

Highland Sojourner

Volume XI, Issue II Newsletter of the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc. Fall 2009

www.pinemountaintrail.com

Bulletin Board

Volunteer Vacations **Group**

Host

Check the PMTC Website or join the Yahoo Group

Weekend Getaways

Check the PMTC Website or join the Yahoo Group

(Weekend Getaways are designed for those who work a full time job. In warmer weather, volunteers can come in on Friday evening; camp at a site we have prepared, work on Saturday, and return home on Sunday. For more information, contact the PMTC, P.O. Box 784, Whitesburg, KY 41858 or sbaker@uky.edu .) **RSVP Required!!**

Pine Mountain Trail Conference Meetings

November 19, 2009 **Cumberland Gap National Historical Park**
Meeting will begin at 1pm

December 17, 2009 **Breaks Interstate Park**
Meeting will begin at 1pm

Words from the Woods **by Shad Baker**

A fine rain and thick white vapor drifts through the golden canopy as pillars of oak shadow the dark browns of aging carpet; a room-sized mound of rocks has been robbed of her treasure but still testifies to ancient hikers.

This summer and fall has seen an awakening of volunteer activity on the Pine Mountain Trail. The increasing numbers of section hikers are beginning to create a discernable path even in the places where once there was nothing but blazes on trees. Even with the help of many feet though, the trail from Indian Grave Gap to near the Twin Cliffs was frequently hard to follow. More than one hiker called from the trail to ask, "Where does the trail go from...?" From this common question have come volunteers and the following newsletter...



Sierra Club Volunteers hike into a Pine Mountain fog prior to a day's work.

Photo by: Adam Evans

Trail – Fortunately we have been blessed by the support of our volunteers and the priceless support of local landowners who have permitted us access through their land time and time again. Chief among these landowners is Carl Rose who controls access to a very remote portion of the PMT. Mr. Rose has permitted the PMTC volunteers to utilize his road several times and has even been kind enough to use his ATV to haul in signs and chainsaws. Thanks to Carl and our volunteers, we have been able to install remote signs and blazes in places that would have been featureless otherwise. It is now fairly easy, even in foggy conditions, to hike from US 23 to US 119 without fear of losing the trail. There are still a few spots that haven't been dug out and a few where more blazes would be preferable, but nonetheless, the trail is no longer a haphazard line of widely spaced blazes and little else.

Land – The Kentucky Dept. of Parks recently hosted a meeting in Frankfort to obtain the status report of land negotiations along the Pine Mountain Trail corridor. The Division of Real Property is tasked with land acquisition after landowners express a willingness to donate or sell either a conservation easement or fee-simple. There are prioritized parcels that are being negotiated and others that will be the focus in the coming months and years. We plan to schedule a meeting with our state representatives and senators along with other high-level state personnel to insure that the Pine Mountain Trail lands are fully pursued. As lands are acquired or easements secured, we will keep you posted.

Hikes – There are several hikes scheduled for the next few months. If you are interested in getting out on the mountain with a group of other people, feel free to contact us via e-mail, the website, or phone (sbaker@uky.edu, www.pinemountaintrail.com, (606) 633-2362). All hikes require RSVP by the day before the hike.

Halloween Hike – Oct. 30 at 12 noon at the rear of the Sunoco Gas Station at the state-line on US 23; we'll hike the Red Fox Trail (~2 miles) from the bottom up to the 'Killing Rock' and then out to the Gas Station. Bring Water, Snacks, Comfortable Shoes and anything else you think you might need. We'll shuttle everyone to the start of the hike.

New Year's Hike – January 1-2, 2010 at 9AM at the US 119 Trail-head above Whitesburg. This will be an over-night backpacking trip. We'll be staying at the Adena Springs Shelter which sleeps 12. The first 12 folks to register will have a place in the shelter, others will have to carry and pitch tents on sloping ground. Bring winter gear along with sleeping bag, food, etc. Water will be available to purify at the shelter. If you don't have a purifier, we can purify it for you. We should reach US 23 by 1 PM. We will have a van waiting to take everyone back to their vehicles.



