

PISGAH AREA SORBA

ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | STEWARDSHIP



2023 Annual Report



1) Volunteers build a new bridge in Bent Creek. 2) Jared Hartman soaking in the view after clearing downed trees on Pilot Cove. 3) Members of the Brevard College cycling team help out at Take a Kid Mountain Biking day.

Members of the Events & Fundraising Committee attend an event to promote trail stewardship

Pisgah Area SORBA is dedicated to preserving mountain biking opportunities by maintaining and improving trail systems in the Pisgah Ranger District and surrounding region.

www.pisgahareasorba.org

Hello!

It's my honor to introduce our second Annual Report, which is filled with inspiring highlights and accomplishments from 2023. Back in October, I was asked what some of my proudest moments were as Executive Director. While of course there are tangible accomplishments, such as setting a record number of volunteer hours in the forest or installing trail counters to gain quantifiable data on use, I am most proud of the immeasurable dedication and commitment from our volunteers, partners, and supporters.

Over this past year, I have seen so much care poured back into our local single track through work days, trail maintenance meetings, educational opportunities, community engagement efforts, and more. Our public lands are our public responsibility and I speak with full confidence when I say our volunteers and supporters are truly preserving our trails for future generations. Our work as an organization benefits not only the mountain biking community, but the entire surrounding network of trail users. It is our goal to continue to instill an intrinsic sense of environmental stewardship and advocacy in our community for years to come.

Within this report you will find highlights of our achievements, our goals, and our lasting gratitude for those supporters who allow the work to happen. Thank you for reading, and I hope you feel as inspired as I do by this work.



Natalie Narburgh
Executive Director



PISGAH AREA SORBA

ACCOMPLISHMENTS -2023

-HOSTED OR ATTENDED 15 EVENTS INCLUDING
TAKE A KID MTB DAY AND WOMEN'S MTB DAYS.

-LOGGED OVER **3,000 HOURS** OF TRAIL WORK IN 2023, WHICH BRINGS A VALUE OF NEARLY **\$100K** TO OUR LOCAL TRAILS. WE SPONSORED 110+ WORK DAYS AND CUT OVER 125 FALLEN TREES FROM REMOTE TRAILS.

-**TRAIL WORK OUTREACH** THRU Can'D AID, NICA TEAMS, FRENCH BROAD ACADEMY, CLUB de EXPLORADORES, THE PISGAH CONSERVANCY, LOCAL UNIVERSITIES & MORE.

-NEW TRAILS, MAINTENANCE AND MORE THROUGH THE **BUTTER GAP AREA** TRAILS PROJECT. HIRED A PROJECT INSPECTOR TO ASSURE QUALITY & CRAFTSMANSHIP DURING THE BUILD. -COMPLETION SUMMER OF 2024.

-COMPLETED **MAJOR TRAIL RECLAMATION** ON SEVERAL TRAILS: HARD TIMES CONNECTOR, DEER LAKE LODGE, LITTLE HICKORY TOP AND AVERY CREEK TRAIL.

-COMPLETED NEARLY 900 HOURS OF **HEAVY ROCK ARMORING** AND DRAINAGE REHABILITATION ON AVERY CREEK TRAIL.

-CONTINUED PARTNERING WITH **ASHEVILLE ON BIKES** TO SUPPORT THE ASHEVILLE UNPAVED PROJECT.

-INSTALLED **(3) TRAIL COUNTERS** TO BETTER UNDERSTAND USE PATTERNS, MAINTENANCE AND USE TYPES IN PISGAH.

-HIRED **PROFESSIONALS** TO TRAIN (14) NEW TRAIL CREW.

-FOSTER **TRAIL ADOPTION** W/ 20+ ADOPTERS WHILE MAINTAINING OVER **100 MILES** OF TRAILS.



