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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Friends of the Appalachian Trail and its Community:

The Overmountain Shelter is a Top 10 iconic image and stop on the Appalachian Trail. All hikers understand that the Shelter is structurally unsound and respect the closing, but still stop there to marvel in the beauty that surrounds it. Tearing this shelter down and NOT rebuilding to meet the standards is an absolute travesty to all tens of thousands of people who love the trail.

The Stan Murray Shelter (the shelter before) only sleeps 6 hikers and offers no view of the surrounding mountains. The 15 miles between Carvers Gap and US 19E are some of the most beautiful views of the entire trail. Shelters provide protection from the elements and the animals. They also provide a mental re-charge and sense of security when out in the backcountry.

I am just a section hiker from Indiana who dreams of becoming a Thru-Hiker. The last 4 years, I have used my vacations to hike the Appalachian Trail one week at a time. This past year, September 2022, I covered the 75 miles section from Sam's Gap to US 19 E to see the Roan Highlands and Overmountain Shelter. This was also my first time ever having to hike alone. I planned my daily miles so I could camp at Overmountain Shelter. That has been my favorite camp of any place I have camped in my life.

The English language, like all other languages, has a set of rules. Sometimes those rules require exceptions. Understanding that there is another shelter nearby and a road nearby should not matter on having an iconic shelter in that spot because, it is a prime location, beloved by the trail community, and in some sense historic. I know of several, but I guarantee there are thousands that would give money and donate time to restore or rebuild that shelter. I would gamble that funds could easily be raised for it. Thus, if the community wants a shelter there, and it could be paid for entirely by donations. Why are we having an issue?

To those that control and are responsible for the Overmountain Shelter, I ask and now I beg you, please do not tear down that shelter and not re-build it. A picnic area is not what we are looking for. The ATC has alienated and severely hurt their relations with the AT hiking community over the last few years. If needed, I would rather see this shelter area "controlled" or "maintained" in another manner.

Those of us that hike, love, and respect the Appalachian Trail know that we are small and outnumbered. But we are the ones that have the honor and privilege of using these areas. We help to do our part by packing out others trash, carrying compost for privy's, sharing our adventures with others, and promoting the great outdoors. Please do not tear down the Overmountain Shelter and not rebuild it. That shelter means so much to the AT Community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Attached is a picture of my tent and a few others from Overmountain Shelter from 9/21/22.

Sincerely,

Chris Curiel

Indianapolis, IN