



Carolina Mountain Club

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October 2022

Shining Rock Wilderness Has a New Look

by Bobbi Powers

You wouldn't think that installing seven small signs, removing two small signs, and re-positioning one sign would change the character of a wilderness area, but a great many people are hoping that is the case. Wilderness areas are traditionally sign-free to preserve an *au natural* experience for hikers. However, Shining Rock Wilderness has received a small makeover in hopes of improving safety. Vance Waggener, a member of CMC's Wilderness Response Team, said, "I am opposed to signage in most wilderness areas, but here, due to the popularity of the trails, it's necessary. If these signs can save one life, it's worth it."

Haywood Search and Rescue (SAR), an all-volunteer group, is called to Shining Rock Wilderness for the majority of its calls. Bill Zimmerman with Haywood SAR stated that "Haywood County is big. It goes all the way up to the Smokies, yet most of our calls are to Shining Rock." Steve Kuni, another member of the Haywood team elaborated, saying, "We've had 15 calls so far this year. We average 30 or more a year, the vast majority in Shining Rock. I didn't grow up in this area. I was up at Shining Rock on nighttime missions 3 or 4 times before I ever saw it in daylight."

On Thursday, August 25, 2022, the above three men, along with other CMC Wilderness Response Team members, trail crew members, CMC Search and Rescue members, plus Chris Worley, Forestry Technician for the US Forest Service's Pisgah District, headed out to Shining Rock Wilderness (SRW) with me tagging along as scribe to document what they are trying to achieve.

However, the story begins 10 months earlier when Les and Catherine Love



were hiking on the Old Butt Knob Trail in the SRW and ran into hikers who had no idea where they were. Les is not one to just brush off such an encounter. He talked with the Forest Service's Chris Worley, and he talked to the CMC Wilderness Response Team and the Haywood SAR members about their thoughts. They agreed that something needed to happen in SRW due to its notoriety and popularity, and they also agreed that there would be no signs in Middle Prong Wilderness. This led to two different scout hikes out in SRW as they brainstormed how best to keep the wilderness experience and yet keep hikers safe. Once the Forest Service, CMC, and Haywood SAR were on board with a plan, Tom Weaver started making the oak signs which have simple arrows and trail names but no mention (intentionally) of Shining Rock.

At 9 am on the big day, Les's plan went into action. Everyone met at the parking lot on FS 816 at 9 am. Back packs were loaded with hand tools. Post hole diggers and larger items were piled into the bed of Chris's Forest Service UTV for the 2-mile thrill ride down to Ivestor Gap. I say "thrill ride" because I was in a seat bumping along with Chris at the wheel. It was quite a different perspective! At the Gap, all tools and signs had to be hand-carried to the sign placement spots which had been pre-determined. These folks are strong and they hike fast even when loaded down with extra gear. There were multiple stops, and at each, Chris found a dead locust tree which was felled and cut to sign-post lengths and hauled to where someone else had dug a 2' deep hole. (Did I mention these folks are strong?!) The signs were placed on the posts and the posts positioned in the ground; this was no small task and included multiple steps in order to prevent theft of signs. Then everyone was off to the next spot, or sometimes the group split to go to two relatively nearby areas. By 5 pm everyone was back at the parking lot after a long and rewarding day.



Bravo to these folks who are passionate about nature, wild areas, and also public safety! And a big shout-out to the US Forest Service for allowing this to happen!

Sidebar 1: Some of you might be wondering about the two signs which were removed. They each featured a destination point and mileage to that point. That was considered too much information, hence their removal.

Sidebar 2: The CMC Search and Rescue Team was formed last year at the request of Haywood SAR. The team boasts about 20 enthusiastic members who have been training and will soon be ready to go on missions when Haywood SAR needs back-up.

Sidebar 3: CMC Wilderness Response Team is a trail maintenance crew trained to respond to trail problems in the Middle Prong and Shining Rock Wilderness areas where power tools are forbidden. They are trained to use axes and cross-cut saws just like the early settlers to the area.

No Experience Necessary: Trail Maintainers Go Out for Fun

by Mike Williams

Retired attorney Bob Widman didn't know a hazel hoe from a Pulaski several years ago when he started volunteering as a part of a weekly trail maintenance crew that helps keep Western North Carolina's hiking trails open.

