



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

September 2021

Laurel Falls Congestion Management Pilot Project begins Sept. 7

Great Smoky Mountains National Park officials announced that Laurel Falls Trail parking will be available by reservation only from Sept. 7 through Oct. 3, 2021, as part of the Laurel Falls Congestion Management Pilot Project. The pilot project aims to improve visitor safety, relieve congestion, better protect park resources, and enhance the visitor experience on Laurel Falls Trail. The 1.3-mile trail is one of the most popular trails in the park with more than 375,000 visits in 2020.

During the pilot project, trailhead parking will be provided by reservation only and no parking will be permitted in undesignated areas along Little River Road. Parking reservations, for two-hour time blocks, may be made online at www.recreation.gov for a fee of \$14 beginning on Aug. 24, 2021.

"I want to thank the public for providing great feedback throughout the process of developing this pilot project," said **Superintendent Cassius Cash**. "The concept was borne out of public workshops last fall and further refined after the latest public meeting as we strive to address safety and congestion challenges at this busy site."

The Park collected public comments on the congestion management pilot project from July 20 through August 7. The Park received 150 submissions from 18 states, with 70% coming from Tennessee residents. The most prevalent comment, representing 42% of submissions, included concerns about the parking reservation fee amount. The second most prevalent comment, representing 22% of submissions, expressed general support of the pilot project effort, while 6% of submissions expressed opposition.

The high level of Laurel Falls Trail use has resulted in congestion along the trail, crowding at the falls, and unsafe conditions along Little River Road. Vehicles parked along the roadside obstruct the flow of traffic and create blind spots for motorists, while visitors walking to or from their vehicles in the lanes of traffic are at risk of being struck by passing vehicles. Roadside parking also impacts adjacent habitats, damages road edges, and causes erosion.

Managing parking through a reservation system is expected to spread use more evenly throughout the day, creating a less crowded and more enjoyable experience on the trail and at the falls. The two-hour timeframe for parking reservations is based on monitoring data collected this summer. On average, most hikers complete the hike in 90 minutes. Park staff will be on hand to actively manage parking and monitor conditions during the pilot. The information learned during this pilot will help the park make more informed decisions about how to manage the area in the future.

During the pilot, hikers who plan to utilize the Laurel Falls Trail parking area to use Sugarland Mountain Trail must also obtain a parking reservation to park at the trailhead. If hikers plan to be on trail for longer than the allotted two-hour time block, they must use a different trailhead and are encouraged to contact the Backcountry Office for more information on other trail access points. Additionally, Rocky Top Tours will provide shuttle access to the trailhead from nearby, Gatlinburg, Tenn. for a fee of \$5 per person. Information about the shuttle can be found at www.rockytop tours.com.

For more information about congestion monitoring in the park, please visit the park website at <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/management/ves.htm>.

Contact: [Caitlin Worth](mailto:Caitlin.Worth@nps.gov), (865)436-1207

Road Closures

Cades Cove Loop Road- Vehicle-free Wednesdays May 5-Sept 1, 2021

Cades Cove Loop Road- Fully Closed for resurfacing Sept 7-Sept 27, 2021

Forge Creek Road- closed to all vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and horse-back riders for bridge repair through August 27, 2021.

Newfound Gap Road- Expect nighttime delays on Newfound Gap Road (Hwy 441) from Chimneys Picnic Area to Newfound Gap. Lane closures are permitted from 7:00 p.m. on Sundays through 7:00 a.m. on Fridays. No lane closures will occur on weekends or holidays. Due to heavy summer traffic, daytime work will not resume until August 16, 2021. Beginning August 17, 2021, expect single-lane closures between Chimneys Picnic Area and Newfound Gap from Monday mornings through Fridays at Noon while contractors repave this section of Newfound Gap Road (Hwy 441). Please allow for extra time when traveling through the project area.

