



Nantahala Hiking Club Newsletter

nantalahikingclub.org

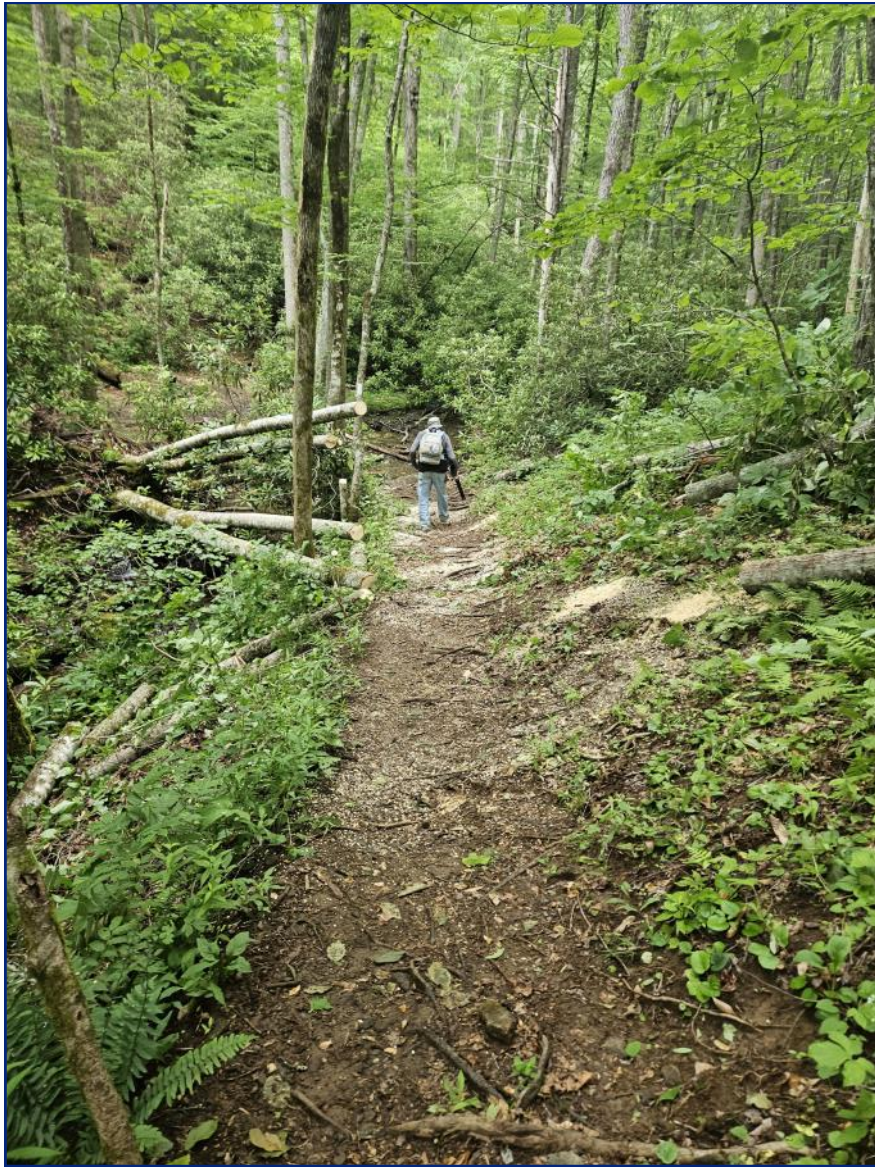
Third Quarter 2024

— Rev. A. Rufus Morgan, Club Founder —
“Keep ever clear the trails that lead to mountaintops.”



This Is What We Do!

Thanks to Paul Dyer for submitting this photo of Maintainer Ed Sams just before clearing a blowdown on the AT north of Winding Stair Gap. See the photo of the site after the work was done on the following page.



PLEASE HELP!

It's not too early to be thinking about Pumpkinfest! This year it will take place on October 19 and the NHC will have a booth once again organized by Karen Martin. Karen needs items to give out as prizes at the booth and asks that everyone donate and re-gift items of all kinds. All items are welcome—for young boys and girls, teens and adults. Please bring your donations to one of the upcoming NHC meetings prior to October 1. If you have items to donate but will not be at any of the meetings, please contact Karen at karenmartin90@outlook.com. Thank you!