Board member/Trail Crew
Coordinator, Tyler Donaldson

TRAILS

Pisgah Area SORBA's Adopted Trails

- 
- Avery Creek
 - Bennett Gap
 - Black Mountain
 - Boyd Branch
 - Buckwheat Knob
 - Butter Gap
 - Campground Connector
 - Cantrell Creek
 - Chestnut Cove
 - Club Gap
 - Deer Lake Lodge
 - Deerfield Connector
 - Deerfield Loop
 - Explorer Loop Connector A
 - Explorer Loop Connector B
 - Explorer Loop Trail
 - Farlow Gap
 - Green's Lick
 - Hardtimes Connector
 - Homestead loop
 - Ingles Field Gap
 - Ingles Field Gap Connector
 - Laurel Mountain
 - Ledford Branch
 - Little Hickory Top
 - Long Branch
 - Lower Sidehill - (Eastern)
 - Lower Sidehill - (Western)
 - North Boundary
 - Pilot Cove - Slate Rock
 - Pilot Cove (Loop)
 - Pine Tree Connector
 - Pine Tree Loop
 - Richmond Hill - Bike Park/Trails
 - Sidehill - OG
 - SideHill Connector
 - Sleepy Gap
 - Small Creek
 - Spencer Branch
 - Spencer Gap
 - Squirrel Gap
 - Trace Ridge
 - Turkey Pen Gap
 - Wolf Branch

AREA HIGHLIGHT

BUTTER GAP TRAIL

Have you heard that the Butter Gap Trail is gearing up to get some much-needed love? Not only will the trail be re-established as environmentally sustainable, but we'll be adding more mileage and additional year-round riding options for a new loop.

Butter Gap is a fall line trail never designed for the demands of modern outdoor recreation and the heavy traffic it has seen for the last decade. It was deemed unsustainable by the US Forest Service (USFS) in 2013, and has since continued to rapidly degrade, threatening the local watershed. The Butter Gap Project will decommission a mile of environmentally damaging portions of the trail. Over five miles of new and sustainable alignment will be built. Heavy maintenance will also be performed on two miles of existing trail infrastructure to improve resilience during extreme weather conditions. Additionally, changes to the bottom alignment will allow expanded year-round access. When all the work is completed, there will be a new 15-mile route option which gives you more time on singletrack!



Butter Gap Field Inspector, Jared Hartman at the annual I9PA party.



Forest Service staff member, Chris Worley scoping out the future build



Community Members on the "Tour de Butter" where they were given an inside look at the upcoming trail work.

BUTTER /SEARCY ROUTE OPTION

USDA Forest Service U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE National Forests in North Carolina