Now he's an old hand at building steps, clearing water drains, trimming back thick vegetation and helping clear fallen trees blocking the trail.

He's also got enough lawyer jokes to keep most of his fellow crew members laughing as they work.

"I always thought park rangers or Forest Service workers cleared the trails," Widman said, a misconception held by much of the public. "I was never very handy with tools, but these guys are patient and have taught me everything I need to know."



Widman is part of a crew that goes out most Mondays, year-round, representing both the Carolina Mountain Club from Asheville and Burnsville's NC High Peaks Trail Association. The crew works trails ranging from the Black Mountains to the Appalachian Trail on the Tennessee border to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail that parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway.



"The scenery is incredible," Widman said. "It's almost as good as the camaraderie and the brownies that the Crew Leader's wife makes for us."

A typical work day starts with the weekly email sent out by the Crew Leader to let the team know when and where to meet and what the tasks will be. The group usually gathers at a trailhead between 8 and 9 am for a safety talk and distribution of tools.

"No tools or experience necessary," said High Peaks President John Whitehouse, who doubles as the Carolina Mountain Club's Monday Crew Leader. "The volunteers only need to bring a sturdy pair of work gloves, wear long pants, and bring water, lunch and some snacks. We'll provide all the tools and help them learn how to do the work."

The group then typically hikes out from the trailhead to the work area, sometimes going a mile or two with a steep climb; other times working only a few hundred yards down the trail. In summer they might weed-eat overgrown sections or trim back vegetation with loppers or handsaws. They also dig out water drains that help stop erosion, sometimes embedding logs to make a berm to channel the water away.



The crews build steps out of logs or rocks on steep and eroded sections and help saw teams clear limbs or whole trees that have fallen and are blocking the path. Volunteer sawyers must take a two-day safety course from the US Forest Service to use chainsaws, and also must wear safety equipment provided by the clubs.

Whitehouse's Monday Crew often attracts 12 to 15 volunteers, so they break up into smaller teams to accomplish several different tasks and to keep a safe working distance from each other. The work usually ends at 2 pm, followed by the hike back to the trailhead.

"We've recently been building steps at Mt Mitchell State Park on a couple of badly eroded trails," Whitehouse said. "We might have two guys digging out and installing the timbers for the steps, screwing them together with a drill and then drilling a hole for metal rebar that will hold the timber in place. Meanwhile other team members are installing water drains or finding rocks that can be broken up with a sledge hammer to fill in behind the step."

Whitehouse's crew also recently hiked several miles up to weed-eat the Black Mountain Crest Trail, one of their most ambitious but badly-needed annual tasks. A team of nine workers shared seven weed-eaters, clearing heavy grass and fast-growing vegetation from a couple of miles of the path. The group will take several trips to complete about seven miles of that one trail.



"The Blacks get about 100 inches of rain a year, and when we started clearing this trail 10 years ago, it was nearly grown shut with blackberry canes, blueberries, laurel and rhododendron," Whitehouse said. "We've managed to open it wide enough so that you can hike it now without getting soaked by the vegetation when it's wet."

The trail crews are salted heavily with retirees, who often thrive on the social interaction and the feeling of working for a good cause. But as the retirees gradually age out, the clubs are constantly trying to attract new volunteers to replenish the ranks.

"We often see dozens of hikers enjoying the trails we work," Whitehouse said. "If only 10 percent of them would volunteer with us one or two days a month, it would be a big help. But so many hikers don't seem to know that it's volunteers who do almost all the maintenance on these trails."

Widman says the volunteer work has become one of the most enjoyable parts of his week, something that he looks forward to.

“The only problem is I keep asking for a raise,” he said. “The Crew Leader says he’ll double my salary, but I keep telling him Zero times Zero is still Zero.”

For more information about volunteering on a trail crew, visit the websites of the clubs at: www.nchighpeaks.org or www.carolinamountainclub.org.

