

February 2006

Sierra

North Alabama Group



Visit our website
<http://alabama.sierraclub.org/na.html>

**General Meeting Thursday,
February 16, 6:30 p.m.**

Bill Matthews will take us along a 145-mile hike across Ireland

Tuesday Night Downtown Hikes

Join us at 6 p.m. at the Land Trust Office Parking lot, 907 Franklin St. for a hike around downtown Huntsville.

Bill Matthews - Hiking Across Ireland

The program this month will be a slide show presentation of Bill Matthews' trek through Ireland. A retired university administrator, city planner, and member of the Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Bill is a traveler who believes the only way you can appreciate the views of the European countryside is by foot. Bill will take us on his 145-mile solo hike across Ireland from coast to coast, past castle ruins, through quaint villages and along centuries old canals and peaceful country lanes slicing through the legendary green Irish pastures and meadows.

Relatively inexperienced at the time, just retired and with only a three-week conditioning period, Bill returned to his Irish roots and found the live pub music, Guinness, weather and hospitality well worth the shin splints and blisters. Please join us in the big meeting room at the main library downtown on February 16. Meeting begins at 6:30, program at 7:00.

- Tom Burley

Update on Proposed Road through the Smokies

The Park Service continues planning for a half-billion dollar road called the "North Shore Road" on the north side of Fontana Lake in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The massive project will cut through the largest unbroken tract of mountain land in the southeast. The Park Service does this while acknowledging that it could bring "major adverse and long-term" environmental impact!

On January 4 the Park Service notified the public that it has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to build the 34-mile road through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The confusing thing is that while the DEIS does not identify a preferred alternative, it indicates that the "environmentally preferred" alternative is a monetary settlement to the local county without building the road to nowhere.

Construction of the road is to compensate Swain County, NC, for the loss of a county road in 1943 when TVA built Fontana Dam. Swain County and the State of North Carolina have gone on record that they do not want the road built, and prefer a payment of \$52 million—a fraction of the estimated \$ 590 million dollars to build and \$14 million per year in maintenance and operation costs.

The National Park Service has publicly acknowledged in the past that the highway would serve no transportation need, and would jeopardize the agency's mission to protect the biological and cultural resources of the Park. It built part of a replacement road in the 70s, but quit after completing seven miles due to extreme environmental damage and exorbitant costs.

The complex road will involve three massive bridges, each one roughly the length of the Brooklyn Bridge, and will cut through the most rugged section of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, bisect the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and destroy 28 miles of the Benton MacKaye Trail. It will cross multiple ridges of unstable pyritic rock and soil. When this rock is exposed to air and water it produces sulfuric acid that will endanger 141 streams and watercourses, one of the richest coldwater fisheries in the southeast.

The highway is opposed by dozens of local, regional and national groups, as well as North Carolina Governor Mike Easley, the Swain County Commissioners, the Bryson City Aldermen, and local civic leaders of western North Carolina.

The public has until March 20, 2006 to comment. Written comments must be received or postmarked by March 20, 2006: North Shore Road Project
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
P.O. Box 30185
Raleigh, NC 27622

Comments can also be emailed to:
northshoreroad@arcadis-us.com with the subject line: "North Shore Road EIS Project."

To learn more, visit this link:
<http://www.northshoreroad.info/comments.htm>
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New Members Wanted!

The new member contest is still under way! Remember, the club member who signs up the most new recruits will receive a cash prize of \$100.00. All new checks (\$25.00) should be mailed to: David Kostowny
116 Pebblebrook Circle, Madison, AL 35758.
Phone: 325-2296. E-mail: divadlk@msn.com

Join the Sierra Club or Renew your Membership for \$25

Name _____
Address _____
City/State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your chapter newsletter.

Enclose check and mail to:

David Kostowny
116 Pebblebrook Circle
Madison, AL 35758.



Tennessee may buy 100,000 acres of forest

The state should take advantage of Bowater paper company's decision to sell 100,000 acres of forest land on the biologically rich Cumberland Plateau, a Tennessee lawmaker says. "I think it's an opportunity we may never have again," said Rep. Mike Turner, a Nashville Democrat who introduced a bill last week to buy the Bowater land.

