

New trails to open in DuPont state forest

By Park Elliot Baker
Staff Writer

Opportunity abounds for Brevard College students. Every year the outdoor mecca that has become Transylvania County further invests in itself. This year is no different and for 2011 DuPont State Forest has hired a local contractor to put in a few sections of new trail and re-route some existing ones.

If you're not familiar with DuPont, you should acquaint yourself with the more than 10,000-acre state forest. With beautiful waterfalls, diverse landscape and more than 80 miles of multi-use trails, the forest attracted an estimated 179,000 people in 2010. About 40,000 of those visitors were mountain bikers.

Multi-use trails are by definition just that: trails that are open to hikers, bikers and horseback riders. The Forest Service goes to great lengths to provide a remarkable experience for recreationists and to minimize conflict between users. Mountain bikers must yield to hikers and horseback riders, and downhill riders yield to those pedaling uphill. These trails connect points of interest such as waterfalls and slickrock and traverse away from the crowds for the more adventurous.

Todd Branham, owner of Long Cane Trails, LLC is a Transylvania County resident who is intent on giving back to the community. He has been contracted to construct re-routes of steep eroded portions of Micajah and Pitch Pine Trails and build a connection from Cascade Trail to Sheep Mountain Trail. Portions of these trails will be closed temporarily during construction. The new trail segments will be opened in the

spring barring adverse weather conditions.

"Trailwork is a unique career in that it requires a lot of physical stamina and creativity to be successful. Not everyone is cut out for this work," Branham said. "It's a pleasure to be able to work in Transylvania County as a trail builder. DuPont State Forest is literally just out my front door and David Brown is great to work with."

According to Branham, there are 75 trail companies in the Professional Trail Builders Association and three of them are based in Transylvania County. Its location in relevance to other national/state parks makes it a great hub for accessing other workplaces as a trail builder.

Other trails that need improvements which are under study are re-routing portions of Grassy Creek, Rocky Ridge and Stone Mountain Trails, extending Lake Dense Trail and connecting Sheep Mountain Trail to the lower end of Triple Falls Trail.

David Brown, head ranger at DuPont, understands how busy people are, but adds that all have to do their part. "Maintaining and improving forest trails is a joint effort between a host of volunteers, the forest staff and professional trail builders," he said. "Mountain bikers have contributed their share of the work, mainly through the Pisgah and Upstate Chapters of Southern Off-road-Bikers Association (SORBA). The Friends of DuPont Forest (FODF) is another major contributor. Brevard College students have also contributed through their annual Move-A-Mountain Day."

Travis Taylor, a Brevard College graduate, is employed by Branham. While studying geography and GIS, a mapping software, at



Todd Branham clears some forest undergrowth for the new trails in DuPont Forest.

Appalachian State, he jumped at the chance to work in his field of interest.

"I feel fortunate to be at the ground level of building a community resource with an eye towards sustainability and accessibility," Taylor said. "The trails that are getting reworked are true to a multiple use ideal."

"We've all heard the controversy about machine built trails in Pisgah, but previous methods of trail construction won't be here in 50 years. The work I get to do out here inspires my ideas about the direction I would like to take my personal research interest."

Maps and more information about DuPont are available at the Brevard Chamber of Commerce, The Hub at Backcountry Outdoors and Sycamore Cycles.

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