

Cumberland Trail Conference

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Dear Cumberland Trail supporter,

In 1971 the Tennessee Trails System Act was passed. This legislative action designated the creation of seven hiking trails, which were to form a statewide system of trails. These footpaths were to promote public access to natural and remote areas, providing enjoyment and appreciation of Tennessee's scenic beauty. At first, the Tennessee State government completely supported the idea and several trail construction projects began. However, time, budget cuts, and other more pressing concerns slowly diminished the support provided toward the Trails System Act's worthy goals. Over the years, the grand idea of a statewide system of designated trails faded. The Act was never fulfilled and the story would end except that one trail was not forgotten; those that cared would not allow all of the hard work that had begun to be neglected. For a short time, the Cumberland Trail lay dormant, but fervent individuals revived it. They wanted to see the trail completed. This enthusiastic group created the Cumberland Trail Conference for a unique purpose, to secure funding and organize volunteers for the development of the Cumberland Trail, completing at least a small portion of the Trails System Act. Since 1996 the Conference and its volunteers have steadily moved the project forward, striving to complete the vision of the few far-sighted individuals that gave it birth so many years ago, and, of those that later resurrected it.

Why has the Cumberland Trail project continued? It is because people cared and supported the project. Cumberland Trail supporters knew State government alone could not fulfill the noble goals of the Trails System Act. They understood that government support changes and that some bureaucrats seek to impose their own ideas, tarnishing the goals of many a worthy cause. The Cumberland Trail remains a viable project because supporters such as you have understood its value and have allowed it to continue. Will this always be the case?

Because of troubled economic times, funding from the State of Tennessee for the Cumberland Trail Conference has greatly diminished. On a full-time basis, the CTC organizes and implements volunteer trail construction/maintenance programs throughout the year. Additionally, time is spent with other trail development operations such as obtaining grants, fundraising, land acquisition, and marketing the Cumberland Trail. All of this is done to accomplish the goal of completing the trail. Since the Conference is the only organization actually constructing the trail and working full-time to complete its development, the project is in danger of not being completed because of reduced funding. If the Cumberland Trail Conference's efforts vanish, is another organization willing to fill the void and complete the project?

MISSION: To preserve the historical and cultural heritage of Tennessee, conserve natural resources, and provide educational and recreational opportunities through the development and completion of the Cumberland Trail Corridor, and to establish a foundation of support by interconnecting local communities within the trail corridor to acquire, maintain, and promote the Cumberland Trail.

The Cumberland Trail is a long distance trail that we all have been traveling for many years, striving towards our final destination, the completion of the trail. The journey has taken us a long ways, producing many accomplishments. However, today our journey brings us to a fork in the path and a decision has to be made, which direction to go. In one direction, the path leads to a repeat of history, enthusiasm for the idea of a complete footpath from Signal Point to Cumberland Gap fades, the idea goes dormant, probably never to arise again. However, if the other path is chosen, because there are those that still believe the cause is worthy, the path will lead to success and the satisfaction of completing a Herculean effort that will be enjoyed for generations to come.

As a supporter of the Cumberland Trail, you can decide the direction of the project. The Cumberland Trail Conference must raise \$75,000 by April 1, 2010 to continue the development of the Cumberland Trail. These funds will be utilized for Conference operations, volunteer trail building/maintenance programs, purchasing materials for trail infrastructure, maintaining trail tool inventory, and for marketing the Cumberland Trail. We are all facing hard economic times and giving may be difficult. However, please consider giving at least \$75.00 during your year-end donations. The CTC is a tax-deductible 501(C) (3) organization. Your contribution could influence which path the Cumberland Trail project takes at this critical junction. With the help of supporters such as you, the project will proceed along the path that leads to the realization of our dreams.



Anthony Hook
General Manager

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