Tennessee Environmental Council director Will Callaway estimates the total cost to the state at \$200 million. If the state bought the Bowater property, the land could be used for public parks, forests, wildlife management areas, greenways and recreation zones. Combined, the acreage is four times bigger than Tennessee's largest state park, Fall Creek Falls.

All the property is on the Cumberland Plateau, a wide swath of rugged, mostly forested high ground that bisects the state from north to south. In 2004 the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council named the plateau one of the most endangered wildernesses in the Americas.

- Associated Press, January 25, 2006

Green Mountain Property is Forever Ours!

After three years of hard work by the Certain family, Forever Wild, the Land Trust, and the Huntsville Planning Department, the Alabama State Lands division has finally purchased the 360 acres on the north end of Green Mt. The property contains about 2 miles of the old Spacewalk Trail between the powerline and Blevins Gap.

One of the conditions that the Forever Wild board set down before buying the property was that there be huge local support for this purchase, so the Land Trust and the Sierra Club responded: The City of Huntsville gave \$100,000; the Land Trust donated \$25,000; Mo Brooks' district of the county commission \$25,000; the rest of the County Commission \$5,000; and the Alabama Sierra Club gave \$1,000 (which came from your membership dues). Thanks for supporting the Land Trust and the Sierra Club with your membership dollars! There will be a hike on the complete SpaceWalk Trail on March 11.

- Sam Denham

North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

February – March 2006

2006 ExCom Members

Chair	Liz Poleretzky	461-5819
Vice Ch/Conservation	Bruce Martin	256/725-2168
Treasurer	Sam Denham	539-1033
Fund Raising	Judy Jones	852-6179
Membership	Dave Kostowny	325-2296
Newsletter	Jack Drost	880-2644
Outings	Lee Hollingsworth	461-3060
Publicity	Sandy Kiplinger	256/498-1023
Programs	Tom Burley	883-4267
Prgm Logistics Coordinator	Doug Horacek	772-6788
Secretary	Judy Burley	883-4267
Tuesday Hikes	Liz Poleretzky	461-5819
Web Page	Steven Baty	489-0990

General Meeting

Thursday February 16, 6:30pm.

Downtown Library auditorium. Bill Matthews will speak and show slides of his hike across Ireland.

Hike Ratings

General Note: Most Saturday outings consume the better part of the day and the early evening. Please allow for this in your schedule

Easy-Less than 5 miles, no serious elevation changes, no trail obstacles.

Moderate-5 to 10 miles, some elevation changes or rough trail (rock hopping), or trail obstacles such as creek crossings.

Strenuous- Over 10 miles, substantial elevation change (1000 ft or more), trail may be rocky, obstructed or nonexistent.

Exploratory- event the leader has not experienced before, may fit any class above.

Sat-Sun, Feb 11-12 – Dayhike and backpack to the Sipsey Wilderness.

Strenuous. We'll traverse the Quillan Creek gorge and enjoy the primitive cross country experience of one of our last truly wild areas. Rated strenuous due to difficult terrain, multiple stream crossings, rock hops and lack of a developed trail.

8 miles for the dayhike portion. Optional stay overnight with a visit to the Big Tree and Bee Branch. 15 miles for the backpackers. Bring lunch and water. Meet at Hardee's on South Parkway at Weatherly Road at 8:00am or the Trading Post at Wren at 9:15. Be prompt – we have a long day! Bruce Martin 256-725-2168.

Tuesday, Feb 14, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at Huntsville

Land Trust Office, 907 Franklin St.
Leader: Virgil DeStefano, 539-0348.

Fri-Sun, Feb 17-19th - Thunder Rock Carcamp/Dayhike, Exploratory. We will depart Friday at noon (meeting place to be determined) and camp at Thunder Rock campground which borders the Ocoee River site of the 1996 Olympic venue. On Saturday we will explore trails in the Cherokee National Forest hiking 9 to 10 miles. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburley@knology.net.

Tuesday, Feb 21, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at Huntsville Land Trust Office, 907 Franklin St.
Leader: Bruce Martin, 256-725-2168.

Excom Meeting

Thursday, Feb 23 - Outings 5:15, Excom 5:45. Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Saturday, Feb 25 - Flat Rock Hike, Moderate. We will hike 8.4 miles doing Mountain Mist, Sinks, Stone Cuts, Logans Point, Super Cuts, Flat Rock and Black Warrior Ridge. Bring lunch, water and sturdy hiking boots. Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot at 8:00am. Cost \$1.00. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for more information.