Heintooga Round Bottom- closed September 13-24 except on weekend for re-gravel work

For current Smokies Closures, please contact the Park at 865-436-1200 UPDATES or follow current road status updates on Twitter at [SmokiesRoadsNPS](https://twitter.com/smokiesroadsnps) or access from the internet using this link: <https://twitter.com/smokiesroadsnps>.

SMHC Hiking Guidelines During COVID

1. One hike leader will serve as pre-registration contact, with e-mail and phone # available in the write-up. Pre-registration is still required for all hikes. Pre-registration may also now occur through smhclub.org.
2. **Group size may now be up to 20.** Higher numbers of registrants should be split into 2 groups.
3. **Meet-up locations with carpooling to the trailhead, shuttles and key swaps are acceptable.** Hikers may still choose to drive to the trailhead independently, depending on their comfort level.
4. **Unvaccinated individuals should wear a mask for carpooling, shuttles, or key swaps, and at crowded trailheads. Masks are not required for fully vaccinated people. In the GRSM a Federal Mask Mandate is back in effect for all federal indoor spaces.**
5. Hikers must sign a release form, with accurate contact information.
6. Inform hikers if anyone becomes ill within a few days of the event, with symptoms concerning for COVID-19, to contact the hike leader immediately. (In addition to the usual pre-hike info). For regular pre-hike prep, see <http://www.smhclub.org/outingpreparation.htm>.
7. All participants should have hand sanitizer or wipes.
8. If leader(s) or any participant feels sick, please stay at home.
9. If leader(s) need to alter planned activity, please contact an SMHC Board member ASAP to discuss proposed changes.
10. Guidelines for A.T. maintainers will have to be reconciled with the National Park, National Forest, and ATC, particularly in regards to group size.

Federal Mask Mandate Back in Effect in the GRSM-Please Be Aware

1. Masks are worn, regardless of vaccination status, in federal buildings such as Backcountry Office - including if they were to be in a government vehicle (example: Ridge runner RR Shuttle)
2. Masks are worn, regardless of vaccination status, in the outdoor areas when it is not possible to maintain 6 feet of physical distance

Facebook Administrators Needed

SMHC has a Facebook page with some 7,000 followers. Consideration is being given to changing this page to an interactive page where you could post about a hike, inquire about a trail or campsite, seek out others to join you on a hike, but to do that Facebook group administrators are needed to screen out the posts that are not related to hiking and issues that would involve the SMHC. If you have are interested in doing this for the SMHC Facebook page, you need to contact Scott Walker at swalker.dev@gmail.com. If the page is made interactive, then hike leaders would be able to share any last-minute changes to a hike due to road conditions or the weather, giving everyone on that hike a chance to see the latest information. This change to an interactive group could benefit everyone in SMHC but volunteers are needed to make it work.

CONSIDER GOING GREEN!!!

If you receive this newsletter by US Mail, please consider changing to the digital PDF version distributed by email. Contact Newsletter Editor smhcnewsletter@gmail.com or swalker.dev@gmail.com to change from print to digital. You will find the digital version much easier to read. Changing to digital will help save considerable time from printing to preparing the newsletter for mail, in addition to the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter.

900 Milers

Are you interested in hiking all the trails in the Smokies? Are you interested in leading hikes to complete your 900 miles with SMHC? Would you like to see the SMHC offer hikes that would help you complete your 900-mile map? Would you like to see these hikes offered on a regular two-to-three-week schedule in addition to the regular hikes in the SMHC Handbook? Are you interested in help shuttling for these hikes? Would you like to see the SMHC arrange Bus and Boat shuttles for these hikes? Would you be interested in backpacking to get some of these trails in? Would you be interested if these hikes were posted on weekends or long weekends? If any of this sounds interesting to you, then you need to email Amanda Beal at amandaw455@gmail.com or Steve Dunkin at jsdunkin1302@gmail.com your interests as they make plans to consider 900 mile hikes.

