



WHAT - WHO - WHERE - WHEN

What is trail maintenance ? It is any chore that helps keep a trail, or a trail related structure like a shelter, bridge, or outhouse, usable and safe. Work is quite varied. Chores may include: cleaning up the shelter area, removing ashes from the shelter fireplace, painting blazes and shelters, cutting weeds, lopping intrusive branches, reshaping the trail to promote drainage, installing waterbars, removing branches or downed trees from the trail, working on the fire road to keep it passable, building rock steps, or dinner preparation at Sherando Lake in May and October. Work sites may be just moments, or two hours, from where vehicles are parked. There is something for everyone, even *YOU !!*

Who can do trail maintenance ? Almost everyone. Tasks range from easy to quite difficult. You must be 18 *and* a TATC (Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club) member to be protected by Workers's Compensation when working on Park Service (Blue Ridge Parkway) or Forest Service (Pedlar - Glenwood District, George Washington and Jefferson National Forest) lands. "Our" A.T. (Appalachian Trail) section lies totally within these jurisdictions.

Where is trail maintenance done ?

Mountain Trail Maintenance: TATC, one of over 30 volunteer clubs, helps maintain the over 2170-mile A.T. This is the reason TATC exists. "Our" 10.5-mile A.T. section runs from Reeds Gap, past or over Meadow Mountain, Maupin Field Shelter, Three Ridges, Harpers Creek Shelter, and the Tye River, to US 56. Trail altitude ranges from 900-feet at the Tye River to 3,970-feet atop Three Ridges. The trail varies from right easy to huffer-puffer up and down.

Reeds Gap is at milepost 13.5 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, where Rt. 664 crosses the Parkway. This intersection is just northwest of the village of Wintergreen on the Virginia state road map.

The A.T. crossing of U.S. 56 is 4.7-miles west of Massies Mill, VA., and 1.2-miles east of the Rt. 814, VA 56 intersection.

In addition to the A.T., we maintain the 3-mile Mau-Har Trail that connects at each end with "our" section of the A.T., the White Rock Gap Trail on the Blue Ridge Parkway, and trails in the St. Mary's Wilderness, Pedlar-Glenwood District George Washington-Jefferson National Forest.

Local Trail Maintenance: Some folks who do not participate on mountain trips, still like to do their part by volunteering time to local trail maintenance. TATC offers half and full day, local trips in the Tidewater area. These trips provide valuable aid, and offer a lot of satisfaction to participants. Some of the work (weed cutting, lopping, and etc.) is the same as that done in the

mountains. Sometimes variety is added as we build park benches, or work on bridges and other structures. Periodic local trail maintenance is accomplished throughout the Tidewater area, Peninsula and Southside, and includes Merchant Mill Pond State Park in North Carolina. Refer to the TATC Educational handout titled: "LOCAL TRAILS."

When is trail maintenance done ? Trail maintenance trips may be scheduled during any month. Three major A.T. maintenance trips are scheduled each year – the Spring trip in May, mid-season trip in July, and Autumn trip in October. An A.T. inspection hike is scheduled each April. Other A.T., and local, trail maintenance trips may occur during any month. Trips are announced at club meetings, in the newsletter, and on the TATC web site www.tidewateratc.org.

Sherando Lake: For the May and October A.T. maintenance trips we camp in the Williams Branch Picnic Area of the National Forest Sherando Lake Recreation Area. The Recreation Area includes two lakes (fishing, canoeing, swimming), and many hiking trails. Bring your own camping equipment and food. Saturday night, after the work day is over, TATC sponsors a dinner. Pot luck desserts are encouraged. Some of the beauties about the Recreation Area are: you are really car camping; you do not have to have or carry a backpack; you can see other folks' camping gear; you can bring an ice chest, car camping stove, and lawn chairs; you can bring folks, young and young at heart, who would just like to be in the campground while you do the trail work; and showers, flush toilets, and running water are available.

Maupin Field: When not camping at Sherando Lake for the July mid-season A.T. maintenance trip, we *sometimes* camp at Maupin Field, the area around Maupin Field Shelter. It includes both forest and open field camping. There is a shelter, normally left for through hikers, and a SST (Sweet Smelling Toilet). There is a spring behind the shelter. Boil or treat all water. From July on the spring may be low or not running. Water can be found further down stream, though it may be quite a walk. Make sure you bring plenty of your own. Bring all your own food and camping equipment. Fires are allowed.

