



Mountain High Hikers Newsflash December 2, 2009

Covered Dish Dinner and Election of Officers for 2010 – December 8th

The Holiday Covered Dish Dinner, Business Meeting and Election of Officers will be on Tuesday, December 8th at 6:00 pm at Sharp Memorial Methodist Church Fellowship Hall in Young Harris. MHH provides ham, turkey and drinks. Please bring a covered dish to share with your hiking family! Come a little early to socialize.

Trail Maintenance Plan for December

By: John Quinlan

"The Trail Maintenance Plan for Dec 09 will consist of the following:

1. 3 Dec: Fires Creek; from Big Stamp West to Will King Gap; then one team down Phillips Ridge Trail with second team, staffing permitting, continuing on to FS 6176.

SPECIAL NOTE: This trip is covering a lot of ground and will start at 0800!!!

2. 10 Dec: Small recon team on Raven Cliff Falls in GA.

3. 17 Dec: High Shoals Falls project in conjunction with David Kuykendall of the FS.

All meeting/orientation times have now changed to 0845 with departure now at 0900.

Conservation Notes:

From Land Trust for the Little Tennessee Newsletter

(these are the folks that secured the land adjacent to Fires Creek and more recently purchased the inholding on Chunky Gal Trail (area located on trail in the Glade Gap/AT area)

All Day Workday in Clay County on December 3

We need your help. As you may recall from our 2008 newsletter, Sandy Jackson of Clay County generously transferred title of his 35-acre tract to LTLT in early 2007, retaining a "life estate" to live on and manage the land until his death. Shortly thereafter, Sandy did pass away, and LTLT now has full title

to the property. We are now preparing to rent out the cabin on the property, as well as the possible sale of the property.

On Thursday, December 3rd, we are organizing an all-day workday out at the Jackson property, with the main task to clean out the barn/garage on the property, finish cleaning out the cabin, and to haul items to the local thrift store, recycling center, and waste disposal sites. Besides labor, we could also use help from folks with pickup trucks to help with the hauling. Even if you can only help in the morning, we can use you!

The Jackson property is located in Clay County, about 15 minutes northwest of Hayesville. If it all possible, we will try to carpool. Please let me know if you will be able to help. Based on who responds, I will make appropriate arrangements for meeting places and times. Most likely, we will leave from Franklin around 8 am.

Please contact Dennis if you can help 828-524-2711.

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Trail Maintenance Report

By John Quinlan

Yesterday, Thursday, 19 Nov 09, dawned a beautiful clearing day for a great trip by seven hardy MHH volunteers for what promised to be a heavy day of chain saw cutting. We met in Hiawassee and then drove to Coleman River (A beautiful easy hike with roaring water-good for children though watch for the slippery bridge crossings! East of Hiawassee). We (seven of us) were well equipped for what we anticipated encountering. We encountered many trees (estimate 12-15) blown across the path rendering it near impassable. We used three chainsaws and made relatively short work of the task. There were a goodly number of trees requiring multiple cuts. All were removed from the trail. There was also some minor brush clearing, primarily using loppers. Dave Richardson led off with three helpers (Bob Stone, Don Chesebro, and Jake Ehrhart) and went to the far end and worked back toward the second group (Tom Shope, Jim Morgan, and John Quinlan). We had a great time with superlative views and enjoyed lunch watch the roaring river. As has become our norm, all worked hard and I am always so pleased by what a great attitude each person displayed. As a result this trail is opened back up but regrettably not really safe for novices due to the slippery partially broken bridges.

In my opinion, shared by the others on the team, there were problems with the safety of the three bridges. The first and third were both missing hand rails and the supporting 4X4s were rotted. The middle one was canted, or sloped downward toward the river and VERY slick with dampness and mildew. Note: None of us fell fortunately). The is a very real safety issue compounded by the very weak hand rail that is loose and not likely to support someone falling against it.

We can solve many of these the problems . The second bridge is probably beyond our capability to rectify alone. We need FS assistance for which I have communicated with them. In the interim I suggested to the FS that signs be erected just before each bridge warning of the slipperiness, and, especially for the second one, if there were some sort of gritty surface material that could be applied to the surface of the bridge decking. This then likely would require a thorough cleaning first.

Since the materials are especially large it'd be helpful if we could establish a rendezvous date/time with the FS for them to deliver said materials. That would greatly assist us in handling the transportation aspects of the long lumber.

The names for yesterday's trail work were:

Dave Richardson, Don Chesebro, Bob Stone, Jake Ehrhart, Jim Morgan, Tom Shope, John Quinlan

Highway 64 Closed

Forwarded by Richard Sullivan

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) has closed Hwy. 64 on the east side of Boyd Gap due to the rockslide for at least 2 months.

This closes the whole Whitewater Center, Thunder Rock Campground, and all of the hiking trails at the Whitewater center and off Hwy. 64 area to residents. The feds have closed the center itself.

Further Info.

Forwarded by Darlene Rothenay

Gordon and I drove over to the Ocoee Whitewater center today, and found out that 64 is now open up to Ocoee #3, across from the Lead Pond trail. A few weeks ago, you could not go much beyond the Brush Creek trail, which is a good ways from the Whitewater center. I talked with a volunteer in the white water center and she said that most of the time, 64 will remain open up to #3, with the exception being on days when they decide to do some blasting. It seems no one knows when that will be, including the people who work at the White water center, so there is a small risk that anyone who hikes over there will run into that scenario.



