

SPRING 2010

# Brushwhacker

## The MSTA Voices Its Concern About Gas Drilling in Our State Forests

by Ed Lawrence

The following was sent in late January to our state senators and appeared in over a dozen newspapers across the state as a "letter to the editor", making the MSTA one of the first organizations to publicly voice concern over the impact of gas drilling on our state forest system. DCNR has said that with the amount of state forest land currently under lease, they expect to see over 1000 new wells developed.



"Our all volunteer organization, The Mid State Trail Association, is dedicated to building, maintaining, protecting and promoting Pennsylvania's longest and wildest hiking trail. The majority of the Mid State Trail's 334 miles of treadway is located on public lands and traverses some of the state's most scenic and remote areas. We are, therefore, understandably alarmed at the scope and pace of the current gas lease programs that have been mandated within our state forest system.

"We strongly believe that, at a minimum, there needs to be a careful and thorough assessment of the full range of short term impacts and long term consequences to the forest ecology itself, and on traditional recreational opportunities, of the leases already in place before more state forest acreage is offered for gas exploration. The implications of forest fragmentation resulting from pad site clearing, road construction and pipeline

installation along with contingent watershed and habitat degradation, water withdrawal and 'frac' disposal issues, and concerns regarding water table contamination and air and noise pollution all need to be closely examined.

"In the past year the Mid State Trail has received recognition for the quality of experience that it offers to hikers from regional, statewide and national publications. We fear that the dramatic and unprecedented increase in the numbers and locations of areas leased for gas extraction on public lands poses a real and serious threat to just that "quality of experience" available to, and most valued by, hikers and other traditional forest users across the spectrum of outdoor recreation.

"We suggest that rather than leasing more public lands for development, the enactment of a reasonable severance tax on gas extraction, which would bring Pennsylvania in line with every other state that hosts a viable gas industry, would be a more appropriate and sustainable way for the state to achieve a just compensation from this natural resource. This sensible approach would protect our state forest ecosystem from further compromise as well as help to minimize the negative impacts on traditional outdoors recreation and the many people in the commonwealth who enjoy it."

## Important Information for Mid State Trail Maintainers

By Ed Lawrence

Each year the Mid State Trail Association enrolls in DCNR's Conservation Volunteer Program on behalf of all our trail maintainers. This very important program, which was authorized by the Conservation and Natural Resources Act of 1995, states that volunteers in the program are to be treated as DCNR employees for the purposes of workers' compensation and general liability. If you are injured while doing trail work for the Mid State Trail Association this law provides you with certain specific medical benefits.

In order to comply with the law volunteers must sign and complete two separate forms on a yearly basis. If you are a trail overseer, your Regional Manager will be contacting you with additional information about these forms. It is very important that you take the time to fill out these forms and return them to the Mid State Trail Association.



# A History of the Mid State Trail - The Central Allegheny Trail

by **Scott Adams**

Back in the early 60's, the 50 mile hike craze was spreading across the nation, even affecting the students of Penn State. Several hikes were organized, but as there were no real trail systems near State College, these hikes were mostly done on state forest roads. It was during this time that Dr. Boon Sumantri conceived the idea of a long trail running through the Seven Mountains.

In 1966, Dr. Sumantri proposed a ridge-top hiking trail, the Central Allegheny Trail. He founded the Central Allegheny Trail Hikers and had many meetings at his house to discuss his proposal. It was during 1966 that Dr. Thomas Thwaites attended one of these meetings and became a member of the Central Allegheny Trail Hikers.

The proposed trail, roughly sketched out on 15 minute topo maps hanging on Dr. Sumantri's living room wall, started at the Colerain Picnic Area along Route PA 45. The other proposed trailhead was to be at a roadside rest on route US 15, just south of Williamsport. The plan, at least at the northern trailhead, was to connect the Central Allegheny Trail to the Loyalsock Trail.

In 1967, Sumantri began exploring a route for the trail by consulting with various state forest officials. The first hurdle encountered along the proposed trail route was Interstate 80. It was learned

that a bridge would be built near Tea Spring at the western end of Sugar Valley that would cross over Interstate 80. This bridge is used today by the MST as it crosses over route 180.