Sunday, Feb 26 - Rainbow Mt hike. Easy. Come experience the best the city of Madison has to offer for hiking. We will meet at 1:30pm at the water tower on Rainbow mountain and have a scintillating easy hike around the mountain. Hike will last approx. 2.5 hrs and we may go to lunch after that. Come see the fabulous balancing rock and other interesting areas. POC for this hike is Dave Kostowny, 325-2296.

Tuesday, Feb 28, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at Huntsville Land Trust Office, 907 Franklin St.
Leader: Nancy Dudney, 882-9408.

Saturday, March 4 - Walls of Jericho hike. Strenuous. Hike 8 miles. Meet 8:00am at old Winn Dixie on Winchester Road to carpool up to Skyline Mountain. Bring lunch, water, and hiking shoes.
Bruce Martin 256-725-2168.

Sunday, March 5 - Fagan Spring hike. Easy. Meet at the Clearmont Trail Head at 1:00pm. Bring water. Call Doug Horacek for more information, 772-6788.

Tuesday, Mar 7, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at Huntsville Land Trust Office, 907 Franklin St.
Leader: Liz Poleretzky @461-5819 or hiker@knology.net.

Newsletter Labeling

Wednesday, March 8th, 5:30pm. Down South Condominiums clubhouse. South Memorial Parkway. Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Saturday, March 11 – SpaceWalk Trail hike. Strenuous. Walk the old boy-scout trail that was built back in the late 60's and early 70's from Green Mt to Monte Sano. Sequential elevation profile: up 900ft, dn 300, up 300, dn 300, up 400, dn 700 up 700ft over 13 miles. Both scenic and unscenic views (the "Ledges"); the trail goes through the Certain property on the north end of Green Mountain, recently acquired by Forever Wild and the Land Trust. Bring lunch and water; rain date Sun, March 12. Note: if you are not planning to hike the whole thing, please don't come! You will be late to square dancing. Meet at the grocery store at Bailey Cove Rd and Weatherly (formerly Bruno's). Sam Denham 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

Tuesday, Mar 14, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at Huntsville Land Trust Office, 907 Franklin St.
Leader: Helga, 534-5656.

Saturday, Mar 18 – Carter Mt hike. Strenuous. Meet at 9:00am in the old Winn/Dixie parking lot on Winchester Rd. We will hike 8-10 miles off trail. Fast hike. Cave cove, Wolf Cove, waterfalls, views. Bring lunch and water. Joette 776-3551.

Sat-Sun, March 18-19 - Sipsey Wilderness backpack. Easy/Moderate Hike in about 5 miles, set up camp with additional dayhiking optional. 5 miles out next day. For more information contact Liz Poleretzky @461-5819 or hiker@knology.net.

Sat-Sun, May 20-28 - Natchez Trace Bicycle Trip. Strenuous. We'll bike from Nashville, TN to Natchez, MS (444 miles). Sag wagon, all food en route and campgrounds provided. Fee \$150. Limited to 10 participants. Bruce Martin 256-725-2168.

Wed-Sun, June 21st -25th -Devils Fork Gap to Hot Springs Backpack, Strenuous. This is a 35 mile self-sufficient backpack with significant elevation changes over three days. We will depart on Wednesday at 7:30am arriving in Hot Springs around 2:30pm. We will spend Saturday night at the Hot Springs Campground on the French Broad River with a one hour soak in the mineral hot springs. Cost will be about \$35 each. Group size is limited. For further information contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburley@knology.net

Other Outings / Events

The following activities are not sponsored or administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no

North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

February – March 2006

information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service because they might be of interest to the readers of our newsletter.

Fri-Sun, March 24-26 Alabama Trails Convention at Cheaha State Park

The Alabama Hiking Trail Society will hold the 4th annual conference & general membership meeting atop Alabama's highest peak –Cheaha Mountain- at Bald Rock Lodge. The weekend will be packed with presentations on:

Hiking Gear, Tips, and Techniques
Hiking Destinations

Leave No Trace Practices & Ethics
The Environment

Trail Building & Maintenance
History

Plus hikes, food, entertainment, photocontest, raffles for prizes, and much more!