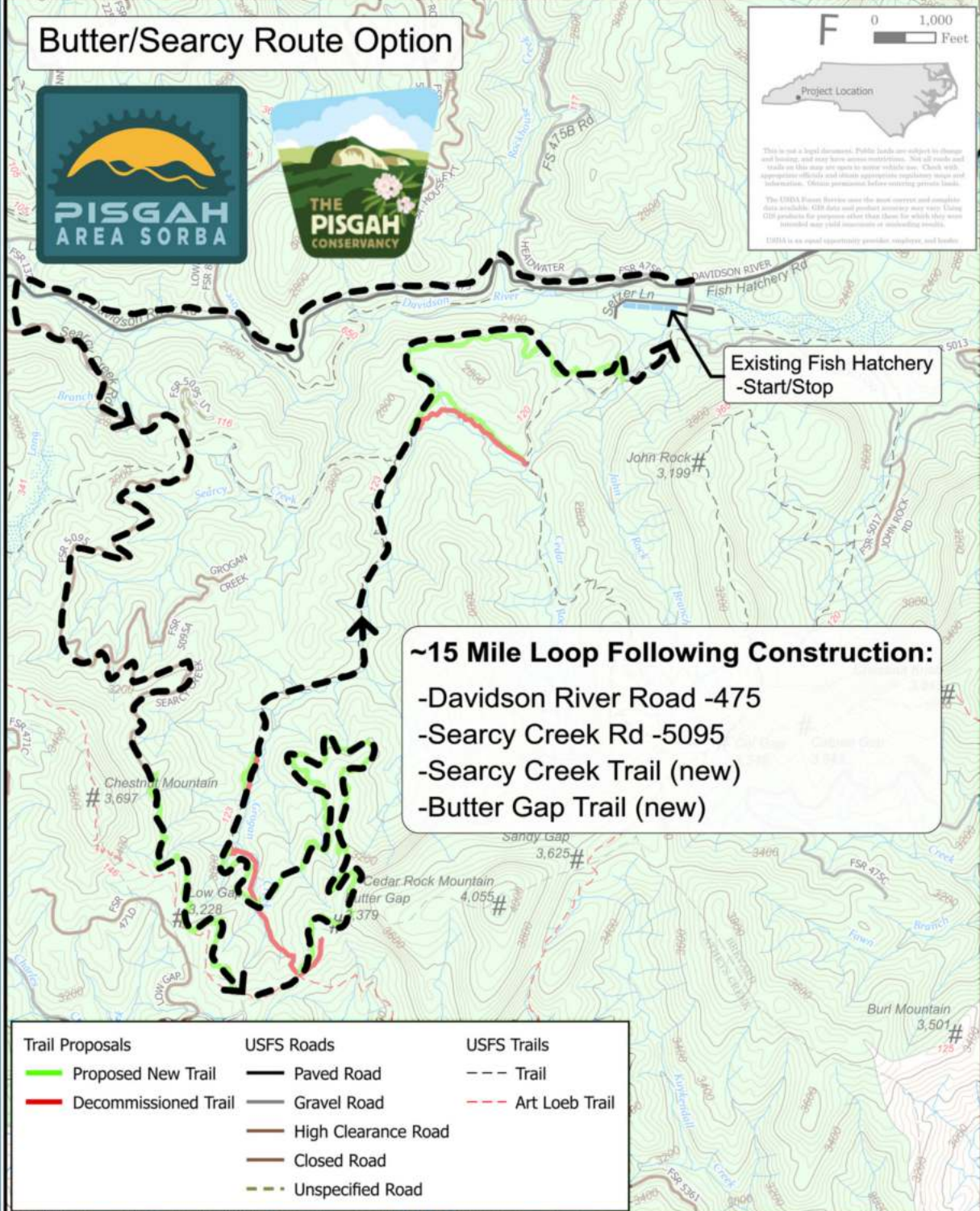
Butter Gap Trails Project

Pisgah Ranger District | 10/4/2023

Butter/Searcy Route Option



This is not a legal document. Public lands are subject to change and leasing, and may have access restrictions. Not all roads and trails on this map are open to motor vehicle use. Check with appropriate officials and check appropriate regulatory maps and information. Obtain permission before entering private lands.
 The USDA Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product creators may vary. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were intended may yield inaccurate or misleading results.
 USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and tenant.

