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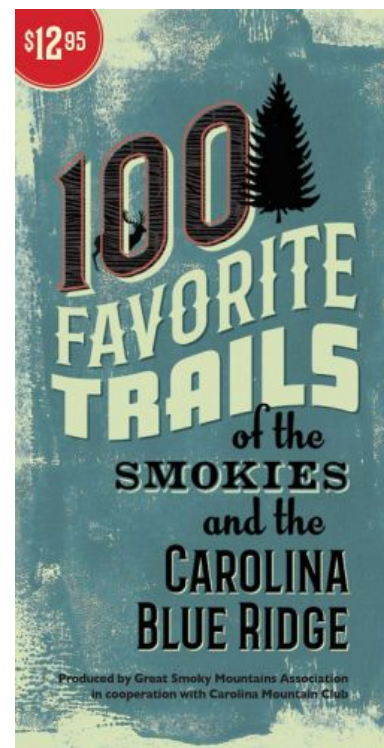
March 2021

100 Favorite Trails of the Smokies and the Carolina Blue Ridge Challenge

by Steve Pierce

The popular hiking map ***100 Favorite Trails of the Smokies and the Carolina Blue Ridge*** dates back to 1966 when it was developed by long-time Carolina Mountain Club (CMC) member Bernard Elias. Several editions of the map were sold during the 70s and early 80s. Many veteran CMC members have an old copy of the map. Now, 12 years after its last publication, The CMC and the Great Smoky Mountains Association (GSMA) teamed up to produce an updated ***100 Favorite Trails of the Smokies and the Carolina Blue Ridge***, published in the Fall of 2020. Many of the trails are ones found on the original publication; however, over the years trails have changed and new trails have been established, so an update was in order.

A committee of CMC hikers made a list of 100 hikes which was used as a basis for the new map. Over 35 CMC hike leaders hiked the 100 trails, made GPS tracks, and with some modifications, submitted the 100 hike descriptions to the GSMA



for publication. There are a variety of trails from moderate to strenuous; under 2 miles to over 10 miles with sweeping views, waterfalls, deep forests, and rushing streams. For some, these trails are familiar favorites, and others may find them to be a great introduction to the variety of trails throughout the mountains. All the trails are loops or in/out hikes, so there are no car shuttles necessary.

The newly published map was well-received and very soon several CMC members suggested making the **100 Favorite Trails** a challenge. A proposal was made to the Challenge Committee and the new challenge was approved by the CMC Council on February 2. Details about the challenge will be posted on the Challenge section of the CMC website in the near future.

Like other CMC challenges, completers of the **100 Favorite Trails Challenge** will receive a patch, certificate and recognition at the CMC Annual Dinner. In addition to full completion, a pin will be given to those who hike 50 and 75 of the trails. A spreadsheet of the 100 trails with mileage, elevation gain, reference to the CMC hike database where applicable, and a space for date completed will be posted on the website.

Since the map was published in late Fall 2020, any trail hiked after October 1, 2020 can be counted toward the challenge. In an effort to build community and to raise awareness we ask hikers to use the hashtag [#100FavoriteTrailsCMC](#) when posting their hikes on social media.

If you have questions about the **100 Favorite Trails Challenge**, contact Steve Pierce at stevepierce50@gmail.com. Check the Challenge page of the CMC website soon for the full details and guidelines for the challenge. Meanwhile, I hope to see you on the trails.

The Story of a Trail's Transformation

by Bobbi Powers

The Pump Gap Trail in Hot Springs is a well-known part of a hiking cluster including Lovers Leap, the Silvermine Trail, Round Top Trail, and the A.T. Since 2003, hike leaders in CMC have led versions of the Pump Gap Loop seventeen times, usually as a half-day hike.

On Valentine's Day 2021, five CMC friends and I did the loop starting up Lovers Leap, continuing on the A.T. across the ridge to the intersection with the Pump Gap Trail where we did a collective sigh before beginning the wet, steep, slippery descent to our cars. We had done this loop many times and knew what to expect. In fact, one of our group, Marcia Bromberg, had broken her leg January 4, 2009, coming up Pump Gap when her boot went through a rotten water bar and her leg torqued.



