

Mountain Stewards Operations Report 2015

As of 19 November, the Trail Crew has contributed 1,074 volunteer hours in 2015 toward building a number of new recreational facilities and has maintained and repaired existing trails and facilities. One area of concern in our maintenance work is that the pressure treated lumber that has been sold since 2006 is not holding up since they changed the formula for preserving the lumber. Some of this material is rotting out within ten years. The expected life of this material was supposed to be 40 years. Some suppliers have now improved on the formula and the lumber is get back to being acceptable for long life but we still have in place that which we bought in the last ten years.

2015 marks our first decade of building recreational facilities for the North GA area. We have now put approximately \$1 million dollars of facilities in use in a four county area in the past decade and are expecting to increase that number in the years to come. A summary of our 2015 accomplishments follow.

Eagle's Rest Recreational Facility, Pickens County

We began building this 140 acre recreational site in 2014 which was opened to the public in 2013. Eagle's Rest is owned by the Mt. Oglethorpe Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in Pickens County, GA. Last year we built an outdoor classroom and observation platform, a Moldering Toilet facility and a kiosk.



Outdoor Classroom and Speakers Platform -2014

In 2015, we built two observation towers, one looking north from the mountain and one looking south. Both of these towers are about 16 feet high. The North Tower was built to be handicap accessible whereas the South Tower could not accommodate handicap access due to its location. The Outdoor Classroom and Moldering Toilet are also handicap accessible. Vista pruning has been done for the North and South Tower. From the towers, individuals can see 60 miles on a clear day. People visiting the site can now see vistas from the four cardinal directions off of the four towers and classroom sites.

In addition to building new facilities at the site, the Mountain Stewards Trail Crew also maintains the 2.5 miles of hiking trails previously built on the mountain by the Mountain Stewards.



North Tower with Handicap Access



Vista from North Tower



Completed South Tower



Completed South Tower

Angels on Horseback

In the past years, Mountain Stewards has support the Angels on Horseback program by building trails for their program. This non-profit 501(c)(3) program provides therapeutic horseback riding for children and young adults with mental or physical handicaps. This year, the Mountain Stewards built a 28 foot long by 10 foot wide bridge over a ravine that was a challenge for the horses and a judging stand for their arena area.



Bridge over Ravine



Judges Stand at Arena

Trails and Facility Maintenance

In the early part of 2015, the Trail Crew cleared 6 miles of trails in the Dawson Forest and treated another 200 hemlock trees to protect them from the woolly adelgid disease. In the later part of 2015, we cleared all 12 miles of trails in the Dawson Forest and have made repairs to the Wildcat Creek Bridge. We also did trail maintenance at the DNR Amicalola Access site and repairs some broken deck boards on the Handicap Trail.

All the trails in the Burnt Mountain Preserve have also been maintained as well as those trails at the Holy Family campus which are open to the public.

Future Work Plans

The Trail Crew will begin building trails for a home school 501(c)(3) program in Pickens County beginning late this year and probably continue into 2016. These trails are for teaching horsemanship and nature study for the school children.

Pickens County with the support of the Mountain Conservation Trust has now acquired approximately 300 more acres for incorporation into the Burnt Mountain Preserve bring that

preserved land to about 1,200 acres. The Mountain Stewards Trail Crew will begin building new trails and facilities at that new area in 2016.

More facilities are being planned for Eagle's Rest in 2016 and they will be built by the Trail Crew.

Also, in 2016, all existing trails and facilities in Pickens and Dawson County will be maintained during the work year.

Indian Cultural Heritage Program

The activities of the Indian Cultural Heritage Program are a separate report.