President’s Message

By Victor Treutel

My Final President’s Message

At the upcoming NHC meeting on July 11, the membership will vote in a new Board of Directors. As required by our bylaws, each year an election is held to determine who will lead our club for the next twelve months. Below is the list of individuals who have volunteered to sit on the Board of Directors for the coming year:

Position	Name
PRESIDENT	Tim Lindler
VP	
TREASURER	Sharon Burns
SECRETARY	Sandi Hawk
MEMBERSHIP	
RPC REP	Bill Mandler
TRAIL MANAGER	Hygie Starr
MEMBER AT LARGE	Donna Sanders
MEMBER AT LARGE	Karen Martin
MEMBER AT LARGE	John Randall
MEMBER AT LARGE	Kelly Motter
MEMBER AT LARGE	Natasha Sebring
MEMBER AT LARGE	Gail McDiarmid
MEMBER AT LARGE	Lisa Duff
MEMBER AT LARGE	Anne Jobe

Currently, we have two open positions: Vice President and Membership Chair. The duties of the Vice President are to back up the President, while the job of the Membership Chair is to coordinate quarterly New Member Orientations. Board meetings are held monthly (or less often) and last no more than one hour. If you or anyone you know would be interested in either of these positions, please send an email to president@nantalahikingclub.org.

Sadly, after three years my term as President is now complete. It was a privilege to serve with dedicated individuals on the Board and those non-board members who play an active and vital role to ensure we are living up to our founder’s most famous quote: **“Keep ever clear the open trails that lead to the mountaintops.”** Reverend A. Rufus Morgan

Without the NHC, the trails within the Nantahala National Forest would likely be impassable, making the life-changing journey from Georgia to Maine impossible. Even a day hike to the amazing 360-degree view from atop Siler Bald or the easy hike to marvel at the glorious Rufus Morgan Falls would be impractical.

The support and involvement of our members over the past three years has been heartwarming and encouraging. Please mark your calendars to attend the club's annual meeting on July 11 at 6pm at the Library to vote for the incoming Board of Directors and show your appreciation to the outgoing Board:

Position	Name
PRESIDENT	Victor Treutel
VP	Tim Lindler
TREASURER	Sharon Burns
SECRETARY	Sandi Hawk
MEMBERSHIP	Lynn Meyers
RPC REP	Bill Mandler
TRAIL MANAGER	Hygie Starr
MEMBER AT LARGE	Donna Sanders
MEMBER AT LARGE	Rory Cassedy
MEMBER AT LARGE	Karen Martin
MEMBER AT LARGE	John Randall
MEMBER AT LARGE	Kelly Motter
MEMBER AT LARGE	Pam Addleton
MEMBER AT LARGE	Natasha Sebring
MEMBER AT LARGE	Debi Gedling

Thank you for the most wondrous and life-changing past three years. I hope to see you on the trails in the near future.

Victor Treutel
Outgoing NHC President
Personal Email: victor@victortreutel.com



Thanks to Gail Lehman for this picture of a lovely Mountain Camellia seen on a recent hike in North Georgia.

Welcome To Our Newest Members!

Terri & John Engle
Franklin, NC

Erin Wall
Jensen Beach, FL

Greg Ritter
Kenner, LA

Jim Davis
Asheville, NC

Cathy Smith
Gainesville, GA

Carrie & George Powell
Franklin, NC

J. Michael & Carol More
Sapphire, NC

Sharon Smith
Maggie Valley, NC

Club Programs

By Pam Addleton

Although I have enjoyed being the lead volunteer for the club's programming for the past two years, my efforts will now pivot to leading the club's school outreach activities for the Macon County schools and Summit Charter School.

YOU could lead the club's program planning for 2025!

In this role, one may expect to contribute eight to twelve volunteer hours per month. Seven club programs are held annually. There are a wealth of program topics of interest to most. Anyone who takes on this position will have access to mentoring and hands-on experience through November 2024.

Please contact me (12treehouse@gmail.com) or the NHC President (president@nantalahikingclub.org) to express your interest or ask questions about club programming.

