**SAVE THE DATES**

**Saturday, March 30**
Spring Trail Work Day

**Tuesday, April 23**
NEEF Trail Work Day

**Saturday, April 27**
Greening Up The Mountains in Sylva

**Saturday, May 4**
Member Wildflower Hike with Dan Pittillo

**Saturday, May 11**
Member Hike to Elbow Falls with Mike Kettles

**Saturday, May 18**
Hook Line & Drinker Trout Festival in Sylva

**Saturday, June 1**
National Trails Day in Panthertown Valley

**Saturday, July 20**

**Pete Ripmaster**
Iditarod Champion

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**Member Hikes More Popular Than Ever**

We have several guided hikes planned for our members to enjoy this spring including an easy-paced wildflower walk with Botanist Dan Pittillo, and a more strenuous trip to Elbow and Red Butt Falls with Mike Kettles. Space is limited and an RSVP is required to sign-up.

**Meet Charly, Our New Trail Crew Leader**

Exciting news as we announce that we have just hired our first trail crew leader. Check out the story about Charly Aurelia on Page 3.

**Iditarod Champ To Speak At Panthertown Benefit**

“Pete Ripmaster is the winner of the 2018 Iditarod Trail Invitational. You’ve probably heard of the Iditarod before, and you might think it’s bizarre to be pulled by a bunch of dogs in sub-zero temperatures in the Alaskan wilderness. But that’s not the Iditarod that Pete won. He did the same course - 1,000 miles and 50 degrees below zero - in the form of an ultramarathon. With no dogs to help him along the way, Pete’s feet carried him an average of 38 miles a day over 26 days.”

Introduction from the MtnMeister podcast episode #207. Don’t miss Pete. Tickets go on sale in April. (Continues on Page 4)


News & Happenings

As we finish off the winter season looking forward to the warmer days ahead and the magnificent wildflower blooms soon to come, we present to you our spring 2019 edition of The Panther’s Roar.

We are excited to announce we have recently hired Charly Aurelia as our part-time Panthertown Trail Crew Leader. Charly will help us protect and maintain the Panthertown Trail System and work with volunteers on much needed conservation projects.

We also welcome outstanding volunteers Abbey Bearer and Marcia Shawler as the newest trustees to serve on our board.

Our dedicated volunteers worked throughout the autumn keeping the 30 mile trail system in Panthertown clear before winter arrived. Our volunteers took a break from trail work during the 35-day government shutdown and have now returned to continue the much needed work needed to conserve Panthertown and the trail system for all to explore and enjoy.

Member hikes and trail work days are both great ways to get involved and meet others who also care for Panthertown. We hope to see you on the trails this season.

U.S. Forest Service and Friends of Panthertown Back To Working On Trails After Federal Shutdown

After a 35 day governmental shutdown closed U.S. Forest Service offices and furloughed staff during January, Friends of Panthertown was re-authorized to continue maintenance work on the trails in Panthertown. Volunteer groups, including Friends, were asked to not do any on-the-ground work in the National Forests during the shutdown. While trail work was on hold, Friends staff continued to plan for 2019 work projects. In February, Friends hired Charly Aurelia as Trail Crew Leader to coordinate the volunteer trail work in Panthertown Valley.
Friends works in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service by providing funding and volunteers to conserve, maintain, and improve 30 miles of backcountry trails in Panthertown.

In late February, after a month-and-a-half long region wide search for qualified candidates, Friends of Panthertown hired Charly Aurelia for the newly created part-time position of Trail Crew Leader. Charly will coordinate the project work and volunteers needed to maintain the Panthertown Trail System. Trail Boss and Friends of Panthertown co-founder Mike Purdy will continue to oversee our mission.

Charly comes to us with extensive backcountry experience. Always an explorer, he has traveled much of the North American continent by foot, bicycle, motorcycle, and on four wheels. Lately his focus has been avid trail running, hiking, and mountain biking with his pup, Jack. He began facilitating learning 35 years ago and during that time he has been a professional educator in emergency and wilderness medicine, communication skills, self protection, and navigation. He will be training and leading the Friends of Panthertown trail crew volunteers.

Charly also serves on the Board of Directors for Pisgah Area Southern Offroad Bicycle Association (SORBA) and functions as their Trails Coordinator managing over 200 miles of trails in Pisgah National Forest as well as municipal, county, and state lands. He is a USFS Certified Sawyer and in addition to extensive Trail Crew Leader training, he has developed the Trail Crew Leader training program for the Pisgah Ranger District of the Pisgah National Forest. Charly also cares for trails in the Upper Hickory Nut Gorge as a part of Conserving Carolina’s Rock Crushers Trail Crew.

This is the first time Friends has offered a paid trail crew leader position. Funding for this important position came in part from donations from our generous members and will continue to be sustained in the future with grant funds.
"Pete nearly died attempting the ITI in 2016... He had every excuse never to return to Alaska. But in 2018, Ripmaster ran the Iditarod again - and won it." - Blue Ridge Outdoors

"Pete Ripmaster has an amazing story of triumph by ultra running the 1,000 mile Iditarod Invitational. He went from dead last, having a near death experience, to winning the race..." - Gear Junkie

"Buckle your seat belts, because you're in for a treat... I'll let Pete tell you about his journeys and obsessions about this event that led to his victory... " - I Could Never Do That
General Admission tickets will be available beginning on Earth Day, April 22, 2019. Please contact us about V.I.P. tickets which will include reserved seating and an invitation to join Pete on a group hike in Panthertown.
Grant Funded Projects in Panthertown

Randy Welsh, National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance Project Manager, reported NWSA was “excited to offer funding to support the volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and agency partners who are stewarding the National Forest trail system on their local public lands”, including Friends of Panthertown and Panthertown Valley. “These trail stewardship projects accomplished much needed work to improve trail conditions on the National Forests. Americans are lucky to have such diverse and beautiful National Forest areas across our country, but we are even luckier to have caring stewards who give their time and their energy and their love to this unique American resource.” The stewardship work in Panthertown that was funded under the NWSA grant was accomplished between May and December 2018.

Above: Board member Mike English takes a break from trail work to speak with a young volunteer about Greenland Creek Falls and why conserving Panthertown is so important.

Friends’ members joined us on a guided hike and visited the popular Frolictown Falls (left), Wilderness Falls (right), and Salt Rock Gap overlook (above).
Photos from Jennifer Pharr Davis Presentation

Friends of Panthertown hosted a presentation last summer featuring Jennifer Pharr Davis, National Geographic Adventurer of the Year. The program was held at The County Club of Sapphire Valley where more than 200 people attended. Don't miss hearing Iditarod Champion Pete Ripmaster on July 20.

Above: Jennifer poses with members and event sponsors, Marcia and Steve Shawler.

Below: Virginia Willard and Margaret Carton.

Right: Steve Shawler, Margaret Carton, Friends' President, Marcia Shawler, and Jennifer with Executive Director Jason Kimenker. Photo by Don Richeson.
VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

Join us on Saturday, March 30, 2019 for a Panthertown Valley Spring Trail Work Day.

Volunteers of all experience levels are welcome and appreciated.