

GWNF, VA Trail Work Trip

Sunday, 9/8/96- This was supposed to be a vacation week! However, I committed to do a week of trail work in the scenic Massanutten Mountain Range in the George Washington National Forest so here I was arriving at Camp Roosevelt, our base of operations, at 4:30 pm. I was delayed by the fact that Hurricane Fran had just pounded the Shenandoah Valley two days earlier. Two of the three ways to get to Camp Roosevelt were closed by downed trees and/or washed out roads. I had to drive over the mountains, come up the valley and come back up the mountain from the west side. The members of our crew were Jim, our ranger and "boss" for the week,

At right, Group picture of the Massarock Crew for 09/09-13/1996. By Mike Calabrese



Rachel, Lisa, John, Dave, "Hildie" and Ed. I was amazed at the wide range of ages present. We ranged from 20 to 74. The first night we had orientation and ate at a Lutheran Church Camp near our camp. The food was great and there was plenty of it. We were handed our gear, which consisted of gloves, a hard hat, a first aid kit, safety glasses and two water bottles. We came back to our camp, sat around, swapped some stories, and then retired for the night.

Monday, 9/9/96- Got up at 5:30am, got breakfast at 7 and were in the truck and on our way to the trailhead by 8am. Our mission was to connect a recently completed section of the Massanutten West Trail coming from the south to an existing section further north. The first thing that we had to do was clear all the blowdowns that were across the trail before we could even get to the spot where we were to start constructing new trail. We didn't get to that spot till mid morning

We ate lunch and I got to use an industrial strength weed whacker that afternoon. We quit at 3, went back to camp, showered, ate, swapped stories and retired.

Tuesday, 9/10/96- Again, we got up at 5:30am and had a great breakfast of pancakes smothered in apple slices. We got to the trailhead by 8am. It looks like I'm going to be the weed whacker. Here's how we create a trail: Dave and

Cliff went ahead and hung flags where the trail was supposed to go. Then, Ranger Jim takes the chain saw and cuts down the trees that are in the way. Then, I come along and weed whack a rough path. Then, Ed, Rachel and Lisa rake the trail bed. "Hildie" busts up the rocks in the way and John clears the stumps in the way. Pretty efficient, huh?

Wednesday, 9/11/96- Today was a rough one. It rained last night and there was alot of thunder so I didn't sleep well. We got to the trail and I again took the weed whacker. I got about a half mile down the trail when I must have whacked a bee's nest. Immediately, I had bees all over me. I got stung on my face, my arms and even down in my boots! I estimate that about half a dozen bees stung me. So I quit weed whacking and worked on the trail bed about half a mile back.



*At left, a section of newly completed trail
By Mike Calabrese*

Thursday, 9/12/96- Today was a short day. We worked from about 8:30 to 11:30 am. I used a fire rake and did tread work. We ate lunch on the trail, went back to camp, showered, changed and went on a tour of the forest sponsored by ranger Jim. We visited the Storybook Trail and a great overlook of Luray, VA, the GWNF visitor's center, a cabin called the stone house that featured gas powered lights and refrigerator, the Elizabeth Furnace cabin, which some of our group restored 2 years ago and, finally, a great dinner at the Spring House restaurant in Edinburg, VA.

Friday, 9/13/96- Another great breakfast of french toast and bacon and then, onto the trail for the last day. The long walk up Short mountain is alot easier today then it was yesterday and the day before. Each day it's 1 mile up the mountain, then about a mile along the ridge till we get to our workplace. Today everyone is working to get the trail done as far as possible. But also, everyone is ready to get home. It rains a little at mid day, then stops. We quit at 3pm, say our goodbyes and leave. We got about half a mile of trail completed and roughed out about 1.5 miles. This was a very rewarding week. It is a great feeling to hike on a trail that you have just built. It's hard work, and I would not recommend it for everyone. But this has been one of the cheapest, educational, fun and rewarding vacations that I have ever had.

Mike C

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