

The BRUSHWACKER

Spring 2003

THE RARELY REGULAR NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE MID STATE TRAIL ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 167 BOALSBURG, PA 16827

Upcoming meeting: June 12, 2003. See last page for details.



Status of MST — Northern Extension

Pete Fleszar — I hope this note finds you enjoying our long-delayed Spring.

I am writing to you because, at some time during the past 18 months, I personally contacted you concerning the idea of a new hiking trail between the Pine Creek Gorge in Tioga County, PA, and the Finger Lakes Trail in Steuben County, NY. Since I have not had the opportunity to speak or write again to many of you, I wanted to bring you up to date on the progress we have made in building the new trail.

The Mid State Trail Association (MSTA) has undertaken the task of building the PA section of the new trail. Initial planning and construction has focused on an area between Cowanesque Lake and Hills Creek Lake in northern Tioga County. We started building the trail on the south shore of Cowanesque Lake in September 2002, in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' National Public Lands Day. A very special and patient volunteer has undertaken the task of contacting private landowners on behalf of the trail, in the area between Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes, and she has secured voluntary access agreements to allow trail construction across several miles of private land. Some agreements remain to be concluded and in a few spots we will make connections by following low traffic roads.

MSTA has also obtained agreements with the Corps of Engineers and the Pennsylvania Game Commission to allow the new trail to cross lands surrounding Cowanesque and Hammond Lakes, and State Game Land No. 37. An agreement is pending with the DCNR Bureau of State Parks at

Hills Creek State Park. The initial phase covers approximately 25 miles of new hiking trail between Tompkins Campground, on Bliss Road on the north shore of Cowanesque Lake, and the north end of Hills Creek Lake.

On the New York side of the border, the Finger Lakes Trail Conference called a group of interested hikers in the Corning area together in fall 2002. This group has formed an ad hoc committee that has met several times, and has begun to explore possible routes and identify key landowners and land management contacts needed to build the trail in Steuben County. The committee presently envisages an approximately 30-mile-long segment between the Nelson PA and South Bradford/Monterey NY areas.

Between Hills Creek and Pine Creek Gorge, the original conceptual trail route crossed private and Tioga State Forest lands north of Wellsboro to connect to the north end of the West Rim Trail at Ansonia on US Route 6. An alternative proposal has since developed to connect Hills Creek Lake direct to the Blackwell area passing east and south of Wellsboro, roughly paralleling Babb Creek through the Arnot and Morris areas. This alternative would also cross state and private land. As the initial phase north of Hills Creek Lake nears completion, MSTA and other interested parties will continue to explore these alternative routes and begin to make more specific plans. It is anticipated either route would require marking and construction of 25-30 miles more of new or newly marked trail.

Returning to the initial phase, we will continue to work on actual trail construction in June 2003. Keystone Trails Association (KTA), in conjunction with MSTA, is sponsoring a volunteer "Trail Crew" based at Hammond Lake, Ives Run Recreation Area, June 10-15 2003. Work crews will leave from Ives Run at approximately 8 a.m. Wednesday, June 11, through Sunday, June 15, to

mark, clear, and dig trail. KTA volunteers will come from around the state of Pennsylvania and beyond to help with the work. Anyone is welcome to sign up to help, whether one day or all. Those who sign up by the end of May will receive FREE food and free camping at Ives Run, contact Joe Healey, jnlhealey@aol.com, to sign up.

If you are in the area and find that you would like to join us on any of these dates (Wednesday, June 11, through Sunday, June 15), come to Ives Run (follow KTA signs to the left as you come down the access road) at 8 a.m., but we might or might not have enough food and campsites. We WILL have enough work and fellowship to offer you!

You can play a very important part as we continue to plan and build the new trail. We need your advice, questions, and comments as the trail project progresses. MSTA will hold a meeting at the Hammond Lake administrative office, just off PA Route 287 between Wellsboro and Tioga on the access road to the Ives Run Recreation Area, on Thursday, June 12, at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to come to the meeting and offer advice and opinions. You can also send your questions and comments to me through E-mail.

Your help would be eagerly welcomed to work on actually building the trail, or to help keep the trail open after it is built. MSTA will need “overseers” who can commit to adopting a particular section of trail and checking on trail conditions at least three times a year. We will help and support you by providing any instruction you might need, or additional help to clear the route if there is a bad storm.

Whether or not you have cleared, marked, or built a trail before, we would love to have you come to any or all days of the KTA Trail Crew next month. We will provide tools and training if needed. If you have ever wanted to give a little something back to the outdoors, this is an unparalleled opportunity to experience the fun, excitement, and camaraderie of trail work! Again, contact me and I will talk to you about connecting your interests and abilities with the outdoors by working on the trail.

