

PATH WAYS

Of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

PATH Year 57, No. 4

Holiday 2021



How Dry Run Happened

One more recap of July's Summerfest. The old falling-apart Dry Run boardwalk is at left. Above is the beginning of work on the turnpike that replaced it, after the boardwalk was taken apart. On the next page is a snapshot of the nearly finished product, along with a report on PATH's year. Photos by Jim Houck.

Our PATH accomplishments in 2021



MARCH: We cleaned up branches and blowdowns after winter season. We also cleaned up winter ice storm damage on Garden Mountain from Walker Gap to Va. 623 and from Va. 623 north.

APRIL: We placed gravel in a wet area at the Virginia 42 AT parking area. Then we hiked three miles in to work on a wet section of trail north of Knot Maul shelter where Knot Maul Branch and the trail occupy the same low area. We constructed drainage structures to keep the two separated.

We looked at and discussed what to do about the deteriorating Lynn Camp Creek Footbridge. We tentatively decided on a relo and ford 50 feet upstream from the bridge. This is on an old woods road that will make a 400-foot section of trail with a low water ford.

We installed one blaze post and placed barbed wire around many blaze posts to keep cows from pushing them over, working between Virginia highways 610 and 42.

MAY: We did back-slope sidehilling on the Desert Dog relo. Jerry Kyle and the Konnarock Crew did marvelous work south of Dry Run repairing a slippery section of the trail including a switchback and then a very rocky and rooty section through the woods. See pictures in the summer issue of Pathways.

JUNE: David Atkinson and Greg Weaver, among others, did boundary monitoring from the Settlers Museum North. The job is important in keeping tabs on the use of Appalachian Trail lands and knowing where survey markers are. Needless to say, it involves a lot of tromping through the underbrush.

JULY: At Summerfest, we removed the existing old rickety Dry Run boardwalk and replaced it with 120 feet of turnpike, moving it back away from the edge of the migrating streambank. See the pictures on Page 1 and above. We also removed trash from the woodsy area above the old Desert Dog Clubhouse in Crawfish Valley, and we did some sidehilling on the relo above.

AUGUST and SEPTEMBER: We weedate along Glade Mountain south of the Settlers' Museum and Chatfield Shelter, and along Brushy Mountain south of the Mount Rogers Visitor Center.

OCTOBER: We hauled gravel to wet spots south of U.S. 11 and worked to reorganize the Sugar Grove tool shed. Several members also walked through their assigned sections to check on conditions before the onset of cold weather. One crosscut crew cut out a big blowdown near Jenkins Shelter. (See picture on Page 7.)

UNDONE JOBS: We thought often about the missing footbridge over Lick Creek north of Virginia 42. It's a ford that can be dangerous at high water, and a replacement footbridge is needed soon. We'll see what the Forest Service plans, although it probably won't be in 2022

2022 Calendar (so far)

March 18-20, 2022 **First PATH Work Weekend** **Sugar Grove, Va.**

PATH's first work weekend of the year is normally used to survey winter damage, remove blowdowns and get the trail ready for the thru-hiker onslaught. It will hopefully include a potluck dinner on Saturday at the Forest Service volunteer work center.

April 15-17, 2022 **Second PATH Work Weekend** **Sugar Grove, Va.**

More of the above, again with a potluck dinner on Saturday at the work center. Please pray for Covid to be a memory by next spring.

May 6-7, 2022 **Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally** **Konnarock, Va.**

The 48th edition of this annual rally features hikes and nature seminars, and this coming year the grand opening of the sponsoring Blue Ridge Discovery Center's restored building. The building is a former Lutheran Girls School and also one-time headquarters of the ATC's Konnarock crew. More on that in Bits and Pieces.

May 13-15, 2022 **Appalachian Trail Days** **Damascus, Va.**

The annual party and celebration. Vendors, talks, crafts, music, food, gear, an auction and the hiker parade. For more information, see www.traildays.us.

