

NC High Peaks Trail Association  
& Friends of Mt. Mitchell State SP  
NEWSLETTER July/August 2020



*Aerial view of Mount Mitchell Summit.*

In 2012 Mount Mitchell State Park asked NC High Peaks to take over management of the Park's Donation Fund. In order to perform that function we became the Friends of Mount Mitchell State Park, an official chapter of the Friends of State Parks. Over the years we have increased our support for the Park in many ways.

Donation Fund:

There are no fees to simply visit the park or hike on the trails. But after experiencing the stunning views and unique ecosystem at Mt. Mitchell, many visitors - who come from every state and many foreign countries - want to give something back. For this purpose, the park has three cash donation boxes, with one each at the ranger office, restaurant and gift shop. Groups that use the Park for trail and bike races also contribute to the fund as a sign of their appreciation.



*Donation Box at the Park Office, one of three.*

To comply with state regulations, park employees are not allowed to manage these funds, a task left to the Friends group at each park. A formal Memorandum of Agreement between the Division of Parks & Recreation and NC High Peaks governs the handling of the funds and how they can be spent. Each donation box has two locks and the Park and High Peaks each have a separate key so that we must both be present to empty the boxes. The funds are then counted by both parties and deposited into a separate account. The Park proposes projects or expenses to be paid for by the fund. If the High Peaks Board approves, the funding is issued from this bank account.



*. Alan installing the Davis Weather Station one of the projects paid for by the Donation Fund*

Since High Peaks took over, key items have been purchased and several notable projects completed, including:

- Biological samples, like animal skins and skulls, for the Education Building.
- Materials for trail improvements.
- Cameras and related equipment for the Park's webcam.
- An online weather station located at the Park.
- Two digital sign boards to provide up-to-date information to Park visitors.
- Park trail maps.
- A Traveler Information AM Radio Station to broadcast park news to motorists.

Some of these projects are discussed below.



*A local contractor helped to set the radio tower in place near the park office.*



*John, Victor, Phil, Martin and Mark moving a stone to make a step on the trail.*



*Tim, Rick, Joe, Mike and Duke placing a milepost near the summit.*

### Support the Park's Online Presence:

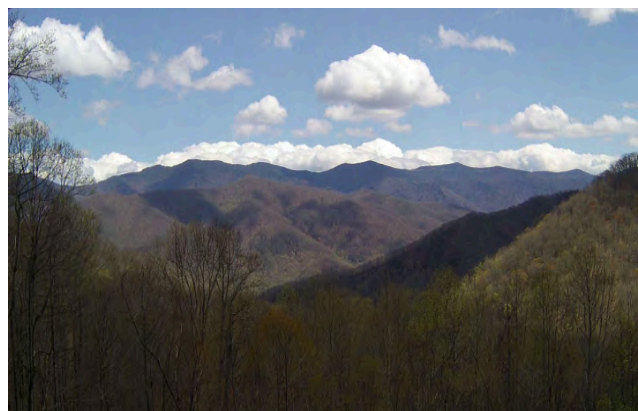
All state parks have a website for park information and High Peaks has enhanced the Park's online presence by providing real-time images and weather data from near the summit of Mount Mitchell. Webcams had been used at the Park before but had not functioned for at least a decade. In 2015 we provided our first webcam for the Park located at the Education Building near the summit of Mount Mitchell. We have expanded to a second camera and added a weather monitor. High Peaks provides an independent, long range Wi-Fi link for transferring these data to the Internet.

### Trail Improvements:

High Peaks provides volunteer labor for routine trail maintenance. We have also provided volunteer labor as our 25% match for work funded under the N.C. Recreational Trails Program (RTP). This competitive state grant program funds trail improvements on public lands. We recently used over \$50,000 in RTP funds to hire a contractor to upgrade a section of the Mount Mitchell Trail in the Park. High Peaks volunteers also worked on this trail.



*Steps installed by the NC High Peaks trail crew on the Mount Mitchell Trail.*



*View of the Blacks from the Pensacola webcam.*



*Our first webcam and Wi-Fi link installed in December 2014. Still working!*

View our Mt. Mitchell Weather page at:  
<https://nchighpeaks.org/davis/index.html>

We also have webcams and weather stations at Seven Mile Ridge,  
<https://nchighpeaks.org/weather2/sevenmileridge.php>

and Pensacola,  
<https://nchighpeaks.org/weather/pensacola.php>



*View of the Blacks from the Seven Mile Ridge webcam.*

Both cameras are aimed at the Black Mountains including Mount Mitchell. Our Seven Mile Ridge and Pensacola webcams are frequently featured on WLOS TV (Channel 13) on their weather reports during local news programs.

At the request of the Park we designed and installed two digital sign boards that display Park information including weather data and images from the equipment described above. The sign boards are programmed at the Park with up-to-date information.



*Cate and Alan with the new Digital Sign Board*



*John prepares to mount the transmitter antenna onto the tower*

In January 2020 NC High Peaks was honored at our board meeting with the **Locke Craig Award** presented by the Director of Parks and Recreation, Dwayne Patterson. This award is given by the Division of Parks and Recreation to an individual or group that "has exhibited the exceptional spirit of dedication to public service and the commitment to conservation represented by the accomplishments of North Carolina Governor Locke Craig, and whose efforts have developed and broadened the constituency of and public support for the state parks system and its programs; have fostered public appreciation of and connection with the state's natural resources; and, have represented a high degree of innovation and creativity." Governor Craig was the force behind the creation of the first state park, Mount Mitchell.

Also at the request of the Park, High Peaks developed and installed a Traveler Information Station (TIS) that will begin broadcasting in 2020. This cooperative project involved the installation of a 30-foot tower and low-power AM transmitter. The transmitter can be heard on any car AM radio within the Park or on nearby sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Similar transmitters are used to warn motorists of highway construction or accidents. Our TIS will broadcast Park information to motorists as they drive up to the Park on the access road. In addition, it can provide safety information and emergency warnings.



*Director Patterson presenting the Locke Craig award. Left to right: Alan, Martin, Kevin Bischof (Superintendent of Mt. Mitchell SP), John W., Dwayne Patterson, Katey, Nancy, Joe, Susan, Russ and Robert.*