Upcoming Summer Programs:

July 11: Chantelle Rondel, aquatic biologist, speaks on ways to support and act for our inland waterways. She works in the field with NC's Wildlife Resource Commission's Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Program. We'll learn hands-on about our local aquatic situation for freshwater mussels, fish and crayfish. The commission's work will be shared. What's our role as residents? Freshwater mussels clean the river. Come participate in the process for boosting aquatic creatures, their habitat and saving mussels in our indigenous and recreational watershed.

<https://youtu.be/-UDXhg6wsrg?si=Ly65ZAjnHfPR9vsU>

(continued on next page)

August 8: USDA Forester Alexandra Lewis of the Nantahala Ranger District presents insight into the valuation of a forest. She will teach ways to determine board feet in a tree and other “uses” of the tree like carbon dioxide, water usage, canopy and habitat. Alexandra’s leadership is vital to the Forest Service and participants can learn the significance of three cores and “cookies” to understand a history of the life of a tree and conservation measures. <https://www.itreetools.org/>





ATC 2024 Day Hiking Checklist

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Learn these essential skills by visiting [appalachiantrail.org/explore](https://www.appalachiantrail.org/explore)

- Backcountry bathroom skills
- Backcountry handwashing skills
- Preventing the spread of illnesses
- Avoiding crowded hiking destinations
- Following local regulations or closures

CLOTHING

- Comfortable clothes you can get dirty
- Insulating layer
- Rain jacket or poncho
- Active footwear
- Hiking boots/shoes

EQUIPMENT

- First aid kit
- Daypack
- Map/compass/trail guide
- Water bottles or bladder
- Water treatment system
- Lighter
- Head lamp
- Trowel and unscented hand sanitizer
- Toiletries – including hand washing kit

OPTIONAL

- Rain pants/skirt
- Sunscreen/sun hat
- Bug spray
- Hiking poles
- Gaiters
- Bandanas
- Buff/neck gaiter
- Pocket knife
- Binoculars
- Nature guidebooks
- Satellite communication device

FOOD

- Calorie-dense, lightweight food
- Trash bag



**APPALACHIAN TRAIL
CONSERVANCY**

799 Washington Street, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807
Phone: 304.535.2200 | www.appalachiantrail.org

Meet NHC's New Newsletter Editor: Lisa Duff



I must have been nine or ten years old when I was first introduced to the Appalachian Trail. My family (Mom, Dad, an aunt, uncle and three cousins) somehow ended up with reservations at Mount LeConte. The adults decided we'd take the long way up via the Boulevard Trail, which meant starting our adventure at Newfound Gap and hiking about 2.7 miles to the AT. To this day, I still remember my mind being blown by the sign at the "start" of the trail indicating that if we hiked one way we'd end up in Georgia; the other way Maine. How was it possible to walk to Maine, I wondered?

Fast-forward about 40 years, and I found myself accepting my dream job in the Smokies working for the non-profit that operates the park's bookstores. The job required me to move to Tennessee, so I found a small cabin in Gatlinburg to call home. Most of you know this, but for those who do not, Gatlinburg is tourism-gone-wild ground-zero, even more so once moonshine was legalized. Most locals have three choices: embrace the crazy, hunker down on the weekends or get out of town ASAP before the sun rises on Saturday mornings. I chose Option 3 most weekends and managed to hike about two-thirds of the park's trails. It's amazing how few tourists you run into once you've hiked about two miles up any trail. I even invested in backpacking gear and conquered Lakeshore Trail in thru-hiker fashion. I couldn't get enough.

The world shut down about the same time we noticed that my mother's mind was doing the same. After seven years of living in Dolly Parton's back yard, I left my Smoky Mountain hiking safety zone behind and moved home to help Mom with her daily needs. I found new hiking trails to explore along the Blue Ridge and within Panthertown and looked for a new hiking community to join. That's when I found the Nantahala Hiking Club, and I'm so glad I did.

I'm new to the club (less than two years) but I'm not new to news and newsletters. Most of my working life has included both since graduating from Western Carolina University a long time back. I'm looking forward to meeting and getting to know the club members, joining more group hikes and attending special events. I'm eager to learn about and share the club's news highlights, our successes and our work to maintain the AT from Georgia to the NOC for us and so many others to enjoy.

