

Fall 2018

# Footnotes

Newsletter for the Foothills Trail Conservancy - - [www.foothillstrail.org](http://www.foothillstrail.org)

## SASSAFRAS TOWER NEARS COMPLETION

In the fall of 2010 a group of interested organizations gathered at the Pickens County Museum to discuss the possibility of constructing an observation tower of some sort on the top of Sassafras Mountain to replace the fire tower which had been removed some 25 years ago. Everyone present knew that this spot, at 3,553 ft. was the highest elevation in S.C., but that it was difficult to find, the road was awful, and there were so many trees at the summit that there was no view to speak of. The High Pointers Association, which publishes a factbook that details the high point in each state, did not have anything nice to say about the top of Sassafras Mountain!

Representatives from Pickens County, SC Department of Natural Resources, Pendleton Historic District, Duke Energy, SC Historical Society, and the Foothills Trail Conference (now Conservancy), along with State Representative David Hiott, were present for this initial meeting to discuss what improvements could be made at the summit of Sassafras, to include an observation tower. Each group representative expressed what they thought ought to be done (or not done!), but the consensus was that improvements needed to be made, and an ultimate goal would be to have an observation tower of some sort to enhance the view. It was also pointed out that it was state-owned property, part of the Jocassee Gorges, and that the Department of Natural Resources was the manager of the area. Thus, all future planning would flow through SC DNR.

In less than a month, SC DNR constructed a rustic observation platform just beyond the end of the Sassafras Mountain parking area. This small platform made it quite obvious that a tower on the summit of the mountain would provide a spectacular view indeed. The ball was now rolling, and in the next few months a number of meetings were held to determine what the initial goals were, who would do fundraising and how, what a tower should look like, and what it should be made of. One legal item that came into play was the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirement that the structure would definitely be handi-capped accessible.



## Sassafras Tower Nears Completion, continued from page 1

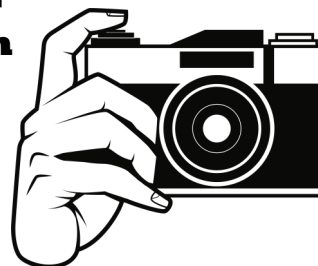
The ADA requirements also affected the newly constructed platform. DNR worked with Clemson Architecture students and faculty to design a new structure that would meet the regulations. The Clemson students built the new platform on the campus, took it apart, transported it to Sassafras, and put it together on the site! More meetings took place to determine the style of the tower, as well as the type of materials to be used, which varied from wood to steel. Ultimately, an architecture firm was hired to put together a comprehensive plan.

Fund-raising started off by selling brick pavers to anyone who wanted to help with this ambitious project. These would be placed in a patio situation when the tower was near completion. Many thousands of these were sold by DNR, but it was obvious that a lot more funding would be needed. The final cost for the project, which also includes drainage, restrooms, and a handicapped accessible trail is approximately \$1.1 million dollars. Various funding groups contributed significantly to the project, but a major contributor was Duke Energy, who used to own the property before selling it to SC as part of the Jocassee Gorges.

Funding needs forced various changes in the planning, and legal issues of various sorts also caused significant delays. In 2014, when it looked like construction might start soon, about 3 acres of trees were removed at the summit by a company contracted by SC DNR. The legal wheels ground along slowly, architecture firms were changed, extra property was purchased to insure control of the site, and time marched on. Finally, after lots of hurdles were cleared, the tower project was bid by SC DNR in early 2017, and was awarded in November, 2017, to Lazar Construction of Anderson, SC. Winter weather made sure that only minimal progress was made in the beginning, but when spring arrived, construction began to take off. Mother Nature intervened again with huge amounts of rain in late spring, slowing down the pouring of concrete and pushing completion into the fall. If early fall weather cooperates, and Hurricane Florence did not impact the project too much, the tower should be open by early to mid-November.

### **Photography Contest**

**We will be holding a photography contest this year at our annual meeting. If you are interested in submitting a photograph that shows the beauty of our trail, please email us at [info@foothillstrail.org](mailto:info@foothillstrail.org) to get the rules and submission information.**



# Foothills Trail Conservancy 44th Annual Meeting

**Oconee State Park—November 2, 3 and 4, 2018**

Deadline for Registration is November 1 , 2018

(to see a map of the park, please check our website)

Every year the Foothills Trail Conservancy holds an Annual Meeting weekend for our members that is filled with exciting hikes, great speakers, delicious meals, and fellowship with other FTC members. This year's Meeting is just around the corner, and we have an exciting weekend planned for all to enjoy! To reserve a campsite, please contact Oconee State Park online. Make sure to register early to reserve your hikes and a place at the table for a great weekend of outdoor adventure and fellowship with the FTC!