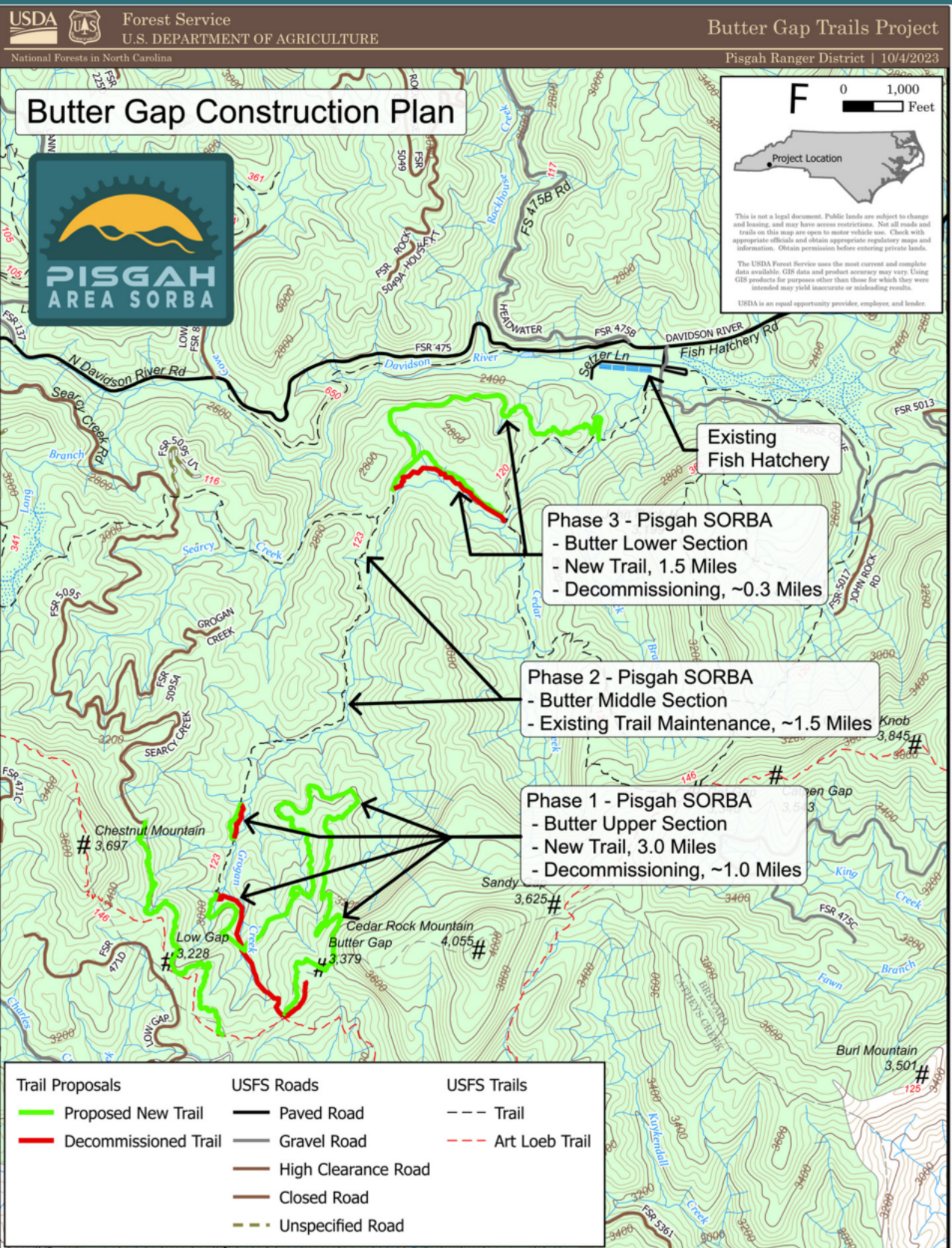


Existing Fish Hatchery -Start/Stop

~15 Mile Loop Following Construction:
 -Davidson River Road -475
 -Searcy Creek Rd -5095
 -Searcy Creek Trail (new)
 -Butter Gap Trail (new)

Trail Proposals	USFS Roads	USFS Trails
Proposed New Trail	Paved Road	Trail
Decommissioned Trail	Gravel Road	Art Loeb Trail
	High Clearance Road	
	Closed Road	
	Unspecified Road	

BUTTER GAP CONSTRUCTION PLAN



ADVOCACY

While it is easy to see the visible accomplishments on the trails, the behind the scenes work is incredibly important when preserving and increasing mountain biking opportunities. Our team and supporters have been hard at work in 2023 to advocate for trail access, maintenance, and the opportunity for new trails. We have also continued to grow our partnerships with land managers, stakeholders, and the community at large. We are proud of this work and have been able to grow our advocacy efforts because of supporters like you! Below are a few highlights from this year.

Launched public information campaign for the proposed USFS Permit Fee

This Campaign included conversations among the USFS and the affected user groups of the proposed fee. Our goal was to provide the public with clear, precise information. Thanks to our organization's strong partnership with the USFS, we were able to answer questions and provide clarity so trail users could create well-informed opinions as they voice questions, comments, and concerns based on the best information available. The campaign included a FAQ page which was shared through all social media and marketing outlets, as well as a podcast episode. Visit www.pisgahareasorba.org for more information on the proposed fees.



Continued Opportunities in Master Planning Sessions

Even in areas outside of our adopted trails, we have opportunity to increase our partnerships and be a trusted source of knowledge and representation for mountain biking advocacy and trail maintenance. We feel it is incredibly important to have a seat at the table in Master Planning session with these great organizations to continue to enhance user experiences and stewardship over the trails. We appreciate DuPont State Forest, Pisgah View State Park, and Asheville Parks and Recreation for including us!



EDUCATION

Education comes in many forms at Pisgah Area SORBA. We strive for multiple layers of education, such as educating our volunteers on sustainable trail practices, the community on the increased use of our natural resources, and our fellow mountain bikers on proper trail etiquette which will lead to a more unified community. Education and engagement also go hand in hand, and we are grateful of the opportunities we've had to share this information and put it in to practice on the trails. Below are a few highlights of this year's work.

Website Redesign

This year we launched our new website, www.pisgahareasorba.org, allowing for a more approachable understanding of our organization and educating visitors on our mission and work.

