



## HIKE INSTRUCTIONS FOR 2025 HARC CHALLENGE HIKE



Thank you for signing up for the HARC 2021 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 for you.

**Date:** Saturday, May 17

**Check in Location:** Pen Mar County Park

**Time:** We ask you to meet at the park at 6:30 am and be ready to leave by 7:00 am. Park in the lot across the street from the entrance to the park, as the gates are closed overnight. The restrooms are also closed at this time, 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 later.

**Hike Location:** We will be hiking on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail south from Caledonia State Park through Pennsylvania to Pen Mar County Park. Most of distance will be through Michaux State Forest land. The AT is the premier hiking trail in the eastern United States—2180 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 84<sup>th</sup> year. Ponder its rich history.

**Terrain:** Be prepared for a long, strenuous day of hiking. In the 20-mile distance there is a total elevation gain of 3,260 feet, and an elevation loss of 3,615 feet. If you thought we would be merely hiking on the top of the ridge, think again. We will be ascending and descending the mountain all day long. So be sure you prepare adequately. Our lowest elevation will be about 900 feet at Old Forge. Our highest will be about 2000 feet on Snowy Mountain. Parts of the trail are rocky. Fortunately, much of the AT follows old logging roads built many years ago. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club does a wonderful job of minimizing the erosion that is inevitable.

**Conditioning:** You are encouraged to get outside as much as possible between now and May 17. 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 a half marathon distance (13.1 miles) in training. We hope to 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 handlers, who will transport us from our vehicles to the start point in Caledonia and meet us along the way with plenty of liquids and snacks. Stops will include South Mountain, PA, the Old Forge Picnic area, and the PA Route 16 crossing. The handlers will also be available for emergencies. If any of us wear out before arriving at our destination, one of the handlers will arrange to meet us at the closest mountain road. We will not be abandoned if we over-estimate our abilities. A trail lunch will also be provided and some healthy treats to start your day. First aid kits will also be available.

**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
- Fanny pack or small backpack
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle/canteen
- Cell phone
- High energy snack (snacks provided)
- Walking pole(s) or stick
- Rain jacket or poncho
- Small tissue packet
- 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 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 time together.

Blessings!

**Kathy Powderly, HARC Executive Director and Hike Coordinator**

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