Update on 100 Favorite Trails Challenge

by Steve Pierce

The 100 Favorite Trails Challenge is proving to be a popular challenge. We will have several challenge completers honored at the Annual Meeting in October. If you are aiming to complete the challenge by the annual meeting, the deadline for submitting your spreadsheet is October 15. If you have questions email Steve Pierce – stevepierce50@gmail.com.

Here are some updates on two temporary trail closures and alternative hikes and one trail that is no longer accessible to the public and the replacement trail:

Greenbrier Area

Flooding due to heavy rain in July has closed access to trails in the Greenbrier area of the GSMNP. Access to **Porters Creek Trail (#25)** and **Ramsey Cascades (#26)** is closed for the foreseeable future.

Until access to those trails is reopened, here are alternate trails that should be hiked to meet the challenge requirements. Once the Greenbrier Area has reopened, Porters Creek and Ramsey Cascades will remain as part of the challenge.

Gabes Mountain Trail to Campsite 34

10 mi. out-and-back; 1,500 ft. elev. Gain

Trailhead: Cosby Area Parking Area in the GSMNP. Google Gabes Mountain Trailhead for driving directions.

Hike: Begin at the Gabes Mountain Trailhead. At 2.1 miles look for the side trail to hen Wallow Falls (1/4 miles off trail on right) then continue to Campsite 34. Return via the same trail.

Rainbow Falls

6 mi. out-and-back; 2,198 ft. elev. gain

Trailhead: Rainbow Falls Parking on Cherokee Orchard Rd. out of Gatlinburg, TN.

Park at the Rainbow Falls Parking area on Cherokee Orchard Rd. (there is also roadside parking).

Hike: Begin hike on the Rainbow Falls Trail ascending through the forest. At 3 miles you will reach Rainbow Falls, a good place for a snack or lunch. The trail continues another 3 miles to Mt. LeConte, but you return the way you hiked in.

The High Windy Trail (#77) is no longer open to public use. The replacement for this trail is the **Trombatore Trail**.

5.3 mi. out and back; 1,058 ft. elev. gain

Trailhead: The trailhead is on Bearwallow Road, near Fairview, NC. It is directly across the road from the Bearwallow Mountain trailhead. US 74 south from Asheville 13 miles then turn right on Berwallow Rd. Trailhead will be on the right.

Hike: Begin hike at the kiosk. Descend and climb for 2.5 miles to Blue Ridge Pastures. After taking in the views return via the same trail.

CMC to Celebrate 100 years

by Pete Steurer

The Carolina Mountain Club will be 100 years old in 2023. Be sure to save the July 16th date when a social is planned to celebrate our Centennial. Each month leading up to the event, eNews will have an article to get us ready for the party. There will be Facebook posts, a video, a 50/50 hiking challenge, and a history slideshow at the CMC October Annual Meeting. A book, *Carolina Mountain Club: One Hundred Years* will be published next year. The following is the kickoff article of our history, safeguarded in the Special Collections & University Archives at the University of North Carolina Asheville D. H. Ramsey Library.

History is amazing! The events of today are history tomorrow. It may be etched in our minds. Sometimes saved in words and images whether on paper or film or stored on the latest digital technology. How it is saved is of lesser importance than the history itself. Most important is that history is there for future generations to understand and appreciate.

On July 23, 1923, the Southern Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club in Asheville severed ties with the Northern Chapter in Boston. Our Carolina Mountain Club was formed. In 100 years, we grew to over 1,000 members. Back then, there were 25. The Depression resulted in membership declining by 1942 from 60 to 29. We shut down from 1942 to 1946 and boomed after the War, reaching 100 members in 1960 and 500 in 1987. All the while, our Club was recording history with meeting minutes, financial reports, hiking schedules and reports, trail maintenance hours, newspaper articles, and conservation efforts. Most of these records still exist today. CMC never had a physical office and officers changed every few years. It was so easy for things to be lost.

Two CMC members were instrumental in preserving our history. Jerome Dykeman, I sense under his own volition, organized the records from the 1940s through the 1960s. His outstanding work is evident in the collection today. Beginning in the 1960s and continuing until her last day in 1992, Eloise Whitson held the office of treasurer and/or



secretary. Her commitment to CMC is clear in the continuity she provided to new officers, data stewardship, and record keeping. All beyond extraordinary.

