

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Winter 2026

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club is a recreational hiking association of volunteers who preserve and improve the Appalachian Trail as the nation's premier, continuous, long-distance footpath.

President's Report

Have you ever had a hankering to become more involved in managing, protecting, and supporting the Appalachian Trail? The qualifications are fairly simple; you just need to be willing to show up. Most of our volunteer opportunities are flexible enough that you get to set the agenda. And it might surprise you to learn that both the RATC and ATC are eager to invest in your growth and success.

This organization, along with its supporters, possesses a wealth of skill and knowledge about trail building, erosion, sawing, environmental issues, land management, conservation, invasive species, and much more. As a member of our organization, you have access to experts in a wide variety of subject areas, and these experts are not just willing but eager to share their knowledge. Would you like to learn how to build cribbing? We are currently constructing multiple tent platforms in the woods, which require hillside cribbing for support. Are you interested in rock work? We have ongoing projects that regularly involve rock work. Would you like to learn how to mitigate invasive species? This is an ongoing task that we are actively working on in the field. The beauty of our work trips is that no prior experience is necessary.

How about leadership and management? If your joints are too achy for digging trails, consider a leadership position. We always have room for fresh energy on our board. Even without achy joints you are more than welcome to come help lead the trail into the future. Right now we could use a membership chair, a social media chair, and a general counselor. If there is something else, you could offer we are happy to hear from you. Just reach out to me at president@ratc.org. Or join us at our board meetings on the first Monday of the month (most months, check [MeetUp](#)), 6 pm at the Glenvar public library.



Save the Date

RATC Annual Meeting and Potluck

Saturday, February 14, 2026

5:00-8:30 pm

St Mark's United Methodist Church
19 Cedar Ridge Drive Daleville, VA
24083

- Volunteer Awards
- Elections

Entertainment! A.T.: The Musical, a tongue-in-cheek slideshow by Skip Fredericksen about his time hiking the Appalachian Trail.



[Preview A.T.: The Musical](#)
(<https://youtu.be/X7Bew9mz0yl>)

President's Report Continued on page 2

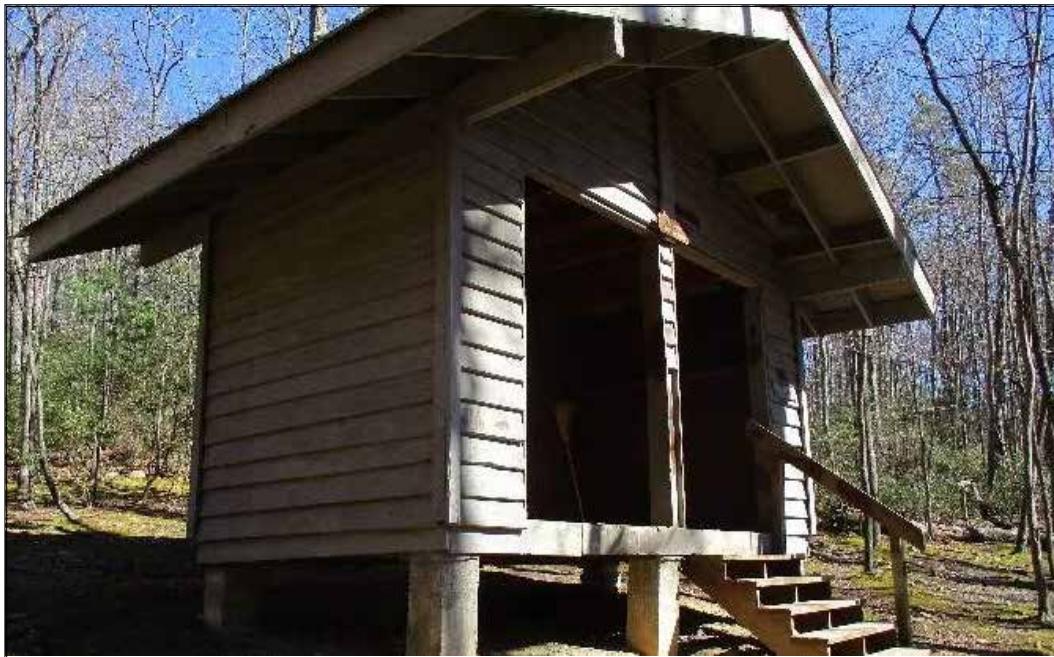
I've been the happy recipient of numerous training opportunities from ATC over the past year. Whether on Zoom or through travel, the choice is generally mine, but the training opportunities have all been fantastic and at no cost to me other than my time. I'm continually amazed at how supportive the ATC is in mentoring skills and leadership. If you haven't already, join [MeetUp](#) and see all of the opportunities our club makes available. And thank you for your membership.

We would not be a club without that support, and could not, therefore, do all the amazing things we do to make sure our 124.6 miles of the A.T. are the best they can be for anyone needing, as Benton Mackaye said, "this thing wilderness Civilizations ... come and go, but the mountain and its forest continue the course of creation's destiny. And in this we mere humans can take part - by fitting our civilization to the mountain."

by Linda Mulheren



67 year old Skip Fredericksen completed the A.T. with his two daughters and has turned the experience into a presentation called "A.T.: The Musical". He will present this at the RATC Annual Meeting on February 14th. Details are on page 1 of this issue of *The Blazer*.



Catawba Shelter

Shelter Nights

The Shelter Nights series allows participants to spend a night with fellow hikers at each of our 16 shelters. Typically there are opportunities for car pooling, and hot dogs are often served. Keep your eyes out for these events through spring of 2026. Bennett Witcher, RATC shelter supervisor is the contact for these events.

Past Events in the Fall of 2025

- Sat, Dec 6, 2025, 5:00 PM to Sun, Dec 7, 2025
- Sat, Nov 22, 2025, 5:00 PM to Sun, Nov 23
- Sat, Nov 8, 2025, 5:00 PM to Sun, Nov 9, 2025
- Sat, Oct 25, 2025, 5:00 PM to Sun, Oct 26
- Sat, Oct 11, 2025, 5:00 PM to Sun, Oct 12, 2025
- Sat, Sep 27, 2025, 5:00 PM to Sun, Sep 28
- Sat, Sep 13, 2025, 5:00 PM to Sun, Sep 14

Check our [MeetUp](#) site for the announcements about future Shelter Night events. If you have questions, contact:
sheltersupervisor@ratc.org

RATC BOARD MEMBERS

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Webmaster: Mark Wilhelm
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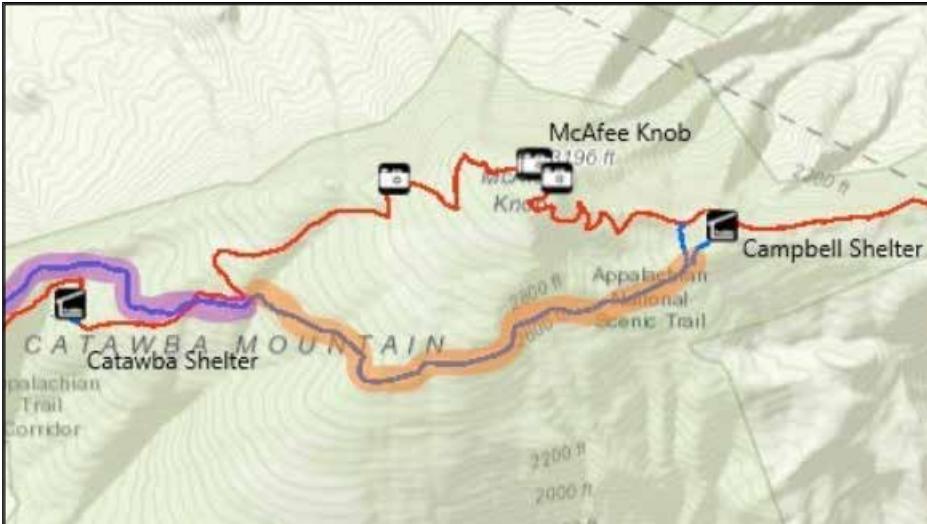
Roanoke College Liaison: Conner McBane
cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org

RATC Archivist: Diana Christopoulos
archivist@ratc.org

Events Coordinator: Jeanine Bomber
events@ratc.org

Catawba Mountain Fire Road Project Phase 2 Completed

Pete Irvine, RATC Project Lead for the Catawba Mountain Fire Road Project, is pleased to report that Phase 2 of the work was completed in late November of 2025. Phase 1 of the project involved heavy maintenance work on approximately 2.3 miles of road from VA-311 to the A.T. crossing at the Fire Road. That work took place in February of 2022. Phase 2 included the second 1.4-mile section of the road beyond the A.T. crossing to the junction with the Campbell Shelter water trail. After extensive reviews from Appalachian Trail Park Office of the National Park Service (NPS-APPA), and site visits from the contractor, actual work started on November 11th and was completed on November 20th, 2025

