Save These Dates

Saturday November 21
Trail Work Day & Hike

Friday November 27
Thanksgiving Hike

Saturday November 28
Trail Work Day & Hike

Wednesday December 2
P-Town Pruning Party

Friday December 11
Trail Work Day & Hike

Saturday December 12
Trail Work Day & Hike

Saturday December 19
Trail Work Day & Hike

Saturday January 16
Trail Work Day & Hike

Saturday February 20
Trail Work Day & Hike

Schoolhouse Falls / Photos by Krista Robb, Trail Stewardship Coordinator

Seasons of Change in Panthertown Valley

We have seen a remarkable increase in visitation to our National Forests during the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, and changes throughout our region. Over the summer we welcomed a new Trail Stewardship Coordinator to Friends of Panthertown, a new Ranger and a new Recreation Technician to the Nantahala District, and a new Forest Supervisor to the U.S. Forest Service regional office. This fall we saw plenty of damage and debris left by a tropical storm, which caused a landslide and a road closure on the most used route to Panthertown. Throughout it all, your support has been appreciated. With 2020 almost behind us, we are thankful and look forward to celebrating new seasons ahead.

Your contributions have made a huge impact on the amount of work we have accomplished with our limited staff and resources. So far this year our volunteers have contributed over 750 hours on the ground maintaining trails in Panthertown. Thank you!

OUR MISSION

The mission of Friends of Panthertown is to work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to conserve this outstanding natural resource while improving the quality and experience of recreational opportunities in Panthertown Valley.
We give thanks to **Cullasaja Women’s Outreach** for their generous $6,000 grant supporting our conservation of Panthertown.

Special thanks to **Wade Hampton** members for their generous $5,000 grant in support of stewardship and youth education.

We are grateful for the members of **Cedar Creek Club** for granting us $1,000 towards maintaining and improving the trails in Panthertown.

Big thanks to the **Hazel B. Bundy Memorial Fund** for a $1,000 donation in support of our mission.

Our appreciation goes to **Melanie Jones** for her assistance this year.

Thanks for practicing the **Leave No Trace** principles of outdoor ethics.

We are very thankful for the hardworking volunteers from **Nantahala Area SORBA** and **WCU** for helping us groom Panthertown’s mountain biking and hiking trails.

---

**News & Happenings**

High winds and heavy rains in October caused significant storm damage, including debris and trees down on the trails. We have worked hard to keep the trails clear, but be aware of the risks of hiking on trails after a storm, with potential for “hazard trees” and branches falling from above. The storm washed out a portion of Cedar Creek Road coming up from Highway 64 in Cashiers. **The road will remain closed for repairs** until sometime in December, according to NCDOT engineers. Visitors should consider an alternative route and entrance to access Panthertown Valley.

Alternatives: there is limited parking available at the eastern entrance to Panthertown Valley at Cold Mountain Gap near Lake Toxaway, or use the much larger Flat Creek parking area to access Turkey Knob Trail (#469), or the nearby Rattlesnake Knob Trail (#452), off Rock Bridge Road, about 15 miles north of Toxaway on NC281.

**USFS Saylors Leaves District**

We said farewell to Nantahala Ranger District Recreation Officer Thom Saylors as he took on his new role on the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri. We worked in partnership with Thom on many trail projects over the past decade since he first joined the district in 2010.

**U.S. Forest Service Issues Roadside Parking Advisory**

USFS - Fall weekends are especially busy on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. Beautiful views are unlimited, but parking is not. Once a trailhead parking lot is full, many drivers park on roadsides. While parking is permitted on the shoulder of some roads, vehicles must not obstruct traffic. Blocked roadways and gates can lead to accidents and delay emergency responders. Follow these tips to be a hero and not a hazard:

- Know before you go as cell service is limited.
- Check for signs that restrict roadside parking.
- Watch for pedestrians as you approach areas with parked cars.
- Choose a spot that will not be damaged by tires on soft ground.
- Do not park on a narrow shoulder with a steep drop off.
- Park vehicles with all wheels off the road.
- Check for oncoming traffic before exiting your vehicle.
- High volume times are typically on weekends. Plan alternative locations.
- Arrive in the early morning, or late afternoon, or visit on weekdays.
- Some areas are so popular that it can be difficult to find legal parking.
Be Aware of “Hazard Trees” & Storm Damage

A "hazard tree" is a tree that has a structural defect that makes it likely to fail in whole or in part. Falling trees are an ever-present hazard when traveling or camping in the forest, yet too often we are unaware of the risks associated with defective trees. Trees can be defective from age, fire, storm damage, and disease.