In 2002, our Club entered into an agreement with UNCA to preserve our history in perpetuity. Bernard Elias, a long-time CMC'er, championed the arrangement. CMC president Don Walton and Bernard's close friend, Wilma Dykeman, were at the UNCA library that day when we all met. Wilma was Jerome's brother and noted author of the 1955 book ***The French Broad***. I remember being awestruck meeting her. I was asked to be the CMC Historian which began the almost half-year task of inventorying and organizing the collection in my garage. After reorganization, there were 19 boxes. It took two pick-up truck loads for me to transport the records to UNCA. Anyone can visit and explore our collection by appointment. <http://toto.lib.unca.edu/>

But why was this agreement with UNCA so important? I have been a member of CMC for over 40 years and wrote the 70th and 80th anniversary histories of CMC in 1993 and 2003. People would always ask me, "Who would ever care about all these records?" They still ask and are mistaken. Founding CMC members Tennent and Ambler have mountains named for them. Others followed like Masa, Loeb, Nichols, and Barton. All have mountains, trails or signage named in their honor. There were so many others too who received no formal recognition.

We live in an extraordinary place and CMC'ers have done remarkable things. Their achievements are archived at UNCA along with the rest of our triumphs and struggles in hiking and in preserving and protecting the mountains of Western North Carolina. That's me standing on Mt. Tennent in 2019, a 6,040-foot peak on the 30-mile Art Loeb trail. Tennent and Loeb, CMC members almost 50 years apart, honored on the same footpath for their superior efforts.

The 1924 Articles of Incorporation describe the purpose of our Carolina Mountain Club. Amended in 1987 to describe CMC's commitment to trail work, these are the words written long ago:

The objects for which this corporation is formed are as follows: To explore the mountains of Western North Carolina and adjacent regions through its hiking trails and rivers, to carry out the responsibilities we have been given by the Appalachian Trail Conference to develop and maintain the Appalachian Trail and to act as its steward, to develop and maintain other trails in Western North Carolina as approved by the Club, to encourage the conservation of our natural scenery, to foster in Club members knowledge and enjoyment of hiking, trail construction, and maintenance, and fellowship and encouragement of the out-of-doors.

Our charge is still relevant today and I sense for the next 100 years. See you in July to celebrate!



Congratulations to CMC!

The results are in and *Mountain Xpress* readers have chosen **Carolina Mountain Club** as a winner in the following categories:

First Place (Hall of Fame): Hiking Club or Group
Category: Outdoors

Trail Maintenance Tool Repair Specialists: Roy Davis and Joe Bange

by Donna Bange

Abraham Lincoln is credited with stating: “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” Any veteran maintainer knows that tool condition is critical to trail maintenance. A sharp Pulaski will cut tree roots like a hot knife through butter. A dull Pulaski will result in a tree root that is time consuming and difficult to remove. Trail maintainers can be intensely demanding of their tools as they crush rocks, move dirt, repair the trail, build steps, remove trees and unwanted foliage. Many CMC volunteers maintain their own tools; they customize their tool attributes (e.g., sharpness) to their liking.



Behind the scenes, Roy Davis and Joe Bange do tool repair and upkeep for CMC trail maintainers for several weekday crews. There are additional tool maintainers in CMC. They met years ago on Friday Asheville weekday crew and quickly became friends. Roy taught Joe the tool repair fundamentals; Joe still considers himself an apprentice of Roy. Roy and Joe enjoy certain aspects of tool maintenance, especially generating sparks as they remove unwanted metal from wedges.

Tool maintenance and repair is both an art and a science. Each damaged tool is unique and the repair is customized to the tool. Joe commented that he first evaluates how the tool is supposed to be safely used and then what is the tool damage. There is an art to getting the sharpness just right on tools such as loopers, hazel hoes, a Pulaski blade, etc. Roy and Joe are open to teaching tool maintenance & repair class to CMC trail maintainer group(s).



Both Roy and Joe ask that all trail maintainers use their tools safely and wisely; they reinforced that the tool should be used only for its intended purpose. Broken handles

are common repair. Typically, the handle breaks because the tool is employed in an unconventional manner.