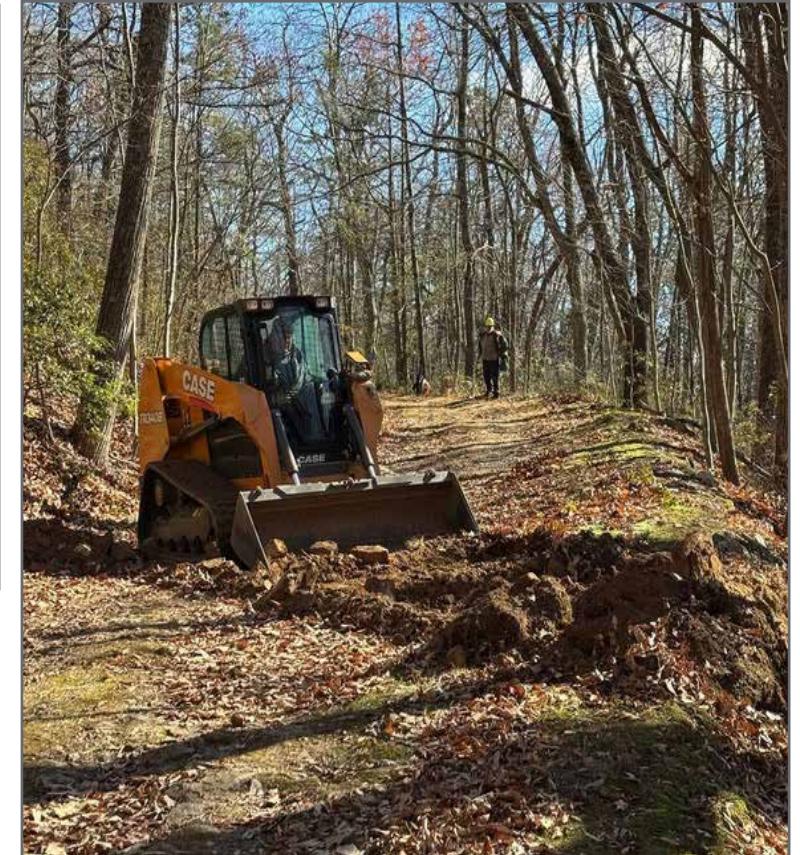


The 1.4 mile section of road serviced in Phase 2 of the project.



Dario Izquierdo next to the stone work for a reclaimed drain. Many of these have been covered with sediment and debris. 10 Culverts and were completely recovered and 66 drains were constructed or reconstructed.

The Fire Road was originally constructed to access cabins and residences on private lands on Catawba Mountain. Best estimates have its origins in the 1930's or early 40's. It is a native-surface road and includes drainage ditches and numerous metal culverts, many with elaborate rock facing. By the 1980's the properties through which the road passed were acquired by the National Park Service in order to relocate the A.T. to its optimal location, including access to McAfee Knob. In the intervening 40 years, maintenance of the road was sporadic, and erosion from the road was impacting streams, water sources and downhill forest areas. Rutting and exposed bedrock were making it increasingly difficult for vehicle access by emergency responders, power line workers and administrative staff; and more uncomfortable for hikers. Given the volume of visitors to the area, the road is an essential part of safety systems and the trail system itself, offering an opportunity for loop hikes and taking pressure off the A.T.



Scott Whittaker, the contractor used on both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project operating his equipment.



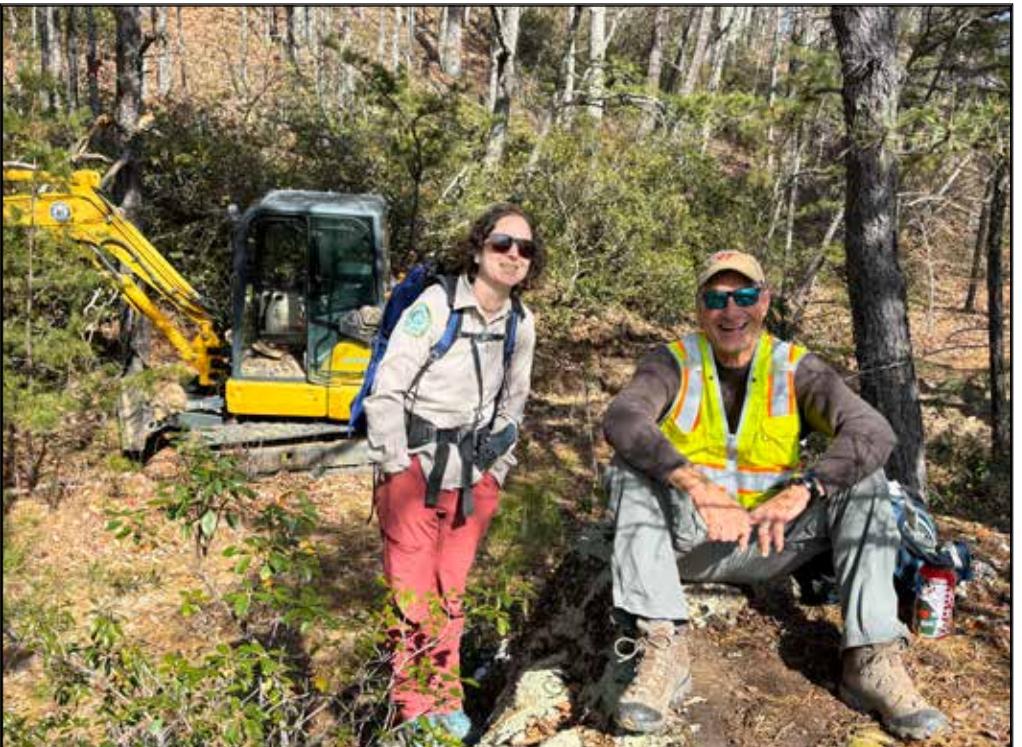
In addition to mechanized work, shovels and picks were used too. Dario Izquierdo uses a tool handle to show the depth of collected sediment removed to clear a culvert. The original rock work is exposed.

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Continued from page 5



Safety Guards: Carol Scott, Terry Shipley, Gregg Still, Mickey Pellillo, Gary Moore and Pete Irvine.



Former Ridge Runner Suzanne Neal and Gary Moore taking lunch during a beautiful late fall day.

RATC projects always include a substantial amount of volunteer work. Pete documented 440 volunteer work hours, by the 17 RATC members who volunteered to work as Safety Guards informing the public of work and kept wayward hikers out of an active work area. **Gary Moore** did duty on all ten days of the project. Friends **Carol Scott** and **Mickey Pellillo** travelled 3.5 hours round trip from the Bluefield "twin cities". Carol of Bluefield West Virginia and Mickey of Bluefield Virginia. **Terry Shipley** travelled 9 hours each way from his home base in Indians to volunteer for two days. **Dario Izquierdo** used his personal truck to haul people and tools during the project. Many more folks were involved, and their volunteerism is deeply appreciated.

RATC is grateful to the staff of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) for their significant support and advocacy for this project, and to NPS-APPA for their review and approval as the public land managers for the A.T. in this area. The project showcases the power of the unique cooperative management system of the A.T., especially the role of volunteer A.T. Clubs. Simply put, this project was only possible because of RATC volunteers, from the Club officers to the on-the-ground Safety Guards

17 of RATC volunteers contributed significant hours to this project over 10 days, valued at more than \$15,000 by the official metrics. RATC paid contractor Scott Whittaker \$10,000 for his work, meaning that we, as volunteers, contributed at least 60% of the total project value. Figured another way, if we had required the contractor to provide Safety Guards, we could only have afforded ~4 days of his work instead of 10."

by Pete Irvine, Project Lead

More on The Web

Pete Irvine's presentation with detailed and specific information about Phase 2 of Catawba Mountain Fire Road Project is linked below:

[**Presentation**](#)

