

# THE HIGH KNOB HERALD

## NEW YEAR EDITION



The Clinch Coalition

The Clinch Coalition  
Newsletter

JANUARY 2023, ISSUE 25

## TCC Releases Press Release on Spearhead Trails' Attempt to be Exempt from Environmental Oversight and Regulations

Last month, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), pursuant to a public records request, released a new batch of public documents related to environmental concerns on the Spearhead Trails system, a 600-mile network of off-road vehicle trails funded by Virginia taxpayers and managed by the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA). The Clinch Coalition in a press release provided documents revealing the scheme between the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Southwest Virginia Recreational Authority (SRRA).

View the full press release on our website at:  
<https://www.clinchcoalition.org/post/swvapressrelease>.

## The Clinch Coalition Celebrates its 25th Anniversary with Archival Website

The Clinch Coalition enters its 25th year of advocacy and education in 2023, continuing its mission to protect and preserve the forest, wildlife, and watersheds in our National Forest and surrounding communities for present and future generations. Over these years, TCC has preserved a treasure trove of papers and artifacts that have been kept primarily in boxes and scrapbooks. Since the fall of 2021, UVA Wise students enrolled in classes taught by Dr. Jinny Turman, Associate Professor of History, have worked on various phases of The Clinch Coalition's 25th Anniversary Project.

The organization is incredibly excited for this milestone, and will be releasing its archive in partnership with Dr. Turman at the end of this month!



Photography by The Clinch Coalition

*Sediment pours off of an excavated stream crossing along the Spearhead Trails network and above homes in Coeburn, Virginia in late December 2022. Newly-released documents show that Virginia Energy officials identified trail construction as the cause of stream damage at the site during a 2021 complaint inspection for Virginia DEQ.*



Photography by Jay T.

*UVA Wise student Shayleigh Cire presents on The Clinch Coalition and share their archive of TCC's history and events.*



# TCC Hosts First Day Hike

*By Tauna Gulley*

The Clinch Coalition's Hiking Club hosted the club's first, First Day Hike January 1, 2023. Hikers, nine people and two dogs, met at the Bark Camp Lake Boat Ramp parking lot. A dense fog was covering the lake and when we started walking, the wind blew the mist across our faces. As we looked out over the lake, icy patches shifted on top of the water to the rhythm of the wind blowing. The view was splendid.

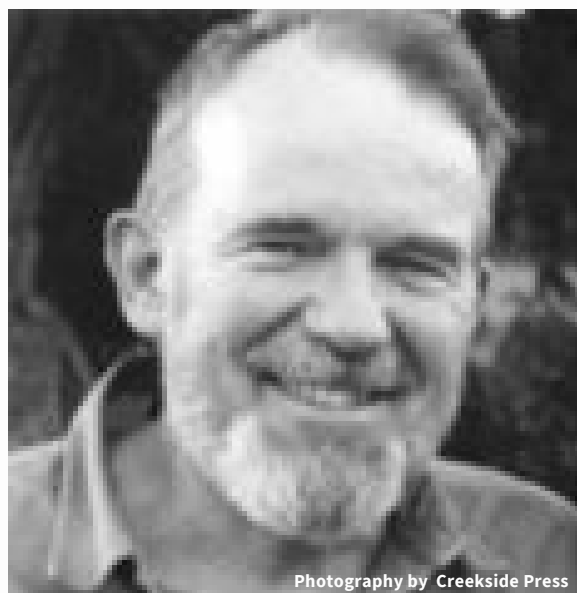
Most of us wanted to hike so we could increase our physical activity levels while experiencing the beauty of nature. We also did some trail work. TCC President Sharon Fisher brought a hand saw and we were able to clear some brush that had fallen on the trail.

First Day Hikes began in Massachusetts in 1992 when Patrick Flynn, supervisor of Blue Hills Reservation in Norfolk County, held the first hike on New Year's Day. Since 2012, First Day Hikes have been offered in all 50 states by America's State Parks. The First Day Hike is a good way to get outside and enjoy nature while burning calories and increasing physical activity.

