



THE HIGH KNOB HERALD

TRAILBLAZER EDITION

The Clinch Coalition Newsletter

Volunteers provide trail maintenance to Phillips Creek Trail

The trail at the Phillips Creek Recreation Area got its first maintenance of the season over the July 4th weekend with the aid of local residents. Under a Volunteer Agreement between The Clinch Coalition and the Clinch Ranger District, Debbi Hale organized a trail maintenance crew to clear the trail leading up to the waterfall from high weeds, rhododendron, and limbs from fallen trees.

Volunteers included Hale, Chris Mullins, Kim Boggs, Phil Shelton and Sharon Fisher, working alongside of Brandon Olinger and Kayla Theel with the US Forest Service. The Phillips Creek trail is a 1.3 mile loop that passes through mature hemlock and hardwood forests and dense rhododendron thickets. At one time there were guide posts showing the locations of a former still site and an Indigenous hunting camp among other notes of interest.

According to Olinger, the three bridges on the trail will be re-decked over the summer. Other improvements at the recreation area will include the repair of shelters. The areas around the lake and leading to the trail are being mowed. A vault toilet is available but no drinking water. The lake is a restful place to relax, fish and view shorebirds and waterfowl especially during peak migration.

In 1972, Belva Bolling, mayor of Pound, organized several coal miners with equipment to build the Phillips Creek Recreation Area. This was the in-kind contribution of \$31,900 by the Town of Pound that was required in order to qualify for more funds from the Corp of Engineers. This effort provided a bathhouse, swimming beach, picnic sites, and parking for the public to enjoy. In 1983, the recreation facilities were taken over by the US Forest Service. The bathhouse was removed and due to a loss of staff and funding over the years there has been less maintenance of the trail and the recreation area facilities.



Debbi Hale removes rhododendron from the Phillips Creek Trail. Photo by Kayla Theel.

The Recreation Area is adjacent to the Cane Patch Campground which is currently closed. Phillips Creek, Cane Patch and Bee Bottom were once favorite picnicking, fishing, swimming, hiking and camping areas and many residents still have fond memories of enjoying these outdoor areas. In addition to restoring the Phillips Creek Recreation Area, there is an effort being made by local citizens to "Save Cane Patch" Campground.

Earlier this spring, the Clinch Ranger District provided First Aid and certified chainsaw training for trail maintenance volunteers as part of a more enhanced partnership between The Clinch Coalition and the USFS that is being developed.

Anyone interested in volunteering to provide trail maintenance at Phillips Creek or other trails in the Clinch Ranger District can contact Kayla Theel at Kayla.Theel@usda.gov or The Clinch Coalition at info@clinchcoalition.org.



We are not waiting to be heard. Hear us now!

“After reading the Kingsport Times News July 6th editorial, **“Criticism of reactor project is premature,”** in response to our press release, I feel like we have been told to sit down, shut up, and wait until you are called on,” says Sharon Fisher, president of The Clinch Coalition.

TCC’s press release, ***The Clinch Coalition stands with Southwest Virginians calling for increased transparency and public input in nuclear energy proposals, releases resource library on small modular nuclear reactors,*** occurred on the same day as the Appalachian Peace Education Center (APEC) held a press conference and released a study of Unicoi County, Tennessee by the Radiation and Public Health Project, **“Health Trends near Nuclear Fuel Services Site,”** which found “... operations at the site have involved handling large quantities of enriched uranium, plutonium, and associated fuel components. Chronic and episodic releases of these chemicals into the environment have occurred, principally through air and water, creating scenarios for community exposure and potential health risk to humans.”

Coverage of TCC’s press release and APEC’s press conference was published June 26th in the Johnson City Press, **“Activist groups call for more public involvement in smr planning,”** followed by coverage of TCC’s PR in the Coalfield Progress, June 30th, **“Public SMR input sought”**. Both stories received a similar comment from Duane Miller, Executive Director of the LENOWISCO Planning District, in response to TCC calling out lack of public engagement and their study **SMR Site Feasibility Study for LENOWISCO** identifying potential sites near populated areas. From the Johnson City Press, “Now that this has been determined, stakeholder participation will be one of the next steps,” Miller said. “There will absolutely be opportunity for public comment and participation.” To their credit, the Times News published TCC’s response to their editorial, **Setting the record straight on Southwest Virginians’ advocacy on proposed nuclear reactors.**

This recent flurry of media coverage was capped with the publication of **“Experts Concerned about SW Virginia Nuclear Plant Placement”** on July 17th by the Public News Service (PNS), which distributes primarily to radio and TV stations across Virginia and the country. According to PNS, Nate Benforado, senior attorney with the Southern



A potential nuclear facility proposed by Southwest Virginia officials in a recent feasibility study as being able to house “multiple” reactors sits a mere 800 feet from the Wise County Christian School.