Keep these safety tips from the U.S. Forest Service in mind:

Be aware of your surroundings as trees can fall without warning. Be particularly watchful when it's windy, or following a snowstorm when branches are covered with snow. Avoid parking or camping in areas where trees could fall on you.

Avoid dense patches of dead trees. Limbs and damaged trees may fall at any time, especially after a storm. Trees without needles, bark or limbs may indicate structural defects. Trees with conks, broken tops, basal scars, numerous downed limbs, ants, or an abundance of woodpecker holes may have internal rot.

Beware of hazardous trees due to ice storm or insect damage. Ice storms can inflict serious damage to trees, uprooting or breaking off large limbs. Cracks can develop in large branches which, although they are damaged, do not fall from the tree. Such branches can present a hazard to people or property long after the ice has melted. Your safety is your responsibility.

Look up while on the trails, especially when it’s windy. Stay out of the forest when there are strong winds that could blow down trees. If you are already in the forest when winds kick up, head to a clearing out of reach of any potential falling trees.

The U.S. Forest Service also reminds visitors to our National Forests to park close to a main road, rather than on a spur or one-way section, when driving in remote areas of the forest to avoid being trapped if a tree falls across the road.

Here in Panthertown we need volunteers right now to help us clean up and maintain the trails. Visit panthertown.org/volunteer to sign-up, get on our email list, or learn more about the work we do. We host public trail work days on the 3rd Saturday of each month, plus there’s plenty of other opportunities to help this season.
Volunteers in Panthertown Valley
We Are Thankful For Our Volunteers Who Maintain The Trails!

The official U.S. Forest Service map (published in 2013) shows the 29.57 miles of public trails our hardworking volunteers maintain all year round.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FS #</th>
<th>Trail Name</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>447</td>
<td>Blackrock Trail</td>
<td>1.70 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>447</td>
<td>Blackrock Spur Trail</td>
<td>0.15 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>448</td>
<td>Devil’s Elbow Trail</td>
<td>1.42 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>449</td>
<td>Deep Gap Trail</td>
<td>1.33 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>Riding Ford Trail</td>
<td>0.95 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>451</td>
<td>Powerline Road Trail</td>
<td>5.52 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>452</td>
<td>Rattlesnake Knob Trail</td>
<td>1.56 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>453</td>
<td>North Road Trail</td>
<td>1.29 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>458</td>
<td>Carlton’s Way</td>
<td>0.51 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>469</td>
<td>Turkey Knob Trail</td>
<td>1.66 miles</td>
<td>H+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>474</td>
<td>Panthertown Valley</td>
<td>3.25 miles</td>
<td>H*B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>482</td>
<td>Mac’s Gap Trail</td>
<td>3.13 miles</td>
<td>H+B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>484</td>
<td>Green Valley Trail</td>
<td>0.60 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>485</td>
<td>Little Green Trail</td>
<td>0.94 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>486</td>
<td>Granny Burrell Falls Trail</td>
<td>0.31 miles</td>
<td>H+B+E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>487</td>
<td>Big Green Trail</td>
<td>1.35 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>488</td>
<td>Greenland Creek Falls Trail</td>
<td>1.02 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>489</td>
<td>Great Wall Trail</td>
<td>1.65 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>490</td>
<td>Wilderness Falls Trail</td>
<td>0.73 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>491</td>
<td>Overlook Trail</td>
<td>.50 miles</td>
<td>Hike</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panthertown Trails and Trailheads

We work under a volunteer agreement with the U.S. Forest Service to maintain 30 miles of public trails and trailheads spread out over 6,311 acres on Nantahala National Forest that make up the Panthertown Valley Trail System. This treasured backcountry recreation destination is popular for hiking, backpacking, and camping, and includes over 20 miles of quality mountain biking and equestrian trails, plus the pristine headwaters of the Tuckasegee River to enjoy. We are responsible for maintaining the 20 officially designated U.S. Forest Service trails in Panthertown. We do not maintain any of the unofficial bushwhacks or footpaths – we only maintain the trails listed on the official USFS trail system map.

