



WILD EDUCATION



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At the Parksville Lake Campground in the Ocoee Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest, there remains no trace of a crew of folks who have united, from as far away as Alaska and as close as the Ocoee River's nearby bank. Participants of the 2011 Wilderness Trails Stewardship Conference have packed up and parted ways for Memorial Day Weekend and will regroup on Tuesday afternoon at Big Creek Ranger Station, located within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

This unique and memorable educational experience has been made possible by Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Camping is provided by the USDA Forest Service (USFS). Women and men eat together, work together, and share close quarters while in the classroom, in the field, and at base camp. Bill Hodge, SAWS director, explains, "We made sure that this

conference was free. We don't want to burden people who are willing to give up one or two weeks of their life to come out here just to pick up these skills. The Forest Service played a big role in making this happen. I know we are all leaving here with certifications and some technical skills, but the people who are here are one of the highlights."

Group training includes Trail Leadership, Leave No Trace, and Incident Management. In 2011, a fun and unforgettable first week included two days of Wilderness First Aid training and certification, a one-day session on Wilderness History and Legislation, and two days of Cross-cut Saw training and certification. During week two, conference attendees headed into ATC Base Camp, the headquarters of the Smokies Wilderness Elite Appalachian Trail Crew (SWEAT), which plays a vital role in managing the A.T. in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In 2011, SWEAT crew leaders led eight consecutive crews, overseeing volunteers who came from all over the country to maintain the Appalachian Trail corridor. Certifications and skill sets acquired here will play key roles in the summer's A.T. maintenance.

Class training starts with the vital component of trip planning and preparation. "Our work is very physically demanding, perhaps some of the hardest labor you will ever perform," explains Andrew Downs, the ATC Trail resource manager for Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. "Being in good physical shape will certainly help you maintain a good attitude. You also need social skills that will enable you to get along with fellow volunteers in often trying times." Driving to the Trail head is a fun road trip in the ATC passenger van — driven in 2011 by Jameson Demiglio, an A.T. thru-hiker and 2011 SWEAT crew leader. After passing through the Pisgah National Forest, we arrived at the trail head, hiked to our first work location, and discussed trail assessment, maintenance, repair and reconstruction. We then continued our Leave-No-Trace discussion while completing some basic trail work tasks. "You know what, it all happened so fast that I didn't have a lot of time to think about it," said 2011 volunteer Aaron Sanford. "I had never been to the Appalachian Mountains and I expected [an] adventure, and it's definitely been that. The best thing is the people for sure." He continues: "I've used a cross-cut saw a lot and this gives me a chance to actually get it written down on a piece of paper that I'm certified to use these skills. They are actually going to mean something to somebody."

The primary purpose of the Red Cross Wilderness and Remote First Aid course is to provide individuals a foundation of first aid knowledge and skills to be able to respond to emergencies and give care in areas that do not have immedi-

ate emergency medical services (EMS) response, such as wilderness and remote environments. In this course, participants will also develop leadership skills and learn how to prevent, plan for, and respond to emergencies. "Wilderness volunteers are unique in that they work far from any type of medical assistance," instructor Jim Holland explains. "Cell phone access is seldom available, nor are radios at times, so it's important that they become self-sufficient. [Wilderness First Aid] teaches them about the natural hazards, about using tools safely, and that prevention is one of the most important things you can do." Holland is a National Registry First Responder, a Wilderness First Responder, a National Association of Search and Rescue SARTECH II, and teaches CPR, AED and Wilderness First Aid for the American Red Cross.

After Wilderness First Aid class, base campers wind down around home-cooked meals and random story sharing. As base camp's fire continues to burn within its contained rock ring, and campers have mostly all gone to bed, Bill Hodge speaks from the heart: "We should be willing to step up and be good stewards of specially designated wilderness. To me, that's sort of the core of what this conference is about, and what SAWS as an organization is about." It's to allow people to continue to expand their knowledge

base, so they might keep coming back year after year to take training opportunities to the next level. The next day is dedicated to Wilderness 101. The Wilderness Act, which established the National Wilderness Preservation System, now comprises more than 105 million acres and contains wild places from all regions of the country. Relevant dates and events in America's national forest history are presented in class by Ocoee Ranger District forest rangers.

Davin Hattaway attended the 2011 conference with his wife, Anna Wlodarczyk. "I think it's wonderful that we can bring together many different people who are attracted to wilderness," says Anna. "People with different views can come together like this and enjoy it together and learn about it together and form a bond, in that way, it makes wilderness a sort of a unifying force for people who perhaps would not meet otherwise." Davin Hattaway agrees, and adds: "I think it's great to see the entire wilderness ecosystem sort of be together on one camp site. You've got the folks who are from the national headquarters, and the folks who are enthusiasts, like myself. You have all different ages, all the way down to the 22-year-old, just graduated, forestry student that's going to be out there leading the SAWS team. It's great to see all of


Continued on page 44

WILD EDUCATION

Continued from page 25

these people and talk to them all at once and see, as a whole, how it all comes together."