There will be representatives from American Trails, Appalachian Trail Club of Alabama, Florida Trail Association, North Alabama Sierra Club, and Sipsey Wilderness Hiking Club joining us for the conference! Learn about their groups during the Friday Welcome Social!

For more information or to register, go to

<http://hikealabama.org/conference/regflyer.pdf>

<http://hikealabama.org/conference/reg.htm>

Or call 334-244-1579

Cahaba Group

Saturday, Feb 18- Odum Scout Trail. Strenuous.

Many people believe the Odum Scout Trail is Alabama's most scenic mountain trail. The trail is situated in Cheaha State Park and was built by a joint effort of boy scouts and the US Forest Service. One tenth of a mile into the hike we will go past High Falls- a three tiered cascade that leaps from ledge to ledge next to the trail. Then we will climb steel and wooden steps to get up the steepest part of the trail which runs next to and past the falls. On down the trail we will come to the edge of a bluff on Cedar Mountain which has a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains. Then on to a second bluff on Big Caney Head and another broad view

of the surrounding mountains. This hike is rated strenuous because of a total distance of 10 miles and a steep first mile climb. Bring lunch and plenty of water.

Meet at the Kmart parking lot Crestwood Blvd at 8:00am.

Jim Binnings 746-3266
jbinnings@bellsouth.net

Saturday, Feb 25 - Pinhoiti Trail Hike

This is the Pinhoiti Trail north of Cheaha State Park on parts of sections 6 and 7. It begins on a 2.5 mile stretch of CCC Road and then ascends Blue Mountain and travels south past Bald Rock into Cheaha State Park. It concludes at the Cave Creek intersection and parking. There 1000 feet of elevation change (uphill) for a moderate to strenuous 7 miles through the hollers of Talladega National Forest. Bring water, lunch, sturdy boots.

Meet at 8:30am at the Kmart Parking Lot at the corner of Crestwood Blvd and Montclair Rd. Just off exit 132B on 1-20. Leader, Tammy Dodson. Home: 205-477-4070 or Cell: 205-792-3847.

Email: tlcmkbeauty@juno.com

Nature Wanderers

Sunday, Feb 12 - Bankhead/Sipsey Wilderness Exploration. Easy.

Welcome Ted as he goes back to the woods! Meet at the Trading Post in Wren at 9:00 a.m. for an easy walk through the woods. Destination to be decided. Bring lunch and water.

Contact Ted Kuzma at 256-974-7771 for details.

Saturday, Feb 25 - Sipsey Wilderness/ Bankhead Forest hike. Easy-Moderate

Join Ted and friends from Wild South for an easy-to-moderately rated hike in the Sipsey Wilderness and/ or Bankhead Forest. Meet at Trading Post in Wren at 9:00 am. Bring lunch and water. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771 or Janice at Wild South 256-974-6166.

Saturday, March 4 - Caney Creek Hike Easy-Moderate

A rare opportunity to see lesser-traveled parts of the Bankhead Forest. A nice walk along North Caney Creek (crossing if possible, but may not be such) with an 80 foot high waterfall and others along the way. Be aware that there is a moderate climb out of North Caney Canyon. Remainder of 3.5 mile hike is mostly an easy walk. Bring lunch and water. Meet at Captain D's in Madison at 8:15 or Trading Post in Wren about 9:00am. Call Doug Felton 256 830 2271 hm and 256 432 1812 wk for details.

Sunday, March 12 - Bankhead/Sipsey Wilderness Exploration. Easy-Moderate

Ted continues to lead our Sunday hikes for those of you who can't make it on Saturdays. Meet at the Trading Post in Wren at 9:00 a.m. for an easy to moderate walk through the woods. Destination to be decided by participants at meeting place. Bring lunch and water. Contact Ted Kuzma at 256-974-7771 for details.

Saturday, March 25. Sipsey Wilderness/Bankhead Forest Hike. Easy-Moderate.

Join Ted and friends from Wild South for an easy-to-moderate hike in the Sipsey Wilderness area and/ or Bankhead Forest. Meet at Trading Post in Wren at 9:00 am. Bring lunch and water. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771 or Janice at Wild South 256-974-6166.