May 20-22, 2022 **Third PATH Work Weekend** **Stony Fork, Va.**

June 16-19 2022 **PATH Summerfest** **TBD**

August 5-8, 2022 **A.T. Vista** **New Paltz, N.Y.**

This is a weekend of programs and hikes planned to replace the late lamented ATC Biennials. It's at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz. More info at www.atvista.org. They are seeking volunteers.



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. SPRING DEADLINE FEBRUARY 20, 2022. Web site: www.path-at.org. Or for info: PiedmontATHikers@gmail.com. Or see our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/PiedmontATHikers/

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The Legend of Stecoah Gap

By Sue Freeman

Twenty-five years ago, while thru-hiking the AT, Rich and I trudged up the mountain after Stecoah Gap in western North Carolina and found it to be long, steep, and exasperating. We hiked up and spotted blue sky through tree trunks. Our hopes would rise, thinking we were near the summit, only to find the trail continued its upward climb. We encountered these false summits several times before finally topping out.

Since then, we've called anything that's arduous a Stecoah Gap. It became part of our personal lexicon.

We always wanted to go back and see if Stecoah Gap was as arduous as we remembered. Maybe we were just tired, or hot, or malnourished.

This past summer we had an opportunity to go back. We hiked north out of Stecoah Gap for 2.5 miles and found a steep, long climb, with multiple false summits. It's not the hardest mountain we've ever climbed by far. Near the top they've made it easier over the years by adding steps and switchbacks (confirmed by the guy renting us a hiker cabin).



our AT thru-hike changed our lives.

As solace to our challenge, and in honor of our 25th anniversary hike, the forest put on a flourish of orange, in tiger lilies and fungi! I love being in the forest.

Rich and Sue Freeman are 1996 AT thru-hikers and the authors of 14 guidebooks on hiking, biking and paddling in New York State, where they're originally from. After retiring, they spent three years living on a trawler, and three years ago moved to Winston-Salem from Florida. They're recently back from a summer on the Colorado Trail; story to follow.



Betsy Truscott takes over as PATH president

By Tom Dillon

After several years during which **Jim Houck** has served as both president and trail master – a thankless combo – we’re going back to splitting the jobs. While Jim will remain trail master at least for a while, old trail hand and current vice-president **Betsy Truscott** was elected PATH’s new president during the Zoom membership meeting on Nov. 20.

Other new officers are **Chris Bracknell**, vice president, and **Ann Ramsey** and **Glenn Miller**, new board members (replacing **Herb MacDonald** and **David Atkinson**, whose terms were up). **Hunt McKinnon** remains secretary and **David Faucette** remains treasurer. Returning board members are **Martha Emrey**, **Tina Tempest** and **Tom Dillon**. Jim will stay on as an advisor.

Betsy thanked the 20-some members at the Zoom meeting for their confidence in her and said she feels good about leading a group as “able” as PATH. But she added, “I will be seeking your advice. More heads are better than one.”

Other changes: **Michele Nester** replaces **Paul Clayton** as PATH timekeeper, and several people are working with Martha Emrey to keep the new PATH Web site up and running. We were stunned last summer by the death of **Mark McGinnis**, who created the site. But several folks have stepped in to help, including **Jack Bookman** and **Steven Fishback**, among others. Martha said she thinks the effort is in good shape. (See next item in Bit and Pieces.)

David Faucette reported that the organization is in good shape financially, but it was noted that several big projects lie ahead, including bridge repair or replacement on Lynn Camp Creek, Hunting Camp Creek and Lick Creek, where the bridge is already out. Lick Creek is a Forest Service project, but it’s unlikely to take place this coming year. Money apparently is available.

In other business, the board discussed a \$1,000 donation to the Settlers’ Museum of Southwest Virginia, whose property the trail crosses, and was informed that **Josh Kloehn**, southern operations manager for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, will be leaving this coming year. He will be placed by **Jerry Kyle**, current Konnarock Crew leader.

