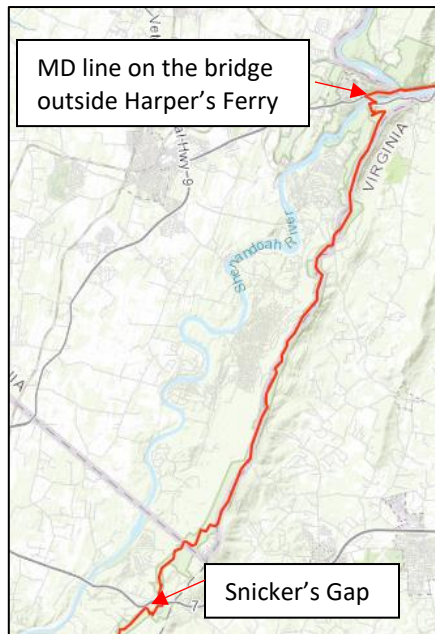




HIKE INSTRUCTIONS FOR 2024 HARC CHALLENGE HIKE



Thank you for signing up for the HARC 2024 Challenge Hike! You are to be commended for taking on this physical and emotional challenge to support the ministries of the Hagerstown Area Religious Council. May it be a rich and rewarding experience!

Date: Saturday, May 18

Check in Location: Weverton AT parking lot off Route 67 in southern Pleasant Valley (just before intersection with Rt. 340).

Time: We ask you to meet at the park by 6:30 am and be ready to leave by 6:45 am. When you arrive at the top of South Mountain, park in the parking lot on the right. There are no restrooms, so make sure to plan a pit stop along your drive to the park. Plan to be on the trail for at least 10 hours or more.

Hike Location: We will be hiking on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail north from Snicker's Gap (Route 7) in Clark County,

east of Berryville, Virginia. Most of the distance will be on the ridge of Blue Ridge Mountain. The AT is the premier hiking trail in the eastern United States—2,180 miles between Springer Mountain in Georgia and Mount Katahdin in Maine. It crosses 14 states and as many as 2 million people hike parts of it each year. It opened in 1937. You will be hiking it in its 87th year. Ponder its rich history.

Terrain: Be prepared for a long, strenuous day of hiking. The first several miles north are in an area called "The Roller Coaster" because they follow the side ridges of the Blue Ridge with a lot of up and down. Then we'll follow the state line between Virginia and West Virginia. Finally, you'll stay on the top of the main ridge for the remainder of the day. The final stretch will take you to where the mountain descends to the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac River at Harper's Ferry. You cross the Shenandoah on the US Route 340 bridge and hike the last mile into downtown Harper's Ferry. Hikers will be encouraged to cross the footbridge to Maryland making this a three-state challenge. Since there is no easy access to roads on the Maryland side, we will return to Harper's Ferry. Vans will transport us back to Weverton. Parts of the trail are rocky and built many years ago. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club does a wonderful job of minimizing the erosion.

Hospitality: Hearty muffins and eggs will be available for breakfast on our ride to the start and "to go." **There are no access roads to the top of the mountain, so hospitality will not be available again for 13.5 miles. So, you'll need to carry extra water and snacks. We will provide "to go"**

trail mix, fruit, cookies, etc. plus water & Gatorade to fill your bottles. Please bring a small or regular backpack to carry what you need. Lunch will be provided at Keys Gap (WV Route 9) parking lot. Plan for a long morning hike before reaching the Gap. At the end of the day, we'll have a light bite and possibly a treat in Harper's Ferry.

Conditioning: You are encouraged to get outside as much as possible between now and May 18. Be sure to get into a regular conditioning program. Walking and jogging are the best exercises for this. If you can spend time on parts of the AT, by all means, do it. You should be able to cover at least 12 miles in your training at one time. We hope you'll be able to keep a two-mile-an hour pace on hike day. While that doesn't sound fast, it's a healthy pace on uneven, rocky surfaces.

Hydration: Be sure to drink plenty of liquids – water, Gatorade, or some kind of sports drink (provided). The long day will eventually catch up with you if you become dehydrated. Better to have to stop and water a tree than to become weak and listless.

Support: We will have the support of a team of handlers who will drop us off at Snicker's Gap and meet us for lunch at Keys Gap. We will also be transported back in our vehicles when we complete the hike at Harper's Ferry. The handlers will also be available for emergencies. There is one possible access point at Blackburn Trail Center, but it is rather difficult to reach on the mountain road. We will not be abandoned if we overestimate our abilities. The handlers will also have plenty of liquids and snacks for us. First aid kits will also be available, and a spade for burying solid waste.

Suggested Check List. Here's a list of things to consider bringing along. Try to keep your pack light.

- Sturdy hiking boots/shoes
- Comfortable hiking clothes
- Light jacket
- Hat
- Small backpack
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- 3 Water bottles/canteens
- Cell phone
- High energy snack (snacks provided)
- Walking pole(s) or stick
- Rain jacket or poncho
- Small tissue packet (Toilet paper)
- Hand sanitizer
- Cloth or bandana

Weather: We will plan to hike rain or shine. It's hard to know whether we'll be sweltering in the heat or shivering in a downpour. (The 2018 Challenge Hike on the flooded Catoctin Trail has to be the most extreme. Pictured on right.) The only exception would be a hurricane coming through the region. We trust this will not happen, but we will pay attention to the weather forecasts.



We look forward to a safe, enjoyable, and rich experience in the great outdoors. Don't forget that this hike is more than just a nice long walk in the woods. You and your financial sponsors are enriching the Washington County community, strengthening families at risk, and bringing good news to those living on the edge. I look forward to our walk in the woods.

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