Kingdom Come State Park
Photo by: Jeremy Williams

Sierra Club Volunteers Build Trail and Visit Coal Mine

by Shad Baker

Volunteers from the Sierra Club have been making annual work trips to the Pine Mountain Trail for several years now. This partnership has opened eyes on both sides of the political spectrum.

For my part, I have learned that the stereotype of a Sierra Club member I had long harbored was frequently inaccurate. As a group, their opinions and views on the outdoors are as diverse as any group in the country. Contrary to being tree-hugging, spotted-owl petting, protestors of all things industrial, they are often just average people who love being outside. Some have been hunters, some have worked in the fossil fuel industry, and some have opposed both of those things. This seems to mirror what I have encountered out in the public and even here in the mountains. It seems an odd contradiction that the individual members do not echo the sentiments of the Club's official platform on some issues of local concern. At any rate, the volunteers have always been hard-working, respectful and a pleasure to meet and spend time around.

Led by Roger and Gretchen Straw, this year's volunteers spent the week clearing trail, installing signs, installing bear-poles and preparing a shelter site. Most of the trail work was between Rose Gap and Box Rock; an area that had long been difficult to follow under adverse weather. The remainder of the work was centered at Kingdom Come State Park, just off the Saltess Trail. About 100 yards up the trail and off to the left, on a small knoll overlooking the Little Shepherd Trail, is the future site of the Black Bear Shelter, which will be built in honor of Dr. Larry Turner, the former Assistant Director of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. The volunteers cut and cleared roughly 25 small trees to make way for the construction of a log shelter to be used by hikers and backpackers along the Pine Mountain Trail. They also built the 70 yard long access trail to the site.

Wednesday is typically the free-day when volunteers can explore the area and take in some of the local points of interest. This year, Black Mountain Resources, through the direction of VP and General Manager Ross Kegan, opened the door to take the volunteers on a tour of the coal mines. The group was toured around the above-ground facilities as well as being taken on a guided under-ground visit to see where most of America's electricity originates. In between, the group was treated to lunch and was able to take part in a question and answer session with Mr. Kegan and his staff.

The questions were polite and direct, as were the answers. It seems likely that most everyone involved came away with a slightly different image than the one they brought with them. Many thanks to the folks at Black Mountain Resources and Ross Kegan for being welcoming, educational, and 'well-spoken'.

The tour was later to be the fodder for conversation, as the group visited the Appalshop in Whitesburg the following night and heard another perspective on mountain-top removal and the ills associated with a much-anticipated federal prison in the county. The following and final evening was spent around a campfire, making smores and debating the future of central Appalachia and energy use in the country.

Many thanks to Roger, Gretchen, Ed, Jim, Colleen, Cere, Rick, Jewell, Deb, Peter, Adam, John, Duane, and Daniel for enduring drizzle, fog, hard work and changing conditions to help build the Pine Mountain Trail. Your service will be appreciated by a million foot-steps of the years to come.



Sierra Club Volunteers preparing for a day on the Trail

Photo by: Adam Evans

Pine Mountain Trail Conference Yahoo Group & Facebook Page

Remember to check out the PMTC Yahoo Group as well as the PMTC Facebook page. These webpages continue to get plenty of hits continue to get plenty of hits. To gain up to date information join both groups. There is no fee to join. Check them out at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PMTC/> or search Pine Mountain Trail Conference from your Facebook page.

Articles for the Highland Sojourner

If you have any article concerning the Pine Mountain Trail or adventures that you've had will hiking the Pine Mountain Trail, please submit them. You may send them to Jeremy Williams at jnwillia@uky.edu.

Membership

***All memberships are based on a calendar year (January-December)** *Membership entitles you to a one- year subscription to the *Highland Sojourner*, the newsletter of the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc. and a decal.

- Student Class** \$20 For those under 24 and in school
- Individual Class** \$25
- Family Class** \$40
- Individual Lifetime** \$1,000 (or \$335 for three years), lifetime members receive a membership card, decal, cap and jacket
- Contribution** \$ _____

Please **check** the membership class you are requesting.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to:

**Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc.
P.O. Box 784, Whitesburg, KY 41858
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