

**Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail**  
**PO Box 10431 Raleigh, NC 27605**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**  
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Jim Hallsey or John Lanman (see contact info below)

**“BIG PUSH SPRING CLEARANCE” AIMS AT OPENING SECTIONS  
OF MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA TRAIL HIT HARD BY STORMS**

Volunteers are being recruited from across North Carolina for a week long push to remove timber debris blocking a critical link of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) in northwestern North Carolina.

Two task forces of the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST) are organizing the “Big Push Spring Clearance” for May 21-27 in Ashe and Watauga Counties and the public is invited to volunteer during all or part of that week.

A 25-mile section of the trail that was under construction from Horse Gap near Glendale Springs to Bamboo Gap near Blowing Rock was hit by an ice storm on Christmas Day 2009 followed by winter snows. Trees and branches are blocking the trail and in many places trail construction that had taken months to complete was wiped out. Much of the trail parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway, which has been closed until recently and is still digging out.

The Friends’ task forces are aiming to have the section cleared and reconstructed in time for its official state designation and opening in October as part of North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea Trail Month. An additional six miles in Watauga County won’t be rebuilt and opened until 2011.

Only US Forest Service certified sawyers will be able to use chainsaws to help. Volunteers are being sought to support the sawyers by pulling cut debris away from the trail and using hand loppers and pruning saws to cut smaller branches. Participants should bring safety glasses or goggles and appropriate work clothes and shoes.

Volunteers can reserve camping space at the Blue Ridge Parkway’s Julian Price Campground. Reservations should be made no later than May 14. For assistance about camping reservations contact Allen de Hart of the FMST at 919-496-4771 or [adh4771@aol.com](mailto:adh4771@aol.com). Volunteers should bring their own camping equipment and provisions.

For planning purposes volunteers need to register by contacting Jim Hallsey, South Ashe Task Force - leader, at 336-877-8831, [jhallsey@skybest.com](mailto:jhallsey@skybest.com) or John Lanman, Watauga Task Force - leader, at 828-963-6901 or [jeanman@charter.net](mailto:jeanman@charter.net). In addition to the Spring Clearance, the Big Push will include work days on the third Saturday and preceding Thursday in June for the Watauga Task Force. The South Ashe Task Force is having work days on June 10, 11, 12; June 17, 18, 19; July 8, 9, 10; July 22, 23, and 24.

The Mountains-to-Sea Trail is a nearly 1,000 mile long linear state park. The trail corridor goes from Clingmans Dome in the Great Smoky National Park to Jockey’s Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks. Approximately half of the trail has been built, almost entirely by volunteers.