UPCOMING HIKES

Meeting Places

Pre-registration with the leader is required for the hike and to ensure you know when and where to meet. We request that you cancel your registration ASAP if unable to hike to allow someone on the waiting list to take your spot. Please familiarize yourself with the Club guidelines in this newsletter.

History Hike

Manhattan Project Museum and Heritage and Powerhouse Greenways.

Saturday — September 4

The former K-25 site in west Oak Ridge has been converted into a Heritage Center as part of the Manhattan Project N.P. The Park features two greenway trails along with some restored natural areas. We will meet early at the Powerhouse trail and look for waterfowl and late summer wildflowers. We will then relocate with a stop to visit a slave cemetery, then make our way over to the Heritage Trail along the shore of Poplar Creek amongst the sites of the former K-25 building and end up back at the Heritage Center Museum opened just this year. Those interested in additional hiking can walk by a historical Baptist Church to the top of McKinney Ridge and back. We will walk about 4 miles total. Rated easy. Meet at the K-25 Overlook parking lot off Rt 58 west of Oak Ridge at 9:00 am.

Pre-registration is required.

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leader: Tim Bigelow bigelovt2@mindspring.com 865-607-6781

Urban Wilderness Gateway and Baker Creek

Sunday — September 5

EASY HIKE

On July 23 of this year, the City of Knoxville dedicated the Gateway to the Urban Wilderness--possibly the only trailhead at the dead end of a four-lane highway. We will hike from the overpass where the speeches took place, through amazing structures and earthworks that our biker friends enjoy, and then on Sycamore Loop, an easy one-mile trail in Baker Creek Preserve. Hike distance: 2-3 miles. Meet at 8:00am at the south end of James White Park Parkway; look for Urban Wilderness signs for a left exit to parking area. If it's raining heavily, we will cancel because mountain bike trails can be damaged when muddy.

Pre-registration is required.

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leader: Doris Gove dorisgove@aol.com 865-456-8198

A.T. Maintenance Work Trip

Saturday — September 11

On this AT work trip, we will be hiking out of Cosby along the Low Gap Trail. Once at Low Gap, we will divide into groups with some participants going north and some south. We will perform general maintenance duties including clearing out vegetation and cleaning water bars.

Pre-registration is required.

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leader: Mark Shipley, shipleymark57@gmail.com, 865-388-5261

Alum Cave trail to Mt. LeConte to Boulevard Trail

Wednesday — September 15

Alum Cave trail to Mt. LeConte to Boulevard Trail with a stop at Myrtle Point for lunch, to the A.T. to Newfound Gap. 13.3 miles. Shuttle required. Meet at Alcoa Food City at 7:30. For parking reasons or Alum Cave trailhead at 9:00. Drive 90 miles (\$4.50) to Alum Cave or 100 (\$5.00) to Newfound Gap

Pre-registration with the leader. Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leaders: Michael Zielinski kf4yws@charter.net or 865-363-6527 Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602

WEBSITE CHANGES

Have you been to <https://smhclub.org/> in the last month? You need to check out the latest changes on the website. On the Home Page there is a Member Log In where you can log in and see your membership profile along with accessing the membership directory. **You can pay your dues by the website** which is much quicker and easier than mailing in a check. Under **HIKE WITH US**, you can find a list of all the Upcoming Events for SMHC. You will want to check that area often to see the latest events that have been added. Take a few minutes and check out the website. Encourage your hiking friends to check it out and join SMHC.

