

# The BRUSHWACKER

Winter 2003

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

**Upcoming meeting: February 10, 2003. See last page for details.**



## *Election Results; Re-Organization Proposal*

Tom Kelliher — Officer elections were held at the fall meeting. Tom Kelliher is the new president and Rich Lange is the new vice president. Jean Aron continues her vital and much appreciated work as secretary/treasurer.

The MSTA is also considering a new structural organization, subject to discussion, revision, and approval of new bylaws. This change from an officer-based to a council-based organization will be discussed at the winter meeting. Under the proposal, the president would be responsible for representing the MSTA to external agencies and associations, and executing decisions of the Council. Three appointed trail bosses will now be responsible for the condition of their section of the trail, the leadership of any special trail crews on their section, the actions of their overseers, and ensuring that our maps and guides accurately reflect actual trail conditions. The Council will be composed of the current officers, the trail bosses, the newsletter editor, and the past president and past vice president. Between two and four additional persons may be elected to the Council by the membership.

John Stein is the trail boss for the southern section, from the Maryland state line to US 22. Tom Thwaites is the trail boss for the central section, from US 22 to PA 192. Joe Healey is the trail boss for the northern section, from PA 192 to the West Rim Trail. Additionally, Pete Fleszar is the regional coordinator for the northern extension project, extending the MST to the New York state line.

## *Progress on the Northern Extension*

Pete Fleszar — I just finished another round of meetings and discussions concerning the MST Northern Extension yesterday and today (1/6-7/03)

First let me say that Krista (against advice since she's 8 mos. pregnant) and I XC skied the newly blazed section of future MST at Cowanesque Lake South Shore Recreation Area on a beautiful Saturday in excellent snow conditions and fine scenery. Even the "M.F. rose" was encrusted in ice (and still off the trail, due to the fine work of many last September) and not a problem. The defile by the fossiliferous boulders was full of running water and might need a bridge eventually.

The New York folks called another meeting on a snowy Monday night at the library in Corning. About a half-dozen hardy souls braved the elements and located the obscure meeting room. Dale Powers had done some fairly extensive scouting between Nelson and South Bradford and has a prospective route crossing the Canisteo River at Addison and the Cohocton River at "Aurene," a new subdivision abutting a wildlife management area just west of Painted Post. Someone else suggested instead crossing the Canisteo on the future I-99 bridge (!), we'll see what happens. The next step that a couple of these folks will take is to get tax maps along the prospective route. In order to help them I stopped in Wellsboro on the way up to get tax maps of the sliver between Bliss Road (Nelson/Tompkins Campground) and the state line. This fairly small area was thoroughly cut-up into relatively small parcels with the tax bills going to Chester County and New Jersey. The largest landowner on the state line had a State College address. If we could get cooperation from them and a couple of locals we might be able after a bit of roadwalking to re-establish the northward vector from Tompkins Campground. Otherwise

we're roadwalking from new Nelson and Tompkins Campground becomes a spur.

This morning I finally was able to talk in real-time to Pete Gee of the Tioga Boar Hunting Preserve. He is OK with the route I flagged last fall per Wanda's instructions so I will make the map and send out the agreement signed since August/September. He requests that hikers on this section call the Hunting Preserve first before they pass through so the elk hunters can adjust their fire. Methinks we will need to stick notes on the maps and make signs on either end accordingly.

I stopped by the Corps of Engineers to visit with Mark Simonis, their new trail coordinator, for what proved to be a lengthy visit. They are still discussing internally which kind of written instrument they will offer us as an agreement for the trail route, and also finding out which offices in Baltimore it will need to be routed through. I told them I had begun playing phone tag with the PennDOT right-of-way folks in Montoursville concerning the two areas requiring sidehilling in road embankments. (Tom K., that crownvetch nightmare east of the ghost town is indeed in PennDOT right-of-way.) Mark and I counted single-hiker-guy stickers that might need ordering for the Carsonite posts and spent some time on sign legends. If signs are erected on Corps lands they will be brown-painted aluminum and not routed wood. They will also use non-standard units of measure, alas. (Tom T., you might want to share with them your wheeled measurements of the various Lynn Keller loops, because they may replace many of those signs in the process of accommodating MST.)

