

Annual Trail Director Report

Bill Gurry 9/7/21

Work days in this fiscal year remained slow due to the Covid pandemic. Trail work activities were as follows:

1st Quarter

The small workday planned for October 10 was rained out.

On October 17, 2020, eight crew leaders completed several projects on the 24 Gun Battery Trail. Rich cut out the dirt between the deck boards on the Gilbert Road Bridge to allow rain water to seep through, blew a few leaves off, and then joined the dirt crew. Bob, Bill, Mike Fred, and Glenn (back from California where he's been fighting fires with the Forrest Service), removed duff, log, and rock berms that have been holding water on the trail and cut many knicks through the duff deposited by soil and organic material loosened by hundreds of thousand feet over time. Harry and Scott removed two large blowdowns, and then hauled a couple loads of loose rocks to a site for a future project.

Also in October, Chief Ranger Anthony Winegar gave us a short introduction to "Compliance" to help us understand NPS procedures. This will be useful for future planning. Afterward, Geoff, Andy, Bob, and Bill went out to clean a culvert and ditch on Gilbert Road.

On November 14, 20 KSU cross country runners and two coaches came out to do some annual maintenance on the Brumby trail and the fire road on the mountain. We had 3 sites a mile apart and each site was about 300 feet long, so we were able to distance. Thanks to crew leaders Geoff, Fred, Mike, Bruce, Bill, Donald, Coach Rich, Glenn, Eric, and the Trail Ambassadors for helping out.

On December 12, 2020, Dr. Dyal from KSU brought 3 very enthusiastic health class students to Pigeon Hill to work with Scott, Fred, Mike, Geoff, Rena, and Bill to fix a problem on the trail just below the earthworks. This trail was built long ago straight up the fall line and has been eroding for as long as I can remember. You may remember ruts a foot deep on this trail. The trail itself had eroded nearly 2 feet in places over the years. In previous years, rocks and dirt were brought in to build water bars as, other than a reroute, no other option was feasible. The effort has been largely successful. Recently, hikers had been walking around the timber water bar shown in the photo that was created to stop water from above turning the corner and eroding the trail. We added some low rock steps and a terrace to make the trail more gradual and inviting to hikers and trashed the social trail. Also, we rebuilt a rock water bar below where someone had moved the rocks and cleaned loose sand and silt out of others. This probably needs to be done every year or so.

Donald and I have taken a couple of hikes with Superintendent Patrick Gammon to view trail issues and get his guidance on repairs. We have also tweaked a couple of future work plans to be ready to go once we can start having larger work days.

I received a call from a consultant to the American Battlefield Trust who was preparing a report on how the ABT can support local preservation groups. ABT sponsors park Day and gives us T shirts. I spoke to him for an hour. I also suggested that he contact Scott about the Friends group. ABT has an online survey that I forwarded to Scott.

2nd Quarter

The Trail Club had no workdays in January and February as we were at the apex of the pandemic in Georgia. We did make some trail assessment hikes with Superintendent Patrick Gammon and with crew leaders to plan future work. We also provided the Park Facilities Manager

with some trail assessments for use by the Park in preparing requests for deferred maintenance funds.

On March 13 a crew leader workday rebuilt the little trail entrance fences across from Kolb's Farm and staged fence rails for the Saturday workday. Crew leaders were Cindy, Geoff, Mike, Bill, Eric, Coach Rich, Fred and Andy for the work.

On March 14 a small volunteer workday was held on the upper mountain trail on Big K on Saturday, March 14. The always enthusiastic and hard-working Allatoona High School JNROTC provided the volunteers. We spread out from the fire road all the way to the mountain-top parking lot to build fences in 3 areas to close the pre-1973 trail up the spine of the mountain, to trash several social trails, and to perform some maintenance on old drainage structures on the "grand staircase" and a few more miscellaneous areas. Crew leaders Donald, Fred, Coach Rich, Dave Skilling, Geoff, Scott, Bruce, Fred, Cam, Eric, Dave and Sean Cauffiel, Mike, and the TAs for provided supervision, strong backs, and support.