## FTC Annual Meeting Schedule

### Friday, November 2

- 9:30 a.m. Hike Departs (See enclosed hike list)
- 3:00 p.m. Volunteers gather to help set up
- 6:00-9:00 p.m. Friday Night Social Hour in the Barn Potluck supper;  
Presentation on Bears by Tammy Wactor

### Saturday, November 3

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast in the Barn (catered by  
Manna from Heaven)
- 9:30 a.m. Hikes Depart (see enclosed hike list)  
Lunch on your own
- 10am– 5pm Various Activities in the Barn  
(Games, Puzzles, Leave No Trace activities, Etc)
- 5:00 p.m. Social Hour in the Barn– BYO Special Beverages  
with Snacks and Drinks by FTC
- 6:00 p.m. Supper (catered by Oconee Station)
- 7:00 p.m. Annual Meeting  
Special Guest Speaker, Jeff Mohr  
(The Great Outdoors: Recreation, Relaxation, and Rattlesnakes)  
Business Meeting, Door Prizes

### Sunday, November 4

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast in the Barn (Continental)
- 9:30 a.m. Hikes Depart (see enclosed hike list)  
Volunteers help with cleanup

# FOOTHILLS TRAIL CONSERVANCY

*Hikes meet at the **lower parking area** (or other designated place) at 9:30 a.m. Wear suitable clothing and appropriate footwear.*

## **Friday**

#1—**Ellicott Rock** - Join **Bobbie Wilhite**, FTC Board member and Master Naturalist, on a moderate to strenuous hike of 7.2 miles to the corner of SC, NC, and GA. This somewhat elusive, and very historic spot, seems to baffle a lot of hikers trying to find it on their own, so going with a leader that knows the exact location is what you want to do. The hike will continue to Burrell's Ford after viewing the "Rock." A camera is recommended. Bring snacks, lunch, and plenty to drink. Meet at the lower parking lot. 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

## **Saturday**

#2—**Lake Trail** - Join **John Garton**, retired Duke Energy biologist and avid naturalist, on an easy, family-oriented hike around the lake. John will point out fall wildflowers, critters, and other things in the lakeside environment. This will probably be an opportunity to collect items for a planned scavenger hunt. Meet at the CCC statue. 9:30 a.m. to noon.

#3—**Station Falls** – An easy hike to beautiful Station Falls and Station Cove. He will discuss the ecology of this rich wildflower area and describe any late-fall flowers that may still be blooming. A camera is recommended. Bring snacks, lunch, and a drink. Meet at the CCC statue. 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

#4—**Lower Whitewater Falls** – Join **Scott Stegenga**, FTC Board member and Table Rock Naturalist, on a moderate hike of 3.5 miles to the impressive Lower Whitewater Falls. Fall colors should make the view of this very picturesque waterfall even prettier! A camera is certainly recommended. Meet at the lower parking lot. Bring snacks, lunch, and plenty to drink. 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

#5—**Big Bend Trail** – Join **Willa Gleason**, FTC member and all-around volunteer who helps maintain the Big Bend Trail, on an easy-to-moderate hike of about 4.3 miles from Cherry Hill campground to the Chattooga River. After reaching the river, the hike will proceed to a couple of nice viewpoints along the Chattooga River, then return to Cherry Hill. Meet at the lower parking lot. 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Bring snacks, lunch, and plenty to drink.

**PULL-OUT PAGES FOR  
MEMBERSHIP AND 2018 ANNUAL MEETING**

# Membership Renewal

## Annual Foothills Trail Conservancy Membership

Your membership to the Foothills Trail Conservancy is vital to the Foothills Trail, the Southeast's best hiking trail. With the Trail traversing the property of EIGHT different landowners, for over 40 years the FTC has been a single voice committed to keeping this footpath well maintained. In addition, we promote the Trail to the hiking community and we publish the official trail map and guide. Your support gives us the resources and support necessary to continue these efforts. Thank you for your commitments in the past, and we look forward to your continued support.

**NOTE:** *Our membership year now runs January through January.*

### Membership Levels:

- Oconee Individual \$20
- Gorges Family \$30
- Table Rock \$50
- Chattooga \$100
- Sassafras \$250
- Pinnacle \$500
- Additional Contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Approx. years of membership \_\_\_\_\_

Brithday: \_\_\_\_\_

For family memberships, how many members are in your family? \_\_\_\_

Please list names and birthdates for family members:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in volunteering. I have the following skills to offer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thank you for renewing your membership to the FTC!  
You may mail this form with your membership and/or contribution to the

**Foothills Trail Conservancy**  
**Membership Renewal**  
**PO Box 3041**  
**Greenville, SC 29602**

—OR—

You may also renew online at [www.foothillstrail.org](http://www.foothillstrail.org) and click "Join Today".