Side note: Tish Desjardins was the hike leader (subbing for Tom Sanders) that fateful January 2009 day on what is now known as The Broken Leg Hike. Then in a weird twist of fate, almost 11 years to the day later, January 2020, Tish fell and broke her nose on her way back from maintaining her section of the A.T. at the top of Pump Gap where the two trails intersect. She reminisced, "I was doing the last water crossing when I slipped and fell face first on a boulder. I called my husband who called the rescue squad, and I kept walking with a cloth to my very bloody nose." The rescuers met her near the end of the trail, and after 10 stitches at Mission Hospital and a negative CT scan, she is recovered but says she has not yet been back on that trail. This was a dangerous trail!

Now back to the story....

As we started down, we noticed thousands of rhododendrons had been whacked from the sides of the trail where they usually encroach. Continuing down, the trail gets wetter as a stream crisscrosses the path. Lo and behold, we started seeing signs of impressive trail work – dog hobble slashed back into submission, massive stones placed to divert water, stones pulverized to make stone paths to keep hikers atop the mud, creek crossings made simple because of more huge, secure stone placements. The descent became a real ooh-and-ahh experience as we exclaimed over the improvements. In one section where we usually would have walked through a stream to regain the trail, there is now a crib wall to keep hikers above the stream which is diverted by the wall, and as a bonus, it's beautiful! In fact, since we did not have to keep every nerve ending on high alert to prevent a fall, we could notice the beauty of the creek near the bottom which had been obscured by overgrowth and debris.

I contacted Paul Curtin, CMC A.T. Supervisor, to compliment his crews for their ginormous achievements. What I learned makes me even more appreciative of those who maintain and build the trails we love to hike. According to Paul, since last September, 580 work-hours have gone into this trail; Mel Skiles the Section Maintainer for this section, three day-crew sessions (one Thursday Crew and two Friday Crew) and two Remote-Overnight-Crew sessions have contributed to six re-built water crossings, removal of much dead wood and debris from the creek to establish a more consistent flow, and building the crib walls. They have also walked the entire loop twice and removed standing dead and downed trees left from the 2016 forest fire that burned through the area.



Tom Weaver created the plan for the crib wall, explaining, "That wall was built by Wayne Steinmetz and me with tremendous help from two guys from the local Hot Springs Hiking Club. They were tireless moving big rocks for us to build with." (Tom also provided the before and after photos.)

Christine Martens, a runner and former hiking guide, joined the Friday Crew to help remove downed trees from her running route. As they worked, she said, "Along the way I was wildly impressed with the rock work along the stream. This portion of the loop was almost not recognizable compared to several years ago when I would have to warn my hiking clients to expect wet feet and some tricky hiking."

But this is not the end of the story. The crews will continue to address water issues, clear more of the creek, and build steps on some of the steepest sections. These types of trail transformations take as much brain as brawn! Thanks to the work of these crews, my hiking buddies and I enjoyed quite a Valentine Treat!

Increased Limits on CMC Hikes

CMC Council has approved an increase in the number of hikers allowed on hikes effective 4/1/21 to 15. The hike leader can reduce this number according to how many he or she feels can safely go on the hike and the number of available parking spaces. Of course, wilderness hiker limits remain at 10. However, car shuttles, car pooling and other COVID restrictions and all other COVID restrictions continue to apply. A change will be made to the COVID 19 Hiking Guidelines on the CMC webpage - carolinamountainclub.org

Attention Hike Leaders: In lieu of a Hike Leaders' dinner, if you have led at least 10 hikes and are a member of CMC in good standing, the Hiking Committee wants to give you a T-shirt. When it has been determined that you have led 10 hikes, you will be contacted with instructions on how to claim your T-shirt.

Happy Hiking!

Outreach Hiking Program

If you are interested in introducing adults to hiking, consider joining the Communications Committee's new outreach program. We will partner with local groups and offer introductory hikes to the adult community once or twice a year. An ongoing goal of the club is to be more inclusive and diversify our membership and these hikes will target diverse communities.