If you think you might be interested in working on the trail in any capacity from planner to

builder, but you can't make it to a meeting or our work trip, let me know and we can talk about how you could best apply your talents and enthusiasm to building and maintaining the trail.

If you represent a group that would like more information about the new hiking trail—whether you would like a speaker to come to one of your meetings or are interested in volunteering as a group to work on building the trail—contact me and we will make the arrangements.

And, if you are unable presently to offer advice or helping hands, pass this message along to someone you know who might be interested.

Just a note: All of our permissions allow quiet foot travel only. Nothing in our agreements allows guests on private or public property to ride bicycles, horses, ATV's, or vehicles on the new trail. Hunting is allowed and welcomed on Game Lands and certain sections of Corps of Engineers land, but our permission for the trail does not allow you to hunt or fish on private land, or hunt in Hills Creek State Park or posted restricted areas at Cowanesque and Hammond Lakes. Once the trail is open, we ask that hikers treat private land along or beside the trail as you would want a guest on your own property to behave. We deeply appreciate the privilege of access our private landowner partners have extended to us, and look to all to preserve the legacy by using the trail responsibly.

We appreciate your attention, welcome your support, and we look forward to meeting again someday on the trail.

Status of MST — South

John Stein — From Maryland-Pennsylvania State line (Green Ridge Hiking Trail, Mason-Dixon Line) to US 22 near Waterstreet, PA - 143 Km (88.5 miles) total.

This relatively new south Mid State Trail walk includes “the hardest part of the entire trail to locate and build”, knife edge ridge tops “tough but extraordinarily scenic”, “Hewitt covered bridge (1879), oldest structure on MST”, “and Martin hill itself, the highest point on the Mid State Trail.” Of the total 143 Km (88.5 miles), about 2% leads on roads through refresh re-supply towns of Everett and Williamsburg. Another 20% is on

unattractive paved roads. There are attractive trail connection possibilities with other trails. One approach to this is the Pennsylvania Greenways Program which we are investigating. This south part of the MST is 28% of the total distance from Maryland to New York.

Every section and trail part has an active overseer, and the trail is becoming well known to day hikers, backpackers, deer, bears, snakes, and hunters. The friendly attitude of people and businesses along the trail make the hiking experience enjoyable. This is Pennsylvania's best example of the kind of wild unique hiking trail which attracts backpackers and hikers from Pennsylvania and out-of-state, knowing ATVs, equestrians, and bikers respect the design and use other fine trails designed and approved for their activities. The Forestry and Game Lands managers also have been most cooperative.

The MST register between the Wright Trail and Biddle Place shows very little activity. An improved river crossing at Route 36 is under consideration. As The Trail becomes more known and used, the MSTA is reaching out to report to Bedford County, PA citizens, seek their suggestions, advice, and any concerns.

Why We Hike

Tom Thwaites — In recent years, many hiking trails have been lost to "other users". Some trails were abandoned, both passively and actively. At least one trail club has grabbed the dirty end of the stick and attempts to maintain trail for others. Land managers are besieged by others to provide trails for them as they "did" for hikers. So land managers go over their maps trying to find hiking trails they can award to others. Are user conflicts inevitable? Are these conflicts reconcilable? If the motivations of the different groups are the same then perhaps their conflicts can be reconciled. What are the motivations of these different groups?

Mountain bikes are the fastest of non-motorized trail users and their motivation appears to be the adrenaline rush obtained from speeding down hills. The personal danger is part of the attraction but a trip over the handle bars may produce a paraplegic. The decreased reproductive success is acceptable. Mountain bikers don't take the side

trail to the view nor do they get off and lie in the mud to smell the trailing arbutus growing along the edge of the trail. Mountain bikes tear out water bars and stone steps. They produce ruts in soft ground and on hills with predictable results but the damage is apparently collateral and not essential to their activity. On occasion they will actually get off their bikes and do some trail work where absolutely necessary to avoid private land, for example. They rarely hit hikers but like to charge at them and get hikers to jump into the brush. "If I see a trail, I'm gonna ride it." This is what has become of the alternative form of transportation of the seventies.

The motivations of equestrians are more complicated. They are faster than hikers but slower than mountain bikes. Horses do lots of damage to hiking trails. They tear out steps and water bars, destroy side hill, and deposit manure on the trail. The great weight of horses and the small size of the feet combine to really churn up a trail. Equestrians appear to suffer some pangs of conscience about the damage they do. They tell a lot of horse lies (horses do no more damage to a trail than hikers, for example). It is sufficient that equestrians believe these stories. Nobody else will. Motivations of equestrians include the display of mastery over a powerful animal, display of wealth, conspicuous consumption and social standing. It costs a lot of money to maintain a horse. There is the initial expense followed by the cost of boarding, vets bills, tackle, a horse trailer, and a truck to pull it, etc. Part of our heritage from England is that only the upper class rode while peasants walked. Hence the reluctance of equestrians to get off their horse and do trail work. Horses tend to be skittish and do not mix well with mountain bikes. The bikes are fast and quiet and horses may bolt when overtaken by bikes. Again the damage done to hiking trails is collateral and probably not essential to the activity.