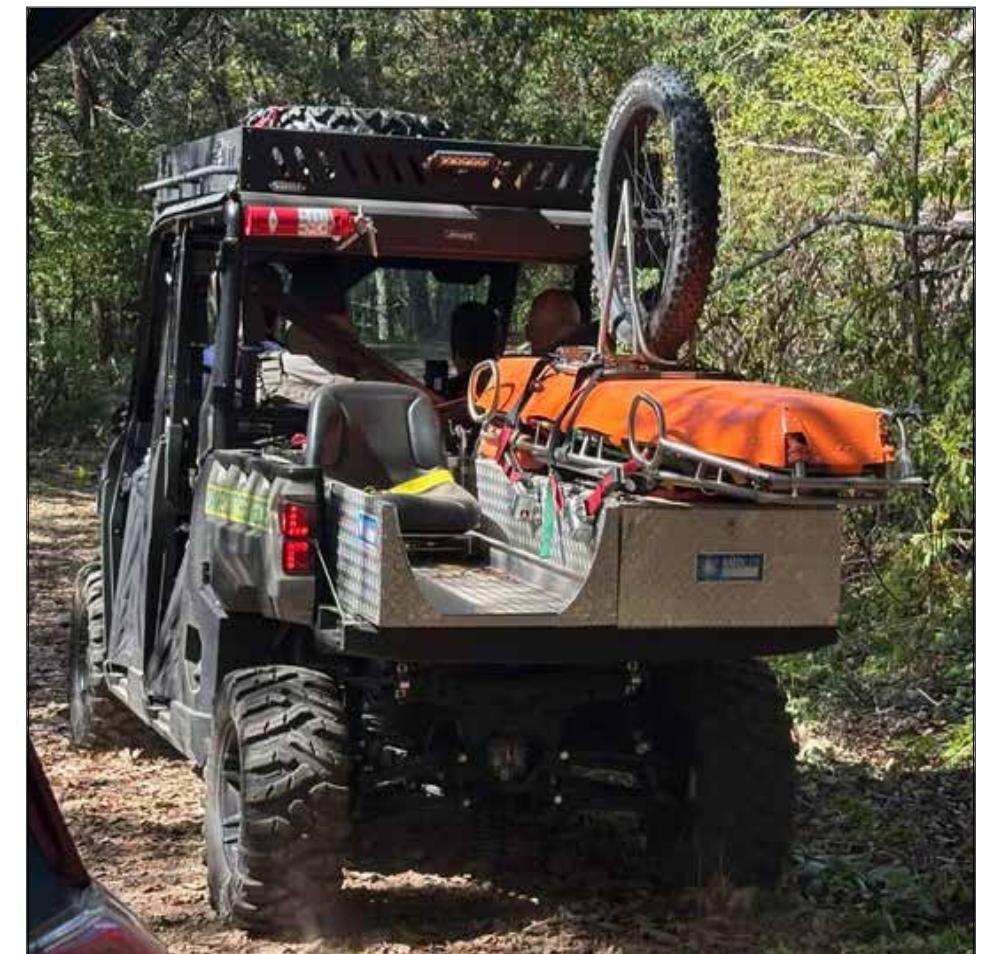
New Utility Task/Terrain Vehicle from Roanoke County Fire and Rescue

Submitted by Pete Irvine

On Monday October 6th, personnel from Roanoke County Fire and Rescue Station 10 (Masons Cove) conducted an orientation and training practice run on the Catawba Mountain Fire Road in the department's rescue UTV (Utility Task/Terrain Vehicle). This specialized rig can carry up to 5 rescuers in the double cab with an additional rescuer in the bed beside an immobilized victim on a "stokes litter" when needed.



Safety Guards: Pete Irvine, Tom Martin, Dario Izquierdo, Jim Webb and Gary Moore.



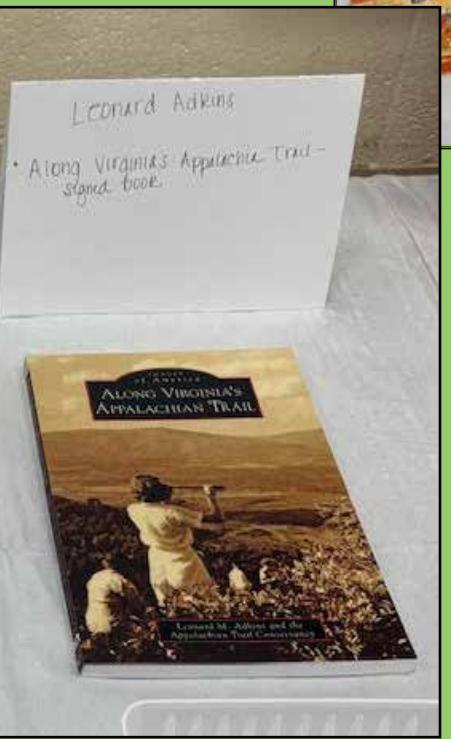
Roanoke County Fire and Rescue's Utility Task/Terrain Vehicle with a Stokes Litter.



Raffle Gifts from Parkway Brewing



Raffle Items from Bee Still Farm



Along Virginia's Appalachian Trail
Donated by Leonard Adkins



On The Web

www.habitualhiker.com

Holiday Potluck 2025

The Holiday Potluck was held on December 13th at the Christ Lutheran Church. We were thrilled to have Leonard Adkins as the guest speaker. He shared a wonderful presentation based on his book, *Along Virginia's Appalachian Trail*.

There were so many delicious dishes and desserts for everyone to enjoy.

Twenty-five food items were collected and will be delivered to the staff at the League of Older Americans/Local Office on Aging who will distribute the food to those in need.

Donors for the raffle include the owner of Bee Still Farm, staff of Parkway Brewing Company, Leonard Adkins, and an anonymous individual. See the pictures of the donated items.

Thank you to everyone who attended and made the evening so much fun.

Thank you also to those who assisted with the set up/clean up, your help was greatly appreciated.

By Jeanine Bomber



FEBRUARY 1960: RATC VOLUNTEERS BRAVE BLIZZARDS TO HELP FOUND MT. ROGERS AT CLUB On Leap Day

Myron Avery and other volunteers from the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club helped form the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club in 1932, and RATC volunteers paid the favor forward 28 years later, braving huge snowstorms to help form the Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club on February 29, 1960. The home page of the MRATC's website still celebrates their Leap Day anniversary.

The Snowy Winter of 1960

1960 was one of the snowiest years in Virginia history, with one storm following another until a March 2 monster dumped 20 to 26 inches in far Southwest Virginia - the most in 70 years. From February 19-22, a contingent of RATC volunteers led by club president Preston Leech spent George Washington's birthday weekend traveling to Abingdon via Norfolk and Western trains, basing their visit at the Martha Washington Hotel. The RATC volunteers were

- **PRESTON LEECH**, an avid hiker and photographer who served as RATC president from 1957-60 and as Trail Supervisor in 1961-62
- **LEIGH HAWKINS**, who served as the club's Historian and editor of the Trail Blazer.
- **HAROLD WARNER**
- **ROBERT TABOR**, who was club President in 1961 and Trail Supervisor in 1962.

As reported in the March 1960 *Trail Blazer*, the purpose of the visit was "to meet with the people of the Bristol-Abingdon-Damascus community to assist and encourage the organization of a hiking or outing club which is willing to:

- a) maintain an assigned portion of the Appalachian Trail;
- b) promote trail-walking in Washington and nearby counties;
- c) photograph, record and enjoy natural features of the area;
- d) scout, blaze, and catalog side-treks in the area - particularly Mount Rogers (5715) and White top Mountain (5520), the two highest in the Commonwealth of Virginia."



Preston Leech.

'Like Tom Campbell, Leech worked for Norfolk and Western Railroad. Campbell was focused on protection, construction, maintenance and mapping of the A.T. Between 1949 and 1955, Campbell, along with Jimmy Denton and a few others, scouted and helped build a 145-mile relocation of the A.T. between McAfee Knob and Iron Mountain near Damascus. He served on the Appalachian Trail Conference Board of Managers from 1950 to 1975 and after his retirement from the railroad in 1965 he became the ATC Vice Chairman responsible for most of the southern half of the A.T.'

Leech was more interested in hiking, photography and writing, although he also served as Trail Supervisor in the early 1960s (see 1957 photo at Tinker Cliffs with Campbells and Dentons; Leech has 3 cameras). He was the likely author of the two long articles about the February 1960 trip (Abingdon Adventure, Parts 1 and 2) that consumed about 15 pages of the RATC newsletters in March and April with detailed accounts of a treacherous hike up White Top Mountain, a ride on the famed Virginia Creeper train and meetings with local residents to form the new Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club.

Founding the Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club

Campbell and Denton had been trying for years to organize a new group in the Abingdon/Damascus area. RATC volunteers were driving about 7 hours to do an hour of two of trail maintenance on that section. In August 1952, Denton reported to the RATC board about meeting with a minister in Damascus (Rev. S.A.M. King) who had several congregations interested in doing trail work, but apparently nothing came of it. In March 1959, Campbell told the RATC board that a group in Abingdon might be willing to take over maintenance and that he had ATC authorization to allow it.