I'll begin accepting submissions—pictures, narratives, invitations, etc.—for the October/Q4 newsletter from July 5 through about September 25 at NHCNewsletter.Lisa@gmail.com. It is not a problem if you send them to Debi due to force of habit. She will very much remain a part of the process until I have the reins fully engaged. I have a trip planned October 5-14, so I hope to send the Q4 newsletter to club members no later than October 4.

Happy Hiking, Lisa

NHC Hikes



Bradley Fork Hike, 04/13/2024
Hike Leader: Gail Lehman



Larry's Road Hike, 04/20/2024
Hike Leader: Sandi Hawk



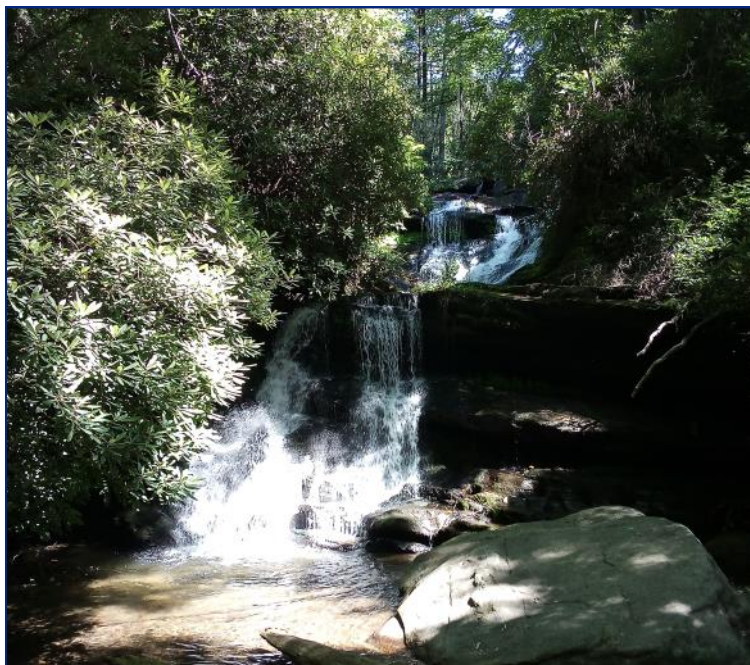
Willis Cove Hike, 04/27/2024
Hike Leader: Katharine Brown



Long Branch/Blackwell Gap Loop, 06/15/2024
Hike Leader: Gail Lehman



East Fork of the Chattooga River, 06/22/2024
Hike Leader: Robin Lurie



Martin Creek Falls Hike, 06/22/2024
Hike Leader: Sandi Hawk

NHC Trail Maintainers Group

By David Stearns

Before our last outing when we met at the Clubhouse, Hygie Starr, our fearless leader, asked, “Who is responsible for buying Clubhouse bathroom supplies?” I didn’t know and no one else did either. Turns out the tasks needed to maintain our maintainer group are divided up between the regular attendees. Beside snacks and drinks, other tasks include repairing tools, acquiring tools, planning where to maintain, getting permission and keys to gates from the Forest Service and private property owners, paperwork (including weekly sign in sheets), turning in mileage and other reimbursement requests into the Club’s treasurer and more.

We have a core of about two dozen folks who show up on a regular basis. Some have been coming for a dozen years or more. After I attended for a month or so, Gail Lehman said to me, “You know, David, this is a special group.” I had the same feeling and I agreed with her. I now say that to the new attendees and have mentioned it at our morning meetings. Being of service and enjoying nature are common to us all. I have also mentioned that it is a very therapeutic way to spend a day. Everyone is conscious of getting along and being kind and patient. For a few hours, the world makes sense. We have rules and guidelines and everyone respects and honors them.

Anyone over age 18 who is able to hike is welcome to join us. Everyone works at their own pace and does what they are able to. There is no judgment or pressure, and the cardinal rules are to be safe and to get yourself in and get yourself out. We have a safety talk before every excursion, usually given by Ed Sams.

We meet at the Clubhouse at 173 Carl Slagle Road, Franklin, NC every Wednesday (weather permitting) at 8:30 AM. You do not have to be a club member to go out with us. You do not have to make a reservation. Work days can be shorter or longer, so It’s a good idea not to schedule any other activity that day. Side note: The Clubhouse is Rufus Morgan’s old home. It is five miles out Highway 64 West from Highway 441 in Franklin.



