**OUR MISSION**

The mission of Friends of Panthertown is to work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to conserve this outstanding natural resource while improving the quality and experience of recreational opportunities in Panthertown Valley.

**We Are Thankful For Our Volunteers And Members**

As we finish out the autumn season here in Panthertown Valley, we would like to share our thanks to all those who came out to help us on the trails this year, and to our supporting members and donors for your contributions towards helping us protect and maintain this special place for residents and visitors who come to enjoy this remarkable backcountry recreation area in Nantahala National Forest. We could not do it without you. Thank you. We appreciate you. Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy Thanksgiving and holiday season ahead.

We are honored to have received a 2019 Top-Rated Award from GreatNonprofits! Read inspiring stories about us and add your own. [https://greatnonprofits.org/org/friends-of-panthertown](https://greatnonprofits.org/org/friends-of-panthertown)

We appreciate all of your contributions. Thank you for supporting the important work we are doing in Panthertown Valley as stewards of this precious natural resource.
News & Happenings

There is nothing quite like the experience of visiting Panthertown Valley during the crisp and colorful months of autumn as the weather cools and the forest views expand.

This year is no exception. The showy fall leaf colors were remarkable and long lasting.

With more than 30 miles of trails and 6,311 acres of quality backcountry to explore, Panthertown remains one of Jackson County’s most prized natural resources.

Our volunteers worked hard all summer long to keep the trail system maintained and the valley protected. We are grateful for each of our volunteers, and we thank them for their dedication and outstanding stewardship work done throughout the year.

Salt Rock Gap Trailhead Property Now Public Land

Back in 2017 we worked in partnership with Mainspring Conservation Trust and our members to purchase and protect 16 acres of privately held land at the Salt Rock Gap trailhead entrance to Panthertown. This summer, Mainspring finalized the transfer of this importantly protected property to be added to USFS-managed boundaries of Panthertown. We are very grateful for everyone’s support!

To renew your membership online, or to make an additional gift in support of the conservation work we are doing in Panthertown, please visit our website anytime: panthertown.org/renew
Iditarod Trail Champion Speaks

This summer, Friends hosted ultra-athlete Pete Ripmaster for a benefit presentation held at the Country Club of Sapphire Valley. Stay tuned for details about our 2020 high adventure benefit presentation!

*Photo left (left to right): Margaret Carton, Pete Ripmaster, Marcia Shawler, Steve Shawler, and Jason Kimenker. Right: Pete Ripmaster*

In October, Charly Aurelia (center front in photo) our Trail Stewardship Coordinator, gave the current students of the Landmark Learning’s Leave No Trace Master Educator program a guided tour and education about Panthertown’s trails and use with LNT context and concerns. Panthertown Valley was selected as one of 14 sites nationally as a 2020 Hot Spot. An LNT team will be on site visiting Panthertown from August 21-25, 2020.
Bear-Resistant Food Storage Lockers To Be Installed In Panthertown Valley

Visitors to Panthertown should be aware that black bears live here and are protected here. This is their natural, wild habitat. Panthertown is their territory and their home. Panthertown is designated by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission as part of the Bonas Defeat - Panthertown Bear Sanctuary. No bear hunting is permitted. Due to frequent bear/human encounters at multiple campsites in Panthertown, and because bears in this area have learned to retrieve food hung in trees, Friends of Panthertown is currently working in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service Nantahala Ranger District to install strong metal food storage lockers, or “bear boxes”, in strategic locations. While a bear can still smell food in a locker, the bear can not get into the locker if it is closed and latched properly.

The first boxes will initially be installed at two popular camping locations: the shelter, and nearby where Panthertown Creek and Greenland Creek meet. Additional boxes will be added over time as resources become available and sponsoring donations are received for funding their installation. Even after the boxes are installed, the Forest Service still recommends campers store food and scented items in bear-resistant canisters.

With approximately 30,000 visitors in Panthertown Valley this past year, and due to safety concerns related to the increase in bear encounters with humans, U.S. Forest Service still strongly recommends all backcountry campers use bear resistant canisters and carry a readily available can of bear pepper spray (rated as bear spray by the U.S. EPA). Backcountry food storage lockers will be added as backup but should not be solely relied upon.

You or your business can help!
Sponsor-A-Bear-Box

Please contact us at friends@panthertown.org for information about sponsoring a bear box in Panthertown.
**Whence These Special Places? The Geology of Cashiers, Highlands & Panthertown Valley book and presentation**

This summer Friends of Panthertown hosted founding board member and volunteer, Bill Jacobs, for his book release and presentation on the geology of Panthertown Valley and the Cashiers plateau. The presentation was held at the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library.

Signed, first edition copies of Bill’s new book are available now at Highland Hiker (Cashiers and Highlands), City Lights Bookstore (Sylva).

**Books may also be purchase at GreatRockPress.com**

Copies of Bill Jacob’s newly released book about the geology of Cashiers, Highlands & Panthertown Valley are available in stores now and online. They would make great gifts for family and friends.

Our Friends of Panthertown partnership was “a huge asset in our outdoor programming this summer and we were so happy to partner with y’all. The kids truly enjoyed their time in Panthertown and it is so cool to see them get to know their land around them and understand nature on a different level. We were really glad to have each kid have access to an LNT lesson as well.” - **Cameron Ward, Education Director, Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau**
Giving Back, Volunteering In Panthertown Is A Rewarding, Enjoyable Experience

“Panthertown has become my favorite place to hike. Such a special place. Today, I volunteered with Charly for trail maintenance. We hiked the Wilderness Falls Trail and removed overhanging limbs and helped reroute some drain fields. It was very rewarding work, and I enjoyed working with Charly. He was very informative and had many interesting stories to tell. I have a new appreciation for all of the work that goes into maintaining these beautiful places for all to enjoy. I will definitely be back to help again as my schedule allows. Charly is a wonderful resource as both a guide and an educator.”

- Beth Jones, Hiker, Member, Volunteer

Left: Our hard working volunteers take a break from maintaining the trails. Here they enjoy lunch and look over a map of Panthertown to see where there is still work to be done.

Below: Our Trail Stewardship Coordinator, Charly Aurelia, gives a safety orientation to a group of Boy Scouts as they prepare to work on backcountry trails in Panthertown Valley.
We appreciate all of our volunteers for coming out to work on the trails with us this year. Special thanks goes to Boy Scouts Troop 701 of Brevard for their hard work in September on National Public Lands Day, to the Carolina Climbers Coalition for helping out on Big Green Trail also in September, and to Nantahala Area SORBA for a great bike and hike work day in November where we cleared Rattlesnake Knob Trail and worked on converting old water bar diversions to rolling grade dips. Please contact us for more information about volunteering in Panthertown!