



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Our mission is to preserve the natural resources and scenic beauty of the Pisgah Ranger District and to enhance the recreational experience of all visitors to Pisgah.





As I was helping other volunteers clean up a long-ignored dumpsite in Pisgah recently, it struck me what a privilege it was to be there -- to be alive for starters, to be healthy, to be out in a beautiful, natural setting. But we also had the special privilege of being able to turn a foul, toxic dump site into a pristine path to a gorgeous river, like it was meant to be. When we started The Pisgah Conservancy in 2015 that was the goal -- to allow people to give back and help care for this forest that they love.

I've never known how best to gauge our progress in this enterprise called The Pisgah Conservancy (TPC). It's sometimes challenging, working with the federal bureaucracy, and things can move slowly. Deadlines often migrate. But I've always told myself to forget my arbitrary timetables and just look in the rearview mirror and see what we've accomplished. In the same way I was able to look back at the former dump site at the end of this successful workday, I can look back on 2022 through the list of accomplishments that are highlighted in this Annual Report and be pleased.

Two years ago we were meeting our budgetary goals, but we were not able to do as much for Pisgah as we wanted. Too much of our day-to-day activities depended on me personally. The organization was growing, and I needed help. So, we embarked on a plan to make TPC more sustainable -- fiscally and organizationally. We recruited a strong slate of new directors who contribute to TPC financially and otherwise. We expanded Jeff Maitz's role to encompass some of my responsibilities in addition to his project management role. We hired a full time Director of Development, Nina Ardle, and after getting to understand her full capabilities we expanded her role as well to take on other aspects of my executive/administrative role. I'm pleased to say that with our fundraising successes and Jeff's and Nina's strong performance we are well ahead of the schedule we set for ourselves two years ago.

It is perhaps the greatest challenge of a small nonprofit to get to the point where its operations are sustained beyond the efforts of a passionate founder. I'm still here and I'm still passionate, but I can now see a future at TPC where my contributions are not critical to the organization's survival. In fact, that's where we are now. If I left tomorrow TPC would still thrive. That's a big step forward, and that's good news for the special forest that means so much to all of us.

John Cottingham

Founder and Executive Director

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OUR TPC TEAM

STAFF:

Nina Ardle, Director of Development
Simon Farr, Trails and Recreation Technician
Jeff Maitz, Trail Specialist

BOARD:

John Cottingham, Founder and Executive Director
Peter Barry
Amos Beason
Nancy DePippo
Clark Gallivan
Elizabeth Jackson
Gail Kinard
Allen McMurtry
Beverly Melenzyer
David Pharr
Kent Satterfield

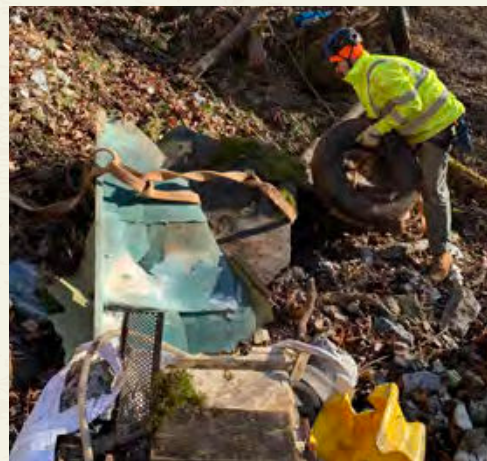




HIGH-TECH PROJECTS

TUCKER CREEK CLEAN-UP

The beautiful Tucker Creek drainage off the Highway 215 corridor had been a notorious illegal dumpsite, its striking waterfall and cascading pools sullied by years of discarded appliances, tires, construction materials, household trash, and debris. Over the course of three cold days, TPC and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) employees, volunteers, and contractors put in more than 500 hours of labor to restore the decades-old dumpsite to its former glory. At the end of the three days an astonishing 45,400 pounds of garbage was removed from the area. The Pisgah Clean-up Fund was established in 2021 and made possible thanks to a banjo donated by Trails Carolina and signed by the Steep Canyon Rangers and Steve Martin. TPC raffled off the banjo and successfully raised more than \$24,000, all of which will go directly into cleaning and rehabilitating illegal dumpsites and keeping the PRD trash-free.



GRAVEYARD FIELDS

TPC contracted environmental consultants to complete the archaeological surveys required for implementation of the complex-scale Graveyard Fields project, which marks an important milestone in the full-scale rehabilitation and expansion of the Graveyard Fields trail complex. These surveys ensure the preservation of critical species, ecosystem health, and the archeological and cultural heritage of public lands. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is typically time-consuming, requiring multiple specialists to approve the scope of work, perform surveys, and receive approval from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Tribal Representatives (TRBO). Thanks to a key agreement with the USFS, TPC contracts environmental specialists to conduct the surveys, thus solving the problem of limited USFS capacity to complete them and reducing the overall timeframe for projects. After years spent working with the USFS to develop routes, collect GIS data, and build an overall project vision, the arrival of this milestone is pivotal. Once a decision memo from the USFS is finalized, we'll be ready to start on-the-ground operations.

