



mountaintrue vistas

ALTERNATIVE G: Not a Compromise for the Buck Project

MountainTrue's Public Lands Biologist, Josh Kelly, next to a "temporary road" built in 2012 in Nantahala National Forest that still remains.

While the Forest Service calls their final plan for the Buck Project a balanced compromise, it's barely changed from their first preferred plan. MountainTrue is filing an objection to the project with the Forest Service.

By Callie D. Moore, Western Regional Director of MountainTrue, and Josh Kelly, Public Lands Biologist of MountainTrue

In August, the US Forest Service announced their final plan for the Buck Project, a controversial timber project set to occur in Nantahala National Forest in Clay County.

First, a brief recap: In April, the Forest Service showed preference for a proposal for the Buck Project called Alternative B. The agency opened the proposal up for public comments, and more than 600 MountainTrue supporters wrote in to express their concerns. The Forest Service then released its final proposal, Alternative G, which still fails to address public concerns about excessive road construction, threats to native brook trout populations, logging in old-growth forests and more.

There are already over 2,200 miles of roads in Pisgah and Nantahala National

Forests. Yet Alternative G would build 8.9 miles of new roads – only a 0.14-mile decrease from Alternative B. Some roads would cross extremely steep slopes, increasing erosion and the risk of landslides, and roads would also be built in the largest potential addition to

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Wilderness anywhere in North Carolina: the Chunky Gal area. One of the criteria used to determine if land qualifies as Wilderness or Backcountry is "apparent naturalness," and building miles of roads and cutting 25-acre blocks into the area will almost guarantee that much of Chunky Gal will not qualify.

Alternative G would likely also harm Buck Creek, a fragile, pristine native

brook trout stream that is classified as an Outstanding Resource Water. This designation is meant to give unique waters extra protection, and there are only nine of them in all of WNC. But Alternative G would build a "temporary" road alongside an

unnamed tributary of Buck Creek, putting this brook trout population at further risk.

The Forest Service proposed the very flawed Buck Project in early 2018. They have now made small changes around the margins of the problem they created and called this a balanced compromise. We will continue to push for a better alternative for the project, because any project that jeopardizes the health of the land and water is unacceptable to MountainTrue.

MountainTrue Organizes Non-Native Invasive Plant Control Effort in the High Country



MountainTrue summer intern Olivia Votava gathers Japanese Knotweed at a non-native invasive removal workday in Valle Crucis Community Park.

Thanks to the support of our members, MountainTrue's forest team has brought together a new collaborative to fight the spread of non-native invasive plants in Watauga County.

Called the High Country Habitat Restoration Council (HCHRC), the group consists of partner agencies, land trusts and local MountainTrue members. HCHRC has already held three non-native invasive plant removal workdays. At each one, MountainTrue staff have taught volunteers how to treat Multiflora Rose and Japanese Knotweed. Volunteers then put their new skills into practice by treating these plants along the Watauga River in Valle Crucis Community Park.

"Non-native invasive plants disrupt ecosystems by displacing native species," says Bob Gale, Ecologist and Public Lands Director of MountainTrue. "Our efforts are restoring appropriate habitat, food and cover for wildlife."

To get involved with future HCHRC efforts, email [AmeriCorps Forest Keeper Coordinator Rhys Burns at forestkeeper@mountaintrue.org](mailto:forestkeeper@mountaintrue.org).

MountainTrue Welcomes New Members, Staff Through Merger



The band Gnarly Fingers plays at the celebration of MountainTrue's merger with the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition on August 17.

On July 1, MountainTrue welcomed more than 500 new members when we merged with the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC)!

Based in Murphy, HRWC has done critical work to protect clean water in the far western counties of North Carolina and north Georgia for decades. As the new Western Region staff of MountainTrue, former HRWC staff members Callie Moore and Tony Ward will continue to fight for clean water alongside MountainTrue's other program areas – resilient forests, healthy communities and clean energy.



Welcome our New Water Quality Administrator, Grace Fuchs!

We're delighted to welcome Grace Fuchs, our new AmeriCorps Water Quality Administrator! Grace is a recent graduate of Ohio University, where she majored in Environmental Studies and completed her thesis work on the social and environmental impacts of fracking in Appalachian Ohio.

Grace is excited to be in WNC and to address water quality issues specific to this region. If you see Grace around taking water samples, we hope

you'll give her a warm welcome to the MountainTrue team.