The club thanks Hunt McKinnon for hosting the Zoom meeting. The board will meet again at 5 p.m. Feb. 13 to discuss the work schedule for the coming year; all are invited. More information on the new year in the March newsletter.

Bits and Pieces

■ **TO ALL YOU TECHIES OUT THERE:** Because of the recent death of **Mark McGinnis**, who created and maintained our WordPress website, PATH is in the process of identifying a company and people to take over his work. We are currently looking for a couple of people to join **Jack Bookman** in keeping our website current by uploading the newsletter quarterly and keeping the calendar of events current. Also, adding or revising copy, if needed. No experience necessary. Training provided. Contact **Martha Emrey**, topco999@yahoo.com or (336) 282-5111 (Leave message if no answer)

■ We know a lot of you are hoping to renew **Wilderness 1st Aid and CPR** certification through ATC this coming spring. Nothing is scheduled yet, mostly due to covid uncertainty, but **Josh Kloehn**, outgoing ATC operations manager for the South, said they are still hoping to be able to schedule something sometime next year. Keep your fingers crossed! If you absolutely can't wait, check out Save A Life on the Web. CPR, AED and First Aid was free when it was introduced last year; unfortunately, now it's \$59. Go to www.nhcps.com for info and try code ET10. Another site to check is www.promedcert.com. Scroll down to CPR. Cost there is \$35.

■ **Just so you know:** Earlier this fall, after a fair amount of discussion back and forth, **Jim Houck**, president, issued the following statement on behalf of the PATH board: "As of September 1, 2021, and until further notice, all in-person PATH functions are to include only people who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 (2 weeks after Pfizer or Moderna booster or 2 weeks after Johnson & Johnson vaccine)."

■ **HUNTING SEASONS:** Remember that Virginia big and small game seasons continue through the holidays and into the new year. Fall deer firearms season was Nov. 14-28 in our neck of the woods. But archery and muzzleloader deer seasons continue through Jan. 2, 2022. Bear firearms season also continues through Jan. 2, 2022. And some small game seasons are open during the winter. Hunting is allowed on national forest lands like those crossed by the PATH section of the AT. So always wear blaze orange clothing in the woods during hunting seasons.

■ The **Blue Ridge Discovery Center** (at Konnarock, Va.) says its refurbished building, once the home of the AT's Konnarock Crew, will be complete in the spring of 2022. It is planning a Grand Opening event during the 48th annual Spring Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally on Mothers' Day weekend. For details, email info@blueridgediscoverycenter.org or call (276) 388-3155.

■ **Guthook**, the trail hiker's app that we wrote about a few months ago in this newsletter, has changed its name to **FarOut**, according to user and PATH member **Don Smyth**. There is a new name and a small update to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy, but other than that it's the same program. A number of people are swearing by it. Web site is www.faroutguides.com. Contact email address is support@faroutguides.com.

DUES ARE DUE JANUARY 1, 2022

PATH's fiscal year ends on Dec. 31 each year, which means dues for the new year will be due Jan. 1. Dues are \$20 for an individual, \$25 for a family and \$15 for a student. You can pay through PayPal, through the Web site or with a check. See Page 8 for more information.

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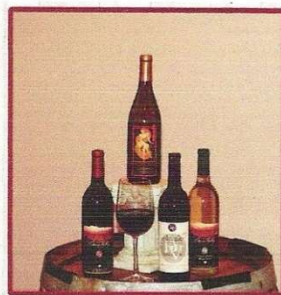
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David Atkinson, Morris Yule and Pete Whiteis, from left, pose with a cleared trail – and the crosscut saw used to clear it – on the AT near Jenkins Shelter during the October PATH work weekend. The blowdown was in a wilderness area, where we can't use chain saws. Ron Hudnell, who took the picture, said cutting up that tree took about an hour – after the decision was made what cuts to make.

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Want to Join?



We will be working on the Trail in 2022, 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, 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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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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