Guy Buford moved that Tom Campbell be given the authority to give the Abingdon group our detached portion of trail which extends from Virginia Highway #16 on Glade Mountain to Virginia Highway 16 on Iron Mountain and covers a distance of 9.7 miles provided this group is capable of caring for this portion of trail. The motion was seconded by Mike Moss and carried.^[1]

Campbell got the ball rolling, and Leech followed up along with RATC volunteers Hawkins, Warner and Tabor.

Founding Members of The MRATC

- **DAVID O. THOMAS** of the Raytheon Corporation, living with his wife Nerine and their two children just south of Abingdon. Thomas remained active in the MRATC until his death in 2007, and there is a tribute to him on the club's website. The Thomas Knob Shelter is named after him! Nerine was also a founding MRATC member who passed away in 2010.
- **DAVID G. THOMAS**, David O's son and a high school senior trying to decide between mechanical engineering at VPI and the Naval Academy. He was still an MRATC member in 2022.
- **BLAIR KELLER** (W. Blair Keller, Jr.), a local dairyman, landowner and brother-in-law of David O. Thomas. He was still a member in 2022, along with his wife Gilda, who is sister of Nerine Thomas.
- **JACK RUSH**, who worked for the Pet Milk Company. He led an annual fall-color- hike of 15 miles from Damascus to Abingdon over the many-bridged, serpentine and very scenic N. & W. right-of-way; route of the famed Virginia Creeper [and now part of the Virginia Creeper hike and bike trail].
- **CLAUDE GREEVER**, a clarinet player and former music instructor at Abingdon High who transitioned to promotion and sales for a Bristol music house. He was an avid spelunker. Because of the snowstorm, it took him 3 hours to drive 54 miles to Abingdon, and he counted almost a dozen car crashes along US 11. He had a 28-year career teaching music and was still living in Abingdon in 2022. He edited the MRATC newsletter in 1960.

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- **LOUISE FORTUNE HALL**, a substitute teacher who wrote a history of Damascus, 1793 to 1950 (and gave Preston Leech a copy). She and her husband **GEORGE HALL** were long-time A.T. supporters. The Trail passed in front of their home on the main street of Damascus. They set up a register in the Town Hall for hikers to sign and next door at the Owl Café hikers could always get a free drink “courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Hall.” The Halls also helped arrange free or inexpensive housing for hikers and any other information they might need. She passed away in 2008, and George is also deceased.
- **HARRY DENTON**, a science instructor at Abingdon High School
- **DOUGLAS PATTERSON**, a wildlife photographer, mushroom expert and owner of a camera shop and photo studio in Abingdon. He was very familiar with Mt. Rogers and White Top.
- **LEN ANGLE** (L.C. Angle III), an Eagle Scout interested in seeing an outing or hiking group started in his city. He was still active in the Historical Society of Washington County, VA in 2022.
- **LEE GARRETT**, an electronics engineer. His wife was also in attendance.
- **MRS. JOHNSON**, about whom there was no additional information.
- **DENNIS PORTER** and **BALLARD HASH**, amateur cav-ers from Norton attending Clinch Valley College. Both planned to become dentists and were interested in joining the new AT club. Both had worked summers in Ore-gon for the US Forest Service.
- **GIBSON (Gip) VANCE**, a wildlife photographer and mush-room expert, who was unable to attend due to illness.

After a brief gathering on Friday night RATC members Hawkins and Warner joined locals Rush, Greever, Denton and young Dave Thomas on a chilling Saturday hike up the power line right of way to White Top despite a zero degree temperature on top and snow-filled roads below. Leech and Tabor stayed behind, enjoying a hearty Friendship Dinner at the Martha Washington Inn with the Halls, Angle, Patterson, David Thomas, the Garretts and Mrs. Johnson.

After Sunday morning hikes on the A.T. and at Backbone Rock State Park in Tennessee, a large group convened for a slide show from Leech and others about the A.T. and maintaining club responsibilities. February 29 (the following week) was set as the date for founding of the Mt. Rogers AT Club. Talk continued through dinner and afterwards.



Thomas Knob Shelter at the base of Mt. Rogers.

On The Web

This historical account is summarized from far more lengthly publications in two editions of the The Blazer from 1960. If you'd like to read the original accounts this time period, documents are listed below:

[March 1960 Trail Blazer\(pdf\)](#)
[April 1960 Trail Blazer\(pdf\)](#)

[Winter of 1960](#)
(<https://theenterprise.net/patrick-pioneers-winter-of-1960/>)
[Mount Roger AT Club Charter Members List](#)
(<http://mratc.pbworks.com/w/page/8862374/FrontPage>)

The RATC crew spent Monday on the Virginia Creeper train over White Top Mountain and down into North Carolina and back, providing an extremely detailed account in the April 1960 RATC Blazer. They were all back in Roanoke by that night, again courtesy of Norfolk and Western.

The Mt. Rogers crew reported on their club's Leap Day founding in a letter to RATC. The MRATC website includes a full list of the 23 charter members. Officers were:

- **David Thomas**, President
- **Harry Denton**, Vice President
- **Louise and George Hall**, Secretary/Treasurer
- **Claude Greever**, Public Relations

Bylaws were yet to come, but Greever would begin publishing a monthly club newsletter. In addition the club asked RATC leaders to visit in May, when the wildflowers were blooming (per Mrs. Hall), and help the new club mark the side trail from Iron Mountain to Mt. Rogers and White Top.

Thomas Knob is Named and a New Shelter is Constructed

According to the tribute to David Thomas on the current MRATC website:

In 1992, the club along with the Konnarock Crew constructed a new shelter to replace Deep Gap Shelter. In order to comply with restrictions regarding the naming of structures for living people, a nearby point was named “Thomas Knob” and the new shelter was named the Thomas Knob Shelter in honor of David and Nerine. The shelter was dedicated on August 14, 1992. Those present for the dedication included club members, U.S. Representative Rick Boucher, Jefferson National Forest Supervisor Joy Berg, Mount Rogers National Recreation Area Ranger Steve Sherwood, and ATC representatives. Thanks to all the volunteers, past and present, for taking care of this beautiful section of the AT, which now runs on the other side of the mountain!

By Diana Christopoulos, Archivist, RATC

[1] RATC minutes, March 29, 1959, and April 17, 1959.

RATC ARCHIVES. Unless otherwise noted, all references are from the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club archives in the Virginia Tech Permanent Collections. See especially RATC Trail Blazer, March 1960, p. 19-26, and April 1960, p. 5-13



Cherry Blossom Trail hike September 17, 2025.
Carol Rowlett will lead Monday morning hikes in
2026

Images from RATC Fall Hiking Events from 2025

Hikemaster's Report

Several people who participated in the RATC sponsored hikes completed all 14 RATC section hikes in 2025. Congratulations to these folks for their efforts and dedication to hiking:

- Josh Wolsey
- Steve Koren
- Linda Osburn

The tentative section hike schedule for 2026 is listed below:

Hike 1	February 28th	Hike 11	April 18th
Hike 2	March 1 st	Hike 10	April 25th
Hike 3	March 7th	Hike 9	May 3rd
Hike 4	March 14	Hike 8	May 9th
Hike 14	March 21st	Hike 7	May 16th
Hike 13	March 28th	Hike 6	May 23rd
Hike 12	April 11 th	Hike 5	June 7th

Carol Rowlett is leading Monday morning hikes around Roanoke. There has been excellent participation to kick off the 2026 hikes.

We also are offering family oriented hikes called "Saturday Hikes"

Hike #1 will be April 4.

We will meet at the gravel parking lot by The Green Goat at 10:00 am and hike the Greenway to Blue Cow for Ice Cream. Perhaps stopping at the playground on the way back to our cars.

Hike #2 will be May 2 for the Johnson Farm Loop.

We will meet at the Peaks of Otter visitor's center at 10:00 am. Afterward we will stop at the Peaks of Otter Lodge for lunch.

Hike #3 will be June 6. We will meet at Moneta Park at 10:00 am for a hike and refreshments.

All hikes are subject to weather conditions. There is a plan to have a hike leader training with first aid. I have not finalized the details. I will post the details on [MeetUp](#) as soon as possible.

As always, we use [MeetUp](#) to publish dates, register, and update information about the hikes. Those interested should read our policies regarding registration for the hikes. Hope to see you on the trail!

