

# PATH WAYS

Of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

PATH Year 57, No. 1

Spring 2021



## Winter Work

Steve Lund, Morris Yule, Ed Ritterbusch, Caleb Hairfield (of the Forest Service) and another Forest Service worker, from left, in October on Chestnut Ridge, top photo. They were joined by Ed Martin, Lloyd Walker and Junior Miller in clearing the Appalachian Trail on the ridge this past fall. At right is the boardwalk at Dry Run after John and Doris Muncy joined Conner McBane and Josh Kloehn of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Jan. 15 to move it away from the creek, which is migrating. The old boardwalk location can be seen to the right, way too near the creek. Conner, who supplied the photos, said the work was vital. Chestnut Ridge, he said, “is a special place and it continues to look better and better every year.” More work is set on Dry Run in May. See the 2020 report on Page 2.



# Here's what PATH members did during 2020

By Jim Houck, PATH president

What has PATH been doing for the past year? We had over 40 club members checking & doing trail maintenance throughout our section. This was reported for the annual meeting Dec. 5.

1. I partnered with Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club and Mount Rogers National Recreation Area to draft COVID-19 Job hazard analyses and safety guidelines.
2. Ron Hudnell and I worked to order COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment for PATH. It's in the Sugar Grove Tool Barn, and some in the Bland shed.
3. Submitted the Volunteer Service Agreement for Mount Rogers NRA. The agreement for the Eastern Divide Ranger District is good thru May 2024.
4. Partnered with VARO/ATC to sign a letter of support for the U.S. Senate to approve the "Great American Outdoors Act," of which 19.5 million dollars came to Virginia.
5. Worked with ATC Roanoke on a Forest Service Road Inventory for the PATH section.
6. With Board approval, sent a check for \$5,000 donation for the new parking lot for McAfee knob.
7. Conner McBane (ATC Roanoke) & crew, along with some PATH members, did mowing & tree clearing on the PATH open areas. (See picture on Page 1.)
8. --Lick Creek footbridge washed out and needs replacing. Remains were removed during the year.
  - Hunting Camp Creek footbridge needs repairs to the handrail & decking. May need to replace the whole bridge. We'll see.
  - Lynn Camp Creek footbridge needs the handrail repaired/replaced. (See pictures, Page 7.)
9. Someone sprayed weed killer/roundup on the Davis Family Cemetery, killing most everything inside the fence.
10. Our LL Bean grant was denied. LL Bean only offered \$14,000 this year while clubs requested \$25,000 in grants. So LL Bean ended its grant program this year. PATH received \$1,400 from the VARO license plate grant. The money will be used to help pay for our new website.
11. Our new web site is up and running. Martha Emrey, Jim Houck and Ron Hudnell spearheaded this project, with help from Tom Dillon on the newsletter, David Faucette on PayPal and inside PATH, Karen Worthington and Betsy Truscott for editing and support. Overall, Martha did the heavy lifting to keep this nine-month project going.
12. Betsy and I attended the Virtual Zoom Regional Partnership Committee (RPC) Meeting on Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> (6 hours).
13. PATH volunteer hours for Oct. 1, 2019 thru September 30, 2020, are shown below.

Field Work – 1,393  
Admin Work - 683  
Total – 2,076

Volunteers - 45  
Age 36 to 54 – 20 (guess)  
Age over 54 – 25 (guess)

Field Work  
Trail work, including  
related travel – 1,379  
Outreach – 2, Training - 12  
Total Field Work – 1,393

# 2021 Calendar

*Here is what we know of our calendar for the start of 2021. Keep your fingers crossed!*

**March 19-21, 2021      First PATH Work Weekend      Sugar Grove, Va.**

Our first work weekend looks like it's still going to be a do-it-yourselfer with no group gathering. Groups can go out to work, with masks while carpooling and maintaining safe distancing, but check in and out afterwards with President Jim Houck or someone else. We're hoping by Summerfest that we will be able to have group gatherings. PANDEMIC, BE GONE!  
**WORKERS, GET YOUR VACCINES!!!**

**April 16-18, 2021      April Work Weekend      TBA.**

Similar to March, but hoping for a potluck on Friday. Rich and Sue Freeman are planning water control work on the trail near Knot Maul Shelter. Others welcome to join. Contact them.

