

# Volunteers maintain Kennesaw Mountain trails

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**KENNESAW** — Through physical effort and the sweat of members' brows, a local club's work will prevent extensive environmental damage to the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park.

Park Superintendent John Cissell said the KEMOTrailCorps will refurbish old trails and cut new ones by hand, sparing the park the damage that would be caused by using motorized equipment.

"It's so much more environmentally friendly to do it by hand, but it's very labor-intensive," Cissell said.

The club, organized recently by Richard Angeli of Kennesaw, is committed to repairing and maintaining the trails throughout the park.

"We are very fortunate to have a lot of people in Cobb County that care deeply about the park," Cissell said. "Over the last 20 years, they've watched its uses grow."

Because the park's budget can't underwrite the maintenance of the 18 miles of trails that meander through it, the club's 43 volunteers have promised to fill the gap.

On Saturday, the volunteers began work at 9 a.m. at the top of Kennesaw Mountain, installing water bars — drainage systems that prevent erosion — earthen steps, and a more well-defined trail route.

Angeli, president of KEMOTrailCorps, said the group worked nonstop until 3 p.m. and the effect was astonishing.

"By the end of the day, I felt fabulous," he said. "It was exciting to see how much work we accomplished in six and a half hours."

Angeli visited the trail again Tuesday morning and said that despite the torrential downpours Sunday and Monday, the mountain peak looks completely undisturbed.

"You can't even tell all that rain happened on that portion," he said. "And it looks completely natural."

Although much of the work is strenuous, Angeli said, volunteers ranged in age from 13 to more than 60 years old.

“Some of it is laborious,” he said. “There’s some heavy boulder moving and digging, but we also gather and spread leaves over the trail to prevent erosion.”

Angeli said people of all skill levels are welcome to join, and although some work may be more difficult for older volunteers, there’s a place for everyone.

Beth Bramlett, communications director for the club, said she’s sure there are tasks anyone can do, regardless of age or skill level.

“Even if it’s just bringing water to the volunteers, we always need people for smaller tasks,” she said.

Ms. Bramlett said she joined because she’s a frequent user of Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park and wanted to give something back to it. And meeting new people is a plus, as well.

The club will educate volunteers on visitor’s impacts on the park — such as how visitors can damage earthworks — and will teach the skills needed to keep trail damage to a minimum.

KEMOTrailCorps, which has sponsored two events so far, will also provide several clean-up days throughout the year.

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