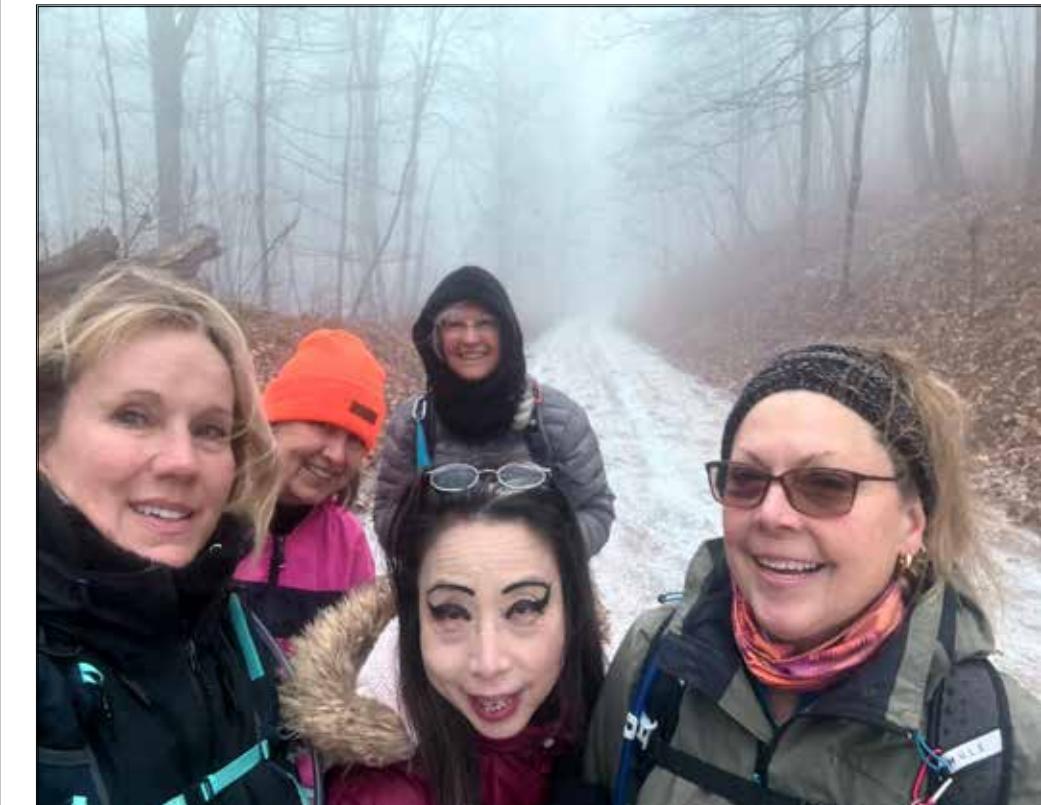
by Dee Case



Black Horse Gap to Curry Gap, November 8th, 2025.



Carvins Cove hike, Horsepen and Lakeside Trails, October 16, 2025.



Johns Creek (VA 632 / Johns Creek Road) to Sinking Creek (VA 630), November 20th, 2025.

On The Web

[Our 14 Section Hikes](#)

[\(https://www.ratc.org/at-hiking/ratcs-14-at-hikes/\)](https://www.ratc.org/at-hiking/ratcs-14-at-hikes/)

[RATC Event Schedule](#)

[\(https://www.ratc.org/at-hiking/hike-schedule/\)](https://www.ratc.org/at-hiking/hike-schedule/)

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Curry Gap (BRP) to Daleville (US 220), November 30th, 2025.



Steve Koren Completed all 14 sections of the RATC Hikes in 2025.



Climbing the wall, Dragon's Tooth to Trout Creek, September 14, 2025.



Dragon's Tooth Parking to Trout Creek, September 14, 2025.

GO Fest New Member Drawing Winner!

We're excited to announce that **Makayla Rosenberger** is the winner of our GO Fest new-member drawing! Makayla received a fantastic gift basket from WalkAbout Outfitter, valued at over \$150, including a \$75 gift certificate.

GoFest was a big success for the Club, with more than 20 new members signing up. We're thrilled to welcome so many new faces into the RATC community.

A huge thank you to WalkAbout Outfitter for their generous sponsorship and continued support of the RATC. We truly appreciate their partnership and commitment to the hiking community.



Trail Supervisors Report

I'd like to welcome the following new trail maintainers:

- Greg Lester
- Sarah Waid
- David Engel

Welcome aboard! I look forward to seeing you all out on the trail.

(Editors note: Mike included information regarding Phase 2 of the Catawba Fire Road Project. It was removed here, but the same information is part of Pete Irvine's submission on pages 4-7)

Catawba Shelter Tent Pads

Currently, there are several major projects ongoing or coming up on our section of trail. Here is an update on those projects: Catawba Shelter: Plans are to build 12 tent sites near the Catawba shelter. Work began on the project in April. This fall we completed three tent pads that the ATC's Konnarock crew had started this past summer. We also have completed one other tent pad. We also have nearly completed a 200-foot long trail from the tent pad loop to the nearby privy. The overall project will take at least another year to complete.

Andy Layne Trail Relocation

Plans are to install a new bridge upstream from the current bridge crossing. In addition, a new parking lot will be constructed south of the current parking lot. Approximately one and a half miles of new trail will have to be built for this relocation. Roanoke Cement Company is waiting for final approval from a government agency to build the bridge and parking lot. Once that is received an updated easement agreement between Roanoke Cement Company and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy will need to be signed. At that point the club can start building the new trail. Actual construction of the new trail section will probably start early this year.

Craig Creek Bridge Replacement

The bridge design is nearing completion. The bidding process should start in February. This process typically takes a month to complete. The contract will then be awarded and materials can be ordered and construction can begin. Construction of the bridge should occur later this year.

Submitted by Mike Vaughn



Catawba Tent Loop Trail. This stairway leads to the privy.

Ridgerunner Review

10/01/24-9/30/25

Submitted by Tom Martin

Counselor RATC

The volunteer Ridgerunners strive to get an accurate hiker count (day hikers, backpackers, thru-hikers, runners, climbers and other), alert hikers to safety and other concerns (Norovirus, water source conditions, fire risk, etc.) gather data, and do light maintenance work. Twenty nine Ridgerunners participated during the 10/01/24-9/30/25 season, with 1,763.876 total volunteer hours. Seven Ridgerunners had 100+ volunteer hours for the season:

• Ryan Wagoner	411.75
• Bill Dawson	361.5
• Tom Martin	147.5
• Brian Boggs	140.17
• Susan Terwilliger	132.75
• Donna Logan	114
• David Nova	103.07



Sub Total: 1,410.74 volunteer hours or 79% of the total

Patrols numbers and percentages of total patrols

• Dragon's Tooth	54	21%
• Tinker Cliffs	23	9%
• McAfee Knob	170	66%
• Hay Rock	9	4%

Sub Total 256 patrols

The Ridgerunner Program within the RATC (also known as the McAfee Knob Task Force) was established in 2015. The initial focus was exclusively on McAfee Knob. The program expanded to include Dragon's Tooth in 2016 or 2017. Tinker Cliffs was added around 2019, and Hay Rock was added to the patrols in 2025.

Seasonal Ridgerunners:

The inaugural 2015 Ridgerunner season had two individuals serving as seasonal ridgerunners - Stephanie Breig and Eric West.

Matt Allenbach was the seasonal ridgerunner in 2016 and 2017.

Dave Youmans was the seasonal ridgerunner in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Dave was on trail 4 days per week, and in the office 1 day per week.

Suzanne Neal was the seasonal ridgerunner in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025. Suzanne was on the trail 4 days per week and in the office 1 day per week. Her last day was in mid-November 2025. Suzanne accepted a new position in leadership at Hungry Mother State Park.

RATC Work Hikes

Catawba Mountain December 17, 2025, 8:00 am

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Tom McCovoy, Gary Moore

Four of us headed up the fire road on a cold, sunny morning. Today we were going to work on the tent pad we had started on during the last work hike. Upon reaching the work site we gathered up some straps and went to retrieve logs for the crib wall for the tent pad. The logs were 12 feet long. It was a difficult task transporting two of them the 200 yards from the log pile to the work site. It took over an hour to transport them. After that the work went well and we are nearing completion of the tent pad. On the way out we passed a few hikers heading up to the knob.