**May 1, 2021      AT Hall of Fame Banquet      Carlisle, Pa.**

The 10<sup>th</sup> AT Hall of Fame Banquet is set for 7 p.m. at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. Visit [www.2020athalloffamebanquet.eventbrite.com](http://www.2020athalloffamebanquet.eventbrite.com). Or write AT Museum, 1120 Pine Grove Road, Gardners, Pa. 17324. Or call (717) 649-5505. Tickets \$50, \$40 museum members.

**May 14-16, 2021      May Work Weekend      TBA.**

Probably similar to March, doing it ourselves. More work building Dry Run boardwalk.

**June 16-21, 2021      Summerfest      TBA.**

May be similar to March, but we hope we'll be able to gather. See above.

**Aug. 6-9, 2021      AT Vista      New Paltz, N.Y.**

This was to be a four-day weekend event commemorating Benton MacKaye's 1921 article laying out the idea of an Appalachian Trail. But it is now planned to be only virtual. An in-person event is tentatively set for Aug. 5-8, 2022. More info is at [www.atvista2020.weebly.com](http://www.atvista2020.weebly.com).

**October 2021      39<sup>th</sup> ALDHA Gathering      Abingdon, Va.**

The annual gathering of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association. It was planned for October 2020, but was postponed because of the pandemic. They're still seeking an exact date. Email [Blaze@aldha.org](mailto:Blaze@aldha.org) for more information.

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This is a newsletter for the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers, a trail work club that maintains approximately 70 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Southwest Virginia. This newsletter comes out four times a year, as long as we have enough material and contributions. It is sent by email to the PATH List and others, or by U.S. Mail to members who don't have email. Feel free to print and post in your local outdoor store. SUMMER DEADLINE MAY. 20, 2021. Web site: [www.path-at.org](http://www.path-at.org). Or for info: [PiedmontATHikers@gmail.com](mailto:PiedmontATHikers@gmail.com). Or see our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/PiedmontATHikers/](http://www.facebook.com/PiedmontATHikers/)

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# Reactions and Letters

Here is a reaction to Herb MacDonald's stories about composting privies in the Holiday issue of Pathways.

■ Good article on the moldering privies. I'm working on an article for one of my websites about installing a composting head on a sailboat. It was interesting to see some of the similarities and differences in the application of what is essentially the same technology. On a sailboat we separate out liquid since the bin is a sealed plastic unit and would hold liquid rather than allowing it to leach out. In either type of privy/head, it is important not to let the waste get too wet, because the aerobic (air-living) bacteria need plenty of oxygen, whereas in a retention tank style system, i.e. a sewer, the breakdown is anaerobic, in other words not in the presence of air. The anaerobic process creates the noxious gases that cause the foul smell of sewage. The aerobic process is much more benign and produces little odor. (You'll notice this when you work on a PATH moldering privy, which everyone should do. – Ed.)

We use either peat or coconut fiber as a medium in our composting heads, rather than the wood chips in the moldering privy. The privy has a much larger bin and is changed out less frequently, giving the wood chips time to decay. My composting head has had 70 uses and is yet to be even half full, so in ideal conditions it has good capacity. Most sailors do not put paper in the head, but keep a container lined in a five-pound flour bag to hold used paper. It can go out periodically with the trash.

The marine head composts best in warm temperatures and quits composting altogether below 55 degrees. It also works better if it has a gentle air flow over it to help dehumidify it. Most installations include a tiny exhaust fan that pulls air through the bin and exhausts it out of the boat. I also have dorade vents in my head compartment. One accepts the hose from the head and I keep it pointed away from the wind. The other introduces air into the compartment any time it is pointed into the wind, creating a slight overpressure that forces air through the bin and out the other vent.

Probably way more than you ever wanted to know about marine heads.

Paul Clayton, Winston-Salem

## Want to Try Another Trail? Here are Some

To nobody's surprise, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy is going to try to keep hikers off our trail again this coming year, out of an abundance of caution about the coronavirus. ATC asked hikers late last year to register if they are planning to thru-hike in 2021, so they can be spaced out, or even to consider alternative hikes.

"Mandatory or voluntary quarantines are active in several A.T. states," ATC said. "Local, state, or federal closures and/or restrictions across the A.T. remain possible next year. And, the operations of Trailside businesses and service providers in 2021 remain uncertain. Hiking the A.T. in 2021 will likely remain a logistical challenge underscored by health and safety risks.