**Wilson Falls
Off Trail**

Saturday — September 18

Purportedly the longest continuous cascades in the smokies, Wilson falls tumbles several hundred yards from the upper bounds of Meigs Post Prong. The falls are comprised of a majestic 400-foot upper cascades that rolls into a rugged sequence of middle tier siblings and then a fifty foot lower falls. Commencing in the spruce-fir vicinity of Mount Collins, we will descend an upper tributary of Sweet Creek and follow the lush valley to its confluence with Meigs Post Prong where we turn upstream for a brisk rock hop leading to the base of Wilson falls. After climbing the length of the cascades, we will arrive near our starting point on Mount Collins. Hike is rated difficult due to steep, rocky terrain and approximately four miles of slick creek scrambling. Contact trip leaders for meeting place and time.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Kindel Page 865-660-8549 kindeledhearts1985@gmail.com Todd Long 865-406-2421 toddmlong@gmail.com

Jakes Creek / Cucumber Gap / Little River / Goshen Prong to Campsite 23

Wednesday — September 22

Jakes Creek / Cucumber Gap / Little River / Goshen Prong to Campsite 23 and return. Those who choose to shorten their hike have many options to do. Please let the leader know before the start of the hike. Meet at Alcoa Food City at 8:00 or the Jakes Creek trailhead at 9:00. Hike 15.2 miles rated difficult due to mileage.

Pre-registration with the leader. Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leaders: Michael Zielinski kf4yws@charter.net or 865-363-6527 Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602

The Boulevard, Jumpoff, Mt. LeConte and Alum Cave

Saturday — September 25

We will start at Newfound Gap and hike to the Boulevard Trail with a stop at the Jump Off for those interested. From there we will take the Boulevard trail to Mrytle Point followed with a stop at the Cliff Tops. We will eat lunch on top of Mt. LeConte. Bring money for t-shirts, etc at the LeConte Store. After lunch we will head down Alum Cave to the parking lot. This is a shuttle hike which will require everyone to be willing to help shuttle. We will meet at Alum Cave Trailhead at 7:00 am. This will allow us to avoid all the parking issues at the trailhead. From Alum Cave parking lot we will shuttle to Newfound Gap to start the hike. Number of hikers will be limited due to shuttle. For a map, profile or gpx, you can access it with [this link](#)

Hike is difficult. Distance by the end of the day will be 14 miles.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Register at smhclub.org

Davenport Gap to Davenport Shelter

AT Family Hike

Saturday — September 25

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and its 31 trail maintaining clubs invite families to take a hike on the AT on its 11th Annual Family Hiking Day. Held trail-wide on National Public Lands Day, Family Hiking Day is an opportunity to introduce children to America's premier footpath and all the benefits that come from being active and spending time outdoors. We will start our out-and-back hike at Davenport Gap in the Big Creek area of the Smokies. The hike to the shelter is steep (600') but short (1-mile). At the shelter, the leaders will discuss its use and history related to the Appalachian Trail. Hike: 2 miles, rated moderate. We will meet at Comcast, 5720 Asheville Hwy, Knoxville, at 9 am to carpool to the trailhead. (120 miles x .05=\$6.00 to driver).

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leaders: Cindy Spangler, spangler@utk.edu, 865-776-1301 Ellie Doughty, ellied@bellsouth.net

For The Record

Knoxville Botanical Gardens

July 17

Seven members and three visitors strolled through the Knoxville Botanical Gardens to pay respects to great trees: Cedars of Lebanon, American chestnuts, butternuts, massive red oaks and redwoods, Kentucky coffees, yellowwoods, and more. The pollinator garden was buzzing, and we found many things to taste and smell, not all good. We admired beautiful stone walls and buildings and finished with a visit to the Native Plant Rescue Squad area where plants rescued from bulldozers or other unnatural disasters await replanting.