ATVs and off-road motorcycles have a fundamentally different motivation. The popularity of rip and tear zones where vegetative cover is stripped from the land and mud holes (it may have been a trout stream or a public water supply until the ATVs went through) show the damage is NOT collateral. The ATV attack on

Lower Trail is yet another example. There are people who like to destroy things. In peacetime, society is hard put to keep these people under control but in war they are given free rein. I think they are one of the reasons that we have wars. These are the majority of people who ride ATVs.

Hiking is the best possible exercise. Hiking is a low stress activity on joints and hiking enjoys the largest possible age range from toddlers to refugees from wheelchairs. But one could get many of the same health benefits from mall walking and even treadmills. The boredom of treadmills can be forestalled with videos, probably of the out-of-doors. Why do large numbers of hikers venture into the wet wild woods with biting insects and stinging nettles on trails lined with roots and studded with rocks? There is something different and deeply appealing about hiking in the out-of-doors. The wilder and more beautiful the land, the better the hiking. Perhaps a few quotes will give us a clue.

From a proposal for the Garby Trail; “Much of what is so incredible about these wild places is the sudden appearance of something so amazing and profound that its shadow remains with us for years after we return from the adventure.”

From the Navajo Indians of North America:

“Beauty is before me, and
Beauty behind me,
Above me and below me
Hovers the beautiful.
I am surrounded by it,
I am immersed in it.
In my youth, I am aware of it,
And in my old age,
I shall walk quietly the beautiful trail.
In beauty it is begun.
In beauty, it is ended”

Found in a trail register in 1993: “A single red leaf spirals gently to the ground; it glows among stones; touch it and your world will change.”
“What is it about a narrow trail and the sound of wind that brings true honesty between two friends?”

From Secrets of the W Trail: “Even the most unpromising trail must be hiked repeatedly in various seasons over a period of years if we are to

learn its secrets.”

Clearly these experiences are spiritual. They are not available in malls or on treadmills. But in our secular age they are also embarrassing. Years ago such experiences would have been hammered into the prisons of organized religion but now they merely mark one as odd and possibly dangerous. So one doesn't talk about them. This is why hiking is such a private activity, some say as private as sex and is the reason hikers refrain from using trail registers. It is the deep but bright secret of hiking. But spiritual experience is essential to our well being so hiking remains popular and can never be replaced by treadmills and malls.

There is no overlap in the motivations of these different groups of “trail users” so user conflicts are not only inevitable, but irreconcilable.

Letter from Roland Bergner to Hugh Downing

Here is one item to mention at the KTA Council meeting on April 5. I just received the approved agreement to locate the Mid State Trail on SGL No. 37 in Tioga County. I have been coordinating this with Mr. Peter Fleszar, Mid State Trail Association. Copies of the agreement will be forwarded to Mr. Tom Kelliher, President, Mid State Trail Association; our Northcentral Regional Office; and Mr. Steven Gehringer, Land Management Group Supervisor for Potter and Tioga Counties. The next step is for the Mid State Trail folks to coordinate the construction of the trail with the Regional Office and Mr. Gehringer. Another example of excellent coordination and cooperation between the PGC and the hiking organizations.

MSTA First Quarter Report

Jean Aron — The MSTA total assets stand at \$22,924.74 at the end of the first quarter of 2003. This represents a gain of \$506.91 for the quarter.

The map sales are much better than reflected here. Several large orders/checks were received in early April, including \$1,000 from Equinox, \$120 from KTA and \$144 from Appalachian Ski & Outdoor. These will be recorded in our 2nd quarter report.

Winter Meeting Minutes

Tom Kelliher — Following brief discussion, it was decided to accept and sign the SGL 37 agreement.

On the question of indemnifying Dominion, it was decided to discuss this with the KTA Legal Chair, Jim Flandreau. (I had the opportunity to show the agreement to Jim at the KTA Spring Meeting. His opinion was that it was a fairly standard agreement and didn't represent real additional risk to us.)

The MST has been divided into four regions, including the northern extension. We have yet to come up with good names for the four regions. From south to north, the four regional managers are: John Stein (south of US 22), Tom Thwaites (US 22 to PA 192), Joe Healey (PA 192 to WRT), and Pete Fleszar (northern extension).