On the way back Roland Bergner called me twice. The upshot is he is sending Tom K. directly the agreement for MST on SGL 37, as counter-counter proposed and accepted. Roland said this will need to be signed and attested (I suggested he send it in good time before the MSTA 2/10 meeting to facilitate this) in quadruplicate, then sent back to him to have the PGC and Attorney General folks sign. He said he had replicated the map I just sent him last week as "Exhibit A" to this agreement. He indicated there would be no wording changes from previous MSTA/PGC agreements. Methinks when it comes

in, it should be checked to make sure. I am not sure that I will get a copy so the Toms and Jean might need to work out how this checking can be accomplished.

Bottom line is we're making progress. Northern Tioga County is covered in a foot of snow so it's a good time to work through the paperwork. Remember KTA Trail Crew in June, it's already on the KTA website!

### *MSTA Finances*

Tom Kelliher — The MSTA total assets stand at \$22,417.83 at the end of 2002. Gains of \$271.32 and \$295.78 were posted during the third and fourth quarters, respectively. For the year, we enjoyed a gain of \$1,974.49.

### *Fall Meeting Minutes*

Tom Kelliher — The fall meeting of the MSTA was held at R. B. Winter State Park on September 9. Twenty people attended.

We have passively abandoned the Reeds Gap spur. We have no overseers for that section, although the Reeds Gap park superintendent wants to keep it open. Most of the signs at road crossings have been destroyed and Hightop Ridge may have been claimed by ATVs. There may be a secret maintainer, as the blazes are in great shape. No need to actively decide until map 212 or the guide book is reprinted.

Ed Lawrence proposed we adopt a stance of protecting fire towers. The numerous antennas which had been mounted on the Sand Mountain tower have been moved to a larger mast. There are no plans to raze the tower "yet." Fire towers are being preserved in the Adirondacks as recreational attractions and as historic reminders of a past forestry era. The MSTA endorsed the concept of being PRO-(Protect, Restore, Open to public)-fire tower and calling for a moratorium on further dismantlement until their future is discussed at a roundtable with BOF.

We are still trying to eliminate or reduce the road walk through Snake Spring valley. The hunting camp at the north end of SGL 73 rejected our request to site the trail on their land. We will have to look at the east side of Tussey.

Tom Thwaites showed the Short Mountain relocation to BOF representatives and, quite surprisingly, the relocation request was turned down. Reason unknown.

Work on the northern extension is progressing well. The Corps of Engineers will allow us to work on their property before any agreement is formally in place. Wanda Shirk has obtained a second landowner agreement. The MSTA resolved that the MST be extended to the New York state line.

The concept of three trail bosses, described elsewhere in this newsletter, was introduced and discussed. Each section should have its own complement of power tools (chain saw and brush cutter). In this regard, \$350 was allocated for John Stein to purchase a chain saw for the southern section.

Bylaws changes to a Council form of government were briefly discussed. Tom Thwaites recommended action on this at the next meeting. Ralph Seeley was not present to provide the motivation for his revisions. Tom noted that Councils meet too infrequently to handle quickly-moving situations.

Jean Aron reported that we had \$7,026.25 in the money market account and \$15,000 (approximately) in other funds. Map and guide sales are slowing. For the past three quarters, sales were 328, 148, and 48. We are still \$1,000 in the red from the last printing. Amazon now stocks the map and guide set! See the MSTA web site (address at end of newsletter) for the link. Hurry, they only have two left (more on the way)!

Lynne Whelden presided over the elections, reported elsewhere in the newsletter.

