

Big South Fork Trail Keeper Program



The Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area has a volunteer activity called the Trail Keeper program for people who love the park's trails and want to help take care of them. The goal of the program is to provide an extended presence in the backcountry and at the same time provide the Big South Fork's staff with information on trail conditions and issues. . With 400 miles of trail there is a lot to be seen and noted and your role will be to walk your trail and report its condition.

People who adopt a particular trail are expected to hike that designated trail at least four times during the calendar year, report on overall trail conditions, pick up any trash, and submit a trail condition report after each hike. Being a Trail Keeper does not involve heavy trail maintenance or the use of any kind of power equipment. Trail Keepers may use a small handsaw to cut out small trees that are down across the trail and may move branches and do light maintenance by hand.

Trail Keeper Program – Trail Keepers Expectations/Responsibilities

- Hike designated trails 4 times each year
- Report:
 - Overall trail condition – impression of the trail, muddy, good drainage present, rocky, hard to follow, etc.
 - Trail hazards – any kind of safety concern, handrail loose or missing on a footlog, dangerous creek crossing, rock/landslides, trail sluffing or trenching
 - Wildlife issues – animal encounters, signs of issues (scattered trash), hog rooting, dead or trapped animals (rare)
 - Signage issues – legible, accurate, worn out, broken
 - Blow downs – trees across the trail, note the location, size of blowdown, if it is passable, a safety issues, or resource issue (pictures are great with something in the photo for size perspective)
 - Anything else you see that you think the trail crew or park management should know about
 - Assist visitors
- Submit trail report and volunteer hours worked to the Volunteer Coordinator after each hike.

Reporting Procedures

It is extremely important that you file a report after each of your hikes. This is the way the information can get out to the trail crews, wildlife staff, management etc. List your volunteer hours on each report You should track your volunteer time from when you park your car at the trailhead to when you return to your car: – so it is the time that you are on-foot on your assigned trail(s) – it does not include travel time to and from the park. We have to prioritize and reprioritize based on park needs, weather events. Please realize that this is a big park and the information is ALWAYS valuable even if you report trees that don't get cut out right away, etc.

File the reporting form by mail, email, or fax. We will provide you with your Trail Keeper Form once your trail adoption is assigned to you.

Trail Adoption and Selection

Contact **Effie Houston** 4564 Leatherwood Road, Oneida, TN 37841;
Email: effie_houston@nps.gov fax # 423-569-5505