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Comments: I am writing as a concerned individual, conservationist, and as someone who has grown up in the Roan Highlands my entire life. In my opinion, the red barn is an iconic symbol of the Roan Highlands that spans the entire length of the Appalachian Trail. People come from far and wide to see the structure, use its shelter, or camp next to it, it is part of the fabric of this special area. To deconstruct it will be a major loss to the allure of this mountain range. I have had the pleasure of knowing many fine people from the Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Pisgah and Cherokee National Forest. If they're all in agreement that the barn is no longer safe for human occupancy, I trust them, full stop. However I do not think that money, public support, or volunteer labor should be limiting variables when reconsidering the future of this shelter site. The money can be raised, public support ranges across the east coast, and volunteers would be much more happy to rebuild a facility than to lose the structure altogether.

Strategically, the OVMS is critical to preserving the sensitive habitat of the Roan. This is the largest camping site in this 18mile section of trail. To lessen the value of this site by removing a shelter (and a privy?) has encouraged hikers to spread out to surrounding areas like Grassy Ridge, Little Hump and Big Yellow. These endemic bald ecosystems can not withstand any more traffic, the signs become more evident each year. I have heard a couple mentions of the Stan Murray Shelter as an alternative camping option, this is laughable to anyone that has hiked this section. That site is tiny, overrun, and unable to expand to higher usage. If land managers are serious about preserving the Roan as a delicate ecosystem, the OVMS has to provide adequate facilities to accommodate the visitation surge this area is experiencing. I understand this site violates ATC guidelines for a camping shelter, but I think in the context of the Roan, this location deserves an exemption from that guideline. A shelter here is ideal for this section of trail.

I suggest to maintain the Roan as an ecologically sensitive habitat and maintain the reputation of a world class hiking destination, the red barn should be rebuilt to outshine its former glory. The public support is there, the money will come from all corners of the country, and I know the incredible work the TEHCC can do. We can transform this tired old barn into a location that everyone can be happy about. I think this requires an attitude of passion to provide our users with the highest quality experience possible. If the shelter situation is not remedied, the headache for the land managers is just beginning.