



Carolina Mountain Club

Since 1923

eNews | Hike . Save Trails . Make Friends.

September 2021

MASK UP!

Don't forget your mask when hiking on the Blue Ridge Parkway or in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The National Park Service issued a directive Aug. 15th to immediately require visitors, employees and contractors to wear a mask inside all NPS buildings and in "crowded outdoor spaces," regardless of vaccination status or community transmission levels, in accordance with the latest guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) as cases of COVID-19, led by the delta variant, continue to spike across the country and in North Carolina.

"Visitors to national parks are coming from locations across the country, if not across the world. Because of this, and recognizing that the majority of the United States is currently in substantial or high transmission categories, we are implementing a service-wide mask requirement to ensure our staff and visitors' safety," NPS Deputy Director Shawn Benge said in a statement.

This requirement will be in effect until further notice and applies to all NPS buildings and public transportation systems. It also applies to outdoors spaces where physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as narrow or busy trails and overlooks.

To view the official statement click here:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/covid-mask-update-aug-2021.htm>

ANNUAL MEETING: HOLD THE DATE!

The 2021 annual meeting for the Carolina Mountain Club will be held on Friday, October 29th at the Hilton Asheville at Biltmore Park. We will start with a social hour at 5:30

followed by dinner at 6:30 and the business meeting at 7:30. Our speaker this year will be Kate Dixon, retiring Executive Director of the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

We will honor Challenge Award recipients, elect new Counsel members and present the recipients of the Award of Appreciation and Distinguished Service awards.

More information on reserving your seat coming soon.

Congratulations to the Carolina Mountain Club!

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

First Place — Hiking Club or Group — in Outdoors

Saturday Workday at Big Bald 08/23/2021

by Danny Bernstein

The third Saturday Workday this year on Big Bald attracted 42 people. This A.T. section, at 5,000 feet, is rocky, steep, and always wet; it's the proverbial green tunnel.

Today's access is through The Preserve at Wolf Laurel, a housing development adjacent to Big Bald. Most maintainers need to drive over an hour to get to the A.T. As we drive into the gated community, we are required to sign in and sign out. A guard with a Navy cap gives us a "Work Permit" card.

The group spans all ability levels and knowledge, and in my case, no ability; I'm here to take notes and photographs. Even non-members are welcomed. Most workers wear bright yellow CMC Trail Crew shirts, either short or long sleeve. Goody bags of candy and a frisbee, provided by Mast General Store, are handed out.

First the safety talk. Chris Werbylo shows us how to carry tools in our downside hand. If you fall, the tool will fall first and then you. Chris reminds us that if you're swinging a hazel hoe, you need to be careful of the arc you're creating as so to not hit anyone. Safety glasses are required for rockwork and sawing work.

The workers are divided into ten groups. Each will have a separate section of the trail and mission. For example, group #1 will work on improving rock steps. Linda Blue and Mary Swain lead the all-women's groups to improve the treadway. Paul Curtin's group (Group 4) will make one trail out of three small sections that are creating erosion. I rode up with Paul and two other women. Believing in dancing with the one who brought me, I first join Paul's group.

We're reminded to "bring back the same tools you brought out and clean them. There will be water and wax to protect the tools." But first "We need abled-body people to carry down logs.

1Chris giving a safety talk



The logs were driven up and need to be brought down from the top.”

The A.T. to Big Bald is reached via a blue blazed trail (0.4 miles) or from the top on a road. Paul goes to carry logs and the rest of Group 4 walks to the A.T. Filmy angelica, bee balm and yellow cone flowers line the trail but I sense that no one in my group is interested in flower identification right now. The blue access trail is mostly downhill. Once we reach the A.T. we turn right and go uphill. Pink ribbons on trees have the group number and we stop at the Group #4 ribbon.