### *A Brief History of Trail Care*

Tom Thwaites — On a July weekend last summer, 30 people gathered at the ghost town of Masten, in Lycoming County, to work on the Old Loggers Path. Despite evidence of ATV and horse incursions, the OLP remains one of the 18 designated hiking trails on state forest lands. In the course of the weekend with the aid of chainsaws, bushwhackers, limb loppers and an occasional pulaski, the 30 workers cleared this 27 mile trail, one of the gems of Penns Woods.

It wasn't always like this. Prior to 1982 there

was no trail care. A letter from Maurice Forrester in the Winter, 1982 KTA Newsletter is the first mention of Trail Care. Maurice proposed the Trail Care Team as a Ready Response Team to maintain hiking trails on state forest lands orphaned by budget cuts. Minutes of the April 1982 spring council meeting of KTA show this proposal was approved. A modest request of \$200 was approved to fund the project. A dollar went farther in those high and far off times but not that much farther. Dick Potteiger agreed to lead the project. Two work projects on the Quehanna Trail were held that year. In subsequent years more trips were held on the Quehanna and the program was expanded to include Thunder Swamp Trail in Delaware Forest.

But on Memorial Day in 1985 a swarm of tornadoes struck Pennsylvania. One monster twister, apparently an F4, touched down south of Penfield in Moshannon State Forest and kept going, crossing the Quehanna Trail twice, the West Branch of the Susquehanna, the Chuck Keiper Trail, and the West Branch again before it lifted north of Lockhaven. The swath averaged a mile or more in width. So empty is this country that the storm didn't kill or injure anyone although it did terrify some cub scouts at Parker Dam State Park.

Both the Quehanna and the Chuck Keiper Trails were officially closed as a result of this storm. Would they ever be reopened again? The future of these trails looked bleak. This was a real challenge to Trail Care which didn't even own a chain saw. Using privately owned saws and one borrowed from the Penn State Outing Club, Trail Care pitched in to reopen the western portion of the Quehanna Trail. Our chainsaw experience was limited to the occasional blowdown. Now we had piles of green trees, up to seven deep, including ones that were snapped off, uprooted, spring-loaded or twisted. We learned that if you cut off the top of an uprooted tree it could tilt back into the stump hole. A spring-loaded tree could snap with great force when it was cut. It took five expeditions but the Quehanna Trail along Saunders Run was reopened. The lone Thunder Swamp expedition that year must have been before the tornado.

At first the Trail Care crew used the traditional tools: limb loppers, bow saws and swinging

weeders, but we soon found we were overmatched. Power tools can increase the productivity of trail workers by an order of magnitude. Yes, chainsaws and bushwhackers make noise and air pollution and are more dangerous than the old unpowered tools but if ten times the usual number of workers showed up for a Trail Care, we would have to have ten times as many tools to keep them busy. Simply directing the volunteer workers to work sites would frustrate the leaders by keeping them off the trails. For better or worse, turnouts are never that large and average about 15.

Today Trail Care has three chainsaws and three bushwhackers. Some people bring their own chainsaws. The maximum we ever had was seven chainsaws on the Terrace Mountain Trail. One day we managed to get three of them stuck in the same log (it was on a steep slope) but on another day sawyers had to sprint ahead to get a log before another sawyer got there. In 1985 Dick Pottieger moved out of state and Tom Thwaites took over as Trail Care Chair. That fall Trail Care bought its first chainsaw but Dick Pottieger had obtained the budget increase required to make this purchase. After our success in clearing tornado damage on the Quehanna we moved on to the Chuck Keiper Trail in 1986. Here much of the damage was avoided by a relocation which we cleared. Elsewhere on the CKT we had to deal with large blowdowns. Is cutting a relocation trail maintenance or construction of new trail?