Quarterly Chapter Updates and Socials

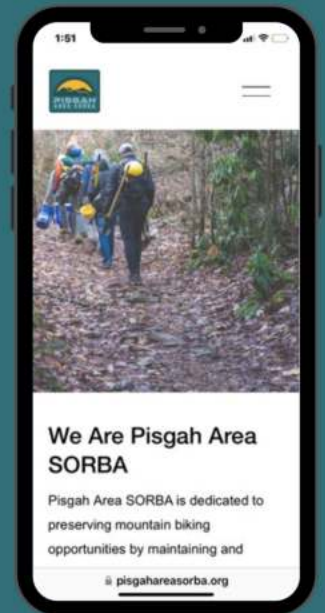
This year we hosted Quarterly Chapter Updates and Socials as a better way to engage and educate our community on the latest PAS happenings. These meetings provide a consistent space to connect, share ideas, and grow trail stewardship understanding.

Trail Crew Training Course

We have hosted several PAS Training Crew Courses this year which provides a path to becoming a Trail Crew Leader with PAS. The courses are designed to both motivate individuals and provide sustained trail crew leadership for PAS. A TCL is "the heart" of the organization's work on WNC trails and we couldn't do what we do without them.

Public Information Campaigns on Current Projects

We continue to work on best practices for delivering information to the public through various project related campaigns. Our most recent example was the Butter Gap information campaign which addressed questions about the project and provided transparent information on the contractor selection processes. We followed up with maps showcasing the most up to date plans for the Butter build.



BE NICE, SAY HI!

Remember, we are all sharing the trails and we are all out there to enjoy ourselves. Trail users in the region include mountain bikers, hikers, fishermen, hunters, horseback riders, trail runners, and birdwatchers to name a few. It turns out everyone wants to get out and enjoy nature and who can blame them?

We want to be sure to follow the rules of the trail, so as not to create any conflicts. We want to be able to enjoy continued access to all of the great riding our region has. This means that we, as mountain bikers YIELD to everyone. When you come upon another trail user, you need to make your presence known (a friendly “hello” or chiming of a bell works great!) and communicate that you are there. Sometimes they will say – “HEY, come on by!” If that is the case go for it, but don’t assume you can.

Remember, to a hiker you look pretty scary and they are not aware that you can control your speed and direction. Give people some room. Try to slow down and rule #1 is always BE NICE!

On the trail mountain bikers give the right of way to hikers, and horse riders. Uphill riders have the right of way to downhill riders. It’s not just the rule, it’s the right thing to do!



Some Other Important Considerations:

- Stay off trails when wet! If your tires are leaving a rut, don’t ride.
- Don’t ride non-system trails, this undermines our relationship with land-use managers.
- If you encounter a puddle, ride through the center.
- Don’t widen the trails, stay off sensitive vegetation outside of the trail “tread.”
- Check local regulations regarding the use of DRONES... you will most likely need a permit! (Dupont requires one. For Pisgah National Forest check with the local ranger district)
- E-bikes are not allowed on any non-motorized trails.
- Pay extra attention around waterfalls. Serious injury and deaths have occurred.
- Be careful yielding to horses, get off your bike and communicate with the rider for everyone’s safety.



STEWARDSHIP

Responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

At Pisgah Area SORBA, we continue to work on best practices and educational opportunities so that we are proper stewards of the trails we serve.

Pisgah Area SORBA Trail Crew Training Courses

As the popularity of Pisgah National Forest trails continues to grow, ensuring their sustainability and enhancing user experiences in the area while minimizing environmental impacts remains a critical priority for Pisgah Area SORBA. Regular trail maintenance is key to achieving this goal. That's why we're empowering our volunteers through specialized training courses to enhance their skills and ability to contribute effectively.

Recently, Pisgah Area SORBA hosted a fully booked, two-day Trail Crew Training class. The training combined classroom theory with practical, on-trail experience. Led by Jon Lane, our Training Course Instructor, the first day was all about building a foundation - participants got to know each other while learning more about trail maintenance terminology, tools of the trade, and key skills for proper and effective trail work. The following day, they put their newfound knowledge to the test on the trails, witnessing first hand the impact of their work on the environment and trail users.