The hikes will be less than five miles long and the goal is to acquaint people with both hiking and the Carolina Mountain Club- its mission and programs. The effort is in its early stages, and hikes wouldn't be offered before fall at the earliest. If you are interested in leading one of these short hikes and promoting CMC, or working on this project in any way, contact Kathy Kyle at

katherinenkyle@gmail.com

CMC on Instagram

by Christine Martens

In September, when I joined the Communications Committee, the Carolina Mountain Club had a fairly inactive Instagram page, with only about 100 followers. Being a millennial and active on the site, I took on the responsibility of posting pictures to Instagram, and we have since grown the Instagram page to almost 700 followers! I invite everyone who uses Instagram to follow the Carolina Mountain Club page @carolinamountainclub and feel free to tag your pictures using @carolinamountainclub and #carolinamountainclub in your posts, and we will be able to share those pictures to our "stories." Thank you, and I look forward to seeing some of our members on Instagram!

Tech for Hiking

CMC is many things to many people but what we all share is a love for the outdoors. How we enjoy the great outdoors starts to move us in a new direction. One new idea that is afloat is to dedicate part of our website to Technology. We'll be looking for members with a passion for technology to submit articles about any range of topics, provided it includes technology. Smartphone Apps, GPS, Apple Watch, other websites you frequent and why, ..., it's endless. And it's worth sharing. For additional information contact Jim and Judy at Hikingtech@gmail.com

MST Segment Guides

You may have heard that we've been working on a new digital format for our MST Segment Guides to make them more user-friendly and easier to update quickly with the latest route information. We're excited to announce that we've just published the first set of new guides—Segments 6-10 on the Piedmont! The mountain and coastal segments will follow shortly. We plan to update the guides frequently, so check back often.

Each guide will have a revision date, so you'll be able to see if you have the most current version. These digital guides will completely replace the printed Piedmont and Coastal guidebooks, which will not be reprinted as they go out of stock. There will also be digital guides for the mountain sections, but we will continue to offer a printed version of the mountain guidebook as that route changes much less frequently.



As a member benefit, current members of Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail have unlimited free access to all digital trail guides, including updates. If you're a current member, click [here](#) to learn how to access the trail guides. (The process to access the guides the first time is a bit complicated, so be sure to look at the instructions. After the first time, you should have no problems.)

Non-members can purchase the guides at a reasonable cost. Simply go to the [Trail Guides page](#) on our website or directly to our [online store](#). To learn more about becoming a member to receive free guides and other benefits, click [here](#).

We hope you'll find the guides useful, and we hope to see you on the MST soon!

Jim Grode
Trail Resource Manager
jgrode@mountaintoseatrail.org

Why Is the Pump Gap Trail suddenly getting some TLC?

by Bobbi Powers

Glad you asked that question! Carolina Mountain Club since 2018 has had a Secondary Trails Program. For decades the major trails have had one or two maintainers per section of the MST and the A.T. in Western North Carolina. The secondary trails languished with little or no upkeep. Enter Les Love, who as Mel Skiles can attest, "could sell refrigerators to igloo dwellers" and Rich

Evans, whose life seems to revolve around trail maintenance, and both of whom have spent countless hours recruiting and training maintainers for these secondary trails. About six months ago, Les called Mel, proposing that he take on the Pump Gap Trail, one of the secondary trails, and the rest is history.

Mel took on the challenge, stating, “Pump Gap Trail is a unique, challenging, and beautiful trail that needs a lot of work....Away from the trailhead, a hiker is in a beautiful woods with rhododendron tunnels, with views and sounds of running water in adjacent streams....The elevation gain of about 1300’...will get your attention when you are carrying a chain saw and other tools.” Mel gives a lot of credit to the various crews which have put in hundreds of hours. Several maintainers have led special projects and deserve special shout-outs: Paul Curtin, Rich Evans, Todd Eveland, Ken Hummel, Tom Weaver, Dave Roberts, and Dan Snyder.

There are 70 secondary trails that CMC opted to maintain in Pisgah Ranger District, Appalachian Ranger District in Pisgah National Forest, and the Blue Ridge Parkway for a total of 148 miles. All but 10 sections have been adopted. Four of those have observers who look for and report issues. That leaves 6 “orphans” still waiting for a forever maintainer. Contact Les Love at lesrlove55@gmail.com. if you would like more information about adopting one of these trails.

Hiking and the Pandemic

And now a word from our hike leaders

by Danny Bernstein

It has been seven months since CMC returned to group hiking, albeit with several restrictions. On behalf of the Communications Committee, I wanted to learn how current leaders worked with the new rules. I sent all leaders who scheduled a hike in the 4th quarter of 2020, and a few others, a questionnaire asking them several questions on their experience with the pandemic protocol.