Another hurdle encountered was the connection of the Central Allegheny Trail with the Loyalsock Trail. In order to reach the Loyalsock Trail, the trail would have to cross the Susquehanna River. This could be accomplished by using the route PA 405 bridge, and then following the Muncy Trail up towards the Loyalsock Trail. However, older maps showed the Muncy Trail crossing private land. This land was owned by PA Department of Corrections and was the location of the state prison for women. This put an end to any ideas of having the Central Allegheny Trail meet up with the Loyalsock Trail.

In August of 1967, Dr. Thwaites went to England on sabbatical leave. When he returned a year later he was disappointed to discover that no further progress had been made with the trail. Dr. Sumantri had developed a severe case of rheumatism that kept him from hiking. Other members of the CATHs had developed other interests. Dr. Thwaites returned to discover that not an inch (nor a millimeter) of the trail had been cleared or marked, and only a fraction of the trail route had been determined.

During the brief life of the Central Allegheny Trail Hikers, the Cabin and Trail Division of the Penn State Outing Club became involved. It was the Penn State Outing Club that continued exploring a route for the trail, and again Dr. Thwaites became involved with this latest group to develop the Central Allegheny Trail.

The Penn State Outing Club soon realized that the original route proposed by Dr. Sumantri was too much to tackle, so they focused on the route through the Rothrock State Forest. It was close to State College but presented formidable problems as most of the original trails in the area were perpendicular to the proposed Central Allegheny Trail.

The initial plan was to utilize the state forest roads for most of the trail through Rothrock. These roads would be linked by short sections of trail along with three new sections of trail that would have to be cleared.

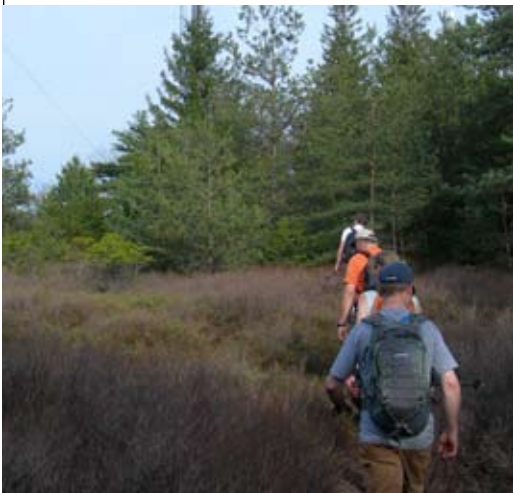
In the summer of 1969, after what seemed an eternity of exploring for possible routes, it was time to start putting the Central Allegheny Trail on the ground. In anticipation of state approval, the Outing Club began to stockpile tools during the spring and summer.

The proposed trail route was approved during the summer of 1969. After consulting with the district forester, the only changes made to the plan was to use orange paint instead of white paint to blaze the trail, as white paint was being used to mark the forest boundaries. The orange blazes were to be diamond shape, similar to metal tag trail markers used by the Outing Club some fifteen years earlier. The day for the first real trail clear, and the birth of the Mid State Trail was rapidly approaching.

## Trail Maintenance Events on the MST

by **Ed Lawrence**

The Keystone Trails Association will be sponsoring two more trail cares and one trail crew on the Mid State Trail this year. The July trail care, 9-11, will be in the Tioga region camping at Ives Run overflow at Hammond Lake, contact Pete Fleszar tioga@hike-mst.org and the August trail care, 13-15, will be in the Woolrich region camping at Ravensburg State Park, contact Joe Healey jnlhealey@aol.com. A week long trail crew will be held in the Everett region from June 22-27 camping at Tenley Park with all meals provided. Deb Dunkle (dhdunkle@embarqmail.com) will be leading the crew but you must pre-register with Ed Lawrence (cathyed@nationi.net).



# Hiking the MST Near Jo Hays Vista

by Adam Bucynski

*Adam is the 7-year old son of MSTA Treasurer, Kirk Bucynski. As part of a homeschool project and also as a scrap-book kind of thing, Adam is keeping a log of all the hikes he and his Dad do. Here is trail report of a recent hike on the MST from Adam's perspective.*

We got to the trailhead at about a quarter after 9. The weather was fairly cold but beautiful and very sunny. We said "hi" to some guys watching for raptors that were coming back north. At the top, we passed the sign for Campbell Trail and went on to the Indian Steps Trail. It actually didn't have any steps there. At the bottom of Indian Steps, we walked on Kepler Road. We couldn't find the sign for Campbell Trail. When we got to the power line, we knew that we hiked too far. We went back to try to find Campbell Trail but still couldn't find it and so we hiked an extra mile. Then, we chose to go up over the power line. It was a good thing that we didn't choose to go in the summer because the ferns would have been up to my neck!

