

FALL 2011

Brushwhacker

The Great Eastern Trail and the MST

By Pete Fleszar

For several years now MSTA has partnered with other like-minded groups in nine Eastern states to create America's newest long-distance footpath. Great Eastern Trail (GET) provides a premier hiking experience on a series of existing trails that are linked or linking to each



other, stretching from Alabama to the Finger Lakes region of New York. This path will ultimately be 2800 km long, crossing New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia,

Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. The north end is a junction with Finger Lakes Trail at Moss Hill shelter near South Bradford, NY. Eventually, GET will cross south Alabama to reach the Florida border and a junction with Florida National Scenic Trail.

Planner Benton MacKaye's original vision for an Appalachian Trail in the 1920's showed a network of braided trails running the length of the Appalachian Mountains. In 2000 Lloyd MacAskill of PATC published an article in the Appalachian Trailway News calling

attention to the existing trails to the west of the AT and saying "Don't look now, but parts are already in place." This article and a follow-up letter to the editor by Peter Fleszar inspired MST and Finger Lakes Trail conference to take up Tom Thwaites's idea from the late 1980's and establish the MST-FLT connection as one of these linkages

The work on GET, as it has been for MST, is being led by volunteers. The organizational scheme will involve existing volunteer trail clubs, augmented where necessary by new volunteer groups. Volunteers work closely with governmental entities, but the emphasis will be on volunteer leadership. GET will be primarily a hiking trail and its support comes from hiking trail clubs. MSTA provides one of the Board members (currently Peter Fleszar), and the 2011 Board meeting was hosted by MSTA with the amazingly gracious assistance of Woolrich, Inc. in Woolrich, PA.

Each of the trails retains its own blazing standards and its own relationships with landowners and public land managers. At the NY border, the northbound GET hiker changes from the orange blazes of MST to the orange blazes of Crystal Hills Trail, a new branch of Finger Lakes Trail passing through the hills of Steuben County around the "Crystal City" of Corning. In southern PA and MD, GET bifurcates into co-equal routes – the west route uses sections 1-8 of MST along Tussey Mountain to reach a new white blazed Great Eastern Trail connection in Green Ridge State Forest near Flintstone, MD, and the east route uses the yellow, blue, and partially non-blazed Greenwood Spur of MST to reach Standing Stone Trail at Greenwood Furnace State Park, thence orange blazed SST to Cowans Gap State Park to follow blue-blazed (formerly orange) Tuscarora Trail south across the Potomac River to northern Virginia.

Various blazed and non-blazed routes in and near George Washington

and Jefferson National Forest carry the GET hiker further south to a junction with West Virginia Scenic Trails Association's yellow blazed Allegheny Trail, which meets the Appalachian Trail near the New River at Pearisburg, VA. West from Pearisburg the GET route is under development to Matewan, WV and Elkhorn City, KY where GET turns onto Pine Mountain Trail. Continuing into Tennessee, GET is on the white blazed Cumberland Trail for most of its length, departing for an urban trek through Chattanooga, and crossing into GA on Lookout Mountain within the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. Trail workers are seeking connections to the Pinhoti Trail in Georgia and Alabama, with turkey track blazes leading to Flagg Mountain, the southernmost 300+ meter elevation point in the Appalachian Mountain chain. One person we know of has already walked from the FL/AL border as far north as Woolrich on the GET.

The current MST color maps and guides state that MST is "Part of Great Eastern Trail in Pennsylvania," and over the last two years the GET logo has begun to appear at MST trailheads and key points along our route. In 2012, you might begin to hear more about GET as a result of an enhanced partnership with Woolrich, Inc. and Backpacker magazine. Watch this space for more specifics as they are developed.



In The Regions....

Woolrich Region

by Joe Healey

The fall MSTA meeting was held in the new Tiadaghton State Forest headquarters office meeting room in Water-ville and all regions were represented. A big thanks to Jeff Prowant, District Forester, for allowing use of the conference room.

