2019 TRACE NOTES
Helpful information for your adventure on Section 3 of the Hiker Challenge.

Start Point — Clear Creek Trail Head
End Point — Suspension Bridge RRG — 29 miles

WEATHER DECISION
Please check our Facebook, Twitter pages and your email for any last minute weather decisions.

Up, Down, on the Road, in the Woods. A Little Bit of Everything in Section 3!

Say goodbye to the Cave Run Recreation Area and Rowan County as you head south on the Trace toward the Red River Gorge. Along the way you’ll experience more Natural Arches, cool natural streams and your first real taste of road walks on the Trace. Because of the recent landslide on the trail up the switchbacks from Clear Creek picnic area, the exact route to start is subject to change at the last moment. We have the option of climbing a small section around the slide or taking the alternate route up the nearby Forest Service Roads to connect to the Trace. Weather is also a factor as high water on Clear Creek can make crossing the stream a wet start to your day.

Your success will be rewarded with a second day of hiking through the Red River Gorge past notable side trails to Indian Staircase and Cloud Splitter and down to the suspension bridge. If it is a reasonable day, you will come in contact with many day hikers and others out enjoying this National Treasure.

Normally we would use Red River Adventures but high water and flooding has forced us to a plan B where the shuttle pick up point will be in Slade.

2019 Hiker Challenge — Elevation Profile Section Three

Elevation diagram courtesy of Kaner “Rudy” Davis, Class of 2014
2019 Section Three Trace Notes:

Clear Creek to Suspension Bridge

Challenge participants please note the shuttle pick up is at 7:00 AM at the PARK AND RIDE just off the Mountain Parkway on the way toward Natural Bridge. Please park along the row, farthest from the building. It is a 45 minute to one hour ride back to Clear Creek. When you complete the hike at the Suspension Bridge, we will shuttle you back down to your car.

FRIDAY NIGHT CAMPOUT: To save yourself from an early morning drive, we encourage you to come in on Friday night, book a room at the Lodge, get a campsite at one of the local camp grounds.

Shuttle Directions: The shuttle will leave from the Park and Ride at 7:00 a.m. To get to the shuttle point from the north and west you get to I-64 and just east of Winchester you take the Mountain Parkway toward, Campton—Slade. Of course if you live nearer you may be familiar with some of the back roads to cut across to the Parkway. Coming from the south you can exit I-75 from several locations and come cross country. If you are cutting across country please give yourself an extra hour to get into this area. At some point, coming from the South you will get to Route 11 and that will take you to Natural Bridge and down to the Parkway where the “Park N Ride” is located on the east side of Parkway next to Go Time Gas Station.

TRACE NOTES

Saturday—Because of the major landslide on the Trace above Clear Creek, the first few miles are subject to change. We will either drop everyone at the Picnic/Furnace Arch gate and then at the end of the bridge you go left and start climbing for the next 3/4 mile. There are switchbacks but it is still a tough way to get going so maybe do a little stretching before you start your hike. Halfway up the hill is a landslide where if conditions warrant you will NOT go around but instead go straight up the hill to the Trace. If you take a moment and look up the hill you will see blazes and the trail above the slide. Once back on the Trace you climb up and at the top of the hill (Mile 48) you are now hiking along a ridgeline for the next two miles until you go down the hill and past Furnace Arch (Mile 52.5). If conditions warrant and we have to take the temporary route, we will drop you at the Shooting Range parking lot on FSR 909 then right onto FSR 906. The mileage will be about the same.

Near (Mile 51) you cross FSR 906. and if you look straight ahead you will see the Trace return to the woods. At (Mile 52) you come out of the woods on a Forest Service road to an area that is FSR 908. DO NOT GO RIGHT! If you look ahead and to the left at 11 on the clock, you will see the trail.

You are now on some great trail with some moderate elevation changes and connecting to private land. Near (Mile 53) you will go down a hill and hit a gravel road (Johnson Branch) where you go right. There should be blazes to
guide you. There is water down the road on the left about 5 minutes if needed. There is pipe on the right coming out of the hillside before you come to the old cabin.

In less than 10 minutes you will climb a small hill on the gravel road and the Trace will return to the woods on your left. You are now on private land until you reach (Mile 55) with obvious signs of timber harvesting. Use caution to make sure you are keeping an eye out for blazes. At (Mile 56) you will descend to Highway 1274. There should be water either in support vehicle or stashed along the trail here.

Left onto 1274 for less than two miles and you will turn right onto Clifton Road, an asphalt county road that goes for about 1.5 miles to where it turns into gravel and goes through a downed gate and becomes trail made of dirt. You will have to cross right through the creek before you get to (Mile 60). Stick with the road or what looks like an old road and at a point it will return to being asphalt and obviously an old road.

At highway 1242 you will go right and here the map is inaccurate as the road as changed. Go with the flow of the road as it will take you down the hill and up to the Highway 460 intersection. Look for blazes on the road. At the intersection go straight onto Highway 77 or Tarr Ridge Road. In about 3 miles you will turn left onto Corner Ridge Road and in two miles be at the trail head where the support vehicle will be waiting with your 5lb drop and water.

Camp sites are available in the woods about 5 minutes down the Trace on the right. We will not be camping right at the Trail Head.

Sunday—Up and out on your own time. Continue down the Trace into the Red River Gorge. It is all downhill for the next 2.5 miles until you come to Gladie Creek. Cross here and continue through the established campsite and up the side of the hill. You are now up and down, round and round in the “Red”. At MILE 71 you intersect the Bison Way Trail. About half mile further again look for side trail to the right likely unmarked that takes you over to the Indian Staircase. Worth the extra time needed for the short hike over. Caution when climbing over in the Staircase area. At Mile 72 you are at Indian Arch—worth the picture. You pass Cloud Splitter just before MILE 74. At Mile 75.5 you descend down the hill and cross Highway 715. The trail goes from the road down the hill and crosses the suspension bridge. Great photo op here as you wait for the shuttle to take you back to Slade and your cars.

**Water:** You should start with at least two liters of water. Water is plentiful all along the trail in the Red River Gorge but not on the section from Clear Creek to the Gorge. The support vehicle will be 1274 with water and at Corner Ridge and at camp on Saturday. You will have natural water sources but we recommend you use a filter.

**Water Obstacles / other Obstacles:** Water shoes are optional. There are several, streams that you will cross that may require a change of foot gear.

**5 lb. Drop:** The 5 lb. drop is in effect.

**Caution:** Weather in March is still unpredictable. In the Gorge you are walking on trail that at one point is on the top of a ridge or hill and then down in the valley. Please plan accordingly.

Good luck. Wishing each one of you “clear skies and mostly clear trails” for Section 3.