

ASTA Gets Approval to Revitalize Sam Brown Park

Alleghany News

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THE DILAPIDATED BRIDGE leading from Wilkes Community College, Alleghany Campus, into Sam Brown Park is pictured above left, with fallen trees visible in the background. Work began with removing the damaged bridge and replacing it with a culvert.

The Alleghany Sparta Trail Association (ASTA) received approval at the Alleghany County Board of Commissioners' Feb 3 meeting to begin work in conjunction with the county's recreation department on a project to revitalize Sam Brown Park.

The entrance to the park, that was discussed for the majority of the improvements, is located in the area around the Alleghany Campus of Wilkes Community College and the campus of Alleghany High School.

The final decision by the commissioners had been delayed to allow more time to gather information about the project. After this vote, work will proceed in March.

In recent years, the bridge on the path to Alleghany High School, which was used for entering the former ropes course area, was in poor repair. Under the plan, that bridge will be replaced with a culvert. Meanwhile, the ropes course itself has fallen into disrepair after many years of neglect and disuse.

Forrest Pulley, who is board chairman for ASTA, said, "There are a lot of trees down, and we are going to clear those out, remove the old ropes course, and install a new walking trail at the lower part of the park with picnic tables and benches. It will be a place for more of a relaxing walk, if you will," he said. "The top of the ridge line has a lot of elevation changes, and we'll put in some more challenging multi-use trails in the area for hiking and biking." A contractor will be hired to help remove some of the larger trees, Pulley said.

He noted that Randy Murphy of the Allegheny County Recreation Department plays a key role in planning and facilitating the work. "We have been and will continue to work with him on this project," he said.

Funding for the project will come from a combination of grants, relief funds, and donations. Pulley said that ASTA has enough funds pledged at this point to get started on the work this spring, but how long it takes will depend on the weather. "We're putting together a project plan," he said.

If anyone wants to help with the funding, Pulley said information on making a tax-deductible donation can be found by emailing ASTA at spartatrails@gmail.com. Meanwhile, the renovation Pulley said information on making a tax-deductible donation can be garnered by emailing ASTA at spartatrails@gmail.com. Meanwhile, the renovation plan also includes clearing the walking trails in the park of trees and debris and replacing a bridge behind the welding shop. "We've been talking with the Wilkes Community College welding program, and they are going to do the work," Pulley said.

The disc golf course, which is also located in that area and around the Lion's Club Pavilion, will be available for use as the work continues, and afterwards.

When asked about specific parts of the ropes course and what exactly would be removed or left, Pulley said, "We'll be working with the county and determining what will remain."

ASTA has formed a hiking club at the high school and has had up to 43 students take part. The club was founded last fall, he said, and the hope is that the students can play a role in the work. The club is being taught trail maintenance and other applicable skills, and this project would give the members an opportunity to have hands-on experience.

"It's really nice to see that come together," Pulley said.

Pulley has been with ASTA for about six years and became board chair about a year and a half ago.

At the beginning of the County Commissioners Meeting, Commissioner Bobby Irwin pointed out that the work is being done without cost to the county. In his comments, Irwin also reminded the board of the hope for a sports center in the future in that same area.

"We really appreciate your time and taking us around and showing us what your vision for the trail is gonna be," Commissioner Garrison Wagoner told Pulley.

"I am very impressed with my meeting with your group and the people that you have on that group, and I think you guys are doing great work for this community," County Manager Bill Shepley said in appreciation.