Environmental Law Center, said the plan is not really viable or genuinely needed. Benforado said he also worries ratepayers will be paying for the high cost of building these facilities, even if they don't come to fruition. The Southern Environmental Law Center (SEL) is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan environmental legal advocacy organization rooted in and focused on the South.

Environmental organizations raising their voices about concerns for the SMR project in Southwest Virginia include, along with The Clinch Coalition, Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards, Appalachian Peace Education Center, Wise Chapter of Virginia Organizing, and the Alliance for Appalachia.

An SMR Library is on TCC’s website at [clinchcoalition.org](https://www.clinchcoalition.org), where information is being posted on the push by the nuclear industry to go from large reactors to modular reactors in Virginia and across the nation. Over 500 individuals have signed the **Petition to Provide Public Input on Plan to Put Nuclear Reactors in SWVA**. Individual citizens are also informing and calling for transparency with letters to the editor and contacting their elected representatives. Contact info@clinchcoalition.org if you want to get involved.

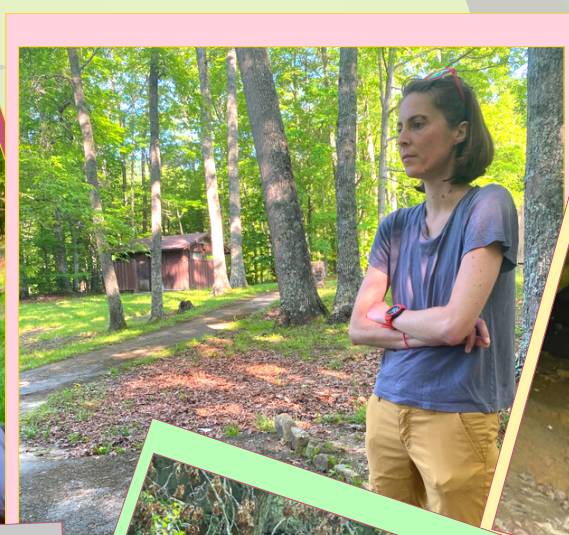


The Clinch Coalition Hikes the Pound River Trail

On Saturday, June 24th, the Clinch Coalition Hiking Club met at the Old Mill Village Launch Area and walked The Pound River Trail. There were 7 hikers ranging in age from thirteen to 65. Hikers traveled from as far as Inman, South Carolina!

We walked along the river for one mile. The trail was mostly flat with one water crossing and lots of cover on the trail. During the hike, we saw two very large turtles in the river. One turtle appeared to be saying “hi” to us as we watched it lift it’s head out of the water. The ferns were stunning, green and lush. Rhododendron were in various stages of blooming. It was the perfect day for a hike and everyone enjoyed themselves. **Join us for our next hike to Kitchen Rock on July 29th! We will meet at the Bark Camp Lake Recreation Area at 10:00am. For questions or more information, contact us at tchikingclub@gmail.com.**

The Clinch Coalition's Photo Corner!





Upcoming Local Events

July 29th, 2023: Join us for our next hike to Kitchen Rock on July 29th! We will meet at the Bark Camp Lake Recreation Area at 10:00am. For questions or more information, contact us at tcchikingclub@gmail.com.

September 23rd, 2023: Join The Clinch Coalition for our High Knob Naturalist Rally! More information coming soon. Mark your calendars!



Photography by Kara Dotten

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) _____
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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

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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 and click on Donate.

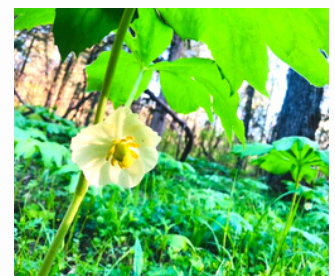
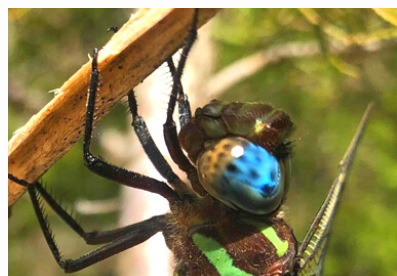
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