

Date submitted (Eastern Standard Time): 11/30/2020 4:49:47 PM

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Comments:

I live in Western North Carolina and volunteer with the Carolina Mountain Club. This past Spring, I led a hike up to Max Patch, considered to be a jewel in WNC. While there were many people, the crowds seemed manageable and under control. Since that time, it has been reported by friends who are trail ambassadors and maintainers that Max Patch has suffered significant damage to the area due to overuse and people not following leave no trace protocols. There have been photos of an abundant amount of toilet paper and trash, unwanted tents and camping equipment, discarded food and fire rings. The CMC trail maintainers spent considerable time cleaning and repairing what they could, only to have much of their good work wiped out. While much of the problem stems from careless people, part of the issue is there is a lack of good signage for the trail and strong fencing to keep people off protected areas. There is a lack of good AVAILABLE parking since the area is so small people park in the roads and block traffic and local residents' accessibility to their homes. Max Patch requires funding for its protection and to improve conditions before they deteriorate even more. A project must be prioritized to construct adequate fencing and signage, improve parking, and BUILD toilets in the parking area for health and environmental safety.