This will become a vital part of CMC history.



I received a fantastic response - 24 answers out of 36. It is a great response, particularly since the questionnaire asked respondents to write and not just check off boxes. We will put all the answers in a PDF on the CMC website under the history tab.

Filling up hikes

Most hikes are not filled to the 10-person limit. This is because hikers cancel at the last minute. It's then too late for the leader to contact someone on the waiting list.

Registering hikers

The overwhelming majority of leaders like knowing who is coming on the hike. They acknowledge that it is more work but worth it. An articulate minority think that registering hikers via email is very time-consuming and even stressful and ask for a mechanized system.

It is not surprising that leaders make up a large proportion of participants on other hikes. They point out that it is extra work to sign up as a hiker and miss the simple “show and go”.

Parking

Many leaders said that they had to alter hikes based on parking availability. Not a surprise here. One half-day leader points out that he needed to change his hike to an earlier time to make sure that there were enough spaces for the group.

Shuttle hikes

The pros and cons of shuttle hikes are varied. Several leaders don't lead shuttle hikes because they're too complicated to organize, so they don't plan them at all.

Others say, “One reason I like hiking with CMC is because you can do shuttle hikes that you cannot do on your own.”

A couple of leaders thought that shuttle hikes are acceptable if hikers wore masks in the car, left the car windows open or the shuttles were short - less than five miles. However, several leaders think that right now, as the rules stand, no one should be planning shuttle hikes. They say:

“I do have a problem with the few leaders and schedulers that have ignored the rules and think it's okay to do shuttles.”

“Either you play by the CMC rules or you shouldn't lead the hike.”

That came up three times by different leaders. Ignoring the “no shuttling” rules is annoying, if not worse.

Comments – edited only for clarity and space

****I really miss the spontaneity of deciding up to the last minute whether to join a hike. As hikes fill up quickly, I'm hiking a lot less with the club than I did previously. I am also hiking alone or with friends more. I don't enjoy saying “no” to those who want to join a hike. I look forward to resuming hiking as it was before the pandemic.**

****On carpooling - It seems like, when there's parking space, more than 10 hikers could attend-- we need to hike now more than ever! There could be some minimal carpooling (driver plus one in back seat, masks, windows open). It's sad that we have to assault the environment by bringing more cars now--understandable, but are there any other options?**

****I have led hikes as a service to the Club but have not gone on any CMC hike instead choosing to hike with a small, trusted pod of hikers.**

****I am hearing hikers complain about not being able to go on as many club hikes as they would like. I know that the club is often pressed for hike leaders (and I personally don't want to take on additional hikes because managing the sign up is a pain), but I wonder about the possibility of even more opportunities for hiking throughout the week or scheduling multiple hikes on a weekend. Even encouraging hike leaders to post scout hikes on Meetups would allow the opportunity for more people to go on the hikes – I'd be willing to do that option.**

****A concern was voiced about hikers not being able to get on hikes. "Will they lose interest in being a member?"**

****Most leaders are sending emails to those signed up asking if they are coming. Usually this is a few days, up to a week before the hike.**

****Two leaders stated that they will ask proof of vaccinations by the fall.**

Concerns

"Hikers are canceling at the last minute. Some just don't show up; they are not even letting the leader know."

"More new members are signing up for hikes but seem less committed."

From Danny

For those who want a mechanized registration system, this is what Meetup is for.

It works well, lets the leader put a limit on the number of hikers, and lets hikers sign up and back out as needed. Right now, as I write this article (February 2021), I see that our last CMC meetup hike was Thanksgiving morning, 2020.

I see a couple of problems with using Meetup for hike signup:

1. Many leaders will not want to use the Meetup system. One can get around that by having the hike schedulers put the hikes on Meetup but that's a lot of work. I don't think you can have a hybrid system.
 2. Many hikers will be discouraged by having to use the Meetup system to sign up for hikes.
 3. Anyone can sign up on a CMC hike. Even if the hike clearly says, "Members only", people will ignore it. The two Thanksgiving morning hikes that were led were full within 30 minutes of it appearing online.
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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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