

2011 Annual SATC Trailmaster Report

by Jeff Buehler



Wow! What a year it has been for severe weather for the mid-state and elsewhere in the northeast. **SATC** trail maintainers were kept busy clearing debris and blow downs from one destructive storm after another. Strong winds and very wet soils from the excessive rainfall brought down many trees and branches on all of our trails. The "Shocktober" snowstorm dropped many inches of wet, heavy snow that broke off a large number of branches from trees still in leaf.

2011 storm havoc started with a snowy winter and then a very wet spring with damaging high winds thrown in. A possible tornado in late May caused severe damage along the Darlington Trail in Bryson Hollow just west of Tower Road that had this trail section impassable due to many uprooted and broken trees. It took five work trips to cut out the jumbled mess and the trail section was finally passable again in early October, but the trail through this pretty stream valley looks quite different now with the loss of tree cover. Other sections of the Darlington Trail also had several trees and branches come down, but the DT maintainers were very vigilant and cleared their trail sections promptly.

The wet weather continued through the summer and then came September's record-breaking rains of Irene and Lee that caused major flooding in the Susquehanna River basin. The heavy rains caused trail erosion at certain locations, but **SATC**-maintained trails did not suffer as badly as some other trails in Central Pennsylvania. The destruction Hurricane Irene caused in New England closed the Appalachian Trail in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest due to unsafe conditions.

In between storms, the **SATC** Trail Crew finished up drainage work on the Appalachian Trail at Yellow Springs where hikers pass through the remnants of an old mining village from the 1800's. The crew built an extensive stretch of turnpike (raised trail) along with other drainage structures on the old former stagecoach road the trail follows and which had become severely eroded. Additional trail rehab work was done north of Yellow Springs along Sharp Mountain where many spring seeps were keeping the trail constantly wet. Drainage ditches dug alongside the trail with cross trail drainage channels will help dry out the trail.

For the most part, the **SATC** Trail Crew has now completed work on all of the major trail deficiencies identified in our past Trail Assessments from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO) of the National Park Service on the 11+ mile section of the AT between PA-325 north to Rausch Gap Shelter side trail that was assigned to **SATC** in 2004. Of course, trail maintenance

is an ongoing endeavor. There will be more trail work projects in the future, but this is still quite an accomplishment for our Club.

Many different volunteers have built new trail and rehabbed old trail along this stretch during the past seven years. Some of the **SATC** trail crew "regulars" deserve special mention for their hard work, unwavering dedication, and continued participation on **SATC** work trips. **Tim "Rock Man" Bachmann** rarely misses a work trip and loves to build rock structures on the trail that should last centuries. **Tom Scully**, who designed, and was instrumental in trail relocations, lead other volunteers. **Gary LaBelle** rarely misses work trips and always works hard no matter what the project. **Jeff Willard** and **Park Trullinger** regularly attended work trips, contributing much hard labor and endless humor. A BIG thanks to everyone who came out and volunteered to improve this part of the A.T. and provide a better hiking experience for trail users while protecting our valuable trail resources. The Appalachian Trail and Darlington Trail maintainers had plenty of workouts. Thank you for the prompt attention given to your trail sections all year.

SATC has new trail maintainers for the Horse-Shoe Trail section that **SATC** maintains for the Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy. Dan Dougherty and wife Pam will be maintaining the one mile H-ST section between Rattling Run Road and the Appalachian Trail on Stony Mountain. Please welcome Dan & Pam and thank them for their commitment. Also, thanks to Gail Brossman who has volunteered to be co-maintainer with Barb Harvey on the Darlington Trail between the Appalachian Trail and Millers Gap Road.

Trail maintainers are needed for the following trail sections:

Appalachian Trail - Cold Spring Trail north to the Rausch Gap Shelter side trail (2.6 miles)

Cold Spring Trail - Cold Spring parking area to the Appalachian Trail (1 mile)

Darlington Trail - Holtz Road to Tower Road (2 miles)

Finally, I am proud to report that **SATC** contributed a total of **1305 hours** of volunteer time on the Appalachian Trail and side trails from a total of 43 volunteers during the past federal fiscal year (Oct 2010-Sept 2011). The Appalachian Trail Conservancy totals up the number of all AT volunteers and the hours dedicated to benefiting the A.T., its corridor lands, and connecting side trails on NPS, state, or private lands. It's never too late to become involved so that you too can be part of this important statistic in preserving our scenic trails.