~Doris Gove



Little River Trail and Elkmont Easy Hike

Five members and one visitor enjoyed a not your average hike along the Little River Trail. Before we even left the parking lot a former President of the club warned us a mama bear had recently bluffed charged him and that the same bear with clubs had been seen earlier in this vicinity. We saw no bear activity on the hike. There was, however, much human activity. Some of which was a great deal of banter. One hiker told the tale of hiking the AT from East to West. He also boasted of Naked Ladies in his yard. We were drawn to a cluster of parents and their children who were scrambling and crawling over a group of very large boulders. A track team of 20 plus girls from Kentucky were running the trail. They were spending the weekend training on trails, tubing and sightseeing. Two white government trucks appeared. The ranger asked if we had seen any bears. He knew about the bears we mentioned but said there had been reports of aggressive bears up further along the trail. In the midst of all this the Little River demanded attention making quiet pool for fish and fly fishermen, rumbling and thundering making rapids, sputtering and bubbling white water. The greens in competition with the river allowed the daylight to peek through making a sparkling mosaic. The finale was a drive through Elkmont admiring the progress in restoration. Lastly, we treated ourselves to ice cream.

~ Adele Soucy

July 31



From The Archives

Over the years, the club has honored the memories of many of its members in a number of ways. The 1937 handbook was dedicated to Col. D. C. Chapman with the following: "... to whose dynamic leadership and tireless work have been largely responsible for the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and thus the preservation of our hiking paradise, this handbook is gratefully dedicated." Chapman, who died in 1944 at the age of 67, has both Mt. Chapman and Chapman Highway named in his honor.

The 1941 handbook had a tribute to Harry Milliken Jennison, who lived from 1885 to 1940, written by Ella Luttrell. He was well known for his dedication to the club and knowledge of the flora of the Smokies. In the 1944 handbook, Harvey Broome authored a humorous article on the club presidents to date entitled "Twenty Yars A Hikin." An example of the style is an account of the first club president: "George Barber, as you might uv guessed was elected First Liar." The article includes photos of the presidents and a couple of outings. This was followed in the 1945 handbook by a tribute to Col. David C. Chapman, who died in 1944, again written by Harvey Broome. It is a short account and includes a nice photo. And in the 1946 handbook, there was a tribute written to Arthur Stupka, club member and naturalist of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. George Barber, who passed away in 1957, is honored in 1958 with a nice tribute and photo. The article ends with these words: "But over the years, his influence has probably been greater than that of any other individual. We should cherish, always, the vision and work and memory – of George Barber."

Starting in 1960, the handbooks started to include a section called "In Memoriam," most often found in the back of the handbook. As the years passed, and in all but a few years, club members' deaths were recorded in this section, noting their years of club membership. A very few had a short additional recognition added after their name: Tom DeWine, "Fish Fry Host for 35 Years" (1971), Vaughn Browder, Honorary Member, 1941 – 1972 (1973), Benton MacKaye, Honorary Member, 1941-1975, "Father of the Appalachian Trail" (1976), Marshall Wilson, Charter Member various periods, (1984), Paul Adams, Charter Member, 1924-1985, (1986), and Hugh and Mary Boone White, Charter Members 1924-1989 (1990). Charter members were first recognized in 1983 to include Adams, Wilson, and the Whites. Honorary members included Browder, MacKaye, and Thomas DeWine. There are currently no honorary members.

The next tribute to occur in a handbook, again to Col. Chapman, was a short quote from Harvey Broome's writings in the 2000 handbook. This was followed by tributes to Charlie Klabunde in the 2015 handbook, to Jenny Bennett in the 2016 handbook, and to George Ritter in the 2021 handbook. Today, the SMHC website includes memorials to Lionel Edney, Charlie Klabunde, Jenny Bennett, and George Ritter.

~ Brian Worley, Historian

Post Hike Write Ups

Post-hike write-ups and photos should be submitted to SMHC Newsletter Editor Dale Potter at smhcnewsletter@gmail.com and Scott Walker, swalker.dev@gmail.com, Facebook Manager. For your write-up, please include the following: Hike name and date, total number of members and visitors, and description of hike.

"There is a way that nature speaks, that land speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough, to pay attention to the story."

~ Linda Hogan

"Every artist dips his brush in his own soul and paints his own nature into his pictures."

~ Henry Ward Beecher

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

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