

PATH's Seventeenth Annual Trail DAWG Days Event

Maybe Trail DAWG Days 2014 should have been held in the Alps; I say this because three of our regular 'dawgs' were abroad in Europe this year while others had personal or family health issues. Never-the-less we had 14 returning 'dawgs', 4 new 'dawgs', and nicer weather than last year.... cool with much less rain than in 2013.

Trail DAWGS went in two directions this year as we covered both the High Water Trail and the old Low Water Trail, both south of VA 615. I can only comment on the High Water Trail which is comfortably open and in quite good shape for a Wilderness trail. No downed trees were removed that were less than 18" above the trail tread as these were easily stepped over by both myself and Grace as we did the trail assessment. One fairly small tree was easy to shove aside as were numerous branches. Few downed trees remain that exceed the 18" height although there is a quite new blow-down with it's leaves just now beginning to wilt that may exceed that height. One tree is leaning over the trail that likely should be removed; I am attaching a photo of it and deferring to North Overseer Steve and the Trail Maintenance Committee to make that call.



Besides the two above mentioned trails that we enjoyed on Saturday, Barry led a well attended Friday hike from US 52 to VA 615 and Valerie took our two youngest 'dawgs' on a portion of the same trail Saturday afternoon along with two adult newcomers. Even prior to these events, most of our youth were able to enjoy a creek-crawl on Thursday afternoon ending just below the bridge over Laurel Creek. By-the-way, a new handrail over the bridge approach there looks nice and provides a greater degree of safety for the area.

Trail DAWGS like to eat well and we truly did! Valerie's Spaghetti Supper was a great hit Thursday night; Greg's Slaw at our traditional 'Hot-Dogs for Trail DAWGS' Friday supper was exceptional and Trudy's Cantaloupe was a nice finish for the meal. Kendra's Artichoke Dip and Valerie's Bar-be-Que received accolades on Saturday night, as did Diana's Mandarin Salad which was a great 'light' dessert following a big meal. Plus there were many other great entrees including Greg's peaches throughout the weekend!

Camp-fire Discussion items included this year being the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act; Trail DAWG Days taking the lead to keep the High Water Trail [in Wilderness] open; and some on-going concerns regarding the Low Water Trail that Jim shared; more on that from him later.

Our challenges were bees that had taken up residence in an old quilt on the porch, on-going traffic problems that resulted from a burning truck in the East River Tunnel west of Bland, and our microwave catching on fire Saturday morning. Steve was able to determine that the bees were not the sweet-honey, Honey Bees that Valerie had thought them to be and they were quickly dispatched; the traffic problems eventually resolved although that took many hours, and luckily I had a back-up microwave on the porch. All is well that ends well; we were most fortunate that the kids stayed away from the bees, that the ABC store in Wytheville was reached on the second attempt; and that the microwave fire was completely contained inside the unit. Life is good!

Do mark your calendars: our 18th Annual Trail DAWG Days Event will be July 24-26, 2015; in a few years we will reach our 20th consecutive year for this annual event that focuses on families and youth. It is time now to think ahead as to how we want to celebrate that milestone when we reach it; suggestions are always welcome. Happy Trails to all!

Submitted by Marcia Hudson Cope