The following essay is reprinted with the permission of the author. It appeared in the New York Times as an opinion piece on May 25, 2024.

America's Trails Are a Wonder, and They Need Our Help

May 25, 2024

By Justin Farrell and Steven Ring

Dr. Farrell is a professor of sociology at the School of the Environment at Yale and the author of "Billionaire Wilderness." Mr. Ring, a former trail worker at Yosemite National Park, is a graduate student at Yale.

As dawn broke on a fall day in 2020 over the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park, a crew of young men and women labored to fix a precarious footbridge below Wapama Falls—at 1,400 feet, one of the tallest waterfalls in the park. Several park visitors were swept off the bridge to their deaths in recent years during periods of high water.

Using pulleys and their combined strength, they struggled to maneuver a 400-pound granite slab into place on a new bridge abutment to support the span. Just as a crew member yelled across the ravine for more slack on the rope, a hiker strolled around the bend and stopped, seemingly dumbfounded. He tilted his head, covered with a wide-brimmed hat, to get a better look.

"What are you all doing out here?" he yelled.

The crew members were among thousands of mostly youthful workers who labor to maintain the trails that thread through America's public lands. It's hard, sweaty work, and there aren't enough workers to do all that's needed in these treasured and sacred spaces.

The trails they manage usher visitors to such places as the cascading waterfalls of Alabama's Talladega National Forest, the rolling Allegheny Mountains and the lush, lake-filled landscapes of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The National Park Service recorded 325.5 million visits to its parks last year, up 4 percent over the previous year and the second busiest year on record. But the 236,000 miles of trails that wend their way through the parks, forests and deserts are often neglected and are certainly undervalued. That poses dangers to hikers and impedes access to the wonders that can be found on public lands.

These trails are testaments to the sheer human effort of generations of stewards who tended to them, often without pay. But fewer and fewer people are willing to do this hard work, either for money or for the satisfaction of donating their time and elbow grease.

"We only get to hire half the staff we're actually hiring for" because there aren't enough applicants, said Remo Fickler, a 23-year National Park Service veteran and rail crew supervisor in Yosemite, lamenting the decline.

To us, this indifference points to a problem of meaning, evinced by a worsening epidemic of loneliness, generational declines in civic engagement and a dwindling commitment to stewardship as honorable public service.

Indigenous tribes for centuries cultivated and maintained intricate trail networks before federal agencies claimed them. Trails proliferated during the 19th century as more people visited the nascent parks, and the miles grew

rapidly in the 20th century with the support of the National Park Service, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Trails System Act.

But America's trails don't care for themselves and during World War II many fell into disrepair as attention was directed to the war and recovery. Afterward the Park Service refocused and repaired and modernized its trails. Still, water, gravity and use by humans and horses and, in some areas, bikes and off-road vehicles are perpetually wearing on them, creating serious safety hazards for visitors. Injuries occur frequently and deaths from slips and falls happen every year. In Yosemite, for example, 16 people have died from slips and falls (not in climbing accidents) since 2007.

Trail crews often serve as the only eyes and ears in the backcountry. Crews are often the first to report a wildfire or to begin the search for a missing person. The same crews fix safety hazards to prevent tragedies. Worker shortages place a heavier burden on crew leaders like Mr. Fickler, especially in parks like Yosemite, which has only about 25 permanent employees on its trail staff for over 750 miles. About four million annual visits are made to Yosemite.

Well-kept trails protect the nation's fragile natural resources by shepherding visitors to certain areas while keeping other areas untrammelled. But crowdsource apps like AllTrails and Strava, where anyone can record an off-trail route, can contribute to the degradation of the surrounding terrain. After the 2018 release of "Free Solo", the Academy Award-winning documentary film set in Yosemite, visitors tramped off trail to get a closer view of El Capitan. A warren of improvised routes resulted, damaging the landscape and creating dangers for users.