We said "hi" again to the guys who were still looking for raptors! We got back to the car, sat on the bench to look

out onto State College while taking the stuff out of our shoes.

The next time we go there, we will make a sign for Campbell Trail and put it at the end of the trail so that people can find their way!

## State of the Treasury

by Kirk Bucynski

Account balances as of 4/10/10 are as follows: Money Market Checking Account \$42,567.60 and YCB Savings Account \$7,236.00.

When our one year CD with First National Bank matured in early March, I called the bank to get new rates. I was going to renew the CD into a slightly longer term to get a better rate; but when I went into the bank to do the paperwork, I found the bank had failed to update the authorized signers on either one of the CD's we had with them. Only one current officer was still on the accounts and it was going to be a major hassle to get things fixed. I contacted the rest of the MSTA officers and we made the decision to just close both the CD's into our checking account for now and look at other options this spring. The CD rates were so low that we really are not losing that much interest just letting the funds in our Money Market Checking Account and we have easy access to them. I will keep everyone updated on my progress in this area.



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### CONTACT THE MID STATE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

For additional information about the Mid State Trail Association, the Mid State Trail, or any articles written in this newsletter, please send all inquiries (via postal or electronic mail) to:

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tioga@hike-mst.org

#### MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Mid State Trail Association runs from January 1st to December 31st. Individual and Family membership dues are \$10. Lifetime membership dues are \$200. 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.

# In The Regions....

## State College Region

by Tom Thwaites and Kevin Busko

### March Trail Care

Three sections were worked on during the March Trail Care. Mountain Laurel and other brush were cut in Greens Valley but a days worth of cutting remains. Long Mountain was cleared from Eagle Trail junction to US 322, but the overlook remains to be brushed out.

Poe Paddy relocation was opened for business and old signs adjusted as required. Geriatric Trail crew worked from R. B. Winter to Oley Camp Trail

and from top of Shriener Mountain to Cinder Pile spring. Much of this section was reblazed and brush was cut on top of Shriener Mountain. At this time we don't know of any area that requires work to be reopened after last winter's ice and wind storms.

### Trail Overseers Needed

Keeping in mind that the Mid State Trail is volunteer maintained, it is up to us, the hikers and backpackers who use the MST to make sure the trail is still here for future generations. In case you are not aware, each section of the trail has a volunteer that oversees its maintenance. The overseer is responsible for monitoring the conditions on his or her section of trail and taking action to keep the trail open. Maintaining a section does not require a huge time commitment; it may only take two days a year. The Mid State Trail Association provides a valuable support organization and can provide many of the tools required. If you are not comfortable using a chainsaw or power tool contact the regional manager and they can put you in contact with another overseer who would help you out

with this task. Turn off that television, get off the internet and get out there on the trail. Being a trail overseer can be one of the most satisfying and healthy activities you will be proud of doing. Right now there are several opportunities in the State College Region. Please check out <http://hike-mst.org/overseeropp.html> for a current listing.

## Woolrich Region

by Joe Healey

On a really nice sunny day towards the end of March, our newest overseer, Diane Buscarini, rounded up a crew of six maintenance deprived souls to soak up the great weather up in Blackwell. Diane took over the first (or last) section of the Mid State Trail in the northern end of the Woolrich Region. The crew started their day at the river runners parking lot, continued up and over Gillespie Point, which is called the Matterhorn of Pennsylvania by Tom Thwaites, and worked down to Big Run Road. Those in the crew were Diane, Bob Boettger, Joe and Lorraine Healey, Bob Mercado and Dave Walp. They got that section in great shape by lopping and applying a fresh coat of paint, finishing by 3:00PM. Then all went for short hike up the old Mid State Trail, now the Bohemian Trail, to check out the steps and sidehill work the KTA Summer Trail Crew built about five years ago. Everything looks great and a Mid State Trail group is still going to take care of that section up to the West Rim Trail.