Watauga Riverkeeper Contains and Finds Source of Petrochemical Spill

When MountainTrue member and fishing guide Jeff Gentry noticed an oil sheen on the Watauga River this August, he notified our Watauga Riverkeeper, Andy Hill. Andy responded immediately, collecting water samples at the site and alerting regulatory agencies. Then, with support from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and local emergency management, Andy put containment measures in place to halt the flow of the spill. He also traced the pollution back to its source: several abandoned storage drums of diesel fuel, hydraulic fluid and motor oil.

"Because a member was keeping his eyes out and let me know right away, we were able to quickly contain and stop a spill that would have otherwise affected drinking water sources and recreation areas downstream," Andy says. If you notice mysterious pollution on WNC's rivers, please let us know by contacting your local Riverkeeper.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: Richard Kark

"I've never met a river I didn't like," Richard Kark says, and he has the numbers to back it up: As an avid canoer since high school, he's now paddled 61 rivers in Western North Carolina, and 309 in his former home state of Wisconsin. "If you love getting outside, it seems natural that you'd want to preserve the outdoors."

A MountainTrue member since 2009, Richard has applied his passion for rivers as an active volunteer as well as a generous donor. He took samples at Azalea Park in Swannanoa for five years as a Swim Guide volunteer, and says he enjoys participating in river cleanups because of the immediate impact he sees. Richard also participated in the Asheville Beyond Coal campaign that won the closure of Asheville's coal plant on Lake Julian.

"I support MountainTrue because of the list of things they're effectively involved with," Richard says. "I appreciate the national environmental groups too, but I like that MountainTrue is more involved with

getting things done around here."

Richard has been a generous supporter of MountainTrue for many years, and we were recently fortunate enough for Richard to support us from his mandatory IRA distribution and to include us in his will. "At my age, you're required to take distributions from the IRA," Richard says. "I've decided to donate all of it to MountainTrue. If you want to give money to good causes, it's a good source to do it from since it can reduce your tax liability."



Richard at the base of Nantahala Falls in Nantahala National Forest.

"MountainTrue's financial advisor makes it easy," Richard continues. "He writes the check, keeps track of the funds and reports to the IRS. I just had to decide the amount."

Richard, we are so grateful for your years of volunteer work and support. Thank you.

"If you love getting outside, it seems natural that you'd want to preserve the outdoors."

To learn more about planned giving with MountainTrue, contact Development Director Adam Bowers at adam@mountaintrue.org or 828-258-8737 ext. 203.

UPCOMING FALL 2019 EVENTS

Plugged in Buncombe: Board and Commission Meetings

OCTOBER-DECEMBER IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NC,
TIMES AND LOCATIONS VARY

MountainTrue is working to demystify local advisory board and commission meetings by pairing participants up with local topic experts to answer their questions before and after each meeting. See the full list of upcoming meetings and sign up for one at mountaintrue.org!

Shade Your Stream Workshop

OCT. 18, 10 AM – 2 PM, BOONE, NC: Join MountainTrue's Watauga Riverkeeper for a workshop about streambank repair and live staking techniques. We'll start off with classroom instruction, and then head out to take part in hands-on stream restoration along the Watauga.

MountainTrue's 2019 Annual Gathering

OCT. 23, 6 PM, ASHEVILLE, NC: Our biggest party of the year is coming right up! Come celebrate outstanding volunteers and advocates, vote on our new board slate and connect with other MountainTrue members.

Guardians of Our Troubled Waters Film Exhibition and Discussion

NOV. 2, 10:30 AM, MILL SPRING, NC: Join a screening and discussion of *Guardians of Our Troubled Waters*, a film telling the story of advocates who stood up to protect rivers in the American Southeast.



Western Region Program Coordinator Tony Ward (left) with volunteers at last year's Lake Chatuge Cleanup.

Lake Chatuge Cleanup

NOV. 9,
9 – 11:30 AM,
HIAWASSEE, GA:
Volunteer coordinators will lead teams of 5-10 to designated trash sites along the shores of Lake Chatuge, and we'll meet back at the beach pavilion at 11:30 for prizes.

To sign up and learn more about any of these events, visit mountaintrue.org/eventscalendar.



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Are You MountainTrue?

MountainTrue members protect WNC's forests, water and air.

Members have the opportunity to hike with experts, maintain our amazing Paddle Trail along the French Broad River, volunteer to help create equitable community design projects and so much more. Have fun with us, learn more about the incredible natural treasures of our region and make a difference in our community.

mountaintrue.org

At the Big Sweep cleanup on Sept. 21, MountainTrue's Green Riverkeeper Gray Jernigan and volunteers hauled trash including 20 tires, a stoplight and lots of single use plastic bags and bottles out of the Green River.