

Susquehannock Trail Club News – 01-05-2023

By Bill Boyd

Wow, a brand-new year! We need to remember to start writing 2023. Also, a new year for our trail club, and we have already begun to make plans for a better STS. One thing we're looking into is upgrading our trail maintenance tools - we'd like to ensure that the maintainers have access to the proper tools when needed. Most of our dedicated maintainers use their personal chainsaws, but we want to be able to provide them with either a smaller or larger saw when required. By "dedicated maintainer" we mean those who have volunteered to maintain a certain section of the trail. Right now, the trail is divided into 21 maintenance sections, plus two crossover trails - with a couple of exceptions these sections have dedicated maintainers - and we're hoping for 100% coverage. This may entail splitting some of the longer sections into shorter stretches. The only section we cannot shorten is the Hammersley - it's 10 miles if one goes straight through or goes in 5 miles and back out.

For some who may feel a bit intimidated by gas-powered chainsaws, we are looking into battery-operated tools. Of course, the gasoline needs mixed with oil properly for the right combustible mixture, and then there is the pulling/cranking to start them. And like it or not they can be irritating to deal with. The same extreme caution must be used if running a battery saw, but you don't have all the cranking, noise, fumes, etc., and they always start. Stihl makes a couple of good items we intend to check out - one is a regular chainsaw with about a 12" bar - a couple of our members have these and can recommend them. The other saw is a small hand-held (one hand) saw with about an 8" bar - I'm told this one is very useful when going along the trail trimming limbs (around 2-3" in dia.) I hear this little saw is so popular you need to get on a list to get one.

We are also hoping to try what we may call the "Clean Sweep" operation of trail maintenance. It could involve a couple going ahead with chainsaws, to clear the bigger stuff, followed by the limb trimmers/tossers, followed by the blazers, and finally the trail mower. I believe the KTA calls it a "5-yr. cutback" - meaning that the trimming shouldn't be needed for maybe 5 years. It will probably need some tweaking as we go along, so we'll see.

And last, but surely not least, we hope to bring on some new members, especially those who may be willing to help with some of the maintenance. These would no doubt be younger folks - and when we say "younger" we mean those under 70. Actually, some of our better years are those between retirement age and around 70, maybe even 80. These trail jobs don't pay actual money, but the health and social benefits are priceless.