"The Appalachian Trail Conservancy urges all hikers to stay local and exercise caution while so much uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic exists."



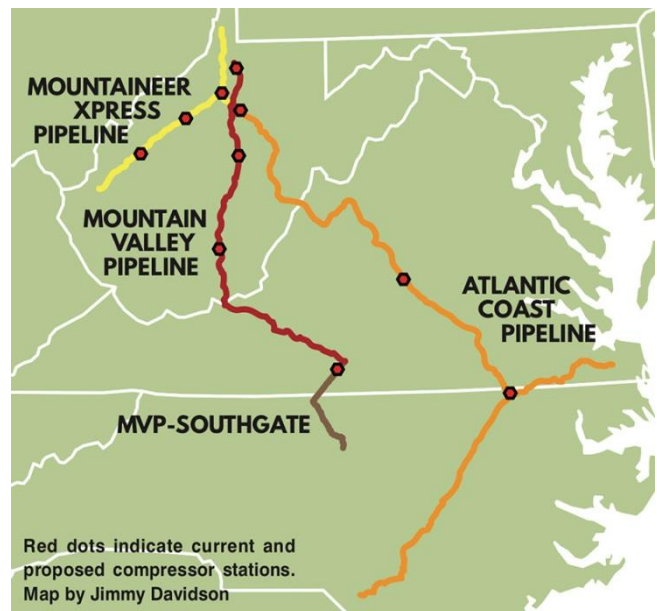
This probably doesn't affect many of us, but ATC did provide a list of alternative trails that ought to be of interest, and it's a neat survey about what's available. Several of those in the South are good Spring Break hikes. Here are suggestions from ATC and elsewhere:

**FLORIDA TRAIL**, Florida, 1,000 miles  
**PINHOTI TRAIL**, Alabama, 171 miles  
**PINHOTI TRAIL**, Georgia, 160 miles  
**PALMETTO TRAIL**, South Carolina, 500 miles  
**FOOTHILLS TRAIL**, South Carolina, 77 miles  
**BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL**, Carolinas and Georgia, 288 miles  
**BARTRAM TRAIL**, Georgia and North Carolina, 115 miles  
**MOUNTAINS TO SEA TRAIL**, North Carolina, 1,175 miles\*  
**LONG TRAIL**, Vermont, 272 miles  
**CUMBERLAND TRAIL**, Tennessee, 210 miles  
**ALLEGHENY TRAIL**, West Virginia, 288 miles  
**TUSCARORA TRAIL**, Pennsylvania to Virginia, 250 miles  
**MASON-DIXON TRAIL**, Pennsylvania, 199 miles

**MID-STATE TRAIL**, Pennsylvania, 330 miles  
**STANDING STONE TRAIL**, Pennsylvania, 84 miles  
**HORSESHOE TRAIL**, Pennsylvania, 140 miles  
**BAKER TRAIL**, Pennsylvania, 134 miles  
**CONESTOGA TRAIL**, Pennsylvania, 63 miles  
**BATONA TRAIL**, New Jersey, 50 miles  
**TACONIC CREST TRAIL**, New York, 37 miles  
**FINGER LAKES TRAIL**, New York, length varies  
**NORTHVILLE-PLACID TRAIL**, New York, 133 miles  
**NEW ENGLAND SCENIC TRAIL**, New York and New England, 215 miles  
**MONADNOCK-SUNAPEE TRAIL**, New Hampshire, 50 miles  
**COHOS TRAIL**, New Hampshire, 162 miles  
\*some road walking in the East

## Bits and Pieces

■ The **Mountain Valley Pipeline** has been an ongoing problem for the Roanoke and Virginia Tech Appalachian Trail clubs, raising questions about earthquakes, possible fires and destruction of the trail environment. It's planned to cross the Appalachian Trail in Giles County, just north of our Bland County section, it's being fought by counties all over southwest Virginia, and we promised last newsletter to try to keep better tabs on it. So here is a little more about what we know. The map shows Mountain Valley in red, the abandoned Atlantic Coast Pipeline in Orange, and another in West Virginia. The MVP-Southgate into North Carolina is currently the subject of several eminent domain lawsuits.