Training doesn't just end with the class; it serves as a stepping stone for work in the field and fits into Pisgah Area SORBA's goal of continually raising the bar for trail work in the region. We encourage attendees to join future dig days and learn from seasoned Trail Crew Leaders, further refining their skills. This ongoing education is crucial for us to continually improve and evolve our practices, ensuring they both benefit the trails and surrounding ecosystems, as well as the community of trail users.



PARTNERSHIPS

The work at PAS would not be possible without our community partners throughout WNC and beyond. We are so fortunate to have organizations like these that help us reach our goals and support our mission to preserve mountain biking opportunities by maintaining and improving trail systems in the Pisgah Ranger District and surrounding region.

Our partners have provided a tremendous amount of insight, feedback, and opportunities throughout 2023 leading us towards many successful endeavors both on and off the trail. We look forward to working with them on future projects creating better and more sustainable trails.



This past Spring, the Blue Ridge Dirt Skrrts, who empowers female mountain bikers to get out and ride, joined forces with PAS to build awareness of trail maintenance best practices and how our volunteer days are designed to build more sustainable trails to support the environment around them.

The USFS has been incredibly supportive of PAS' trail advocacy efforts and continues to find ways to support how we maintain trails in Pisgah National Forest. In 2023, we wnetered into a Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the USFS which will provide \$5,000 per year to PAS' trail maintenance work.



STRATEGIC PLAN

Pisgah Area SORBA is in the process of solidifying the organization's first-ever strategic plan which will be finalized in 2024. This year the Board of Directors came together to build on three key goals to provide the organization direction in order to best support PAS' mission and the longevity of the trail and advocacy work that needs to continue. Check back on our [website](#) to see updates on our Strategic Plan and how we are taking action to accomplish our goals.



**PRIORITIZE
LONG TERM
ORGANIZATION
STABILITY**

**PRIORITIZE
COMPREHENSIVE
TRAIL SYSTEM
MANAGEMENT**


**INCREASE
PUBLIC
AWARENESS**

STRATEGIC GOALS -PAS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Pisgah Area SORBA's trail efforts would not be possible without all the generous funding support from the community, industry partners, and major donors who are passionate about preserving natural spaces and promoting trail stewardship. We are grateful for all the ways that our fundraising initiatives provide the means to embark on new trail projects, expanding our trail maintenance efforts, and the opportunity to help foster a deeper connection between the communities we serve and nature.

One of our newest programs to get supporters more involved is the 2024 Trail Builders Club. This program offers a platform for donors to actively engage with our work and serves as a dedicated channel for gathering funds that directly contribute to the enhancement and preservation of our trails. Through the Trail Builders Club, we are not just raising funds; we are building a community passionate about the trails and committed to the enduring legacy of the Pisgah Ranger District and beyond. Visit our website to get more information on how you can become a member of the Trail Builders Club today!




2024


Trail Builders Club

Join the club, support the trails


SCAN



Member Benefits	Trail Boss	Trail Guide	Trail Blazer	Trail Scout
	5k+	1k+	500+	250+
Trail Builders Club Sticker	✓	✓	✓	✓
Direct Access to PAS ED	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition on Website	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition in Annual Report	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Access to Trail News and Reports	✓	✓	✓	✓
Custom Bike Swag	✓	✓	✓	
Invitation to Annual VIP Event	✓	✓		
Coaching Session from MTB Skills Factory	✓			