The section that needs work has three trails where only one should be. The wooden steps are rotten and look unsafe. So hikers have worked around the steps to create two new trails. The goal here is to close up the unofficial trails and improve the steps. To me,

the trail, in general, is perfect but I know that it's not something that I'm supposed to say; I'm here to observe and learn.

The guys in Group 4 wait for Paul Curtin to come down so “Paul can tell us what to do.” So I move up the A.T. to another group.

Skip Sheldon and Tom Weaver are engrossed in building steps. I have pictures of Skip moving rocks from almost 20 years ago. Skip, the rock master, is passing on his knowledge to the next generation.

“If a rock can be picked up by one person, it's too small. Two people should be able to pick up a rock. If it's too heavy for two people, the rock is too big,” Skip says. That's probably not the kind of information you'd find in a trail construction manual but it's a good engineering estimate. Paul Wulfin, the third person in the group, wields a pickaxe as dirt is moved behind and under the rock.



“Gargoyles” Skip says. “This section needs gargoyles”. In Gothic architecture, a gargoyle is a carved face with a spout designed to carry water

2Skip and Tom inserting a rock

from a roof and away from the side of a building, thereby preventing rainwater from running down masonry walls and eroding the mortar between. Here, the gargoyles that Skip adds are pointy rocks on the side of the trail. They provide weight to the guide rock and keep hikers on the steps and not off the trail. Trail work is planned based on availability of material close at hand or what can be carried in. It's different from designing a house where you plan the house and then get the materials.

I move down, past the blue trail and find the women's group. They're taking out roots, *trippers* they call them, those that can trip hikers. The trail is taken down to the dirt. Some leave much of the grass, others will spread leaves in the fall and yet others just leave the dirt. "Yes, it will be slick for a while," a woman says.

Linda Blue, a retired horticulturist, says that the main thing that you have to learn is that "water only flows downhill." Pat is creating a water diversion from the blue blazed trail. Now the phrase is water diversion, not water bar. Bars have the feel of creating a dam while a diversion keeps water moving off the trail.

When women work together, they are more independent, resourceful, and not intimidated by the men. New women maintainers get guidance from the experienced ones. "They use more finesse with loppers to untangle roots than brute force," Linda explains. "They are more likely to take a hiker's view and think," "Is this something that's going to trip you?"

"It's not a coincidence that there are so many retired technical professionals such as engineers and doctors on the work crew," Paul Curtin says. Trail work is technical problem solving that needs to be figured out.

The US Forest Service puts out a detailed manual called *Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook*. It measures 7.5 inches by 4 inches and is meant to fit in a man's pocket. The manual describes techniques for every possible trail situation; that's the gold standard. What kind of background do trail construction gurus have? I look up the resumé of the principal author of the manual, Mary Ann Davies.

Mary Ann Davies is a project leader at the Forest Service's Missoula Technology and Development Center. She received a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Montana State University. She worked in the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Region with facilities, tramways, recreation, and fire.

The A.T. from Sam's Gap to Big Bald is Favorite Hike #46, so CMC hikers will benefit from all this hard work. The next Saturday Workday is October 9. You might want to be there.

Park with Caution

Don't park in the old Bi-Lo parking lot in Brevard! The Bi-Lo is closed and towing is now being enforced. A CMC hiker recently parked there for a hike and when they returned, their car was gone. It cost \$210 to get it out of impoundment. Signs are not obviously posted.

Please discuss alternative parking with your hike leader.

Black Folks Camp Too

by Kathy Kyle



Carolina Mountain Club joined about 25 representatives from area outdoor organizations for a joint hike with Black Folks Camp Too founder Earl B. Hunter Jr. in August to hear about what his organization is doing to diversify the outdoors and what other groups and individuals can do to achieve the same goal. The group hiked a loop up to Lover's Leap near Hot Springs on the A.T. Check out BFCT message and watch for more ways CMC is also supporting this message.

<https://www.blackfolkscamptoo.com/the-unity-blaze-patch-project-initiatives/>

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.