The Clinch Coalition Hiking Club will host a hike the last Saturday of every month beginning **January 28, 2023 at 11am at the Powell River Trailhead in Appalachia**. If you are interested in hiking with us, please join our email list here: [tcchikingclub@gmail.com](mailto:tcchikingclub@gmail.com).



Photography by Tauna Gulley



Photography by Creekside Press

## TCC Honors Co-founder Dick Austin

In 1998, Richard (Dick) Austin became a co-founder of The Clinch Coalition, along with Steve Brooks, Otis Ward, and Joe and Gerry Scardo. Their organizing skills brought together local residents to protest the excessive logging in the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest, which at that time included the destructive clear cutting of the forest.

Their actions - using a petition that gathered several thousand signatures, community meetings, rallies and even a Smokin' Bear billboard - brought enough pushback to get the USFS to cut in half the acreage they had proposed to log. The newly formed Clinch Coalition developed a position statement opposed to all commercial logging in the national forest. Logging continues to this day, but TCC challenges logging proposals and then monitors logging sites for best management practices. Austin became an environmental theologian out of his pastoral experience in West Virginia. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Swarthmore College (1956), a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary (1959), and a Doctor of the Science of Theology from San Francisco Theological Seminary (1975).

Austin led a campaign to abolish strip mining in West Virginia in 1971, then co-chaired the Citizens to Abolish Strip Mining that lobbied U.S. Congress to pass anti-strip-mining legislation. The bill passed in Congress but was vetoed by President Ford. Partial success was achieved when President Jimmy Carter signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act in 1977. Moving to Dungannon, VA, Austin became active in local environmental issues. He is an author whose early books include *Environmental Theology*, *Baptized into Wilderness*, *Beauty of the Lord*, *Hope for Land*, and *Reclaiming America*. An oral history has been videoed with Austin as part of an archival project by UVA-Wise students under the direction of Dr. Jinny Turman. The video is available at

<https://youtu.be/oWy3QtSneyk>.

If you would like to become a member or make a donation, please visit [www.clinchcoalition.org](http://www.clinchcoalition.org).





## Upcoming Events

**January 28th, 2023:** TCC Hiking Club meets at 11am at the Powell River Trailhead in Appalachia, VA! Contact TCC Hiking Club for more information at [tcchikingclub@gmail.com](mailto:tcchikingclub@gmail.com).

**February 10th, 2023 @10am:** Norton Group Hike at Clinch River State Park. Contact Katie Dunn for more information at [katied@nortonva.org](mailto:katied@nortonva.org).

**February 14th, 2023 @5pm:** Trash Treasures Workshop at Norton Community Center. Contact Katie Dunn for more information at [katied@nortonva.org](mailto:katied@nortonva.org).



Now is the time to become a new member or renew your membership. Also, consider making a tax-deductible donation. Your support is vital to helping us continue our advocacy for a clean and protected environment. In 2023, The Clinch Coalition enters its 25th year dedicated to working on environmental justice for our communities and protecting our forests, waters, and the vast biodiversity of Southwest Virginia. Only together can we conserve our natural heritage, create excellent recreational opportunities, and build a culture of land stewardship.

### Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: (To receive The Clinch Coalition's Monthly Newsletter)

Phone: (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

### Renew Membership or Become a New Member

\_\_\_ Student \$10 \_\_\_ Individual \$25 \_\_\_ Family \$40 \_\_\_ Business \$50

Make check to: The Clinch Coalition, P.O. Box 2732, Wise, VA 24293

### Make a Tax-Deductible Donation

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check to Virginia Organizing and write on memo line: The Clinch Coalition

Mail check to: The Clinch Coalition, P.O. Box 2732, Wise, Virginia 24293, or go to [clinchcoalition.org](http://clinchcoalition.org) and click on Donate.

**Paypal/Credit Card:** Go to [clinchcoalition.org](http://clinchcoalition.org) and click on Donate to be linked to TCC's PayPal.

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