For any overseer that needs help with their section, it is only a phone call or e-mail away. Let me know. I can get a crew to help. I do have two sections that need overseers. If you are willing to adopt a section, that would be great. Again, same applies, if help is needed at any time with that section, I can muster up a crew to help.

KTA has scheduled a weekend Trail-Care on August 13 to 15 for a Woolrich Region section. Camping will be a Ravensburg State Park. Hope you see you there.

## Everett Region

by Deb Dunkle

### Trail Awareness Student and Mentor Program by REI and MST

We held the February work day with Herb Brambley presenting his information about the Iditarod sled dog race competition in Alaska. Herb, an MST overseer from Breezewood, PA was selected as the Target Teacher of the Trail. In this national competition for teachers, Herb was selected for his specialty in Environmental Education and Computer Technology. His twenty minute presentation turned into two hours of Alaskan history of the Iditarod, current racers, junior championship races, and demo of his lesson plans from the TOTT. After raffling REI gifts, the crowd of 80 went out onto the snow covered golf course and watched Herb demonstrate his 4 sled dogs. Herb was able to show his hand-made sled, how to harness, and how to take care of the dogs. We followed Herbs blog from Alaska for about a month: he had the experience of a lifetime. You can learn more about Herb's experience under "Teachers" at <http://www.iditarod.com>.

Our March work day was held on March 20, 2010, first day of vernal equinox: we went looking for wood pixies! We found 9 trail maintainers and 1 student. The weather cooperated with temperatures in the upper 50's as we placed a car below Dunkard Path, Hall Farm then proceeded to the Civil War trenches on the Snake Spring side of the Tussey Mountain. We started off with the civil war history information to all then hiked back to the trail head. Rev Jack showed up with his chain saw. He took two workers with him, and the others (Chuck, Wife, brother David, friend, Susan, Jacob, Jane, Jonathan and Abby, and Jake and myself) proceeded on up the



trail with loppers, hand saws and grass whips. We were able to clean up the path, look for possible camp sites then finished with the history of the Dunkard Path. We built a cairn at the top of the Dunkard Path so that the turn would be more visible to hikers. The cleanup and hike was done early and all declared fun was had by all!

Susan Higgins and myself scouted out the Snake Spring side of the Dunkard Path and also went up past Greenawalts to check on the access and trail further to the south. James Greenawalt has new blue side trail blazes painted to make it easy to the top. The road was surprisingly dry: not muddy for the most part. At the very end of the day, we both sighted a cute brown pixie in the trunk of a tree – no it wasn't Jake! This was prep work to get ready for KTA Trail Crew week in June.

### **Trail Scouting and Geocaching**

John Stein, Chris Dunlap, and Shirley Lantz showed up late Tuesday, March 23rd to scout out the Everett region for possible State Game Lands camping sites. Early Wednesday morning, they met Susan Higgins and worked from Rainsburg northward to Everett marking downed trees, briars, water, signs, camp sites and vistas. Shirley and John were the resident experts to GPS the sites. The next day Debra was the substitute for Susan as we went from Loysburg to Martinsburg Rt 164. This will not only assist for possible camp sites but will give a good idea of what kind of work crews will need to be available in June 2010 work week. Somehow Shirley and Laverne found time to do 4 different geocaches in the dark and rainy evenings. Shirley is such a diehard that after her two days of lengthy scout trips, she had time to geocache to the Loysburg flagpole by bushwhacking through the Loysburg rocks straight up to the pole. Getting close to 6pm we were ready to call out the search and rescue team not knowing where Shirley was. She showed up tired, but happy as she found another cache! Word is – go with another – don't deviate from the path – it wont give Laverne a heart stopping scare this way!

### **KTA Trail Crew Week June 22-27**

The former manager, John Stein, will lead up the construction of new trail behind the Blue Triangle Hardwoods. After many years of working with the hardwoods company and the PA Game Commission, John finally received notice that the new relocation punched in by Tom Scully was approved. John will need a full crew possibly all week on this section. We were very glad to obtain approval of both the hardwood company and the PGC. This will get the trail closer into Everett instead of the road walk around the valley.