Catawba Mountain December 22, 2025, 8:00 am

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Greg Stick, Gary Moore

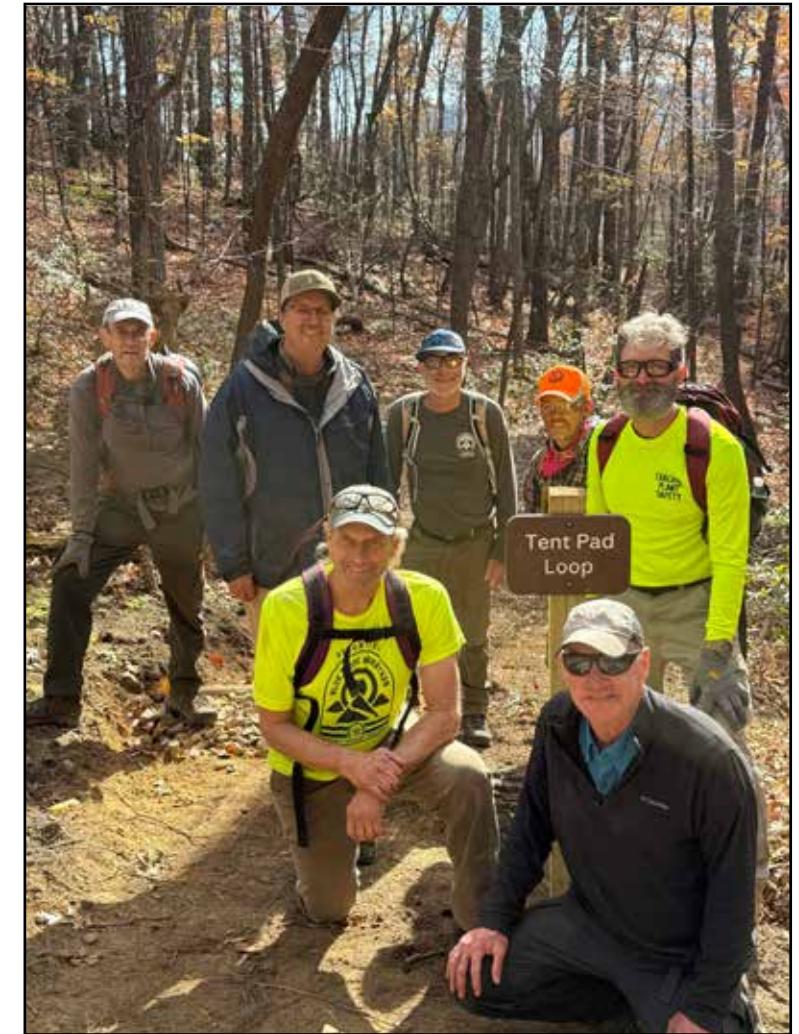
It was another cold morning heading out the fire road. At the work site we split up into two groups, with one group working on a tent pad and the other putting in steps on the privy trail. By the end of the day we had installed eight new steps and completed the tent pad. We were pleased with the results of work. We saw very few hikers out on the trail today



Gary Moore and Tom McAvoy fill the crib on a tent pad.



A completed tent pad with stairs and cribbing.



**Catawba Mountain
November 4th, 2024**

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Greg Still, Dave Grimm, Greg Stick, David Tompkins, Rick Clark, Gary Moore

We had a good size group today and great weather for trail work in the forecast. Greg Still drove most of us up to the work site. We split up into three groups, with Jim cutting steps, and the other group starting work on the trail up to the privy and finishing the last 30 feet of trail connecting the tent pad loop to the water trail. The work went very well with such a large group. By the end of the day we had made good progress on the privy trail and had completed the connection to the water trail. We were very happy with the results of the work today. All eight of us managed to get in Greg's truck back to the parking lot.



Catawba Shelter tent pad loop completion with new signage.

Pictured here:

Mike Vaughn
Jim Webb
Greg Still
Dave Grimm
Greg Stick
David Tompkins
Rick Clark
Gary Moore

Submitted by Mike Vaughn

The Privy Trail begins its climb up the hill from the tent loop.

MVP Impact on the A.T.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) was completed in June 2024 and soon began pumping gas from West Virginia. The pipeline was constructed on the slopes of Peters Mt. below the A.T. at Symms Gap on the Virginia and West Virginia sides. A 600' bore was drilled beneath the ridge crest of Peters Mt. to avoid crossing the A.T. In the fall of 2024 vegetation planting was done to stabilize the soil and reduce the visual impact of the pipeline construction corridor. This involved aerial seeding and planting of tree saplings of native species along the entire length of the pipeline. Monitoring the establishment of the plants and continued revegetation where needed and control of non-native plants will continue for five years after completion of the pipeline.

To assess the visual impact of the pipeline representatives of MVP and Tetra Tech (a consulting firm hired to assess and document conditions along the pipeline) hiked the A.T. to Angels Rest, Rice Fields, Symms Gap, and Kelly Knob on July 15 and 16, 2025 to make observations on the visibility of the pipeline from these popular overlooks.

The views from Kelly Knob were obstructed by vegetation immediately in front of the rock outcrops and the pipeline route was not visible.

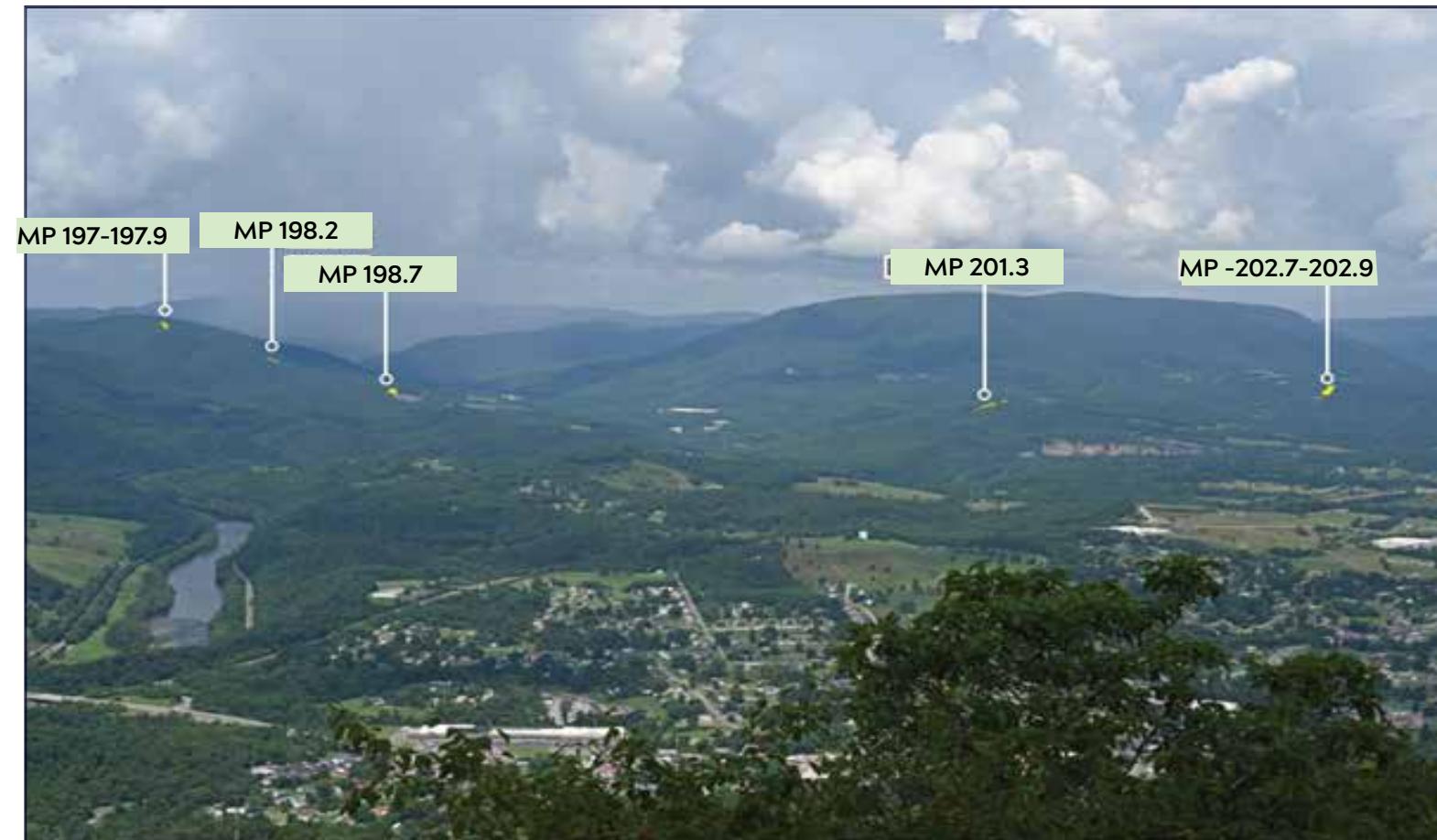


Fig. 1. View from Angels Rest on July 16, 2025.

