

Cattanooga Times Free Press



88 is No. 1 again: Alex Bowman wins pole position for the Daytona 500

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Lady Vols top Georgia 62-46 to win fourth straight game

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NEW REPORT ON EDUCATION

Southern states need to tighten gains gaps

BY MEGHAN MANGRUM STAFF WRITER

Despite making significant strides in the past several decades, Southerners remain concerned about the quality of education in their states, according to a recent report by a network of Southern state-based organizations called the Columbia Group. The report, "Accelerating the Pace: The Future of Education in the American South," found that student achievement has improved significantly, but overall achievement gaps have widened in some states, especially between affluent and white students and their low-income or minority peers.

"If schools do not help more students catch up more quickly — even as they raise expectations for all children — the region's economic prospects will worsen," the report states. "In some areas, they already have."

Commissioned by groups including the Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education and the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, the report includes the first Education Poll of the South.

See **GAINS GAPS** > A7

Democrats plan another run at blocked Russia memo

BY CALVIN WOODWARD THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee are prepared to black out parts of their memo about the FBI's Russia investigation to ensure there's no harmful spilling of secrets, then try again to get President Donald Trump to let it come out. A White House aide said Sunday he's confident it will be released once Democrats "clean it up."



Mason Boring, with Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards, carries a two-man saw to clear downed trees on the Fodderstack Trail of the Citlco Creek Wilderness in the Cherokee National Forest on Thursday in Monroe County, Tenn.

TRAILBLAZING

HOW THE REGION'S TRAILS ARE BUILT AND MAINTAINED

BY MARK PACE STAFF WRITER

Mason Boring and Clayton Morgan held adjoining handles of a perforated lancetooth two-man saw, pulling the more-than-70-year-old piece of equipment back and forth.

The two were clearing a fallen tree from Fodderstack horse and hiking trail in Cherokee National Forest on Thursday morning. Boring estimated it had been five years since a crew came to clear the path.

That's what brought the two men here, miles from civilization, hiking and pulling a saw older than many of the surrounding trees.

The drive to the trail was as treacherous as the



Mason Boring operates one side of a two-man saw while clearing trees on the trail.

hike itself. The two had taken a U.S. Forest Service truck more than an hour from any paved road, climbing and climbing and climbing, following what

was less road and more dirt and rock path edging the mountainside.

Morgan already had axed the limbs off the downed tree, tossing them aside.

It was going to be a hard day of work for the pair.

Boring works for Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards — a non-profit partner of the forest service, where Morgan works. The groups are forbidden by the Wilderness Act of 1964 from using mechanized or gas-powered equipment in the wilderness area.

The purpose is to keep wilderness areas wild. Congress and Wilderness Act supporters wanted to ensure the areas weren't overworked, SAWS Executive Director Bill Hodge said. They would rather see overgrown paths with downed trees than a

See **TRAIL** > A10

Plane crash in Russia kills all 71 people on board



Is Corker reversing his course on Senate?

Adviser: At this point nothing has changed

BY ANDY SHER STAFF WRITER

"conflicted accounts" as to whether it was Corker or the

Welcome

Trail

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well-manicured, over-worked man-made trail system that only slightly resembles the natural landscape.

"In these wilderness areas, it's great to see what America looked like before man got here," Boring said.

Wilderness areas represent an extreme of trail building and maintenance. However — despite the stringent regulations and abstract rules — the overall process is similar to most trail building and maintenance projects in the region: research the audience and terrain, find funding, acquire land, design the trail, build it and keep it relatively clear of debris.

The first step is knowing the audience, and the terrain can often dictate the user group, Tennessee River Gorge Trust trail designer Mariah Prescott said. Trails built in rural areas up mountains with water crossings are naturally going to be for more experienced hikers than flat trail systems in urban areas, which appeal to a larger user group.

"Researching that is the first step," Prescott said. "You want to find out who your audience is that you're building a trail for."

Once the user group is known, trail-building organizations then work to obtain control of land. And that process can look different for every trail.

The forest service has to determine what to do with land it already has while following strict federal rules. Private groups search, sometimes exhaustively, to find land and funding but are more free to do as they please with the land. Other trails are built on county property, private property or land is donated.

"For [public groups], it's totally different because they have the land and have to decide what to do with it," Lula Lake Land Trust trail builder Pat Kelly said. "For Lula Lake, it's working with private land owners and connecting through there."



STAFF PHOTOS BY DOUG STRICKLAND

Above: Clayton Morgan with the U.S. Forestry Service removes limbs from a downed tree on the Fodderstack Trail of the Citico Creek Wilderness in the Cherokee National Forest.

Left: Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) employee Mason Boring carries a two-man saw down the trail. SAWS works exclusively with manual tools to maintain wilderness trails where gasoline-powered equipment is not allowed.