Money can certainly help address the trail problems on federal lands, but that seems, like willing workers, in short supply. The National Park Service, which oversees 85 million acres, faces \$23 billion in deferred maintenance, and since 2011, the agency has cut nearly one in five jobs from its operation staff, even though visitation rose and four new national parks have been authorized. At the U.S. Forest Service, which manages an additional 193 million acres, 45 percent of its permanent employees have left since 2021.

The bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act, signed by President Donald Trump in 2020, sought to address trail funding shortfalls, yet four years after its passage, the Forest Service estimates that it still lacks even one full-time trail worker in more than one-third of its districts, and 410 full-time trail jobs remain unfilled.

Federal funding is important. So is reversing the nation's declining civic health. What we really need is a national commitment to environmental stewardship to protect our wild places and assure that it is possible for people— young and old, mobile and physically challenged—to visit them and move through them safely. But what we have seen is a national shift inward, into our phones, our basements, our political tribes. We need to aspire to something more.

Franklin Roosevelt touched on this idea in 1933 when he spoke about the formation of the Civil Conservation Corps, created in the Depression to employ young men and improve America's public lands, forests and parks. "What is being accomplished," he said, "will conserve our natural resources, create future national wealth and prove of moral and spiritual value."

Trail crew jobs, whether paid or volunteer, can be experiential models for how to counteract America's lonely shift inward. Working on public lands provides the setting to learn and embody the values of long-term stewardship and communal obligation in a specific place, for a specific civic purpose.

"On trail crews, people value you for the things that really matter," Darian Gumper, a young woman with six years of experience on trail crews, told us. "Are you a hard worker? Do you look out for the community? There's no way to hide it out here."



Thanks again to the wonderful folks at Deerfoot Lodge, who supplied us with 18 young men in June to help us by dismantling the old privy at Wesser Bald, staining the shelter and doing tread work.

Easter on the Trail 2024

By Elena Marsh, Past Organizer of Easter on the Trail

Although there was not an official organized event this year for the thru-hikers, some club members made up goodie bags and took them out to the AT to visit with any hikers who were in our vicinity. Tom and I managed three different days, passing out over a dozen bags and chatting with many hikers who were so appreciative of our offerings. It was great to see that the yearly tradition of Easter on the Trail was not lost due to lack of organization and the hope is that club member Ned Kraft, who has indicated he would like to lead the event next year, will be able to once again make Easter on the Trail the wonderful project it has been for many years. It should continue for as long as our members care and the hikers come through Franklin.

Sharon & Bill Van Horn did their own Easter on the Trail this year. Thanks!



A.T. Stewardship

By Pam Addleton, NHC School Outreach
and Bill Mandler, Chair SORO RPC

A unique match in-kind grant helps the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) fulfill its mission for projects on the portions of the Appalachian Trail (AT) within the State of North Carolina. The grant is called the NC AT License Plate Grant Program. Heard of it? Maybe yes, maybe no, but now is the time to take action through a minor contribution: a specialty AT license plate for your auto or for a gift to a special someone.

That's interesting but how do I get an AT specialty plate to show my support of our AT through a local grant award? North Carolina's DMV offers a specialty license plate called "Friends of the AT". It's pristinely beautiful just like the AT. Visit online or at a local DMV to order the AT license plate. A slam dunk bonus is that for every \$30 paid to buy and renew the plate, \$20 is contributed to basic and volunteer projects. A Friends of the AT License Plate order form may be found here: <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/downloads/Documents/MVR-27AT.pdf>. And here's what the plate looks like:



How large is the grant award? Grant funds have been awarded to applicants in 2024 totaling \$30,000. That's no small grant and that's lots of AT license plates on autos across our state and interstate!

So, what kind of projects does ATC award through the grant and did our Club or community receive 2024 grant funds? The funding helps support critical Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC) and community outreach efforts. This year, NHC received approval for a grant of \$6,360 to support our annual activities such as Trail Ambassadors, Thru Hiker Chow Down, school outreach and stewardship, and participation in Pumpkinfest. In addition, some of the funds will be used for trail maintenance equipment and supplies. Funding was provided for a bear box (USFS approved) for food storage at the Betty Creek campsite. This is the first bear box installed in the section of the AT that is maintained by NHC. Betty Creek campsite was a bear priority so we made it a grant priority too. The bear box has been very well received by the 2024 thru-hikers and day hikers.

