

Mountain Stewards Operations Report 2016

As of 19 November, the Trail Crew has contributed 1,308 volunteer hours in 2016 toward building a number of new recreational facilities and has maintained and repaired existing trails and facilities. We will add approximately another 180 hours of work before we take our winter break in mid-December. In 2016, we completed the final build out of Eagle's Rest Park, began building the new section of the Burnt Mountain Preserve, completed the horse trails for Sweet Dream Farm, a home school 501(c)(3) program, maintained all the existing trails we have built that are operational and are ending our years' work helping the Angels on Horseback program remove their facilities from the current site and get them ready to be installed at their new location beginning in 2017.

We have now put over \$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 2016 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 late 2013. Eagle's Rest is owned by the Mt. Oglethorpe Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in Pickens County, GA. Having added three observation towers, an outdoor classroom, two hiking trails and a moldering toilet in previous years, this year we built the new picnic pavilion on the east side of the parking area and have added a new hiking trail with some interesting natural features. We also made some temporary repairs to the east platform which is approaching 20 years old. Next year we will make more permanent repairs to the steps leading to the platform as well as other repairs to keep it safe for continued use.



Pavilion with Handicap Ramp



Picnic Tables and Seating



Seating and Swing



Vista Seating Serving Area

Grassy Knob Vista Trail – This new trail at Eagle’s Rest Park is 1.3 miles long and has many natural features and vistas in all cardinal directions.



Trail Going Past Rock Formation on East Side of Trail



Grassy Knob Rock Garden in SW Corner of the Trail



Rock Formation on North Side of Trail with Tree on Formation



Square Rock

Of note, Eagle's Rest Park was built in three years by the Mountain Stewards Trail Crew expending 2,187 volunteer man-hours and providing other resources to the foundation. Total cost of building the park was approximately \$70,000 dollars of which \$44,000 was the value of volunteer services and the remainder was the cost of materials and contracted services. Commercial costs for building the park are estimated to have cost around \$250,000.

Sweet Dreams Farm

The Trail crew built approximately 2.5 miles of horse trails on the eastern and western slopes of a ridgeline through the farm area. The children can now travel these trails on horseback learning horsemanship and getting out into nature to learn about the flora and fauna of the area.



Sweet Dreams Farm Horse Trails

Angels on Horseback

In the past years, Mountain Stewards has support the Angels on Horseback program by building trails and facilities for their program. This non-profit 501(c)(3) program provides therapeutic horseback riding for children and young adults with mental or physical handicaps. After operating their program on a farm near Jasper for the past decade, they have to move to a new site near Bent Tree which they are purchasing so they will have their own place to call home. Beginning in 2017, the Trail Crew will reinstall facilities we are currently removing from the current site.

Trails and Facility Maintenance

In the early part of 2016, the Trail Crew cleared 6 miles of trails in the Dawson Forest and assessed the hemlock situation to determine if we needed to retreat any hemlocks. We also made repairs to the Wildcat Creek Bridge and two locations on the Wildcat Creek Trail. Before closing out 2016, we will do some trail repairs at the DNR Amicalola Access site.

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.

Work Plans for 2017

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 anticipates completing work on new trails in this area in 2017. We will also be working at Eagle's Rest Park, the new Angels on Horseback site and other locations that will be added to our 2017 program

Also, in 2017, 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 growing in scope and total effort. Using new techniques in dowsing, we are mapping Indian Cultural Heritage sites throughout the nation and will be reporting out in May at a major conference in Pigeon Forge, TN on our findings. We are using dowsing for mapping these sites since there is underground streams of water located under most, if not, all Indian sacred sites. We presented 20 programs to historical societies and other groups throughout the year across the nation and expect to do that many again in 2017. We now have over 2,100 Marker Trees in our national database covering 42 states. We are receiving about 5 trees each week for evaluation to be considered for the database.