A lot is happening in the Woolrich Region besides the Marcellus Shale controversy. Specifically, Woolrich

Corp. sponsored a meeting on November 4 in their Bryton Lodge which is tucked away in the mountains above Woolrich. The purpose

of the meeting was to discuss ways to promote the Great Eastern Trail nationwide by generating publicity along its path in Pennsylvania. Bent Hollowell, Vice-president of Media Relations for Woolrich Corp. hosted the meeting along with Backpacker Magazine representatives, Alison Kennedy and Carolyn Fanning. Although Woolrich Corp. focuses on the MST, in a broader context, they are also in full support of the GET as it travels along portions of the MST, which includes the area of Woolrich. The Backpacker Magazine staff was there to help nail down the details of the magazine's promotion of the GET through their ongoing "Get Out More" program which will be held in Woolrich on National Trails Day on June 2, 2012. The MSTA will be the host club for this event and further details will be forthcoming. Those attending the meeting in addition to Brent, Ali and Carolyn were Tom Johnson from the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Pete Fleszar and Joe Healey from the MSTA, Joe Clark and Carl Lorence from the Standing Stone Trail Club and Curt Ashenfelter and Thyra Sperry from the



Keystone Trails Association.

State College Region

by Kevin Busko

The KTA sponsored trailcare weekend on the Reeds Gap Spur of the MST was held the weekend of October 7-9. The work crews focused on the Reeds Gap end of the trail. Blow downs were cleared from Reeds Gap SP to Bear Gap, which is about half way to the Poe Paddy end of the trail. Blazing and brush clearing made it about halfway to Bear Gap from the Reeds Gap SP end. We anticipate another trail care weekend in 2012 to continue with this project.

Boy Scout Erik Hoover from troop 375 in Stormstown has finished his Eagle project on the MST. Erik organized the construction and installation of six new trail signs at Deer Path, Roman Tower, Laurel Run Trail, Fleetfoot Trail, and both North Meadows Trail junctions. Erik also repainted several signs on the MST between Jo Hays Vista and Big Flat. The Hoover family donated a dozen locust signposts to the MST for use as future signage.

We are close to having an assigned trail maintainer for each section of the MST in the State College Region. Thanks to all the dedicated maintainers, past and present. Without you there would be no trail. I encourage each of you to take your job as a section maintainer seriously and to put forth an extra effort in 2012 to get out there and have your section in tiptop condition for the hiking season. There is no better reward than receiving an e-mail or phone call from a hiker thanking the MSTA for providing an excellent hiking or backpacking experience.

KTA will be holding a weekend trailcare the weekend of March 30 to April 1, 2012 in the State College area. We will be staying, once again, at Rimmey Lodge at the Seven Mountains Boy Scout Camp.

Please consider attending for the weekend or just for a day. No experience necessary. Tools and instruction provided.

Everett Region

by Deb Dunkle

The MSTA, Bedford County Rails to Trails, and Juniata Clean Water Partnership were awarded a generous grant by REI. This is going towards various activities for a joint effort of the three clubs in the Everett Region. The rails-to-trails is a first for Bedford County and this initial grant will be used towards matching Broad Top Township funds and to produce a personal adventure of Hike, Bike and Canoe in the three areas. This is scheduled to be produced in May 2012 along with the Bloody Run Canoe Classic.

Please mark your calendars with these dates for the KTA trail crew: June 19, 2012 through June 26, 2012. The Everett church ladies have agreed once again to cook – for those of you who have been missing this delicious food, please consider packing on the pounds to put out the energy on the MSTA trail! Your taste buds will thank you for coming! Take some vacation days and put your tent up at Tenley Park. There will be showers for men at Everett HS and ladies at the church. Jake the JRT mascot likes any working volunteer; the last crew only asked that he doesn't show up with any more skunks or porcupines!

The Yellow Creek Bridge project is seeing some daylight at the end of this bridge! Hopefully the DEP papers will get signed off, DCNR finds amended budget monies and the MSTA can bid out before the end of the year. We are looking for donations to help complete this project. Suggested donation of \$300.00 but any size is quite welcomed and appreciated.

Any volunteers interested in maintaining a Everett region section, please email Debra so that she can get your name and numbers. DHDUNKLE@EMBARQMAIL.COM. There are many openings and lots of work for this budding area, lots of trail work and items to work on so that your assistance is direly needed. Experience with

power equipment or just bring lots of enthusiasm and hard work effort!

Tioga Region

by Peter Fleszar

The The Dyke Creek relocation is now open, thanks to 2 years of KTA trail workers, and a special trip by Louise Sis to help finish the blazing in August. MST now follows the north part of the Sand Run Falls hiking/ski trail loop to an actual parking area on Arnot Road, and continues north across Fisher Road and Dyke Creek to Tokarz Road at a State Forest boundary where blazes end for now. A new map (thanks to Sheila Kasperek), and new guide to this section are posted to <http://www.hike-mst.org/guide.html> - as a result of this relocation, 6 km was added to the thru-hiker's MST. We continue our work to locate as much off road trail as possible so we can finally finish blazing the entire MST.