Tom Thwaites reported that the 201/203 map is being reprinted on Tyvek. It will include an inset of the Shingletown Gap trails, courtesy of Tom Smyth. Tom also reported that the MST may be re-located off the Little Flat fire tower road now that the road has been re-opened to traffic.

It was decided that those landowners who allow the trail through their property should receive newsletters.

\$500 each was allocated to region managers John Stein and Pete Fleszar for purchase of basic tools for the overseers in their regions.

Chain saw safety was discussed. Any overseer borrowing an MSTA chain saw must use standard safety equipment (boots, helmet with face shield and ear muffs, chaps, and gloves). All overseers using chain saws are strongly encouraged to achieve chain saw safety certification.

Jean Aron reported that we had \$7,172.47 in the checking account and \$15,280.24 in the time deposit account. Region managers should report overseers hours to Jean.

New 201/203 Map

Tom Kelliher — The new 201/203 map has arrived from the printer. Printed on Tyvek, it sports an ISBN number and a detail of the Shingletown Gap Trails.

Mark Your Calendars

June 10–15 a KTA summer trail crew will work on the northern extension, camping at the Army Corps of Engineers Hammond Lake Ives Rum Campground. Contact Pete Fleszar (717) 583-2093 for more information. October 10–12 (note the date change) John Stein will lead a trail care on the southern extension, camping at the Woy Bridge campground. Call John at (717) 533-3679. Alternatively, for either expedition, contact Joe Healey at (570) 655-4979.

Looking for a Newsletter Editor

Tired of all these artwork-less newsletters edited by a computer scientist geek? We're looking for someone willing to take over the responsibility of newsletter editor. If you'd like to consider the position, contact Tom Kelliher: kelliher@goucher.edu or (410) 931-2946.

MSTA Web Site; Brushwacker on the Web

This issue and previous issues of the BRUSHWACKER are available in Adobe Acrobat format on the MSTA web site. Just visit <http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA>.

MSTA Listserv

A listserv (electronic mailing list) has been set up for the MSTA. It will be used for discussion and the distribution of documents. For example, an electronic copy of the winter meeting agenda will be distributed to the listserv a few days before the meeting (printed copies will still be available at the meeting). To join the mailing list, send e-mail to msta-members-request@lists.goucher.edu with the single word "subscribe" (without the quotes) in the e-mail's body (not the subject). Once you've confirmed your request, you'll be subscribed to the listserv.

Send in Your Articles and Art for the Next Newsletter!

Anything you'd like to appear in the next newsletter can be e-mailed to kelliher@goucher.edu or snail-mailed to Tom Kelliher, 6 Turnmill Ct., Baltimore, MD 21236. Submissions for the next newsletter are due September 2, 2003.

June Meeting

The next MSTA meeting will be on June 12 at the Army Corps of Engineers Ranger Station on Ives Run at Tioga-Hammond Lakes. Lots to discuss!!! The meeting will begin at 6:30 pm; no potluck this time. The Corps of Engineers' phone number is (570) 835-5281. Directions to the Ranger Station: From either PA 287 or US 15 (north of Mansfield): Follow signs to "Tioga-Hammond Lakes" and to "Ives Run." They will direct you to the Ives Run Area which is between Wellsboro and Tioga on PA 287. From the access road from PA 287, cross under the railroad, over the bridge, and take the first right turn, continue past the Stephenhouse Run trailhead (left) up the hill to the end of the drive, the ranger station will be on the right.

THE MID STATE TRAIL ASSOCIATION WAS FOUNDED IN 1982. OUR BYLAWS STATE:

The purpose of this organization shall be the completion and preservation of the Mid State Hiking Trail System. To this end the MSTA will:

- *Supervise, coordinate, and carry out trail work.*
- *Ensure that maps and guides are available for the hiking public.*
- *Enter into agreements with private landowners and public land managers to provide for the trail.*
- *Take such other actions as may be appropriate to further the purpose of the organization.*

Adopted September 30, 1984

Elections are held every other year at the fall meeting. Current officers, elected for two year term until fall 2004: Tom Kelliher, President, kelliher@goucher.edu, (410) 931-2946; Rich Lange, Vice President, r-lange@suscom.net, (570) 753-3647; Jean Aron, Secretary/Treasurer, shorthiker@aol.com, (814) 466-9260; Tom Kelliher, Newsletter Editor.

**Meetings are held two or three times per year, usually in winter, spring, and fall.
Next meeting: June 12, 2003 at Ives Run, Tioga-Hammond Lakes.**

Mid State Trail Association
P.O. Box 167
Boalsburg, PA 16827

