

A Brief History of

THE CLINCH COALITION

For twenty-five years, The Clinch Coalition (TCC) has utilized activism, education, and outreach for ecological preservation in Southwest Virginia.

1998

The Clinch Coalition was formed during efforts to protect Bark Camp Lake from a 1400 acre timber sale and successfully decreased the effort to 700 acres.

2003

The Clinch Coalition successfully halted an environmentally hazardous ATV trail project on High Knob, and a golf course on the Flatwoods section of the mountain.

2007

The Clinch Coalition acquired a \$40,000 grant to improve the Chief Bengé Scout Trail. The same year, TCC sponsored its first High Knob Naturalist Rally..

2010

Coalition members signed a petition, alongside other environmental organizations, to protect regional 404 designated species under the Endangered Species Act.

2015

The Coalition joined 23 other groups in advocacy of surface mining regulations to conserve freshwater sources. The group also celebrated the 75th anniversary of the High Knob Recreation Area.

2019

The Coalition successfully reduced the timber sale of the Nettle Patch from 1,499 acres to 577, stopped harmful road developments, and reduced 1,000 acres of prescribed burns.

2006

The Coalition sponsored an art and essay contest titled, "How do trees save and protect the streams and animals in our forest?" This sparked the creation of the annual "Earth Awareness" contest.

2008

Coalition members opposed the construction of the Virginia City Power Plant and sponsored "The Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival" at the Norton, Virginia, Cinema.

2014

The Coalition sponsored the first High Knob Hellbender 10K Race. The group also sponsored their first two day hike of the Chief Bengé Scout Trail to celebrate National Trails Day.

2018

The 11th annual High Knob Naturalist Rally was held, with nearly 350 attendees. The Coalition celebrated 20 years of activism, and recognized founding members Dick Austin, Steve Brooks, Joe Scardo, and Gerry Scardo at the rally.

Early Members of the Coalition

Steve Brooks

CURRENT ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Brooks, a founding member and "the glue that held the group together," has been with TCC since the beginning. He has long been active in regional conservation efforts and became a key organizer to rally opposition to the Bark Camp Timber Sale and a 30-mile ATV trail.



Gerry & Joe Scardo

FOUNDING MEMBERS

The Scardos have been involved with TCC from inception, and their efforts have included leading educational hikes and communicating with public officials on behalf of the organization.



Diana Withen

FORMER PRESIDENT

Referred to as Diana "Dynamite" Withen by Gerry Scardo, Withen was involved in early Coalition efforts and served as president of TCC from 2006 to 2018. During her time as president TCC held its first High Knob Naturalist Rally. It has since evolved into a successful, annual event.



Otis Ward

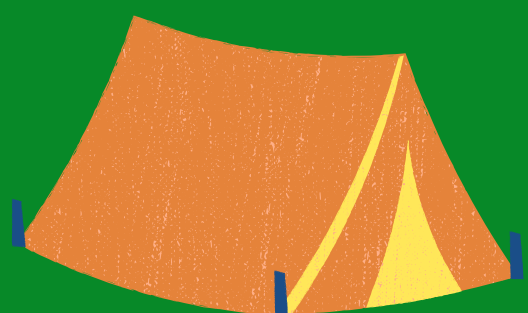
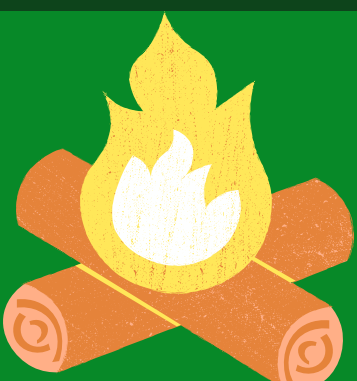
EARLY MEMBER

Ward, alongside Steve Brooks, contributed to the initial formation and organization of TCC. His efforts included collecting 2,000 signatures for a petition that opposed the Bark Camp Timber sale in 1998.

Dr. Richard "Dick" Cartwright Austin

FOUNDING DIRECTOR

A founding member and the founding director, as well as an outstanding writer, Dr. Austin has worked to scale back regional clear cutting and helped prevent a harmful dam development at the mouth of Devil's Fork.