# Foothills Trail Conservancy 44th Annual Meeting

## Registration Form

Oconee State Park- November 2, 3, and 4, 2017

Deadline for Registration is November 1, 2017

Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate the number of people for each category below.**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Register for the entire weekend. | <input type="checkbox"/> I can only attend Saturday Evening<br>(includes meal and activities) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adults \$35 per person           | <input type="checkbox"/> Adults \$25 per person   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children (12 and under) \$10     | <input type="checkbox"/> Children (12 and under) \$5  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$80                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College Student \$20             | <input type="checkbox"/> College Student \$12   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scouts \$10                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Scouts \$7   |

Total Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**I/We plan to attend the following. Please indicate the number of people:**

Friday Night Social/Speaker \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Evening Social \_\_\_\_\_  
Saturday Supper \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Meeting/Speaker \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like to register for the following hikes. Please indicate the number of people:**

Friday : Hike 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Saturday: Hike 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Hike 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Hike 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Hike 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Hike 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Hike 7 \_\_\_\_\_ Hike 8 \_\_\_\_\_  
Sunday : Hike 9 \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteers are GREATLY appreciated!!**

**\*\*I can volunteer to help with:**

Setup on Friday: 3pm-5pm \_\_\_\_\_  
Friday Night Social: I can bring a dish to share \_\_\_\_\_  
Saturday: Breakfast: I can help with setup/cleanup Saturday morning \_\_\_\_\_  
Sunday Breakfast: I can help prepare breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ I can bring a dish to share \_\_\_\_\_  
Sunday Breakdown: I can help with breakdown/cleanup (10-11am) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail your registration and payment to:**

Foothills Trail Conservancy- Annual Meeting  
PO Box 3041, Greenville SC 29602

**PULL-OUT PAGES FOR  
MEMBERSHIP AND 2018 ANNUAL MEETING**



# ANNUAL MEETING 2018 HIKES AND OUTINGS!!

## Saturday, continued

#6—**Yellow Branch Falls** - Join **Elamon Barrett**, volunteer partnership coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service, on a moderate to strenuous hike of 3.0 miles, to the base of one of the most scenic falls in the area. Water for the falls spills over the top and down a series of ledges that form an arc like a balcony, making it different from other “traditional” waterfalls. A camera is recommended. Meet at the lower parking lot. 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

#7—Join **Dan Whitten**, FTC Board member and Master Naturalist, on a moderate hike of 4.5 miles to Lee’s Falls, tucked in a hollow below Long Mountain. This very picturesque waterfall is a little tricky to find, but it is one of Dan’s favorites. A camera is recommended. Meet at the CCC statue. 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Bring snacks, lunch, and plenty to drink.

#8—

**Maintenance outing** - Join **Andrew Gleason**, FTC Board member and Maintenance Coordinator, in planting new shrubs, adding mulch, and other needed improvements at the Foothills Trailhead parking area. Fall is the time to add to the native plants that were donated by the Clemson Horticulture Garden, Head-Lee Nursery, and the FTC. The FTC is committed to the upkeep of this beautiful trailhead. Meet at the trailhead at 9:00 a.m. FTC and OSP will have the plants, mulch, and all the tools necessary.

## Sunday

#9—**Sassafras Mountain Tower** - Join **Greg Lucas**, Board Member and DNR Jocassee Journal Editor, on a tour of the new observation tower located on the summit of Sassafras Mountain. This long-awaited project should be finished and ready to display an outstanding 360-degree view of the mountains and the piedmont below!! Meet at the lower parking lot. Bring snacks, lunch, and a drink. 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.



### **Scavenger Hunt**



We are adding some additional fun this year with a Scavenger Hunt for anyone who wishes to participate. Scavenger hunts and instructions will be available at the registration table.

These can be completed at your own pace. We will recognize those who have completed the hunt on Saturday night. We would also love your feedback on this, and other family activities, as we hope to expand these activities and programs. There will also be other games and activities for families, children, and those just wanting an alternative to the hikes on Saturday. Please ask for more information and join in the fun!

# TWO MAJOR CAMPSITE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN 2018

## FTC and Gorges volunteers and an Eagle Scout

On a cold weekend during the first week of February, volunteers from Gorges State Park, the Wilds Camp, and the Foothills Trail Conservancy joined forces to complete a major renovation of the campsites along Toxaway Creek and the edge of Lake Jocassee. Prior to the weekend, Gorges State Park personnel had stockpiled 3 dozen 16-ft 8 x 8 timbers, along with other materials at the campsite area, and these were waiting for the volunteers when they arrived Friday morning.