The trust envisioned a trail that would connect 120 miles of trails in Chattanooga and the surrounding area. Lula Lake employees worked for a decade to purchase land and reach agreements with private land owners. By the time they got the land, they knew exactly how it was going to be used and built.

It's a process Prescott just went through, as well. She designed Chattanooga's newest trail: Ritchie Hollow. For Prescott, designing and physically building the trail were more difficult than get-

ting the land, which the trust received in a memorandum of understanding from Prentice Cooper State Forest.

A decades-old trail once existed on the land, and remnants of it are still there. The land is also home to moonshine stills and has several scenic water crossings — all of which Prescott wanted to feature on the 2.5-mile hike. She also wanted to connect the Tennessee River to the top of Suck Creek Mountain.

Once land acquisition and design were done for

Kelly and Prescott, there was the process of actually building the trail.

Kelly spent two-to-three weeks over a three-month span putting the finishing touches on the connector trail, marking the route, clearing the corridor and renting a machine to help build the trail. That trail system was finished in fall 2017.

For the Ritchie Hollow Trail, Prescott turned to Pat Kelly's wife, Brenna Kelly, who oversees the Southeast Conservation Corps. The corps does much of the technical trail

Ridge and other locations.

"As a contractor, by the time I get there, the studies have been done and everything has been given a green light," Smith said. "So I'll come in, take a topographical map and then take a hike of the proposed route to see how it looks."

Brenna Kelly, Smith and other professionals often work in tandem with volunteers.

Smith got his trail building start volunteering with the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association of Chattanooga — a 300-member volunteer network of trail builders. The local group is a member of the country's largest mountain bike group, International Mountain Bike Association, and has helped build and maintain trails at Raccoon Mountain, Five Points, Enterprise South Nature Park, Stringer's Ridge, Little Cedar Mountain, Raisin Woods, Blankets Creek and Booker T. Washington.

"That's what makes SORBA so valuable," Smith said. "They're the middle man. They can do a combination of working with volunteers or contractors. It's easier for these nonprofits to pull a grant than to go through all the red tape of federal and state agencies."

Those groups often will spend several months building a trail, and depending on the agreement, will also maintain it once it's finished.

At that point, groups like SORBA, SAWS and other volunteers will partner to travel the region's trail systems, blow away debris, clear downed trees and ensure they are sustainable for current and future generations.

"We're just trying to connect people to their public lands in meaningful and tangible ways," Hodge said.

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Corker

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U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn and former U.S. Rep. Stephen Fincher, are already off and running in the GOP while former Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen is running unopposed in the Democratic primary.

The senior adviser to Corker said "it is true that Senator Corker has been encouraged by people across Tennessee and in the Senate to reconsider his decision, but at this point nothing has changed."

But even if it does, Blackburn doesn't appear ready to back up. With

regard to the possibility of Corker jumping into the contest, Blackburn campaign spokeswoman Andrea Bozek said in a statement "Senator Corker hasn't conveyed that to Rep. Blackburn."

"Our campaign is running full speed ahead, we are running to win and Marsha is the only true conservative in the race that can beat Phil Bredesen," Bozek said.

One plugged-in state Republican said "there are people encouraging Corker but as far as I know nothing has changed," then agreed, "it'd be real hard" at this point for Corker, who announced Sept. 26 amid a fierce public spat with

President Trump that he wouldn't seek a third term.

But the same Republican said "there's concern that Bredesen's entry puts this race in play" both with Blackburn, who is further to the right than Corker, and Fincher, who is not well known.

CNN reported that conversations about Corker getting back in came up at least once in a conversation with U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., posing problems for McConnell, who while he likes Corker and wished he'd sought re-election, apparently may be uncomfortable at this juncture.

Moreover, according to a

pro-Blackburn Republican, Trump wants "no part of it."

Last year, Corker created a national stir when he publicly criticized Trump in a Chattanooga speech, questioning the president's ambivalent response about who was at fault in a Charlottesville, Va., clash over removal of statues of top Confederate leaders. The protests resulted in a woman killed with a white supremacist police say was the driver being charged with murder.

Trump taunted Corker on Twitter about the Tennessean's being undecided about seeking re-election and said the senator "begged" the president for an endorsement.

After one presidential tweet, Corker returned fire, calling the White House an "adult day care center" with no one evidently in charge that day. That drew a derisive response from Trump who mocked the senator

as "Liddle Bob Corker" who couldn't "get elected dog catcher."

Things have considerably calmed down since.

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Memo

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sensitive information, knowing Trump would stop its release, in an effort

put the FBI on trial, to put Bob Mueller's investigation on trial, and the president is only too happy to accommodate," Schiff said.

Rep. Devin Nunes, chairman of the intel-

classified intelligence. "We will redact it to make sure that we're very protective of sources and methods," Schiff said.

In their memo, Republicans challenged how the

was used to get the warrant. The Democratic memo is thought to elaborate on those points.

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cherish this story, and
celebrate this life.*

**Bradley W. Wilkey,
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