



## FALL 2024 ISSUE

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## Trailside Thoughts

| From Our Board Chair |

Hello ASTA Friends,

First and foremost, we at ASTA, extend our deepest sympathies and strong support to everyone who has been affected by the devastation of Hurricane Helene. The scale of loss and suffering is unimaginable.

In times like these, it's crucial to lean on one another. Many of our ASTA volunteers have been involved in helping our neighbors locally and across western North Carolina. Volunteering time and financial support are the basic principles of ASTA and every gesture of support is invaluable.

To those grieving losses, we send our heartfelt condolences. To the people working on the front lines, your efforts do not go unnoticed. And to all



affected we pledge our support during this challenging time.

While our thoughts are with the victims of Hurricane Helene, there is much to celebrate within ASTA. Our newsletter will share some of the things we are doing to enhance our community. There are many exciting projects planned for 2025, and these will be announced in upcoming newsletters.

However, for now, we turn our attention and heartfelt solidarity to our neighbors in the mountains of North Carolina.

Forrest Pulley

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## What's Been Happening?

| NPS Announcement | Trail Maintenance Days | 1st Saturday Hikes |

### National Park Service PSA

Almost the entire North Carolina section of the Blue Ridge Parkway remains closed due to portions of the roadway that have been compromised by flooding and tree hazards. Crews continue with emergency stabilization and damage assessments following Hurricane Helene.

For safety reasons, park managers are asking the public to please be patient and respect the closures. Many areas remain unsafe due to visible and hidden hazards, such as weakened and missing portions of the roadway; standing dead and downed trees; unstable slopes; and crews and heavy equipment operating on the road. Unauthorized use also hinders recovery operations of work crews. The National Park Service is working diligently, and areas will reopen as soon as it is safe to do so. Due to increasing instances of visitors entering closed areas and disregarding or vandalizing safety barriers, rangers will begin enforcing closure violations and issuing citations as necessary. These actions are necessary to prevent accidents and injuries to the public and our crews.

On Wednesday morning, October 23, 2024, the Blue Ridge Parkway opened to traffic from milepost 285.5, at Bamboo Gap, to milepost 305, near Beacon Heights, in the Blowing Rock, North Carolina area. This is the first section of roadway to open in North Carolina since Hurricane Helene. Opening this section of the park provides improved transportation links while communities address ongoing storm recovery on other local routes.

Updates are posted regularly on the parkway website and social media platforms.

[Blue Ridge Parkway Facebook](#)

## Trail Maintenance Days



Our current trail maintenance efforts are on pause until further guidance from the NPS. Before Helene, there was quite a bit progress being made on sections of the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) in Alleghany County. This in large part to our volunteers! We hope that when the time comes folks will join us in the opportunity to clean up and repair the MST within the county and beyond. The Friends of the MST are already collecting information on those interested in helping when the time is right.

[MST Volunteer Sign Up](#)

## 1st Saturday Summer Hikes



Our group hikes explored Pilot Mountain, Grayson Highlands, and Bluff Mountain Trail over the Summer months. We will continue to have group hikes in neighboring areas not as impacted by recovery efforts. ASTA believes in the many benefits hiking has on not only physical wellness, but also emotional and mental wellness. We hope to continue with planning other opportunities for folks within our community to join us in group hikes. Follow us on Meetup to stay up-to-date for upcoming opportunities!

[Follow on Meetup](#)

# Sparta Walks

| Where Are We Now? Walkability Efforts Continued |

The Sparta Alleghany Walkability committee continues to connect on a regular basis to talk about improvements in downtown Sparta. There have been many successes in communicating with local Department of Transportation (DOT) representatives. You'll notice repainted crosswalk sections throughout town! More projects are still currently underway and we hope to continue to keep you updated on these efforts. If you'd like to view the full Sparta Walk Audit report, hit the button below. Additionally, we are collaborating with our partners to submit an application for the Great Trails State Project funding in November. Stay tuned for more updates!