Alert!

November 24, 2009

Your Comments Needed on Accessible Trails

The U.S. Access Board is asking for comments on their October 2009 "Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas" by December 18, 2009. These Guidelines will become final direction for accessibility on trails on Federal land. **Once the Guidelines are finalized they will be the basis for future regulations which will apply to ALL new trails on local and State lands as well.** It is critical that trail designers, contractors, and managers review these guidelines closely and comment on issues or concerns they see.

GET THE FACTS

- [Issues with draft final Accessibility Guidelines](#) for trails and recreation on Federal lands
- [US Forest Service concerns](#) with draft final Accessibility Guideline

- Complete text of [Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas](#)
- How to submit comments to www.regulations.gov



CONCERNS FOR TRAIL PLANNERS AND MANAGERS

Agencies and organizations have raised concerns about aspects of the Guidelines which seem vague and could cause problems with compliance. The Guidelines contain a number of changes from the 2007 "[Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#)" (NPRM), which received over 600 comments.

Comparing the new [Guidelines](#) with the previous [NPRM](#):

- Trails are required to comply with the accessibility requirements "to the maximum extent feasible." The term "feasible" is not defined, so there is no guidance on how much change to the trail environment is the maximum feasible.
- NPRM permitted exceptions where compliance would "substantially alter" the function or purpose of the facility or the setting. The new Guidelines change this to "fundamentally alter," a term both vague and absolute.
- NPRM allowed exceptions where "compliance would cause substantial harm to cultural, historic, religious, or significant natural features or characteristics." The Guidelines require designers to cite specific laws for any exception, which would result in more bureaucratic effort and a deterrent to building new trails.
- If it is decided that a new or altered trail will not comply with the guidelines, an unspecified Notification must be filed with the Access Board, which could become another burden to trail managers.
- In previous versions, guideposts helped trail managers document when following the guidelines was not "reasonable." These guideposts are now deleted, leaving managers' decisions legally reviewable based only on the judgment of the Access Board.



The U.S. Access Board is hosting a webinar on Thursday, December 3, 2009 from 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. (ET) on "Understanding the Draft Final Guidelines on Outdoor Developed Areas." Register in advance at <http://www.accessibilityonline.org>.

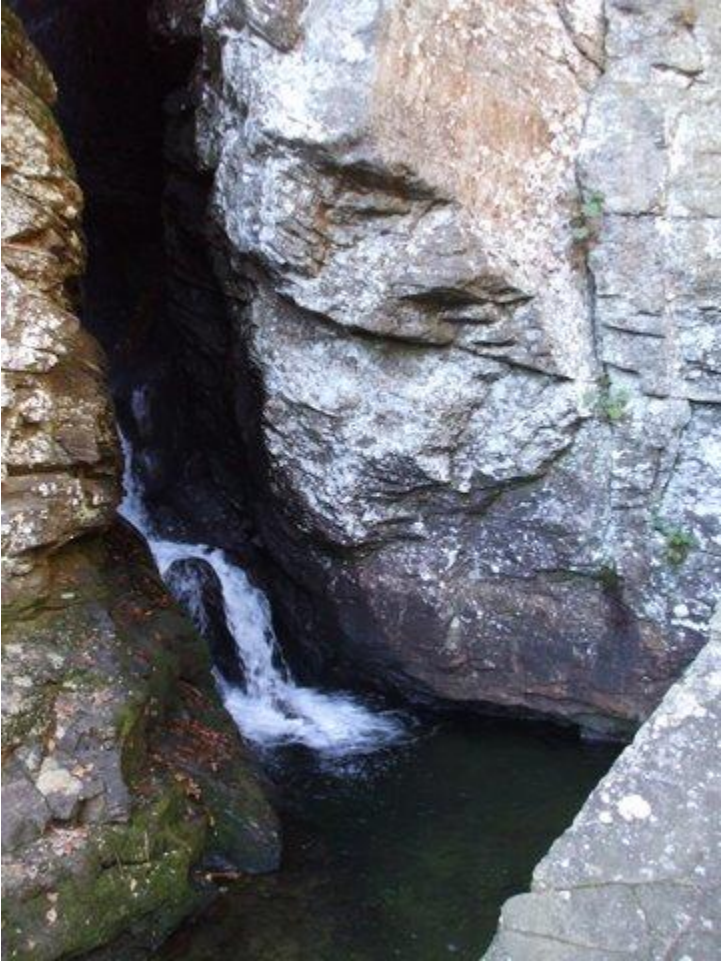
For questions regarding the Draft Final Guidelines: Contact Bill Botten, 202.272.0014; botten@access-board.gov.



Comments are due December 18th, 2009: www.regulations.gov.

For more explanation of specific accessibility requirements see the Forest Service [Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails](#).

American Trails will post comments from other groups and agencies at [Accessibility Guidelines Summary](#) for trails and recreation on Federal lands.



Where Is This Located?

Hint—MHH will be doing maintenance there soon!

How You Can Help

Dues are due at the end of this month.

The big bang for your buck remains the same for 2010. In order to assist our membership chairman, John Orr, merely go to www.mountainhighhikers.org and click on how to join and printout an application/renewal form, complete it and mail the form along with your check to John Orr. Thanks for your continued support over the years.