From last year, there were sections that got worked thru one day but really needed more. This will be the time to give those areas more TLC. Most of these areas are hard to access in one day but with more time, general maintenance and painting of blazes are needed. We hope to add the Great Eastern Trail signs once the forestry and game commission approve.

The camp will be set in Tenley Park, Everett, PA again this year. Primitive camping, with showers for fellows at the Everett High School, just 5 minutes up over the hill. Showers for gals will be at the Everett Church of the Brethren as well as the homemade meals by the church ladies. These meals were the highlight of last year's trail crew - homemade cake, pies, cookies plus jellies for morning biscuits. The ladies are looking forward to making food treats and are already calculating what to make for more "oohs and aahs" for our crew members. Don't forget to sign up early at the KTA website, <http://www.kta-hike.org>.

I hope to wrap up the year long student and mentor program at this year's trail crew. I have asked that students and mentors make a commitment of at least one day. Last year we enjoyed the camaraderie of landowners one evening. Charles and Sara Jane Williams even jumped up to assist Tom with putting together one of his signs. Since this is a benefit to our community, I hope to extend our thanks to our Buchanan State Forest

and Pennsylvania Game Commission contacts. Bossman Joe thought our evening activity of bluegrass may not be topped but the peepers are singing, warm air is floating thru the park - just need the fireflies then Jake and I will be ready for trail crew 2010!

## **Tioga Region**

**by Peter Fleszar**

A local hiker reported a trail blockage on private land this winter and thanks to some quick detective work by Daryl Warren it was found that the electric company's tree trimming crew had left a slash pile across the trail. Thanks to Daryl for clearing that up, and a reminder to all that if you encounter a problem in your hike on MST, please let us know!

We have heard from one person about mowing but we could probably use one or two more volunteers to assist with this task as many hands make light work.

Remember July 9-11 KTA Trail Care will be returning to Ives Run Recreation Area at Hammond Lake, again many hands make light work.

## **MSTA LifeTime Members**

Tom and Barbara Thwaites  
Jean and Gert Aron  
William and Shirley Gross  
Greg & Deborah Grove  
John Stein  
Eric Freed  
Ed Lawrence  
Thomas Kelliher  
Thomas Bastian  
Rodney and Karen Hershberger  
Debby & Paul Meade  
Andrea Commaker  
Burgess Smith  
Harry Felton  
Debra Dunkle  
Kevin and Mary Busko  
Daniel Styer  
Marc and Pam Reese  
Betty Cambell  
Jan Unneberg

# Geocaching and the Mid State Trail

by Scott Adams

In case you aren't familiar with geocaching, it is defined as is an outdoor activity in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers (called "geocaches" or "caches") anywhere in the world. A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook.

Geocaching provides an opportunity for many to explore the forest and trails of Pennsylvania. As a matter of fact, there are over 80 geocaches located on or near the Mid State Trail. Daryl Warren has put together a listing of these geocaches. This list can be found at <http://www.hike-mst.org/geocaching>.

So the next time you go for a hike on the MST, check out some of these caches and see how much fun geocach-

ing can be. If you have friends that geocache, then share this list with them. Hopefully they'll discover how much fun hiking can be.

# Great Eastern Trail

by Pete Fleszar

The markers for the Great Eastern Trail are in and are being deployed at key locations such as parkable trailheads, using vandal resistant hardware and tools as specified by President Ed Lawrence, as landowners and land managers approve.

Maps of the northern connection by the Finger Lakes Trail Conference have been prepared and should be available for sale from the FLTC office and website

<http://www.fingerlakestrail.org> within a short time of when you read this.

# Geospatial Update

By Peter Fleszar

The color Map 301-306, covering Everett Region, or MST from I-68 to US 22, is in development. It will be similar to the Map 307-310 and Map 311-316. From user comments, there are some

slight differences from the first series. Although the scale will be the same, 1:50,000, or 2cm = 1km, map sheet size will be slightly smaller for easier folding. Contour interval is reduced from 50m to 25m and only heavier index contours will be labeled. If all goes well the Map 301-306 will be available this summer.



[www.hike-mst.org](http://www.hike-mst.org)

**Join us for our  
next MSTA meeting  
on June 26th at  
Tenley Park in  
Everett, PA.**

Place  
Postage  
Here.

Mid State Trail Association  
PO Box 885  
Huntington, PA 16652