The Tuscarora Trail was closed in the early 1980's, not by storm damage but by gypsy moths that defoliated the ridge top oaks, killing them and letting masses of briars grow. Damage to Tuscarora Trail was so severe that KTA considered closing it. It took several trips to clear Knob and Rising Mountains but by then Tuscarora Mountain south of PA 16 was grown shut. It took several more trips to clear it and by then Knob and Rising Mountains had grown shut again. Trail Care met its match on the Tuscarora. We never did get the Tuscarora all open at one time but we did keep the it alive until it was adopted by the North Chapter of Potomac Appalachian Trail Club.

We thought we could also contribute to re-opening of tornado damaged trails in Allegheny National Forest but were frustrated by officials

who would not permit us to work on tornado damage there. One is asked to believe that tornado damage in a national forest is far more dangerous than in a state forest. As a result, we were deprived of any significant work in Western Pennsylvania and we wanted Trail Care to be state wide. Not until August of 1990, did we hatch a plan for a truly significant project in Western Pennsylvania. While sitting around a campfire at Tamarack fire tower on the Donut Hole Trail we decided to build a new trail at McConnells Mill State Park north of Pittsburgh. Public land extended from Eckert Bridge down Slippery Rock Creek to Hells Run and then up Hells Run to an existing trail. This was another departure from pure trail maintenance. This campfire, like so many others on Trail Care expeditions, was organized by KTA's fire meister, Mary Pitzer.

Slippery Rock Gorge Trail was explored and repeatedly flagged by Dave Maxwell and Mark Eckler. Private landowners along the trail corridor did not want this public land opened to the public and tore down the flagging. One of the land owners even had the temerity to complain to the manager of McConnells Mill State Park about the construction of the trail. No wonder hiking trails are in such short supply in the Pittsburgh area. The trail followed a bench on the side of the gorge for some two miles north of Hells Hollow but in general a great deal of side hill construction was required. It took Trail Care three years to open the Slippery Rock Gorge Trail and we had a lot of help from Shenango Outing Club and other groups. Hikers started to use the trail long before it was completed even though the south end did not connect with any existing trail and its start was hidden behind a large log on the far side of the run. The rough trail was soon beaten down like a sidewalk.

For all this good work on public land don't we get support from the state? Up to 2002 the most we ever received from the state is permission to camp free or stay in cabins at parks near the work site. The Trail Care Crew did receive the 1998 Conservation Volunteer of the Year Organization (no funds) Award but only for its work in Sproul State Forest not the rest of the state.

Trail tools and their upkeep come out of a very

modest budget from KTA along with materials to build bridges, plant trail signs and other structures. Years ago a ranger at Raystown Lake asked Rich Scanlon just how big the Trail Care budget was. Rich, in turn, asked the ranger just how big did he think it was? "Oh between 30 and 35 thousand dollars a year" the ranger replied. At that time the amount was only \$1,500 per year. The total spent over all the 20 years of Trail Care would not quite equal the ranger's lower estimate. Trail Care works miracles for peanuts. Many people think Trail Care is KTA's principle activity but most KTA members see it as a sideshow. At least 90% have never participated in a Trail Care expedition although they may work on other trails.

Among Trail Care accomplishments are saving the Quehanna, Chuck Keiper, Donut Hole, Terrace Mountain, Link, Thunder Swamp Trails and Bucktail Path, and helping to build the Allegheny Front Trail. Thunder Swamp Trail was adopted by Pocono Outdoor Club. Building the Slippery Rock Gorge Trail in McConnells Mill State Park was the best thing we ever did. In an evaluation of the North Country Trail in Pennsylvania it was rated A+ comparable only to the virgin timber in Cook Forest State Park. There is a surprising amount of old growth along Slippery Rock Creek.

The maximum turnout ever was 40 on the Link Trail in April, 2002. The maximum number of trail workers in a single year was 129 in 2002 when we had a total of 12 expeditions. KTA's first week long trail crew was fielded in 1984 and 4 weeks were spent working on trails other than the Appalachian, including a relocation of Mid State Trail on Broad Mountain east of Penn Roosevelt Park. Not until 1997 did we again field a week long Trail Care using a grant from Eastern Mountain Sports. Since then we have held week-long expeditions every year. There has never been a shortage of work to do.