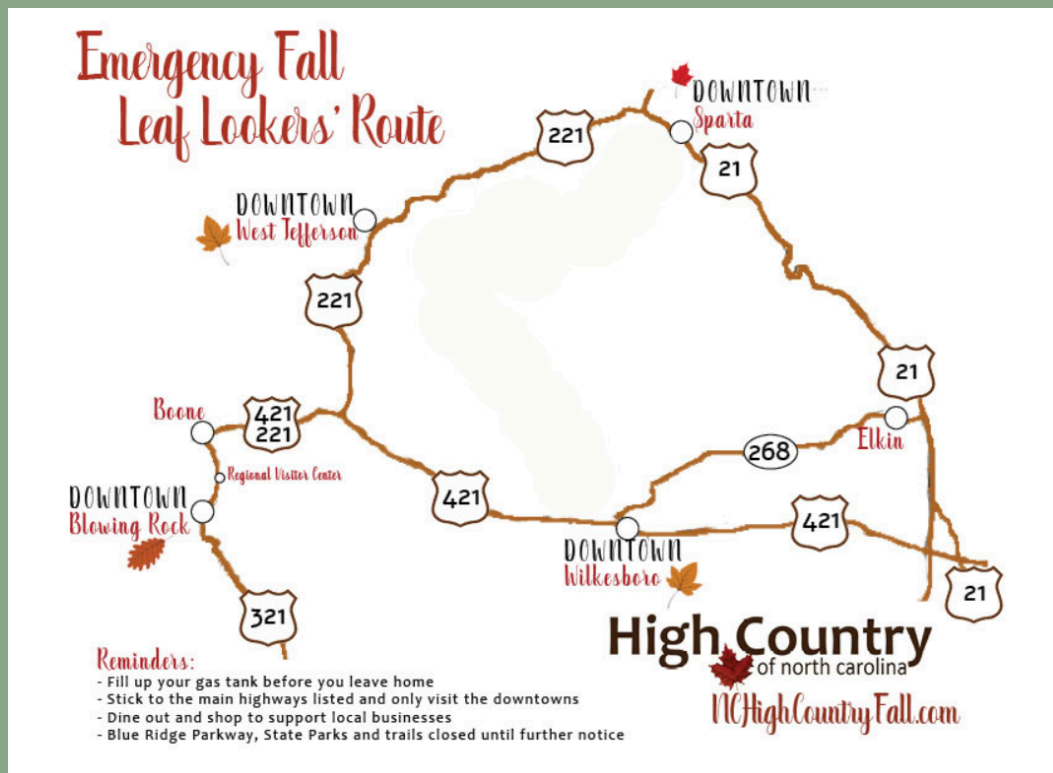
[Link to Walk Audit Full Report](#)

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## Current Leaf Lookers' Route

| High Country NC Tourism Openings & Closures Hurricane Helene |





Although access to some communities has improved, hazards remain. The affected area has limited supplies and traffic delays are possible due to recovery activities. Obey all signs and barricades.

Many top local tourism attractions have sustained damage, are unable to open due to road closures/ staffing, or are closed to keep traffic to the area at a minimum while supporting locals. This site will be updating this list of openings/closures daily as visitor activities reopen:

[Road Updates](#)

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## Mark Your Calendars

[Upcoming Events](#)



**Look for our group events on Meetup**

*Weather Dependent & Subject to Change*

**Possible Upcoming Group Hikes...**

- Stone Mountain
- Olde Beau
- Walk of the Turkey Hike
- Jingle Bells Walk
- First Day Hike

November 17 - National Take a Hike Day

November 29 - #OPTOutside Day

December 11 - International Mountain Day

January 1 - First Day Hike

January 5 - National Bird Day

**Follow Us on Facebook**

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# Welcome!

To our New Meetup Members Since the Last Issue



- Natasha from Independence, VA
- Eric from Sparta, NC

- Sherry from Hudson, FL
- Harriet from Salisbury, NC
  - CJ from Mount Airy, NC
  - Amanda from Elkin, VA
  - Steven from Traphill, NC
- Deborah from N Wilkesboro, NC
  - Elizabeth from Creston, NC
- Karen from Glade Valley, NC
  - Cathy from King, NC
  - Faith from Nashville, TN
- Donald from Summerfield, NC

We look forward to seeing you out on the trails!



## Alleghany Sparta Trail Association

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