BUTTER GAP PROJECT

TPC collaborated with Pisgah Area SORBA and the USFS in the planning and preparation for the large-scale Butter Gap Trail project (scheduled to break ground in 2023) by contracting both archaeological and botanical surveys that are required before any new trail construction occurs. Similar to Graveyard Fields, once a USFS memo is issued we'll move forward with contracting and project implementation. TPC will provide direct funding for the construction of the 1.2 mile Searcy Creek Connector trail which will open up trail system connectivity and loop opportunities from Forest Service Road 5095 to the Butter Gap and Long Branch trail complexes.



COURTHOUSE CREEK WILDLIFE OPENING

In collaboration with a coalition of partners including the NC Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council and the NC Wildlife Resource Commission, TPC constructed a 3-acre permanent wildlife opening in the Courthouse Creek Area. This project will complement the newly created early successional forest in the area, will benefit forest and wildlife health, and will establish permanent habitat for a diverse group of species. Wildlife cameras have already captured the site being used by bear, bobcat, wild turkey, coyote, deer, hawk, and a wide variety of bird species. The project -TPC's inaugural wildlife improvement project - was initially included as part of the 2013 USFS Courthouse Creek project, and TPC and partners were able to cover the gap in USFS funding and capacity to complete it.



ART LOEB TRAIL SHELTER RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT



TPC began work demolishing and reconstructing two dilapidated trail shelters on the iconic Art Loeb Trail at Butter Gap and Deep Gap. Through an agreement with the USFS and with funding from the Great American Outdoors Act, this work will provide safe and comfortable facilities for forest users for years to come.



PINK BEDS LOOP TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROJECTS

TPC partnered with the USFS, FIND Outdoors, and the Conservative Anabaptist Service Program to perform much-needed improvements on Pink Beds Loop Trail. Several hundred feet of elevated turnpike and bog bridge were installed in flat, wet areas; bridges were raised and reset; and heavy machine work was contracted to establish new grade dips and ensure positive drainage on this popular trail.



SIDEHILL TRAIL HEAVY MAINTENANCE

TPC contracted local trail builder Trail Dynamics to perform heavy tread and drainage reconstruction on Sidehill trail in Bent Creek. In addition, TPC trail workers joined USFS technicians and Pisgah Area SORBA volunteers in rock armoring, bridge re-leveling, and locust turnpike construction on nearby sections of Lower Sidehill trail. These direct improvements to trail conditions and sustainability will provide for an improved user experience while protecting the resource for years to come.



VISITOR INFORMATION PROJECT - JOHN ROCK AND BLACK BALSAM AREAS

TPC is collaborating with contractors and the USFS on the design and implementation of new visitor information kiosks in the John Rock and Cat Gap Loop trail complex. In 2022 we added the Black Balsam-Tennent Mountain trail complex to this project, which will provide wayfinding, resource education, and safety materials for trail users in these heavily-trafficked and iconic Pisgah destinations. Overall design is nearly complete and implementation is expected in 2023.

BLACK MOUNTAIN TRAILHEAD PROJECT (PHASE 3)

TPC awarded a contract to local professional trail builders at Trail Dynamics for the construction of the Black Mountain Trailhead Connector Trail, which is phase three of the Black Mountain Trailhead relocation project. With implementation scheduled for 2023, this new .2-mile trail will connect the new parking lot by the Ranger Station with Thrift Cove Road and will include a 10-foot long bottomless arch culvert with high-quality stonework sure to be an iconic trail feature hearkening back to the stone aesthetic of early Pisgah.



Get your Pisgah Conservancy license plate and show your Pisgah Pride while donating to the cause.

NC residents can purchase a TPC license plate for just \$30 when you register or renew a vehicle, and \$20 from each purchase comes right back to TPC! There were more than 2,400 TPC license plates on the road in 2022 and the number grows each year.

Ask how to get your license plate today!



BOOTS ON THE GROUND TRAIL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

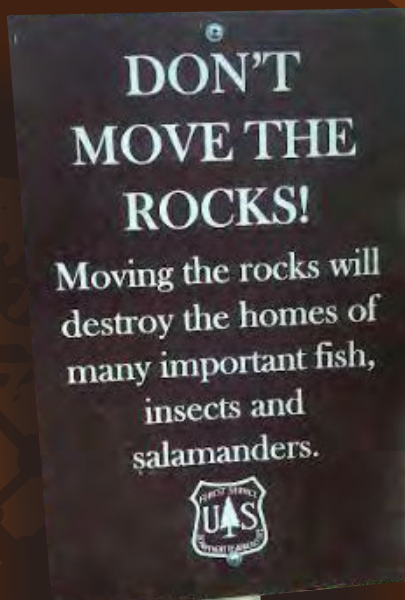
TPC's Trails Specialist and Trails & Recreation Technician are core to our mission of providing direct benefit to the Pisgah Ranger District, and they set TPC apart from other organizations supporting National Forest lands. Through an agreement with the USFS, these full-time employees work side-by-side with USFS employees and regularly assist in trail planning, assessment, and maintenance, recreation site maintenance, contract inspection, volunteer/service group leadership, GIS mapping, and more.