We walked Big K on March 22 to prepare for the April workday. Our planned workday for April was cancelled.

On April 23 Bob, Bill, Geoff, Mike, Rich, and Andy built two steps on Big K using loose rocks in the trail. Due to erosion, the existing steps were too high, and hikers were finding other ways around, including walking over an earthwork. The new steps are more gradual and more inviting to hikers. After the next big rain and several thousand feet over the next couple of weeks, we'll see how they are working.

3rd Quarter

The May 8 workday was a small affair with a group from Walton high school and two other volunteers. Donald, Rich, Mike, and Fred took the volunteer group up Big K to trash social trails and the old pre 1973 trail up the spine of the mountain. Bill, Scott, and Geoff and a couple of very energetic volunteers cleaned the Big K fire road ditch, and the water from four springs was pouring down in the ditch.

On May 7 Fred, Mike and Bill updated a trail assessment on the Pigeon Hill and little k trails done by Eric and Bill last summer. As a result, 22 projects were identified, photographed and written up. We will walk this trail once more to complete the plan. 4 more projects were identified in other parts of the Park.

On June 6 we had an excellent workday with an energetic group of friends from REI. We added 4 terraces/steps near the last left turn as you hike up to the top of Big K using the last of Bruce's old barn timbers. I know of 5 places on the Mountain Trail that have now been improved using Bruce's timbers.

The timbers were fabricated by Eric and Bob and hauled to the top by Donald, then put in place by REI and by Bob and Eric and David and Bill and Fred. Mike and friends loaded gravel and dirt from the bottom of the grand staircase at the fire road, and Scott hauled it around to the parking lot for REI to bring down and fill between the old eroded timbers and Bruce's barn timbers making "terraces" rather than steps to encourage hikers to stay on the trail rather than walk through the woods. The barn timbers were anchored with rebar driven through the timbers into the trail by Sean, David's big strong son, who, incredibly, drove 9 rebar anchors through the timbers into the rocky trail and never hit a rock. And, of course, Donald built a new section of stack-rail fence.

A group from SCA came to KMNBP in June and July. Mike and Dave met with the SCA trainer, and Bill worked with SCA a couple of days. Dave, Mike, Fred and Bill prepared a comprehensive work plan for Pigeon Hill and little k for SCA and for future Trail Club workdays.

4th Quarter

On July 10, Mike and Dave led groups on two projects rearranging large loose rocks in the trail where the existing “steps” were too high. Thanks Andy, Fred, Bill, Scott, Bob, and Rich for joining in, and thanks to Rena for running registration.

On Saturday, 8/14/21, a group from Hillgrove JNROTC and a few other volunteers rebuilt most of the old fencing around the Illinois Monument at Cheatham Hill. The crew also cleaned the mud off of the plaza around the monument, laid logs to prevent mud from flowing onto the plaza, relocated a sign, closed a socail trail, and other miscellaneous work.

Thanks to Dave, Andy, Bob, Bill, Fred, and Eric for staging the fencing materials and cutting the support blocks on Thursday ahead of time. On Saturday, thanks to Donald, Andy, Fred, Mike, Bill, and Dave and to the TAs for running the crew. Finally, thanks to Andy for returning on Monday and completing screwing the fencing together. Danny and Eric were off somewhere in the jungle dealing with those evil invasive plants.

We also want to thank David Browne of the KMNBP staff for helping out and supporting our work for staging and on workday.

No workday will be held on Spetember 11 due to the huge number of visitors expected for the 911 field of Flage remembrance. A workday is being planned for September 25.

Please see the newsletters for photos.

Future Trail Work

A spreadsheet summary of work needed foe each trail in the Park is attached. The Trail Club will need to meet with the Park to establich priorities for future work.