

Top Of Georgia Severely Damaged by Tornado!

I'm sorry to report that the Top of Georgia was severely damaged by a tornado at about 9:00 PM Saturday night. At daybreak, the host was able to get to a phone and sound the alarm. I packed a bag and came to the park immediately to help coordinate the recovery efforts. I can't possibly list all of the people who jumped in to help, but there were many. Some even traveled to the park to help. I extend my sincere thank you to everyone for their dedication to this club and our park.

We have many, many trees down. Our signature pine tree is down, and the Pine shelter has a broken foundation and is leaning badly. The bridge had a huge tree across it. Many trees along Andrews Creek are toppled with their roots exposed. The fire pit and deck area are covered with fallen trees. At least one of the walk bridges is smashed and in the bottom of the creek. The main pavilion has a tree lodged in the left rear corner. The office and maintenance building has been crushed by a huge tree. The tool shed was hit by another large tree. The large shed at the top of the property where we store the John Deere tractor (the barn) has been destroyed by a gigantic pine.

But every cloud has a silver lining. No one was killed or injured. There is minimal trailer damage. The three worst damaged buildings are covered by insurance. Both entrances, the bridge, the main driveway, the lower loop, the upper loop, and the road to the barn have all been cleared by volunteers. The golf carts, generator, and riding mowers are all intact. The John Deere is trapped inside the barn but looks to be in good condition. The office, kitchen, library, and archive room appear to be safe.

We have filed an insurance claim. The EMA and EPA have been on site. Habersham EMC and Windstream have worked many hours restoring services. The electric has been restored in some areas of the park, and we have phones and internet. However, the upper park must remain without power because of the extensive damage. Some buildings are at risk of collapse. It is a dangerous place to be.

We have electricians and plumbers on site. There are many broken water lines to be repaired. We hope to get water at least in the undamaged lower area soon, but the upper area will take much longer.

For all of these reasons, we have chosen to close the park. This will allow the cranes and log trucks and their crews to get into the park. We are in the process of having all trailers and motorhomes in the way of recovery efforts moved to the lower area.

Finally, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the spring work days and rally. I am setting a goal for ourselves to be back in business by the Memorial Day Rally. That is very optimistic, but I have a lot of confidence in this club's ability to rise to the occasion.

Stay tuned for updates as we pass milestones on our way to the new, improved Top of Georgia.

Bill Wild, President