Over the past year, TPC employees have worked with USFS employees and Pisgah Ranger District volunteers on a wide range of projects including:

- Construction of new 30-foot bridge on Buckhorn Gap trail
- Suspension bridge repairs on South Mills River trail
- New bridges on Caney Bottom, Looking Glass Rock, Pink Beds Loop, Pressley Cove, and Cat Gap trails
- Avery Creek rockwork and drainage improvement
- North Slope trail drainage improvement
- Construction of split rail fence at Sycamore Flats
- Construction of locust staircase on Andy Cove Loop trail
- Non-native invasive species removal (NNIS) at Sycamore Flats including a workday with Gaia Herbs employees
- Volunteer training and supervision
- Training in trail bridge assessment, hazard tree assessment, crosscut saw, and chainsaw use

LAYOUT OF SHINING CREEK AND BIG EAST FORK REROUTES

TPC employees worked with USFS technicians to lay out, collect GIS tracks, and submit reroutes of Shining Creek and Big East Fork trails to USFS archaeologists and specialists for review. These reroutes will replace sections of these trails that experienced significant landslides during Tropical Storm Fred and will provide safe passage through these impacted areas.



LEADING PARTNER CREWS

In coordination with the USFS, TPC employees led projects for a variety of visiting work crews. These included student groups from Brevard College, Coastal Carolina University, and First Presbyterian Church of Beaufort, as well as a month-long crew from the Conservative Anabaptist Service Program (CASP). Projects included trail maintenance, tread improvements, bridge reconstruction, turnpike construction, and bog bridge construction and installation.

PISGAH RIVER RANGERS

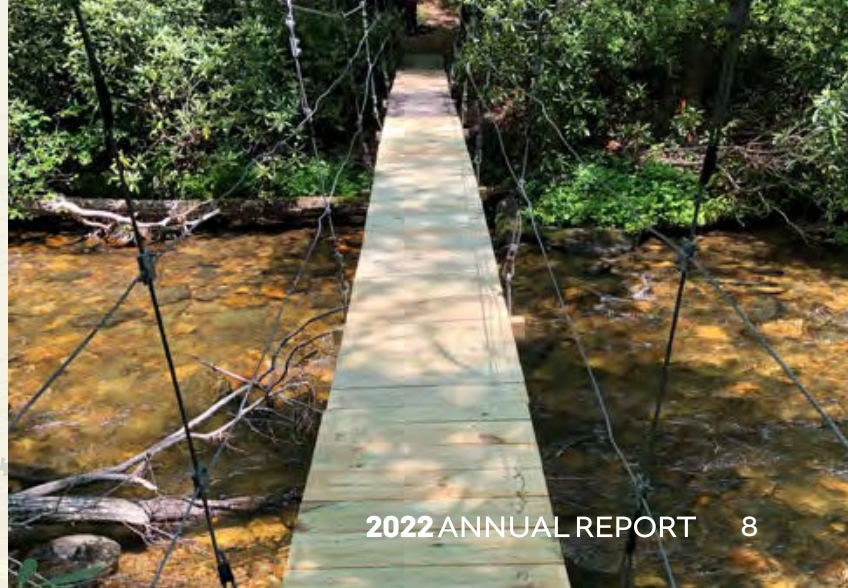
The Pisgah River Rangers had a successful season providing community outreach and education, river restoration, and clean-up efforts on behalf of Pisgah's waterways. They delivered nearly 50 formal and informal education programs in collaboration with community partners, engaged more than 1,000 visitors, and reached more than 4.7 million people on Facebook.

Their on-the-ground work included dismantling 82 rock structures from rivers, remediating 65 illegal campsites located near vital waterways, and removing more than 300 pounds of trash from rivers, recreation sites, and hiking trails. Since the program's inception in 2019, all three previous Lead River Rangers have secured jobs within the local federal workforce, which is a primary goal of USFS Public Lands Corps (PLC) programs.



WILDERNESS PROJECTS

TPC worked directly with USFS technicians and SAWS Wilderness Rangers to identify trail issues in the Shining Rock and Middle Prong Wildernesses, clear down trees with crosscut saws, brush the trail corridor, and improve trail conditions across the system. TPC's Trails & Recreation Technician earned a C crosscut certification in 2022 which allows him to train others in the use of crosscut saw and axe - specialized tools at the heart of wilderness trail management.



