

The effort put the finishing touches on a 1.5-mile relocation project. With many of its members also belonging to CMC and working regularly on its Monday crew, the Yancey County club constructed a new section of trail through the woods in order to take the Mountains-to-Sea Trail off the gravel road that runs from the campground entrance to Neal's Creek.

CMC Trails Facilities Manager Tom Weaver designed the bridge, which was approved by the U.S. Forest Services. Crew members started the job by constructing a three-foot tall pier of recycled pressure-treated lumber on each side of the creek. With Ranger approval, they then located and felled three large locust trees and peeled all the bark from the logs to discourage rot. Next they loaded the logs onto a trailer, drove them a half-mile up Neal's Creek Road and snaked them through the woods to the bridge site using a rented Bobcat. Using an elaborate system of overhead cables and pulleys designed by Whitehouse, a retired nuclear engineer, volunteers then lifted and safely moved the logs – which weighed an estimated 1,200 pounds each – into position on the piers. The logs were bolted together and pinned to the piers using iron re-bar, the tread was flattened and roughened for traction with a chainsaw, and finally handrails and steps were added.

Altogether, 17 volunteers contributed 514 hours of work on this project. This bridge should provide years of service to hikers enjoying one of our state's premier trails. Thanks to all the volunteers who worked so hard to build it!