RELATED INFORMATION

A.T. Section Maintainers: Our three major trips each year are designed to do the heavier trail maintenance work. In addition to these trips, volunteer Section Maintainers add to the maintenance effort and maintain individual, short sections of "our" A.T. Section Maintainer skills vary, and their efforts range from everyday weed cutting to more difficult jobs. Some work alone, others announce trips at club meetings or in the TATC newsletter. The TATC Supervisor of Trails and Assistant Supervisor of Trails (present at most club meetings,

and listed in the TATC newsletter) can brief you on Section Maintainer responsibilities and the availability of sections.

Day Pack: Bring your day pack on trail maintenance trips. In it you should have your lunch, 2 to 4-liters of water (the more the better), extra clothes, rain gear, and other personal items. For suggested contents, see the TATC Education Handout titled: "DAY PACK - SUGGESTED CONTENTS." The farther away from base camp you are, the more important the contents of your day pack become. Be sure to carry water treatment equipment. Also refer to the TATC Education Handout titled: "SURVIVAL - REPAIR ITEMS."

Directions For directions to Sherando Lake, Maupin Field and the trailheads for 'our' A.T. section, see the TATC Education Handout titled: titled "TATC A.T. SECTION - TRAIL HEADS, MARSHALING AREAS, AND LANDMARKS."

Emergency: For emergency telephone numbers, distances, locations, and in case of a medical or other emergency, carry the TATC Education Handout titled: titled "TATC A.T. SECTION - DATA SHEET."

First Aid Kit: As an outdoors person, you should assemble, carry, and know how to use a good first aid kit. For suggested contents, see the TATC Education Handouts titled "FIRST AID - AN INTRODUCTION," and "FIRST AID KIT." The further away from base camp or vehicles you are, the more important your first aid kit becomes.

Konnarock: The U.S. Forest Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Southwest and Central Virginia, sponsor Konnarock Crews. Each crew is made up of volunteers, with a paid, experienced, leader. The Crews help A.T. maintaining clubs with trail relocations, really heavy trail work, and trail maintenance training. Work weeks are Thursday through Monday. You can volunteer for one or more weeks. Until you have worked with a crew, you simply cannot imagine the camaraderie and self-satisfaction that can be yours. Working with a crew provides a great deal of experience you can pass on when you do trail maintenance with TATC. The area the Crews work runs from the A.T. southern terminus, at Springer Mountain in Georgia, to Afton Mountain, where I-64 crosses the A.T. For information: call the ATC, Southwest and Central Virginia Regional Office 1-(540) 953-3571.

Safety: Safety is of paramount importance, whether hiking or doing trail maintenance. **Safety is anything you or others do to keep from being injured.**

Taxes: Some non-reimbursed expenses and mileage associated with trail maintenance may be tax deductible. Consult your tax accountant, and maintain appropriate records and receipts. Tell your tax accountant that TATC is a 501(3)(c) non-profit organization.

Tools: If you have loppers or a bow saw, bring them along. Other trail maintenance tools are provided by TATC. Please, take care of these as if they were your own; return them when the day is over. If you plan on using a saw (bow, buck, cross cut, chain) bring, and use, a pair of safety glasses. Bring your own gloves. Leather gloves provide the best protection, but are dangerously slippery when wet. Cotton gloves with rubber stipples provide grip when wet, but offer much less protection. Some leather gloves have a Thinsulate™ lining which offers more warmth, even when wet. Current Forest Service certification is *required* to operate a chain saw or crosscut saw on National Forest and National Park Service land. One person with hands on a crosscut saw must be certified.

Water: The most frequent problem on trail maintenance trips is the lack of water. Participants simply underestimate the amount they need for the day. The very minimum that should be carried is 2-liters. It is better to carry 4-liters, and this may well be gone before you return. There is water available (if you boil or treat it) along the northern half of the Mau-Har Trail. There is water at both Harpers Creek and Maupin Field Shelters, but this may be low or gone from July on. Boil, filter, or chemically treat all surface water used for drinking, cooking, or washing. Refer to the TATC Education Handouts titled: "WATER - THE BASIC ESSENTIALS," and "WATER TREATMENT EQUIPMENT DATA."

Weather: Be prepared for the weather at the work site, whether that is in the Tidewater area *or* the mountains. In the mountains be ready for 30° in May, 50° in July, and 10-15° in October. It may not be that bad, but *be prepared*. On May 15th, 1997 snow was 1 1/2-inches deep on Three Ridges. 50° is warm in winter, but is darn cold in July. See the TATC Education Handout titled: titled "WEATHER RADIO."

Other References: Refer to TATC Educational Handouts titled: "TRAIL MAINTENANCE - COMMON A.T. CHORES." and "TRAIL MAINTENANCE - PHILOSOPHY."