On Angels Rest several short sections of the MVP corridor (mile post (MP) 197.8-197.9, MP 198.2, MP 198.7) were seen on Mystery Ridge, a spur on Peters Mt., over 6 miles away (Fig. 1). The MVP was not easily discernible in the valley between Peters and Butt Mt. Short sections were seen at the base of Butt Mt. (MP 201.3 and MP 202.7-202.9). This is roughly 0.6 miles of the corridor that was visible from Angel Rest

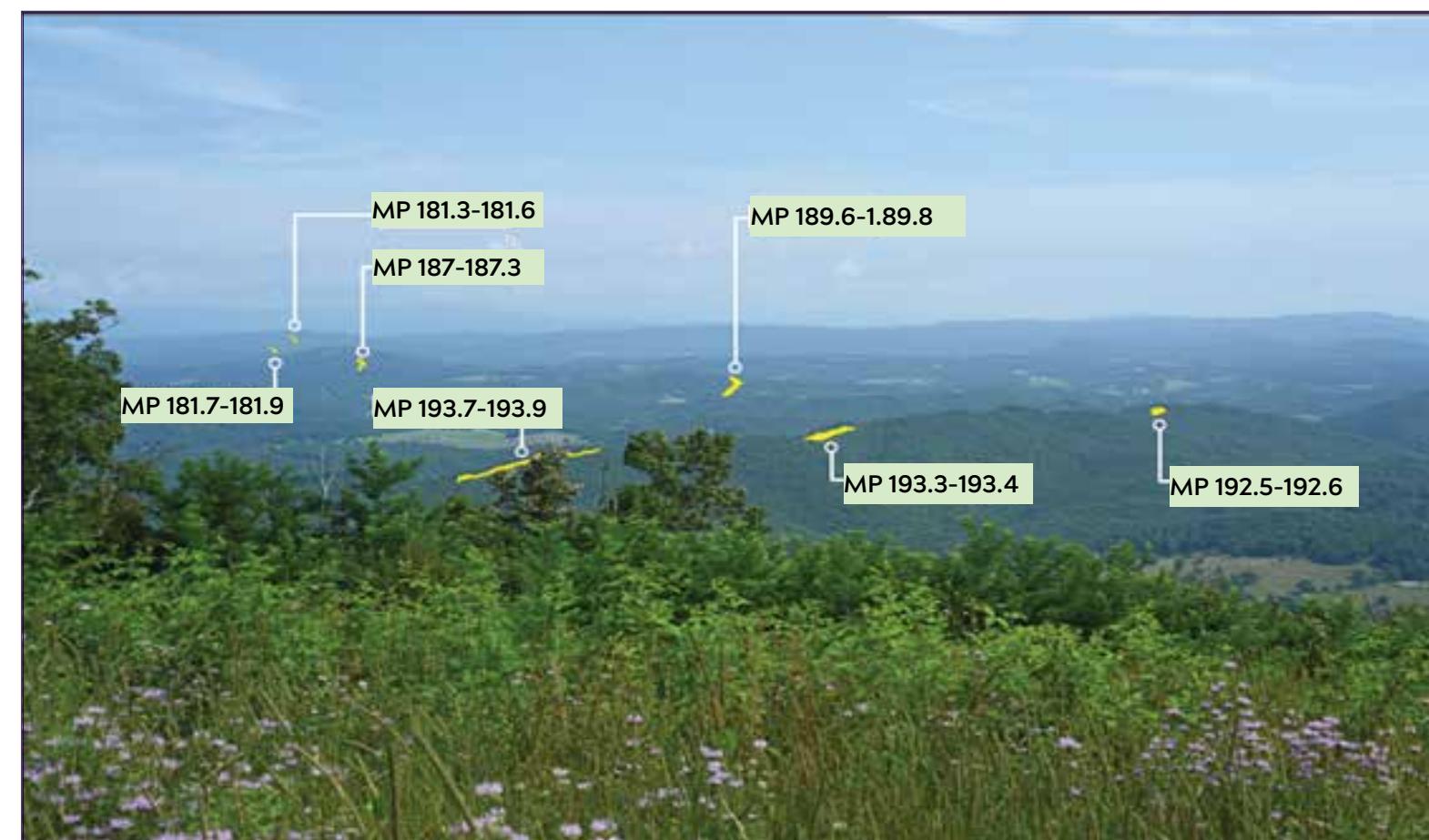


Fig. 2 View along AT from Symms Gap, April 16, 2025.

A.T. Symms Gap the goes through 0.5 miles of open fields with great views westward (Fig. 2). The MVP was visible from here for a total of 1.4 miles at several locations in West Virginia. The MVP views in the foreground are only 0.1 mile in length but are more obvious due to the closer proximity from the viewpoint than the more distance visible pipeline corridor.

A total of 1.1 miles of the pipeline were visible from Rice Field (Fig. 3). These views of the pipeline were at a greater distance than the views from Symms Gap and were not very noticeable.

The most impacted view was from Symms Gap. But it was not overly obvious. However, during leaf-off season the visibility of the corridor may be greater.



Fig 4. Vegetation growth planted within the past year along the MVP corridor, Sept. 30, 2025.

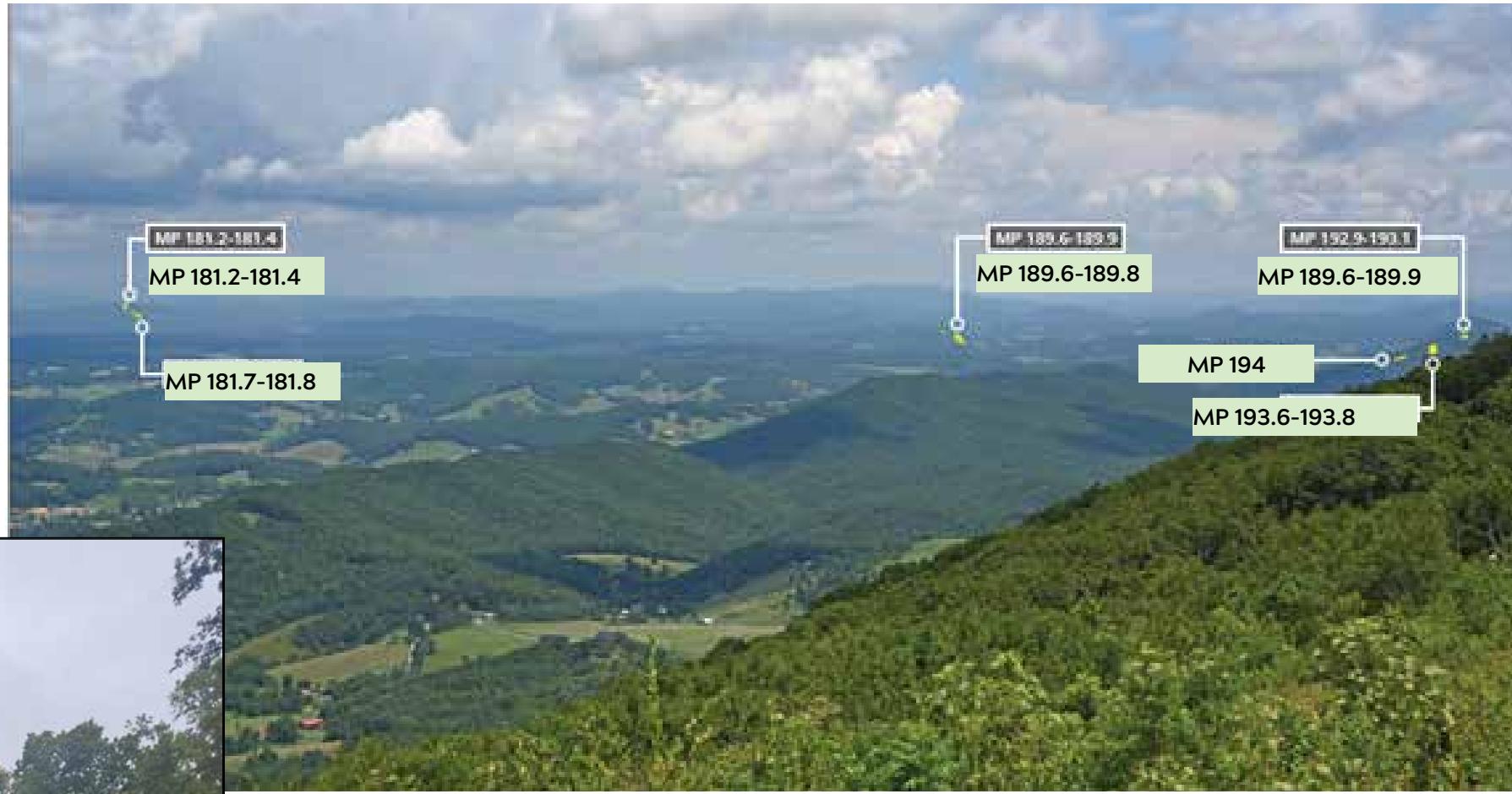


Fig 3. View along the A.T. from Rice Fields, April 16, 2025.