BOOTS ON THE GROUND HOSTING VISITING DELEGATIONS:

- The Pisgah Ranger District hosted a delegation from the country of Georgia through the International Programs branch of the USFS. Through the Congressional Office for International Leadership's (COIL) Open World Program, the Georgian delegation came to learn about working with partners and volunteers in managing public lands as they seek strategies to improve the management of their own country's public lands. TPC was chosen to present and share details of our work with the Pisgah Ranger District as a case study of a successful USFS partnership.
- TPC welcomed representatives from both the USFS National Partnership Office and the Grants and Agreements Office from Washington D.C. to visit sites showcasing partner-driven projects, projects in motion, and areas where partnership support can produce positive benefits for our public lands. Important themes included highlighting the strengths of working with a broad spectrum of partners and volunteers, the benefits of partnerships in managing public lands, and the opportunities for growth through expanded partner support. TPC was chosen to present and discuss our unique partnership with the Pisgah Ranger District, including our contributions to trail management, non-native invasive species removal, wildlife habitat improvement, dumpsite clean-up, watershed improvement, and education.

PISGAH PROJECT BIKE RAFFLE

We're grateful beyond words for the nearly \$40,000 that was raised by the Pisgah Project 2022 bike and for the nearly \$210,000 that's been raised by this partnership with Cane Creek Cycling Components and the mountain biking community since the very first Pisgah Project bike raffle was held in 2017.

Thank you to these partners for making the 2022 Pisgah Project bike possible:



Thank you to Riveter, The Hub and Pisgah Tavern, Piney Mountain Bike Lounge, D.D. Bullwinkel's Outdoors, Liberty Bicycles, Motion Makers Bicycle Shop, REI Asheville, and Hunter Subaru for hosting the bike on its tour through WNC.

Congratulations to Brock Helfer, our lucky winner from Atlanta, GA!





PISGAH

PROJECT DAY

2022

Pisgah Project Day is an annual, all-hands-on-deck effort to improve the Pisgah Ranger District. This event brings community volunteers, local businesses, and TPC partners together to achieve a long list of projects for the betterment of Pisgah - all in a day's work.

Here's what we accomplished in 2022:

- Built a new 30-foot bridge on Cat Gap Loop trail
- Performed heavy trail maintenance on Ledford Branch and Wolf Branch trails
- Rebuilt the first 300 feet of South Mills River trail
- Completed heavy trail work on a section of the MST at Skinny Dip Falls
- Installed 80 feet of split rail fencing at Sycamore Flats to protect the riverbanks of the Davidson River
- Constructed new and improved existing grade dips on Pink Beds Loop trail
- Removed and treated non-native invasive plant species at Sycamore Flats, the Pisgah Ranger Station, and Hard Times trailhead
- Built more than 200 feet of turnpike on the Exercise and Andy Cove trails
- Removed trash from a five-mile stretch of Davidson River Road
- Completed trail maintenance with heavy drainage work on Coontree Loop trail
- Cleared downed trees and performed trail maintenance on South Mills River, Cantrell Creek, and Horse Cove trails
- Completed multiple limb trimming projects at the Cradle of Forestry
- Completed trail maintenance on the Sunwall trail leading to rock climbing areas on Looking Glass Rock
- Began locust staircase construction on Andy Cove trail
- Removed graffiti from and repainted Frying Pan Tower and adjacent utility buildings
- And more!

Thank you to our PPD 2022 sponsors: Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority, Hunter Hometown Foundation, Hunter Subaru, D.D. Bullwinkel's Outdoors, Mast General Store, Oskar Blues Brewery, Pilot Cove, Range Urgent Care, Sierra Nevada Brewing Co., Vulcan Materials Company, Asheville Print Shop, Bartlett Tree Experts, Comporium, Ecusta Brewing, Gaia Herbs, GRAYL, Looking Glass Realty, Murphy's Naturals, O.P. Taylor's, Piney Mountain Bike Lounge, Pisgah Coffee Roasters, Pisgah Map Co., REI, SylvanSport, Trail Dynamics, 3oak HandCrafted, Adventure Treks, ELEVATE Physical Therapy, First Citizens Bank, McNeely's Store and Rental, PLATT, Samsel Architects, Water Oak Dental, LBM Industries, and Jennings Builders Supply.

These partners helped make PPD 2022 possible: U.S. Forest Service, Back Country Horsemen of Pisgah, Carolina Climbers Coalition, Carolina Mountain Club, Pisgah Area SORBA, Pisgah Cowboys, Pisgah Chapter of Trout Unlimited, FIND Outdoors, NC Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council, Hemlock Restoration Initiative, and Transylvania County Master Gardeners.