Salt Rock Gap Trailhead (western entrance)
- Blackrock Trail (#447) H+B+E
- Blackrock Spur Trail (#447A) Hike Only
- Panthertown Valley Trail (#474) H+B+E

Cold Mountain Gap Trailhead (eastern)
Limited parking, No horse trailer access, No horse trails
- Panthertown Valley Trail (#474) H+B
- Mac’s Gap Trail (#482) H+B
- Greenland Creek Trail (#488) Hike Only

Flat Creek/Rock Bridge Trailheads (northern)
- Rattlesnake Knob Trail (#452) H+B+E
- Turkey Knob Trail (#469) H+E

Designated usages: H = Hike, B = Bike, E = Equestrian
* Part of trail #474 and #486 are designated Hike Only
We Give Thanks ... for Our Members!
by Virginia Willard, V.P. Membership & Development

Virginia Willard is a longtime volunteer and member of Friends of Panthertown. She is an avid hiker, loves Panthertown Valley, and serves on our Board of Trustees as Vice-President of Membership & Development. One of her favorite hikes in Panthertown is to the magnificent Blackrock Overlook.

Our Members are the true friends of Panthertown. We could not do what we do without you!

Contributing Members provide approximately half of the financial resources needed to support the work we do to conserve this outstanding backcountry wilderness area in our own backyard. Other sources of revenue include grants, bequests, special events, and merchandise. Many of our Members also work tirelessly as volunteers to help maintain the trails for the enjoyment of other members and the general public.

Friends of Panthertown Members enjoy the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to protect and preserve Panthertown Valley. They take pride in supporting our conservation and education programs. They also enjoy other benefits such as invitations to guided hikes in Panthertown, free educational resources and webinars, a colorful newsletter, amazing speakers, and other events.

Five years ago we conducted a survey to make sure we understood how our members and others experience Panthertown Valley, what they expect of Friends of Panthertown, and especially to learn what our members are looking for in their membership relationship. Based on that survey we implemented some new activities, such as guided hikes for members, and a more robust volunteer trail maintenance program. Now it’s time for a new survey to update our information. Let us hear from you! Please go to our website to take a quick survey to share your feedback with us.

Visit panthertown.org/survey

“Dues-paying” members total about 300 individuals or families. Of course there are many more non-members who also enjoy Panthertown and all it has to offer to hikers, campers, mountain bikers, anglers, and horseback riders. Some non-members support Friends of Panthertown with their time and energy as volunteers at our trail work days. Many more are on our email list, and follow us on social media. All are part of our “family”. We greatly appreciate you.

A list of current members as of July was published in our Summer 2020 newsletter. Are you on that list? Is it time to renew your membership? We would be thrilled if more would become contributing members. It’s easy to join or renew! Just go to our website and click on “Become a Member”. You can pay securely online, or send us a check. Membership contributions and other donations are tax deductible because Friends of Panthertown is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

On the eve of the Thanksgiving holiday we say, “Thank You” to all our members and volunteers! We are grateful for your support.

Pristine headwaters of the Tuckasegee

The boardwalk to Schoolhouse Falls

Your donations support our trail work.

You help us protect this special place.

These photos were contributed by Krista Robb. You’re invited to submit your photos and stories to be featured in a future newsletter!
Friends hosted a successful webinar presentation by Patrick McMillan on Southern Appalachian Bogs & Fens

Emmy® Award-winning PBS television host talked about Panthertown Valley’s rare wetlands.

We were honored to have Dr. Patrick McMillan, the Hilliard professor of environmental sustainability at Clemson University, and director of the South Carolina Botanical Garden, join us to share his bog and fen presentation with our members this summer. A video recording is available to watch anytime on our website. Special thanks goes to Marci and Steve Shawler for sponsoring Patrick’s presentation.

Above: Vibrant red Sphagnum Moss on display in Panthertown.

Below: An abundance of flora.

We want your feedback.

MEMBER SURVEY
Please visit our website to take a quick survey and tell us how we’re doing.
panthertown.org/survey

We have had some great member hikes this season, including this group led by Mike and Sue Kettles to Warden’s Falls.
A 180 degree panoramic view of Panthertown Valley as seen from the Salt Rock Gap overlook (Krista Robb)

Friends of Panthertown
PO Box 51
Cashiers, NC 28717

Visit our website to read about a ROAD CLOSURE affecting the route to Salt Rock Gap western entrance to Panthertown.

Holly berries on display in Panthertown Valley, and the view from the top of Little Green Mountain (Photos by Krista Robb)