On Sept. 30, 2025, representatives of MVP, RATC, OCVT, ATC, Tetra Tech, and USFS visited the pipeline corridor below the crest of Peters Mt. on the Virginia side to assess the revegetation efforts by MVP. The corridor had been seeded with native plants and tree saplings were planted within the past year. Very few open areas with bare ground were found and approximately 90% of the corridor had healthy vegetation (Fig. 4).

Read more about the MVP

[Virginia Department of Environmental Quality](https://www.deq.virginia.gov/news-info/shortcuts/topics-of-interest/mountain-valley-pipeline-main-line)

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/news-info/shortcuts/topics-of-interest/mountain-valley-pipeline-main-line>

[Mountain Valley Pipeline Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_Valley_Pipeline)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_Valley_Pipeline

[Mountain Valley Pipeline Project](https://www.mountainvalleypipeline.info/)
<https://www.mountainvalleypipeline.info/>

[US Forest Service Mountain Valley Pipeline](https://www.fs.usda.gov/r08/gwj/newsroom/releases/mountain-valley-pipeline-restoration-work-begins-national-forest-lands/)
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r08/gwj/newsroom/releases/mountain-valley-pipeline-restoration-work-begins-national-forest-lands/>

Several of the tree tubes were examined and a rough estimate of 25% of the tree saplings were dead. Dead saplings will be replaced in the coming year. There was no evidence of the bore pit at the top of the construction corridor (Fig. 5). Little to no erosion was evident.

The construction of the pipeline was very controversial and the quality of the view shed was somewhat reduced and still poses a danger to the surrounding area. In general, the vegetation along the pipeline corridor on the Virginia side of Peters Mt. was vigorous and should provide a beneficial habitat that was not present before the pipeline was constructed. Monitoring and revegetation where needed will continue for the next four years.

Submitted by Tom McAvoy
Conservation Supervisor



Fig 5. Site of bore hole where the boring drill was located for a 600' under Peters Mountain.

RATC TRAIL MAINTAINERS AND SECTIONS

#	Section	Maintainers
1	VA 611 to Va 608	Walter Shroyer Mickey Pellillo
2	VA 608 to VA 606	Matthew Barnett Todd Coake (sawyer)
3	VA 606 to Ribble Trail	Mike & Jennie Reilly, Denise & Bill Hendon Stephanie & Jack Buffet
4	Ribble Trail to Big Horse Gap	Bill & Leslie Kay Floyd
5	Big Horse Gap to Doc's Knob Shelter	Craig McNally Mark Allamong (sawyer)
6	Doc's Knob Shelter to Power Line	Matt Gentry Tim Ligon
7	Power Line to Wilburn Overlook	Greg Still (sawyer) Craig McNally
8	Wilburn Overlook to Cross Road	Julie Petruska, Sue Terwilliger, Craig McNally
9	Cross Road to US 460	Adam Stevens
10	Pine Swamp to Bailey Gap	Dave & Lori Jones (sawyer)
11	Bailey Gap to VA 613	Pete Schitthener Eric West Adam Stevens
12	VA 613 to Lone Pine Mountain	Greg Hardwicke Lisa Garcia Kurt Stephenson Ryan Wagoner
12A	Lone Pine Mountain to War Spur Trail	Eric West
13	War Spur Trail to Johns Creek Road	Kelly and Linda Mulheren Molly and Fred Jones
14	Johns Creek Road to Rocky Gap	Terry Shipley, Greg Evanylo
15	Rocky Gap to field north of route 42	Brian Kelly (sawyer) David Engel
16	Field North of route 42 to Route 630	Shane Smith
17	VA 630 to Sarver Shelter Trail	Chase Davidson , Amanda Yoder David Anderson
18	Sarver Shelter Trail to N. end of Ridgeline	Chase Davidson (sawyer), Kathryn Herndon-Powel,Susan Herndon-Powell, David Grim, Russ Estes
19	N. end of Ridgeline to VA 621	Eric Hanson, Molly Brunner, Josie Demarce
20	Va 621 to Audie Murphy Monument	Erik Leedom



**A.T. Crossing at the Pedlar River foot bridge,
submitted by Ron Bradbury.**

#	Section	Maintainers
46	Catawba Valley Trail (CVT)	Johnathan Harris Michelle Cook Sean Cook
47	Ribble Trail	Bill & Leslie Kay Floyd
48	Boy Scout Trail	Donna Logan
49	McAfee Fire Road, Rte 311 to AT crossing	Peter Irvine (sawyer) Kailee Sesler Sarah Ward
50	McAfee Fire Road, AT crossing to Campbell shelter	Dario Izquierdo Gary Moore

#	Section	Maintainers
21	Audie Murphy Monument to VA 620	Lee Hipp Will Mackinnon
22	VA 620 to Ridgeline	Hugh Craft Joe Brabant, Jan-Erik Zeller (section sawyer)
23	Ridgeline to Dragons Tooth	Tom McAvoy, Charles Hudson, John Grant, Jan-Erik Zeller (sawyer)
24	Dragons Tooth to VA 624	David Poteet Sarah Allison
25	VA 624 to VA 785 Tree line	Bo Carneal Becky Carneal
26	VA785 Tree line to VA 311	Bo Carneal Becky Carneal
27	VA 311 to Fire Road	Jim Webb (sawyer) Greg Stick Erik West
28	Fire Road to Campbell Shelter	Jim Webb (sawyer) Greg Stick
29	Campbell Shelter to Brickeys Gap	Bill Gunn Nick Lindsay Christian Smith
30	Brickeys Gap to Ditch Trail	Kevin Witcher
31	Ditch Trail to Angels Gap	Bryon Lane Mike Phillips
32	Angels Gap to Power Line	Mike Vaughn Jeff Armstrong
33	Power Line to US 220	Ron and Cathy Butler, Nancy and Leonard Galvan Robert & Jeanie Bomber
34	US 220 to VA 652	Homer and Therese Witcher
35	Va 652 to Fullhardt Knob Shelter	Dave Horst (sawyer)
36	Fullhardt Shelter to Salt Pond Road	John Garris Mark Wilhelm
37	Salt Pond Road To Wilson Creek	Greg Lester
38	Wilson Creek to Black Horse Gap	Theresa McDaniel Mary Frye
39	Andy Layne Trail	Daniel Howell, Randy Fuller
40	Dragon's Tooth Trail	Donna Logan, Brad Clay
41	War Spur Trail	Anja Whittington, Jay Raymond
42	North Mtn Trail, Route 311 to Grouse Tr.	Jeff Hoepner Alex Reis
43	North Mtn Trail, Deer Tr. To Grouse Trail	Hugh Craft Joe Brabant
44	North Mtn Trail, Grouse Tr. To Turkey Trail	Bob Patten
45	North Mtn Trail, Turkey Tr. To CVT	Vacant

TRAIL BLAZER
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
PO Box 12282
ROANOKE VA 24024-2282

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

*Hurry and join or renew!
Dues will change in February
of 2026*

**Roanoke Appalachian
Trail Club Application
New and Renewal**

IF ACCEPTED FOR MEMBERSHIP, I AGREE TO:

1. Support the objectives of the RATC
2. Abide by the rules of the national and state parks and forests
3. Respect the interests of the owner when on private property
4. Keep trails and woodlands free of litter, and
5. Abide by the instructions of the leader on group hikes and trips

Name(s)	New Member Packet Fee:	\$5		
Address	Individual # of years	x \$15		
	Family # of years	x \$20		
City	State	Zip	Individual life membership	x \$250
			Family life membership	x \$300
Phone			Donation	\$
Email			Total Amount Enclosed	\$

Dues are payable in January of each year. Make checks to "RATC" or use PayPal at ratc.org

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to:
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024

RATC is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Membership dues are tax-deductible.

Please Note: To save costs, the Trail Blazer is provided electronically via email/link. Paper copies may be obtained via mail. Request a paper copy via treasurer@ratc.org or by calling 540-521-5435