Trail Care assembled the first Drexel modular bridge over Saw Creek on Thunder Swamp Trail. The modular bridge was designed by Drexel engineers for the Appalachian Trail and could be extended to spans up to 64 feet. Many of the trail signs on the Thunder Swamp Trail were made and installed by Trail Care. Trail Care has also built bridges, mostly of more conventional design, on

the Quehanna and Mid State Trails.

The Quehanna and Allegheny Front Trails are being adopted by the Quehanna Area Trail Club. Trail Care has also worked on Connestoga, Baker, and Lost Turkey Trails as well as trails in Hickory Run and Keystone State Parks. In the future, Trail Care may have to take over the maintenance of more orphan hiking trails. An orphan trail is one that doesn't have a volunteer maintaining club.

Is Trail Care just an interim arrangement until some way can be found to get hikers to pay user fees? DCNR discounts volunteer hours spent on trail work in comparison with other volunteer efforts. An hour spent watching satellite TV in the comfort of his RV by a campground host counts as much as an hour doing side hill construction, clearing blowdowns or cutting briars and poison ivy in the rain by a trail volunteer. The campground host continues to generate volunteer hours while asleep in his bunk while the trail worker is off the clock while sleeping in his water-logged tent.

The total number of volunteer trail workers on ALL Pennsylvania trails, including the Appalachian Trail, is thought to be about 1,000, while the total number of hikers in the Keystone State is guesstimated to be about one million. So all the trail work is done by one tenth of one percent of the hiking community. The other 99.9% get a free ride, if you'll excuse the expression. Like so many others these hikers think hiking trails are built and maintained at taxpayer expense. User fees would let this vast majority of hikers contribute to the trail work they have successfully avoided.

Finally, there are real dangers in doing trail work in the woods. Branches and entire trees fall down even in calm weather and power tools can cause serious injury, even death. Bureau of Forestry requires their employees to wear hard hats when working under the canopy but volunteers typically refuse to wear them. Law suits arising from a single serious accident could end volunteer trail work in Pennsylvania and other eastern states.

For 20 years Trail Care has struggled to keep the state's foot trails alive. Under its new leader, Joe Healey, Trail Care enters a new century of opportunities and problems in Pennsylvania, Trail

Country USA.

### *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 Fleszars (717) 583-2093 for more information. October 24–26 John Stein will lead a trail care on the southern extension, camping at the Woy Bridge camp ground. Call John at (717) 533-3679. Alternatively, for either expedition, contact Joe Healey at (570) 655-4979.

### *MST Alerts*

Tom Thwaites — On 31 July, as an Eagle project, Jamie Mooreshire and other scouts from State College built a footbridge over Detweiler Run, replacing the last log bridge on the Greenwood Spur. The new bridge was built with treated lumber and should last for decades.

Since 1987 the Reeds Gap spur has provided a challenging route between Poe Paddy and Reeds Gap State Parks via Bear Gap Picnic Area in Bald Eagle State Forest. Earlier this year we lost our last maintainer on the Reeds Gap spur. Five signs at road crossings have been destroyed but many signs at trail crossings are thought to survive. MSTA regards the spur as passively abandoned like the North Link Trail in Potter County and will make no further efforts to maintain this trail or replace the missing signs. We have doubts about the original concept for this trail which was blazed at the request of Gary Smith who was manager of Reeds Gap in the mid '80s. The spur followed many ancient trails and adventurous hikers may still be able to follow it. The spur is described in the 10th edition of the Guide book and is shown on Map 212. A decision on active abandonment is delayed until we have to reprint one or the other.

The Short Mountain relocation was turned down at the last moment. It would have led to a low water ford of the Juniata River between the big island and the railroad bridge. Since the project is in a natural area Harrisburg claims it has to be reviewed at that level.