Do local school systems have access to the ATC grant application process? Yes! An outstanding science stewardship grant of \$1,310.57 was awarded to Mrs. Janis Brannon, middle school science teacher at Jackson County's Summit Charter School. Mrs. Brannon and her students lead an eco-water sampling project each fall. The project has been ongoing for 15 years and continues to engage the 8th grade students through her science leadership and engaging enthusiasm. The students actively sample water at five local streams that hikers use as usual water sources such as at Standing Indian Campground, Winding Stair Gap trailhead, and Rock Gap shelter areas. Their water sample findings are documented at EarthEcho Water Challenge (<https://www.earthecho.org/> and <https://www.monitorwater.org/about>). Mrs. Brannon also employs a salamander diversity program specific to western NC. As if she had spare teaching time, she and her students get hands-on experience day hiking the AT from Winding Stair Gap to the newly constructed Rock Gap shelter where the water sampling and salamander program results are provided in the shelter's kiosk. Mrs. Brannon plans to share her students' water sampling and EarthEcho results at an upcoming NHC program planned for November 14, 2024. Congratulations students and thank you, Mrs. Brannon.

(continued on next page)

That's not all. Here's how you can become an AT hero too: Those of you who have paid or renewed a "Friends of the AT" license plate will be happy to know that 66 percent comes back to our AT and to the development of future stewards of our trails and ecosystems. Those of you who are stuck with a humdrum plain NC license plate on your auto, well, it's time to claim hero status by getting a specialty AT plate to show your volunteerism for western NC.

Questions? Contact Jake Stowe, Program Support Specialist for the Southern and Virginia Regions. You can reach Jake at jstowe@appalachiantrail.org. Applications for 2024-2025 will open around December 2024.



Trail Skills Workshop Save the Date: September 14-15, 2024

Make plans to attend the annual Trail Skills Workshop on September 14-15, 2024 at Lake Winfield Scott (Suches, GA). This is a great opportunity for anyone to learn or update their trail maintaining skills and network with friends.

The Trail Skills Workshop (TSW) is a training event focused on teaching the most current trail construction and maintenance methods applicable for Eastern landscapes. These classes are for new and experienced trail workers. Skilled instructors are provided from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the United States Forest Service (FS) and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC).

The \$35.00 fee (\$25.00 GATC members) covers all programs, camping for two nights, Saturday dinner and a T-shirt. Registration will open on July 11.

For more information contact: tsw@georgia-atclub.org.

2024 Thru-Hiker Chow Down

By Gail McDiarmid

The annual Thru-Hiker Chow Down was held at the Lazy Hiker on April 6, 2024. The weather was picture perfect: blue skies, no wind and mild temperatures.

Prior to the start of the event, Tim Lindler gathered everyone up for a group photo and a very important announcement. Bill and Sharon Van Horn (founders of the Chow Down) were honored by having a beer named for them. While I didn't sample the beer, I was told that it was very tasty.

Around noon, hikers began to arrive, heavy packs on their backs and some with dogs in tow.

Each hiker signed in by first name, trail name and shared where they were from. A total of 31 hikers signed in. While many were from the Northeast, we also met a gentleman from Turkey. Others were from San Francisco, Seattle and Green Bay.

I know everyone was hoping for more hikers but, as I am learning, the better the weather, the fewer the hikers. The week prior to the Chow Down was cold and wet. Evidently, it was important to get back on the trail and put in some miles!

This was my first time to oversee the Chow Down. I simply could not have done it without the help of all the volunteers. I am looking forward to next year's event and I am mulling over some ideas. I will keep you posted!

Funding for this event was provided from the NC License Plate Grant.



This year's Chow Down volunteers
Photo submitted by Katharine Brown



The Van Horns about to test their namesake beer
Photo submitted by Bob Scott



Photo submitted by Bob Scott

2024 NHC Spaghetti Dinner

Our Incredible Kitchen Staff



Paul & Charles



Tom



Rich & David



Elena & Nancy



Gwynn

Photos submitted by Gayle Treutel



Photo submitted by Charli Gray



Thanks for helping me put this newsletter out for the past several years. It has certainly been a cooperative effort! Petey and I hope to see you all out on the trails and at other NHC events!

Debi Gedling