The Forest Service issued a new environmental impact statement Dec. 11 that supports plans for the Mountain Valley Pipeline to pass through the Jefferson National Forest. The plans are for a 42-inch pipeline across 303 miles of Virginia and West Virginia, including National Forest land in Monroe County in West Virginia and Giles and Montgomery counties in Virginia. It has drawn the ire of environmentalists and many residents. On Jan. 29, conservation groups asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit to stay new construction on the pipeline, “to head off further destruction by MVP.” But the court turned the groups down on Feb. 19.

Other facets of the project include the use of a 125-foot-wide temporary construction right-of-way for pipeline installation and trench spoil and the use of above-ground facilities limited to pipeline markers at road and trail crossings to let the public know about the pipeline’s presence, and automatic pipeline protection test stations required by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The pipeline would be buried where it crosses the trail.

Appalachian Voices, which has fought the project, said the following: “The agency’s [Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement](#) confirms its plan to weaken 11 fundamental rules protecting old-growth forests, soil health, wildlife and scenic viewsheds in order to allow the fossil fuel developer to cross mountainous wild lands in the Jefferson National Forest.”

The December decision came as the Trump administration rushed to push through fossil fuel projects in its last days. And it’s true that a lot of the pipeline is already in the ground. But the newly appointed chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is Richard Glick, a Mountain Valley critic. So at least a few issues are still unresolved.

■ At long last, the new **PATH Web site** is up and operating. There are still kinks to work out, but please visit it and feel free to express your opinions and point out any problems. It’s the same address, [www.path-at.org](http://www.path-at.org). This has been a long time coming, and in the long run we hope it will draw more attention to the club. Please note, however, that you will have to resubscribe to the new Web site to reach Inside PATH.

■ After one try that didn’t work, the second try at a Zoom annual meeting worked just fine on Dec. 5. We voted **Tina Tempest**, owner of the Quarter Way Inn hikers hostel, onto the board (replacing **Karen Worthington**, whose term was up), approved a budget for the New Year, and discussed various issues. Here is **Herb MacDonald**’s PATH List summation:

‘I enjoyed the Zoom board/membership meeting Saturday, 12/05/2020. Jim was great moving the agenda along, answering questions and clearing up issues. Hunt was exceptional managing the Zoom session with his in-house technical supporting wife. David gave an accurate accounting of our income/expenses for 2020 and a budget for 2021. His summary was: We have money! After many months with little or no contact between board members and members, it was encouraging to hear familiar voices and see faces. The update on the new Web site was instructive and helpful. After many years working toward a new Web site, a talented team made it happen before the end of 2020 in the face of a Pandemic, at a reasonable cost, time and lots of effort. I only wish more members would have been able to participate in the Zoom; we started at 10 am and finished at 12 pm. So it was efficient and would not have taken much of your time, without any travelling. There is a suggestion we have a PATH Zoom meeting in March to begin our activities in early 2021. We need your participation both on the trail and the planning for work on the trail. Jim’s summary was that well-planned work trips with multiple workers are possible with masks and distancing. Watch for the announcement on the Zoom meeting.’ (Nothing yet – Ed.)





## In Middle Earth?

Ron Hudnell has been working on a grant request for money to repair the bridge over Lynn Camp Creek, at right; its rustic railings have seen better days, though Rich, above, and Sue Freeman have been working to keep them in place and steady. We don't know when we will work on the bridge, but the prospect has produced some nice thoughts. Josh Kloehn of ATC said, "The bridge is

downright magical with the moss growing on the weathered railings now. It looks like it could've been somewhere in Lothlorien within the Lord of the Rings universe!" Junior Miller, who took the bridge still life, commented, "I'm pretty sure a troll lives under it."

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# Want to Join?



We will be working on the Trail in 2021, despite coronavirus. If you'd like to join us, here's how: You may join PATH (or renew) at our Web site, [www.path-at.org](http://www.path-at.org), with PayPal, or print and mail this form with check or money order. You can also attend work weekends/meetings and join or renew there. Please don't mail cash!

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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Annual membership dues are \$20 for an individual \_\_\_\_\_, \$25 for a family \_\_\_\_\_ or \$15 for a student\_\_\_\_\_. Donations are also

accepted. Donation total \_\_\_\_\_

Send payment to PATH Treasurer, P.O. Box 4423, Greensboro, North Carolina 27404. Total amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

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