



Mountain High Hikers Newsflash October 4, 2009

Good News – Web Site is Back Up!

After some time and much effort, the MHH website is back up and working fully. The address is the same www.mountainhighhikers.org but we are now on a new server. If you have anything to add to the website, or any suggestions for changes, please let me know.

Richard Sullivan
rjsullivan@pol.net

Attention All Members

In the last Newsflash we mentioned the New Hiking Guidelines and Hike Leader Guidelines. Now, you can easily download these documents as our site is up and running. Please take the time to read both the Member/Guest Hiking Guidelines and Hike Leader Guidelines to become more familiar with goals and suggestions formulated by a cross spectrum of our club.

Additional Trail Maintenance Scheduled:

By: John Quinlan

This coming Thursday, Oct 8th there is going to be a special trail maintenance day. The work will be in the Fires Creek area. As usual we will meet in the Ingles parking lot at 0745, or, if preferable at the Leatherwood Falls picnic site at 0815. If anyone has a GPS please bring it along. Note that some MHH'ers enjoy having breakfast at the Cottage Deli beforehand. All are encouraged to participate."

Trail Maintenance Report

By: John Quinlan

"Thursday 1 October 09 saw 13 MHH volunteers come to conduct trail maintenance on various segments of the Fires Creek area trails.. A great turnout for which I am very appreciative. The weather was simply spectacular. And, of course it is very gratifying to see so many well motivated folks. After the safety briefing

and courtesy of the Tusquittee Range District we had more than enough PPE to properly outfit everyone. Having this good folks allows me to form multiple groups; in this case three separate teams.

Team #1 headed by Richard Sullivan along with 5 additional members (Ginny Smith (a brand new helper), Dave Richardson, Steve Jersey, Bob Stone, and Rod Whitefield). Richard had the most members with the right mix of skills to take on the longest section of the day. They started working from the Bristol Horse Camp up Bristol Cabin Trail to Carver Gap (Rim Trail). On this section they encountered the greatest water challenges of the day as some of our prior work needed repair after the recent heavy rains to fix water bars and realign water drain points. At Carver Gap they emplaced two of the needed trail markers; once again courtesy of Bill Champion of the Forest Service. The they proceeded West and along the way were gratified to see the section of trail that MHH rerouted last year was holding very well despite some horse traffic that is now authorized on this section of the Rim. At the point where the trail turns or Northerly down to the FS road they noted a new concern; evidence of ATV traffic apparently coming in from the Fires Creek Cove subdivision. Here they placed a heavy tree barrier that required considerable effort. Amazing enough they encountered problems with overgrowth or deterioration since our last visit earlier this year. This team covered the mile in a rapid time reaching the Leatherwood picnic area not long after the other two teams arrived. Seems like all it took was "a few good men" (and one new woman) to get through the longest stretch so fast.

Team #2 headed by Bob Lehoullier and two other volunteers (Don Chesbro and Jake Erhardt). This team worked their way from the Rim Trail at the northernmost crossing of FS 6176 down to the Leatherwood picnic area also. Actually all routes were planned so that each of the three teams would rendezvous back at the Leatherwood picnic area. This team was short a chains saw (currently under repair at the Tusquittee Range Station from which it was borrowed. I had hoped there would not be too much heavy work on this section as this part had been worked recently and thus has the fewest team members. As luck would have this almost happened though Bob reports that he did encountered two trees to deal with that will have to be deferred until a later trip. Once again with so many great helpers the equipment requirement goes up. Nonetheless the team accomplished the job in a splendid fashion and other than the bypassed trees had nothing they could not handle with the hand tools and on brush.

Team #3 (Composed of Jean Caputa-what a trooper at 81 years young!!! (Better yet she has been actively doing so for many years), Tom Shope, Gary Thompson, and John Quinlan) rode up FS 6176 to the intersection of the end of the Huskins Branch Trails. We had had a report of a large tree blocking the trail and 'armed" with a chain saw, brushcutter, Swedish axe, and lopper we began to clear debris and fallen trees and branches across the trail. This began with the obscured trail sign covered with vines and overgrown vegetation. While expecting one large tree we actually encountered 10!! Half of these were significant; some so large as to require multiple cuts to allow safe removal from the treadway. Fortunately we have learned to be prepared so extra fuel, bar chain oil, and tools (yes we had to retighten the bar chain once) had been carried with us. This then later met the other two at the picnic area.

Once the teams arrived we had multiple and, I must say, spectacular treats awaiting us. Along with the now expected cold drinks, Pam Sullivan brought TWO delicious cakes she and Francine Quinlan had baked!! How cool is that! I am worried we are setting too high a bar for refreshments as all of us would encourage them to continue to do so. Well that cannot always happen butt it sure was enjoyed by each one of us-some indulged in two pieces and fortunately with two cakes all who so desired could be accommodated. Thank you ladies!

All in all a lot of ground covered (8.6 miles of trails) and made "Open, Blazed, and Safe" thanks to these three teams. Way to go!

Lesson learned this day was we all needed to due our best to educate, inform the public as to the proper use of these trails. We and the Forest Service go to a lot of effort to do our best to keep these trails open for the enjoyment of all. There is a place for each type user but it is incumbent on these same users to be respectful of each other. Signage for example can help but some individual responsibility is in order."

.....

Wayah Bald Information Provided

By: Peter Barr, Director

NC Chapter Forest Fire Lookout Association

Several teens were arrested for repeated arson attempts using homemade explosives at the Wayah Bald lookout tower last month. Luckily, the tower was not destroyed but some damage did occur. More fortunately, the Nantahala Ranger District announced that the Wayah Bald lookout tower will be top priority for the USFS's recent federal stimulus funding award for lookout tower restorations. The tower will soon have its recently crumbling stonework reset and repaired and receive a new roof as part of the project. Wayah Bald is a popular landmark in Macon County and along the Appalachian Trail. Visit <http://nclookouts.blogspot.com> for full coverage of the Wayah Bald arson attempt as well as the upcoming restoration, including links to articles and video.

Be Alert in the Fall

Be alert for roots and rocks on the trail under the fall leaves. Also, some areas may have a heavy concentration of hard mast crops (acorns, etc.) and makes for a roller skating experience. Hiking poles really help at this time of year. The site below gives interesting information about hard and soft mast crops.

http://www.ncrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/ch/ch_9_12.pdf

Silver Comet Bike Trip = Fun Day

From Pam Sullivan

The bike trip on the Silver Comet Trail was a wonderful early fall outing for 17 hikers. After being warned about a mudslide over part of our trail, we were able to rearrange the trip to avoid the closed section. The weather was bright, sunny and cool with some fall color peeking through all the greenery.

We biked through the Brushy Mountain Tunnel into the Paulding Wildlife Management Area to our endpoint, Castle Rock. After looping past our cars at Coots Lake Trailhead, we went another 4 miles to a nice lunch at the 212 Cafe in Rockmart. We really had the trail and cafe to ourselves since it was a mid-week trip.

Thanks to those who drove to Atlanta, those who provided spare bikes and to the early warning about the trail closing. Watch this great group of fun folks on you tube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAKI7TXW5vc>