. Appalachian Trail Conservancy

The Great Smoky Mountain National Park is Closed to the Public

During the closure period, visitors can experience the park using digital tools including our social media platforms and website where near real-time views can be seen via park webcams at <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/photosmultimedia/webcams.htm>.

Park rangers can still help answer questions via email or phone during business hours at (865) 436-1291, (828) 506-8620, or GRSM_Smokies_Information@nps.gov.

The NPS is working with federal, state, and local authorities to closely monitor COVID-19 and adjusting measures to control its spread. We will notify the public as we are able to resume operations and will provide updates on our website at www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/conditions.htm and social media."

-- Press release, dated 3/24/2020, from GSMNP Public Affairs Office

When the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club faced trying times

Our Club was founded in 1924, after the 1918 "Spanish" flu pandemic, which would be an event most closely parallel to what is happening now with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in the last (almost) 100 years, there have been other challenging historical times our Club has had to make adjustments for.

From the 1934 Handbook: (in the time of the Great Depression)

E.G. Frizzell, President

To each and every member I send greetings. Those of you who have kept in close touch with the Club know that the past year has been a busy one. Although we have had little or no money in the treasury, due to our funds being tied up by bank failures, our section of the Appalachian Trail clearing program was carried through as scheduled. This was made possible by the bulldog tenacity and unquenchable enthusiasm of a relatively small number of loyal members..... (Those maintainers haven't changed much!)

From the 1944 Handbook: (WWII era)

Maintaining A Schedule Under War Restrictions

Guy Frizzell, President

Profiting by the experiences of last year, our first under rationing, the various committees charged with the responsibility of a program for the year have developed a schedule of activities that looks very well indeed. It is noted that there are 5 trips to the Smokies, well-spaced through the year, and several innovations- cook-outs, a walnut hunt, a muscadine hunt, a blackberry pickin', and Saturday evening hikes.....(Although we certainly can't do any of these social activities, maybe someone wants to revive those walnut and muscadine hunts someday??!!)

Furthermore, when one peruses these wonderful historic Club Handbooks, there were other challenges related to conservation, fluctuations in membership, loss of key leaders, and much more. However, our Club has persevered, its continuity maintained by the well thought out structure of its Constitution and By-laws, as well as its ability to flex with the times. Most crucial are the members and volunteers of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, and the Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee, who bring their energy, passion and love for the outdoors to this organization.

Here are words from Benton MacKaye, addressed to Margaret Broome, Chairman of the Handbook Committee, SMHC. This is also in the 1934 handbook, during a time when MacKaye had to stay in Knoxville recovering from illness-

"For we need this thing wilderness, far more than it needs us. Civilizations (like glaciers) come and go, but the mountain and its forest continue the course of creation's destiny. And in this we mere humans can take part- by fitting our civilization to the mountain. This, friend Margaret, is the thing that you are doing (you and your Club-mates)- you who have wrought your portion of the Appalachian Trail- you who cherish your strategic Smoky Mountains for yourselves and all America...."



In the April newsletter, we put out a request for older editions of SMHC newsletters. Many thanks to Dan Feller for quickly responding to our request for old newsletters. And thanks to Kenneth Miller and Jim Quick who also offered their collections!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Arnita Gray, nsitasari@yahoo.com, 304-559-6795
 1008 Brentwood Ay Kingston TN 37763
 Trailhard, LLC, trailhard@gmail.com
 714 Blockhouse Valley Rd Clinton TN 37716
 Terry Wilks, tapwilks@comcaast.net, 248-909-6593
 367 Cheestana Way Loudon TN 37774

For the Record

Laurel Falls/Buzzard Point 3.11.2020

A perfect day awaited 20 fun loving hikers, including one visitor who plans to join the Club, to enjoy this moderate in and back 11-mile hike within the Laurel-Snow SNA (formerly

Bowater Pocket Wilderness Area near Dayton). Heavy fog awaited the hikers which made the easy journey following an old railroad grade that remained from the early mining days along beautiful Richland Creek magical. Many hikers made repeated comments about how beautiful this section was of the Cumberland Trail.

Along the trail many artifacts of the early mining operations were noted including a mine ventilation tunnel, remains of the water supply lines that fed water from a reservoir up trail to the city of Dayton, impressive stone work and much more.

After about a mile we began our climb up one side of the river gorge to Laurel Falls after negotiating our way through a small cave for lack of a better word. With the recent rains the 80-foot Laurel Falls was very impressive. We then backtracked our way to a trail intersection that lead us up about 1.5 miles with noticeable elevation gain to the other side of the river gorge to Buzzard Point. Along the way we crossed Richland Creek (actually a river) along an impressive 150-foot double metal bridge for a great view of the rushing water. Once reaching Buzzard Point the sky cleared with a warm sun just in time for everyone to enjoy lunch and a spectacular view overlooking Richland Creek and the city of Dayton and well beyond. Three hikers went toward Snow Falls by mistake after reaching the top of the plateau but realized this before long and joined the group just in time to enjoy lunch and candy bars provided to all hikers. Many hawks but no buzzards were observed flying both above and below Buzzard Point. We returned to our cars by backtracking the way we came. After the hike a few hikers



were led to the remains of the coke oven operation for which the mines supplied coal for



coking. These are likely the best-preserved ovens, probably because they are hidden by kudzu which makes winter the best time to visit.