The old haul road on Oregon Hill has been bulldozed in preparation for logging on Oregon Hill

and in Brown Fork. If you do not wish to share the trail with logging trucks you face a lengthy road walk. North-bounders follow Silver Spring Road, (called Barrens Road on Map 210) and turn left on Brown Fork Road. It is entirely possible the logging trucks will also follow Silver Spring Road because two additional timber sales are on the south side of Silver Spring Road. The junction of Brown Fork and Silver Spring Roads is not shown correctly on Map 210. The actual junction is BEFORE you cross the Barrens power line! Brown Fork Road will return you to Mid State Trail near the old log cabin. South-bounders follow Brown Fork Road and then turn right on Silver Spring Road to junction with Barrens and Okome Roads. It may help if you know that Barrens Road (sometimes spelled Barrons) leads to Cedar Run, Silver Spring Road leads to English Center and Okome Road leads to Okome of all places. Both Okome and Barrens Roads cross the Mid State west of the junction.

Martin Hill fire tower, fenced off since antiquity has recently been removed joining Tussey and Rauchtown Towers. On the weekend of 28 and 29 September the first installment of the northern extension of the Mid State Trail was cut and marked in the Cowanesque Lake Corps of Engineers Lake in Tioga County. This promises to be a delightful trail around the lake.

### *Vandals on ATVs Cause Extensive Damage to Lower Trail*

Forest Coalition of Pennsylvania — One of our state's favorite rails-trails destinations was recently vandalized.

Jennifer Barefoot, President of Rails-to-Trails of Central PA, reported that part of the Lower Rails-Trails in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania was severely damaged by vandals on ATVs. The southernmost 3 miles (beginning in Williamsburg) were damaged, with benches and picnic tables broken, overturned, or thrown into the river.

A total of nineteen benches and three tables were vandalized. Twelve of the benches were broken and all three picnic tables were broken. Considering the weight of the benches and tables, this was no small effort.

What made this such a calculated act was that

if they didn't break the benches or tables by overturning them; they picked up the cement pavers and broke them over the benches or tables, breaking not only the pavers but the cement bases for the tables and benches.

Volunteers who had put years of effort into creating the Lower (rhymes with flower) rail-trail wonder "WHAT DID THEY GET FROM IT?" It is difficult to comprehend the mentality of irresponsible people who destroy the work of others.

Do they feel great knowing that they violated people's memorials or honorariums to loved ones? Just when you were hoping that there was an upper limit to ignorance, someone comes along and proves that you were wrong.

### *Special Considerations for State Game Lands*

Tom Kelliher — The PA Game Commission has been quite generous in allowing us to route the trail through several game lands. If you maintain a section within a game land, please keep in mind these considerations: Neither side- nor loop-trails are permitted; Paint blazes or other marks used to identify the trail may not be placed within three feet of any Commission-marked boundary or witness tree. The Commission has recently begun enforcing these conditions.

### *State Forest and Game Land Maps Now Online*

Both the Bureau of Forestry and the Game Commission have placed maps of their lands online. Check the MSTA web site (address at end of newsletter).

### *Looking for a Newsletter Editor*

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](mailto: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-request@lists.goucher.edu](mailto:msta-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.

## *February Meeting*

The next MSTA meeting will be on February 10 at the Unitarian Fellowship building in State College, 780 Waupelani Dr. Extension. Lots to discuss!!! A potluck dinner will begin at 6:00 pm, followed by the meeting. The Fellowship's phone number is (814) 237-7605.

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](mailto:kelliher@goucher.edu), (410) 931-2946; Rich Lange, Vice President, [r-lange@suscom.net](mailto:r-lange@suscom.net), (570) 753-3647; Jean Aron, Secretary/Treasurer, [shorthiker@aol.com](mailto: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: February 10, 2003 at State College Unitarian Fellowship Building.**

Mid State Trail Association  
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