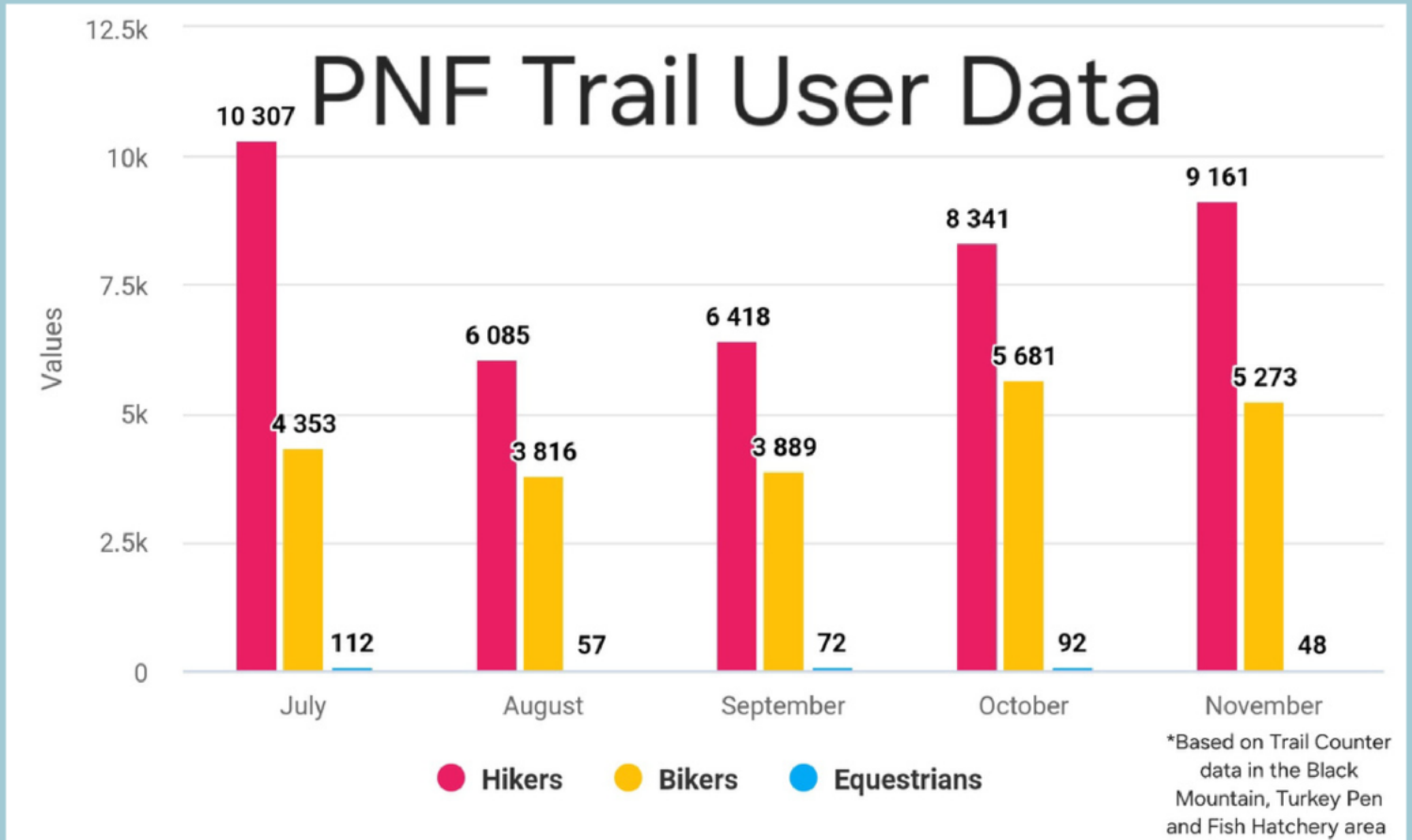
Advocacy, Education, Environmental Stewardship



Become a 2024 Trail Builders Club member today!

BY THE NUMBERS

Monthly Trail Counter Data



In early July, Pisgah Area SORBA installed the three trail counters at key areas: Turkey Pen (inclusive of hike, bike, and equestrian traffic), Black Mountain (hike and bike), and the Fish Hatchery (hike and bike). These counters have already started to provide invaluable data for establishing baseline metrics, enabling us to track and analyze month-to-month variations and, eventually, year-to-year trends in usage.

Preliminary findings reveal that Turkey Pen and the Fish Hatchery areas primarily host foot traffic, while the Black Mountain area sees a majority of cyclists. The Fish Hatchery counter is particularly crucial for monitoring the short-term surge in bike traffic due to seasonal trail openings and, importantly, anticipating the long-term impact of the Butter Gap project, which promises increased year-round bike usage.

These trail counters would not be possible without the support of the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority who provided PAS with grant funding so that we could better understand how the trails and the Pisgah Ranger District is being used.

BY THE NUMBERS

2023 Volunteer Trail Hours

We had a total of 3288 volunteer hours on the trails in 2023 with over 100 work days! This has been our biggest trail work year yet!