Thanks to Roy and Joe for their efforts. They, along with other tool maintainers, save CMC tremendous money and resources upkeeping and refurbishing tools instead of CMC purchasing new tools.

Trail Maintainers Picnic

by Donna Bange



The Maintainer's Picnic is always a good time to reconnect with other CMC volunteers as evidenced by the two photos. Brenda Worley, Sallye Sanders and Danny Bernstein enjoyed catching up on both CMC hikes and trail maintenance.

Sallye is the first CMC member to be awarded the Centennial challenge: 50 hiking miles and 50 hours of trail maintenance. Mike Davis, Sallye Sanders, Rich Evans and Paul Curtin also reconnected and swapped stories about trail maintenance. Rich Evans has over 10,000 hours volunteering with CMC.



CMC Friday Crew Works With Young Adults from AmeriCorps

by Donna Bange

The Friday Asheville Crew, led by Paul Curtin and Chris Werbylo, worked in mid-September with a team from the National Civilian Community Corp (NCCC). NCCC is part of AmeriCorps, an independent agency of the federal government. The NCCC team consisted of eight volunteers from ages 18 to 22, and is in the midst of a ten-month term of service being spent working with the US Forest Service.



The Douglas Falls Trail craved serious trail maintenance attention. Tropical Storm Fred had resulted in a landslide that closed a portion of the trail. Additionally, tread maintenance and step installation were sorely needed. This trail section about a mile down from the MST intersection has been nearly impassable for a year. Since the road to the parking below Douglas Falls has also been closed by a landslide, the falls has



been very difficult to reach. On Monday, CMC sawyer Dave Roberts and Paul Curtin accompanied the NCCC Team to remove trees and clear a blocked off section of the trail. Dave spent considerable time educating the team in the proper and safe techniques to fell and partition downed trees in the landslide area. On Wednesday Douglas Falls Section Maintainer Steve Patch and Paul worked with the team to remove the landslide debris, install cribbing, and open up the trail. Then, the CMC Friday Crew worked side by side with the NCCC Team on building new rock steps and maintaining tread.

These young adults are incredibly dedicated. In appreciation of their efforts, the Curtin and Bange families sponsored a dinner Sunday night. The team greatly appreciated their time working with and learning from the CMC crews, along with CMC's hospitality.

Skip Sheldon is Awarded the Presidential Life Time Achievement Award

by Donna Bange

Skip Sheldon was bestowed the honor of the Presidential Life Time Achievement Award for his hard work and dedication to the Appalachian Trail at the recent CMC Trail Maintenance Picnic. He has logged over 4000 volunteer hours just on the A.T. Skip is only the third CMC member to receive such a prestigious honor. Likewise, there are only 40 total individuals across America who have been granted such an award for their Appalachian Trail efforts.

Skip has been a cornerstone of CMC trail maintenance for over 30 years. He led the Friday weekday crew for 7 years. In 2018 he was conferred the CMC Distinguished Service Award for his extraordinary contributions. Skip has logged over 7700 trail maintenance hours and is one of the top trail maintainers for volunteer hours. He also received the ATC Silver Service Award for his 25 years of service to the Appalachian Trail.



Skip has learned and applied maintenance techniques for all types of trail problems and is expert in using and explaining how to use any trail maintenance tool available. He is an expert sawyer. Skip is well known for being a patient and knowledgeable teacher of trail maintenance skills and a great mentor to many new maintainers who have joined the club over the years.

In addition to CMC, he has volunteered with Boy Scouts of America along with Trout Unlimited. Skip is known for his generosity, good humor, and patience with newcomers. He is a joy to work with and always has the club's and trails' best interests at heart.

Carolina Mountain Club eNews is published on the first Friday of each month. Send your news to eNews@carolinamountainclub.org. Articles are due on the last Friday of the previous month. Please limit articles to no more than 1,000 words. You may send up to two photos as jpg attachments.

To join Carolina Mountain Club go to : www.carolinamountainclub.org. Click on "Join CMC" on the right side. Follow the instructions. For all address and email changes, log in, select "Modify Profile", make changes and click on "Update Member" or email Dennis Bass at dbass3607@gmail.com. Your email changes will be automatically reflected in eNews delivery.

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