Twelve volunteers and park staff worked diligently all day Friday, leveling each campsite with the timbers, adding in-ground fire ring / grills, and placing lantern posts and picnic tables. After a very productive day, the work crew camped out in temperatures that were barely in the 20's! On Saturday morning, five more volunteers arrived and set to work on the remaining campsites.

A big boost occurred at lunchtime with the arrival of a fabulous lunch prepared by FTC Board member Bobbie Wilhite. The feast of baked ham, fried chicken, potato salad, pimento cheese sandwiches, cookies, and tea was transported by pontoon boat up the lake by Jocassee Lake Tours and delivered right to the worksite! What a treat!



With a goal to complete eight campsites, work continued steadily by the 17 volunteers all day Saturday. When 6 pm arrived, they had added a ninth site to the list, loaded up all the tools and equipment, and were heading back up the hill to the Wilds Camp. This two-day, cooperative project was deemed a HUGE success and will benefit campers and backpackers on the Trail for years to come!

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An Eagle Scout project has resulted in the vast improvement of a designated campsite east of the Thompson River. Although the designated campsite has been shown on the Foothills Trail Map and discussed in the FHT Guidebook, it was little-used over the years, and was somewhat hidden from the Trail due to vegetation.

Gabe Boggs, of Troop 134 in Six Mile, finished his Eagle Project by placing an in-ground grill/ firepit at the campsite and adding two substantial benches alongside of it. He and his crew of fellow scouts also cleared vegetation from a large flat area for tent sites. In addition, a water cistern was placed in a stream about 75 yards down the Trail from the campsite area. To ensure that hikers would not miss the trail to the campsite area, he installed a hand-routed sign at the entrance. This refurbished campsite is a welcome addition for backpackers on the Foothills Trail, and will undoubtedly get much use in the future.



## FEATURED GUEST SPEAKER AT 2018 ANNUAL MEETING TIM SPIRA

### BOTANIST AND AUTHOR HEADLINES 2018 ANNUAL MEETING



Tim Spira's love for nature began in the mountains of California, where he studied alpine gentians (a flower) as a graduate student and did rare plant surveys for the U.S. Forest Service. Since completing a Ph.D. in botany at the University of California, Berkeley, Tim has shared his passion for plants with students and colleagues for over 30 years, including 10 years as a faculty member at Georgia Southern University and 20 years at Clemson University, where he taught a variety of courses, including field botany, plant ecology, and natural history. He retired from Clemson University in 2015 (????). Tim enjoys hiking, bicycling, gardening, and traveling to natural areas throughout the world, as well as exploring wildflowers and waterfalls in the southern Appalachian Mountains. He's published numerous papers in scientific journals, and his photographs have appeared in books, scientific journals, and magazines. Most recently he's the author of the award-winning book *Wildflowers and Plant Communities of the Southern Appalachian Mountains and Piedmont: A Naturalist's Guide to the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia*. Tim and his wife, Lisa Wagner, (along with their dog, Woody) live in Asheville, NC.

#### 2018 ANNUAL MEETING PICTURE SHOW

Do you have some great pictures of your fun along the Foothills Trail? OF COURSE YOU DO! In this day of digital pictures, everyone shoots up a storm. At the 2018 Annual Meeting we will have a slideshow of digital pictures taken along the Trail. They may be waterfalls, hikers, camping, wildflowers, sunsets, animals—anything you think others would enjoy. You may email pictures to [info@foothillstrail.org](mailto:info@foothillstrail.org) or bring the picture files on a standard USB thumb drive and we'll load them onto a picture show computer. The digital slideshow will run at various times throughout the weekend. By sending your pictures, you are also giving us permission to use them on our social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as our website. Thanks!

Foothills Trail Conservancy  
PO Box 3041  
Greenville, SC 29602

WWW.FOOTHILLSTRAIL.ORG

### Board of Directors

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Becky Weedman  
Andrew Gleason, Maintenance Coordinator  
Dan Whitten, Vice Chairman  
Bobbie Wilhite, Secretary

### FOLLOW THE FTC ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM



Be sure to check out the Conservancy's page on Facebook and follow our Instagram for the latest in activities, updates, notices, and plenty of photos of interesting and beautiful places on the Foothills Trail. There is a link to the page on the FTC website homepage. Just scroll down a little ways and the Facebook logo is on the left. Click on it and it will connect you to the page.

### SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Andrew Gleason, maintenance coordinator, and all our Trail Captains who worked extra hard to keep the trail in tip-top shape.