David Cohen, a recent University of Georgia graduate says, "I've gained a lot of insight into the issues at hand and definitely a lot of tools to explain those issues and get people to better understand them and to hopefully encourage stewardship in the average person that might not have considered those issues beforehand. It feels really good to know that you're not the only person that feels a certain way about the world and our place in it and what we should be doing to protect it." So, why do we volunteer our time for these wilderness projects? Is it for a good time? Is it to keep the trails open to hikers? Is it for the friendships that are established? Is it for the skill sets and certifications? Wilderness First Aid instructor Jim Holland explains, "I feel that it's important that everyone give something back to their community, to their state, to their country, to the environment that [they] live in. If you enjoy doing something, you should give something back to it. I have always tried to do that most of my life."

Re-branded for 2012 as the "Wilderness Stewardship Institute," this ATC, USFS and Wilderness Society partnership is growing in scope for volunteers and agency partners interested in protecting wilderness. Like the 2011 opportunity, the 2012 WSI will offer Cross-cut, Wilderness First Aid CPR, and Trail Construction. It will also include a week-long advanced course in Cross-cut for Instructors, as well as instruction concerning the technical aspects of managing a federally designated wilderness area. 

For more information, contact Andrew Downs at: adowns@appalachiantrail.org. Online registration will be available early spring 2012 at www.trailcrews.org.

TRAIL GIVING CONTINUED

Cynthia Anne Clarke by Duncan & Ann Clarke

Bill Connor by Nancy Levin

Alan Cunningham by Denise Buckley

Chris Deffler by Margaret & Edwin Deffler

Roger "Straighttalk" Dixon by Charles & Jill Dixon

John Evans by Charles Hughes John & Virginia James, Philip & Coralyn Rawlins, The Clorox Company

Thomas Fiore by Russell & Nancy Carniak

Bill Foot by Laurie Foot

Martin Fossett by Janelle Wong, C. J. & Linda Larkin, Joseph & Shoba Sequeira, Richard & Margaret Slotkin, Guy Stevcek, Jane Zagajski

John George by Glenda George

Thurston Griggs by Charles Clarke, Virginia Musser, Dick & Laurie Potteiger, Rosie Suit, Barbara Valentine

Larry Kight by Allen & Donna Law

Sterling Kreider by Connie Guthrie, Mr. & Mrs. Yost

Fred Luehring by Gerald Adams

Frank Madeiros by Robyn & Frank Demand

Michael Manes by Kevin Burd

Michael L. Marziale by Ronald & Diana Albright, Richard & Nancy Barber, Lee & Siri Bendtsen, Marianne Cardamone, Gerald & Linda Chaffee, Elaine Decolibus, Steven & Jennifer Devoe, Philip & Sylvia Emery, Timothy & Jean Eskeli, John & Suzanne Glomb, Marsha Greenlaw, Roger Hagan, Jay Hartman, Albert & Janet Krall, Mary Ann Luebcke, Karen Marziale, Angela Marziale, John McAllops, Brenda & Robert McBride, John & Bettie Miller, R. Wayne & Dreama Ogden, Anne & Andre Paradis, Steve Paradis, Anita & Michael Patterson, Dianna Poling, Alonzo & Susan Rollinson, Michael & Theresa Schmal, Mark Suwyn, Barry & Cindy Tilden, Christina & Michael Todasco, Scott & Elaine Whipple, Edwin Wilson, NewPage Corporation, Burns Tax Consulting, LLC, Finch Paper, LLC

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Robertson, Sandy & Glenn Weiner, Wells Fargo Bank

Robert Mountford by Douglas Dunlap

John O'Meara by Beverly O'Meara

Michael Norton by James & Ruby Norton

Jeanne Phillips by Guyon Phillips

Michael Ripley by Prudence Shipping Corp.

Louis F. Ragonese by Barbara Burlingame

Laura Susan Ramsay by Douglas Dunlap

Robert Schuster by Lani Terry

Franklyn Sledd by Tonia Sledd

Chris Sutcliff by Thomas & Lucia Norris, Debra Taulbee, Lydia Thompson & Family, Sharon Winget

Mary Terry by Lani Terry

John Townsend by Jonathan Freeman

Franklyn Way by Dick & Jean Forbes

Malcolm White by Lennie & Bill Steinmetz

Barbara Wickland by Franklin Wickland

Paul Wuerzner by Marty Johnson, Michael & Laura Niland

Robert Yerike by Doug Riddle
Robert Young by Robert & Bea Smith

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Tarma Designs

FEBRUARY 8, 2012 MARKED THE FIRST anniversary of the passing of Mr. Fred Morgan Kirby II, president of the F.M. Kirby Foundation. The foundation has funded the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) through general operating support for more than a decade. According to the foundation, "Mr. Kirby carried forth the conservative values of his grandfather and father in both his personal life and through his philanthropic mission of the F.M. Kirby Foundation." It is also well known that F.M. Kirby was at the forefront of providing "winners" with consistent operating support over the long term. Some called it capacity building. Mr. Kirby deemed it practical. We find it fitting that F.M. Kirby's support this year falls within our "Visionary" giving circle. We thank the F.M. Kirby Foundation and Mr. Kirby for considering ATC a "winner." Mr. Kirby's spirit will continue to exist all along the Appalachian Trail. 

Membership dues and additional donations are tax-deductible as a charitable contribution. ATC is a Section 501(c)(3) educational organization.

To make a contribution or renew your membership, call (304) 535-6331 ext 119, or visit: www.appalachiantrail.org