



North Carolina High Peaks Trail Association
To: The Board of Directors
Annual Report, FY 2019

Introduction and Activity Summary

Fiscal Year 2019 was another busy year for the Association. We sponsored 18 hiking events and one Fire Tower Open House. We had 220 hikers participate and 49 visitors to the Green Knob Fire Tower. We had two people complete the Mount Mitchell Challenge: Dennis Smith and Rick Harkins. We also recorded 2,439 volunteer hours on 104 work days encompassing 17 trails. NC High Peaks completed the refurbishment of the third section of the Mount Mitchell Trail. This project was completed by the American Conservation Experience with assistance from the Monday crew for one additional section. About one mile of trail was rebuilt which went from the State Park boundary up to the summit trail.

Another major accomplishment was the installation of a Traveler Information System radio transmitter for the State Park. It broadcasts on 1630 AM and will reach the Parkway starting near Green Knob going all the way to the park summit at Mount Mitchell. Alan Orovitz and John Whitehouse supervised the permitting, equipment purchases, and tower construction over the past year. We used Friends of Mount Mitchell funds for the equipment and installation costs.

The High Peaks Birders were also busy this year. We completed an installation of bird houses as a memorial to Bob Repoley. Bob was one of the founders of High Peaks Birders who passes away last year. These were installed at Mountain Heritage High School, Cane River Recreational Center, Mountain Aire, and other locations around the county. The Birders also sponsored several strolls and birdwatching programs during the year. One of the most interesting activities was assisting with a bird banding program at Big Bald in Wolf Laurel Resort. We may make this an annual event. Finally, we participated in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count and the Audubon Climate Watch Bird Survey.

NC High Peaks Trail Association also assists the Crabtree Falls Chapter of the Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Working in this capacity, we sponsored a spring cleanup at Linville Falls

Campground, several cleanups of the 23 overlooks in our section of the Parkway, and repair and refurbishment of 23 picnic tables at the Crabtree Falls Picnic Area.

As of November 30, 2019, NC High Peaks had 173 members. Seventy-seven of these were family memberships, 93 were individual memberships, and three were organizational memberships. This is an increase from 151 memberships on November 30, 2018.

Statement of Activities

NC High Peaks Trail Association is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation chartered in North Carolina. Our purpose is to advance the public's awareness, education, understanding, and appreciation of nature, wildlife and the natural environment by engaging in outdoor recreational activities including walking, hiking, bicycling, and water sports. Our area of interest includes the North and South Toe River basins, Cane River valley, and the North Carolina portion of the Nolichucky River in the mountains of Western North Carolina.

The Association is engaged with our community leading hikes, maintaining and building trails, cleaning over-looks and scenic by-ways and working to improve the quality of our outdoor recreation assets. We are partners with the Blue Ridge Parkway, Pisgah National Forest (Appalachian Ranger District), Mount Mitchell State Park, Carolina Mountain Club, Appalachian Trail Conservancy and Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. NC High Peaks is also the fiduciary agent for the *Friends of Mount Mitchell State Park* fund.

NC High Peaks coordinates hiking trips each month. It also participates in community outreach activities like the Mount Mitchell Crafts Fair (held in August), Old Timey Days (held in September in Burnsville), and the Earth Day celebration on the Burnsville Town Square.

NC High Peaks is actively engaged in trail maintenance in our area. The 'Monday Crew', led by John Whitehouse, works almost every week on trails in the Black Mountain Range as well as the Mountains to Sea Trail and the Appalachian Trail. We completed the third section rebuild of the Mount Mitchell Trail in 2019. As in previous years, this was funded through the Recreational Trails Program, sponsored by the State of North Carolina. The work was mostly done by the American Conservation Experience with assistance from the Monday Crew. This section of trail went from the State Park boundary up to the summit trail, a distance of about one mile.

NC High Peaks Trails Association maintains a website: <http://www.nchighpeaks.org>. The website provides information about the Association and includes a calendar of activities, provides access to the Associations' maps of the Black Mountain Range and its trail network, and provides a retail outlet for merchandise. The Association also maintains a Facebook page that is used for public relations, communications, and promotion of hikes and other activities.

Statement of Expenses

NC High Peaks Trail Association had no remarkable expenses in FY 2019. NC High Peaks incurs expenses for trail maps, maps for area information kiosks, our website, webcams, and weather station on Mount Mitchell. We also pay Yancey Transportation Services for hiker

transportation, fees that are reimbursed by the hikers. Finally, we act as the fiscal agent for the Friends of Mount Mitchell fund and pay for supplies and other things requested by the State Park for which they cannot use State appropriated funds.

Mount Mitchell Challenge

Beginning in 2018, NC High Peaks initiated its *Mount Mitchell Challenge* hiking program. Modeled after similar programs offered by the Carolina Mountain Club, the challenge involves hiking all 23 recognized trails in the Black Mountains. The reward for completing the challenge is a three-color patch that the owner can proudly wear to show their accomplishment. The rules for the challenge are:

- 1) Complete hiking the 23 trails and trail sections listed in the document “HP Hike Challenge Trails” on our web site.
- 2) Complete and submit the “Hike Challenge Record” also on our web site.
- 3) Trails must be hiked on or after January 1, 2018. No credit will be given for trails hiked before that date. There is no time limit for completion.
- 4) Trails must be hiked or run. Credit will not be given for mountain biking, ATV riding, horse riding, etc.
- 5) Trails can be hiked in any order and in any direction. However, you must cover the entire trail or trail section.
- 6) NC High Peaks will have sole discretion in awarding the hiking patch for this challenge.

Conclusions

In closing, the NC High Peaks Trail Association continues to grow in its ability to fulfill its mission statement. Phases One, Two, and Three of the Mount Mitchell Trail rebuilding project have been completed. We have improvements to the Park trails close to the summit facilities in the planning stages. We are well known in the community. We look forward to 2020 as another year of challenge, growth, and benefit to our community and our members.

Thank you to Nancy Fitzgibbons for handling our minutes and recordkeeping, Susan Weller for our financial management, Joe Lappin for serving on the Finance Committee, and John Whitehouse for his excellent leadership of the Association. Thank you also to Jake and Cynthia Blood who have done so much with our grant management over the years and especially last year in the face of many personal challenges. We also want to thank Alan Orovitz for his leadership and skill whenever a technology need presents itself. Alan is one of the unsung heroes that enable NC High Peaks to do the many things we do.