Our mission is accomplished through volunteer opportunities, educational resources focused on environmental stewardship, and advocacy for mountain biking access in order to preserve our natural resources for future outdoor recreation. This would not be possible without our amazing volunteers who have dedicated over **3300 hours** to the trails in 2023. This is a record breaking year for PAS with the most volunteer hours recorded on our trails and it has been incredibly special to see how all of our volunteers have stepped up to make sure the forest is getting the love it deserves.



2023 Volunteer Award winners:

Craig Ruhland, Leroux Jooste, Soleil Ayers, Will Avent, Marc Clayton, and Freddie Carpenter.

THANK YOU 2023 VOLUNTEERS!

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

Titanium (\$5000+)



COGNATIVE MTB[®]



**SYCAMORE
CYCLES**



**Trail
Trust**
A Fox Factory Initiative



INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

Carbon (\$3000+)



TREK

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

Aluminum (\$1500+)

Barringer Construction	Oskar Blues
Blue Ridge Adventures	Pisgah Map Co.
Cane Creek	Riveter
Hedrick Industries	Sarver Realty Group
JAG Construction	Second Gear
LuvTrails	WNC Property Solutions
	WTB

Steel (\$500+)

Berm Peak	Luxe Linear Drains
Equinox Environmental	Pisgah Rage
Jade Mountain Builders	The Bicycle Thrift Shop
Ride Kanuga	Trail Dynamics

2023 LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors

Craig Ruhland - President

Douglas Miller - Vice President/Fundraising Chair

Tyler Donaldson - Trail Crew Coordinator

Abi Fuesler - Secretary

Jason Wells - Treasurer

Gary Lowden - Governance Chair

Heather Wright - Events Chair

Josh Whitmore - Community Engagement Chair

Chad Davis - Member at Large

Daniel Sapp - Member at Large

Claire Tuttle - Member at Large

Emi Kubota - Member at Large

Kent Cranford - Member at Large

Mike Knuckols - Member at Large

Stacey Wiedrich - Member at Large

Additional Leadership & Support

Jared Hartman - Butter Gap Field Inspector

Glenn Middleton - Training and Trail Adopter Coordination

Jack Henderson/Pisgah Map Co. - Map/Cartography Support

Nina Machnowski - Social Media Coordinator



Tyler Donaldson



Doug Miller



Emi Kubota

2023 TRAIL CREW LEADERS

Allen Frost
Andrew Bick*
Andrew Holcombe
Austin Bankert
Bryan Flack
Caleb Morrison
Camilla Christiansen
Chad Davis
Chadd Kittle
Chuck Carlson
Craig Ruhland
David Bird
David Tate
Ed Sutton
Eric Dudley
Freddie Carpenter
Glenn Middleton

Jack Henderson
Jamie Arkfeld
Jan Ferebauer
Jared Hartman*
JD Powers
Joe Kelley
Jon Greener
Jon Lane*
Jonathan Landry
Justin Bragg
Kevin Booth
LeRoux Jooste
Marc Clayton
Matt Holzenkamp
Matt Kirby
Max Eason
Michael Nuckols

Mike Ferraro*
Mike Gaffney
Natalie Arkfeld
Nate Johnson
Rick Houck
Rusty Barlow
Sam Leuthold
Sam Pechlin
Scott Foster
Scott Randall
Soleil Ayers
Steffen Gronegger
Trent Duncan
Tricia Davis
Tyler Donaldson**
Will Avent
William Velthaus

*** Area Trail Coordinator ** Trail Crew Coordinator**



Marc and Freddie



*Glenn, Natalie, Tyler
Andrew, Craig*



Jared, Nuckols, Tyler

GET INVOLVED

There are many ways to get involved with Pisgah Area SORBA and support our mission. Here are some options for you to consider in 2024



Volunteer



Join



Donate

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO VOLUNTEER, JOIN, OR DONATE](#)

SCAN



SCAN



[SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER FOR INFORMATION ABOUT MEETINGS, EVENTS, AND MORE.](#)



2023 Trail Adopter of the Year, Will Avent, clears a massive tree from a trail in the Pisgah Ranger District.



Outgoing President and Trail Crew Leader, Craig Rhuland, using the Dingo on a bridge replacement project in Bent Creek Experimental Forest.



pisgahareasorba.org

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