Lloyd Chapman

The Sugarfingers, off-trail 3.14.2020
Despite an ominous weather forecast and the threat of unusually rugged terrain, sixteen adventurous hikers gathered for a thrilling tour of the wild Sugar Finger ridges. Under the expert leadership of Clayton Carver, the jovial group successfully scaled the precipitous bluffs and nerve-racking boulders of the Second Finger. A celebratory lunch was enjoyed on the crest of Sugarland Mountain, surrounded by glorious views of Mt. LeConte, the Chimneys, and Little River watershed.

From the mountaintop, the crew descended a short distance along a well-maintained manway, before dropping off along another rocky ridge with spectacular



and unique views of the Chimneys' massive west face. Upon reaching the valley floor, the group was treated to a series of secret cascades, one of which was the awe-inspiring Birthday Falls, one of the tallest freely falling drops of water in the Smokies. The rain never came, everyone made it out safely, and a grand day was had by all.

David Sands

Walker Sisters and Their Family and Friends 3.14.2020

A group of ten (10) hikers started and finished on a cloudy day, the Sun never broke through, yet no rain drops rained on this parade. Emphasis was placed on this part of the GSMNP, in that it was a community of numerous families of which we call today Little Greenbrier. The way to the Moore Cemetery was pointed out for those who wished to make a future hike of their own. Saw the sites of two bothers homes, a niece, nephews and the home site of Jim and Caroline Walker Shelton, the only Walker sister to marry. Also pointed out other families home sites along the way. A very learned group of hikers pointed out the names of some of the native as well as exotic plants along the way. As we came across the NEON location one of the hikers explained the purpose of the metal pins in the ground. (Please Google NEON) At the conclusion of the hike, some went to the Mattox Cemetery to view the final resting places of the Walker Sisters, their parents, brothers, niece, and the sisters Grandparents.

Mark and Janet Snyder

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club History

The SMHC has, from its inception, been dedicated to conserving the nation's natural beauty for all of us and for future generations. Early Club leaders and members worked diligently to support the efforts to form a national park in east Tennessee and western North Carolina, which later became the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The founding and early members of the Club all were active in a broad range of conservation activities, within the region and nationally.

Carlos Campbell was a founding member of the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club and a charter member of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association; for the latter he served as Secretary from 1940 until his death in 1978. During that time, he wrote numerous articles in Nature Magazine and American Forests extolling the virtues of the Smokies. After hiking thousands of miles through the mountain range, often through unchartered regions where trails barely existed, if at all, Campbell was highly qualified to author a definitive account of the national park. See Carlos C. Campbell, in his book *The Birth of a National Park* (UT Press, 1960).

Harvey Broome, Club president in 1932, was an American lawyer, writer and conservationist. Broome was a founding member of the Wilderness Society for which he served as president from 1957 until his death in 1968. The Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club is named the "Harvey Broome Group" in his honor.

Like Harvey, Ernie Dickerman, Club president in 1950-51 and 1955 was an American wilderness advocate and conservationist. Known as the "Grandfather of Eastern Wilderness", [1] he was particularly instrumental in securing legal protection for wild land in Virginia and the eastern United States.

Jim Thompson, Club co-founder and president in 1928-29, played the role of official photographer for the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association and his photographs inspired the site committee responsible for determining a location for a new national park in the southeast. Upon seeing his photographs, the committee agreed to visit the region.

Over the years the SMHC has supported or fought, as appropriate, numerous controversial issues impacting the Great Smoky Mountains Park in an effort to lessen adverse impacts on the Park's backcountry and to preserve the wilderness environment of the Park. We successfully opposed a second trans-mountain road from the Bryson City area to the Cades Cove area in the late 1960s, were an important element in the coalition that opposed a road on the north shore of Fontana Lake and obtained a cash settlement in lieu thereof, supported the abandonment of the private summer cottages at Elkmont, most of which have since been removed, and advocated closure (so far unsuccessful) of the one-way Parsons Branch Road. The Club Conservation Committee leads the way in these activities and is still working on an effort to have much of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park officially designated as Wilderness. Recent leaders in those efforts include Leroy Fox, Club president 1969-70; Ray Payne, Club president 1971-72; and Will Skelton. Ray and Leroy, along with former president Harvey Broome and others, were leaders in opposing the transmountain road; all three were involved eliminating the private Elkmont residences and in the Park's adoption of a management plan that provides for management of much of the Park essentially as a nationally-designated Wilderness area. Ray and LeRoy were especially involved in stopping the Northshore Road. Outside the Park Will has been a leader in the designation of substantial acres of Wilderness in the adjacent Cherokee National Forest.

The Club conservation committee continues to be very active in a wide range of conservation issues locally and across the nation. Each year the Club board designates a portion of its expenses toward strategic and timely conservation needs. These funds have been built up over the years Club dues and generous endowments from Club members.

Brian Worley, Historian

Club President, Diane Petrilla was recently recognized by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy:

As a thank you for all that you do, and to highlight the important work of A.T. volunteers such as yourself, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy is honoring you this month in the form of a Volunteer Spotlight.

Your hard work, passion, and contagious enthusiasm is felt by many.