Educational Outreach

WAYS THE COALITION TEACHES FUTURE GENERATIONS TO PROTECT NATURE

Naturalist Rallies

2008 - PRESENT DAY

Annual Coalition organized Naturalist Rallies on High Knob provide environmental education opportunities to the public with hands-on experiences for all ages.



High Knob Hellbender 10k
October 4, 2014

This challenging 6.2-mile race boasts more than a 2,000-ft elevation gain as it climbs from downtown Norton to the High Knob summit.

Visit our website for more information
highknobhellbender.wordpress.com

High Knob Hellbender 10k

2014 - PRESENT DAY

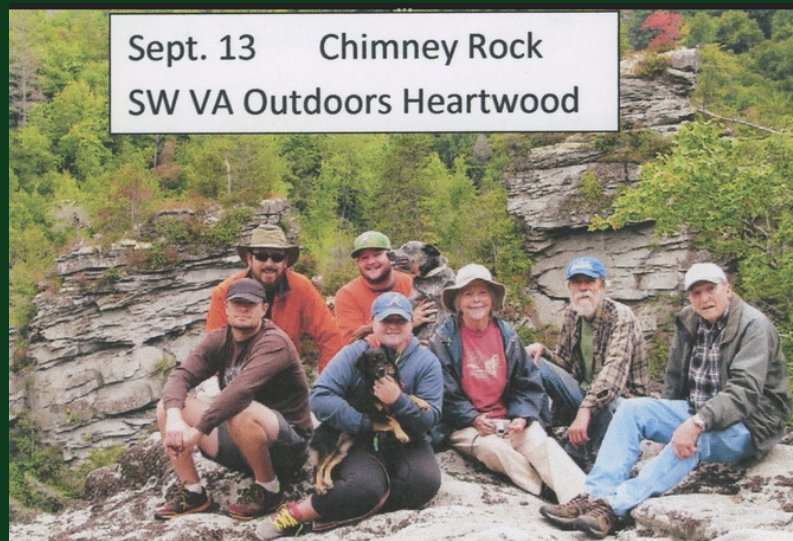
This annual 6.2 mile marathon pushes participants up more than 2,000 feet of elevation gain to the summit of High Knob, with proceeds contributing to future Coalition efforts.

Earth Awareness Art and Essay Contest

2006 - PRESENT DAY

Each year, the Coalition encourages community discussion and introspection toward the topic of environmental conservation by inviting local students to participate in this contest.

The Clinch Coalition
eARTh Awareness Contest
'Going Green'



Hikes on High Knob

1999 - PRESENT DAY

The Coalition organizes periodic hikes on Clinch District Forest Service trails, which encourages locals and tourists alike to explore and learn from the natural life that exists throughout Southwest Virginia.

Trail Maintenance

1998 - PRESENT DAY

Members of the Coalition assist with the maintenance of Clinch District Forest Service trails including the scenic Little Stoney Falls, Devil's Fork, Roaring Branch, and more!



Read More at:
CLINCHCOALITION.ORG



“LET HIGH KNOB STAND.”

The Clinch Coalition has worked for 25 years to provide safe habitats for regional species.

OYSTER MUSSEL

The oyster mussel is an endangered freshwater mussel found in the Clinch River. Coalition efforts have assisted in the preservation of this organism, including captive breeding programs for population replenishment.



HELLBENDER

The hellbender is a threatened salamander species found in the eastern United States, that requires especially clean water systems for survival. Coalition efforts continually serve to protect this species from habitat loss in local ecosystems.



RED-SPOTTED NEWT

The red-spotted newt is abundant on High Knob. Clean water sources are crucial to the development of this species. Coalition members have worked to protect local water sources and to preserve this newt.



The Clinch Coalition aims to preserve these organisms' delicate environments through conservation and education.



Bibliography

Interviews:

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November 13, 2021.

Dr. Richard Cartwright Austin,
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University of Virginia's College at Wise,
November 8, 2021.

Diana Withen,
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University of Virginia's College at Wise,
November 7, 2021.

The Clinch Coalition Website:
<https://www.clinchcoalition.org>.