Four times this year, new gas pipelines were built on private land crossing MST that we didn't know about in advance. We have seen that the pipeline crews do move fairly quickly and are skilled at restoring the area, leaving stabilized vegetation and a new viewpoint behind! We know from journals that a couple of thru-hikers this year have had the presence of mind to go around the construction zones. However, the gas companies have not so far been contacting MSTA beforehand. If we know ahead of time, we can take steps to alert hikers and detour them temporarily to a nearby road, surely making all concerned more comfortable. If you are aware of upcoming gas company activity on your land on or near the trail, or you are hiking and encounter a situation related to gas or other construction, please do not hesitate to contact tioga@hike-mst.org or 717 576-3112 (cell).

If you know of a Scout or other youth looking for a service project this year, we have a need for a 300 meter boardwalk to be installed along MST on private land near Route 6. We have the lumber all ready for the right youth to demonstrate their leadership skills through logistics rather than fund raising. Contact tioga@hike-mst.org or (717) 576-3112 (cell) for

more details.

Mark your calendars early for the KTA Spring Meeting in Wellsboro, with hikes on MST and other trails throughout Tioga County, on April 27-29, 2012; and Tioga Region KTA Trail Care, based at Hills Creek State Park group campsite on July 13-15, 2012.

State of the Treasury

by Kirk Bucynski

Account balances as of 11/17/11 are as follows: Money Market Checking Account \$38,949.11 and YCB Savings Account \$101.41. Recently, we received \$2,200 in donations toward the Yellow Creek Bridge Project. This money was placed in our checking account since we will use these funds to pay upcoming expenses.

KTA Trail Care on the MST

by Ed Lawrence

Mid State Trail friends and supporters will have four opportunities to volunteer with the Keystone Trails Association's Trail Care Program to help maintain and upgrade the MST in 2012. KTA's schedule will include the following work dates:

March 30 - April 1 lead by Kevin Busko on the State College Region staying in Rimmey Cabin at Seven Mountains Scout Camp.

June 19 - 24 week long crew lead by Deb Dunkle on the Everett Region camping in Everett's Tenley Park, with meals provided.

July 13 - 15 lead by Pete Fleszar on the Tioga region camping in the Hills Creek State Park organized tenting site.

August 10 -12 lead by Joe Healey on the Woolrich Region camping in the Little Pine Creek State Park group camping area.

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Mid State Trail Association runs from January 1st to December 31st. Individual membership dues are \$12 and Family membership dues are \$15. Lifetime membership dues are \$250. Trail overseers are also needed for sections of the trail. Please contact one of the regional managers if you have interest becoming a trail overseer.

A Big Heartfelt "Thank You" to Mr. Harold Herring

By Ed Lawrence

Harold Herring, who hikes under the trail name "Pickle", contacted the Mid State Trail Association this summer expressing his desire to include the MSTA in his trust. Mr. Herring, originally from Kutztown, Pa., hiked the Mid State Trail in the Spring of '06. He remembers the trail as being both challenging and well maintained, and even crossed paths with a MST crew working on upgrades to the trail in the Everett region. Mr. Herring now lives in New Mexico, where he continues to hike and volunteers time as a trail maintainer under that glorious southwestern sun. The MSTA wishes to thank Mr. Herring for his generosity, for helping to ensure that the MST treadway will wend through Pennsylvania for future hikers to explore. Hike on Pickle, Hike on!

A Bridge At The End Of The Tunnel

by Ed Lawrence

The ongoing (and ongoing) project to put a safe and accessible bridge over Yellow Creek in the Everett Region is, at this time, tantalizingly within reach. Deb Dunkle, with the support of Pete Fleszar, has put untold time, heroic effort and countless meetings into guiding this project through the labyrinthine intricacies of the grant and permitting process. Although the famous labyrinth of Minos housed only one Minotaur, the team of Dunkle and Fleszar have encountered and overcome obstacles at virtually every turn of this multi-year journey. Fulfilling all the requirements of the various agencies has meant that the meter has continued to run on the cost of the project. At its October meeting the MSTA voted to pledge \$13,000 in order to push the required \$44,700 'match',

needed to release the grant funding, over the threshold with the hope and expectation that this will remove the final hurdle that stands in the way of actually building of the bridge. The MSTA can not thank Deb Dunkle and Pete Fleszar adequately for their tenacity and grit in seeing this complicated project to its conclusion. Donations to help offset this expenditure will be gratefully accepted.



www.hike-mst.org

Membership in the MSTA makes a great holiday gift.

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