

The BRUSHWACKER

Fall 2002

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

Upcoming meeting: September 9, 2002. See last page for details.



Tom Thwaites Footpath

Rich Scanlon — For over 25 years, Tom Thwaites has played a major role in the development, maintenance, and promotion of hiking trails in Pennsylvania. He is the “Father” of the Mid State Trail, and a long-time leader of trail care expeditions across Pennsylvania. He has authored the “Fifty Hikes” series for Pennsylvania trails that has inspired and guided many a beginning and veteran hiker. Few people can match what Tom has given to the hiking community of Pennsylvania.

This year, Tom will be giving up his position as leader of KTA Trail Care (ed: and as MSTA president). As a tribute to Tom, his fellow trail care workers are planning to name the Little Flat section of the Mid State Trail as the “Tom Thwaites Footpath.”

KTA Trail Crew on MST

Joe Healey — For the third week of the KTA Summer Trail Crew, the crew traveled down to Bedford County in south central Pennsylvania to the Woy Bridge Campground. The facilities were great, as the crew had a lodge with a huge porch overlooking the Juniata River. Wanda Shirk from Ulysses, PA, was the cook and did an excellent job. Although it was her first time as cook, she didn't miss a beat. She surely knows how to make hungry trail workers happy, with lots of delicious food. She doubled as the evening entertainment, playing the ukulele and, to everyone's surprise, composing a song about the crew, which she sang around the campfire.

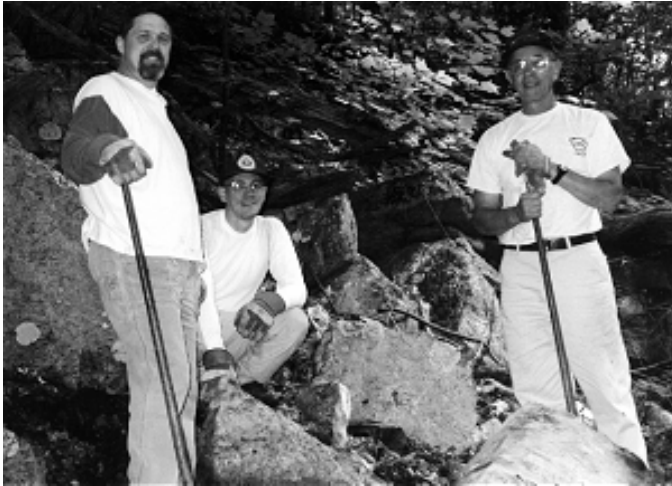


Tom Thwaites with sign marking the Mason and Dixon Line on the MST.

Tom Thwaites, our crew leader, directed the work on the southern extension of the Mid State Trail. Tom Kelliher led the rock gang. Using a high line, they placed approximately thirty steps into position. Some of the rocks weighed between 500 and 700 lbs. Tom Thwaites was well pleased with all the work that was accomplished, especially since this last week had the fewest participants — seven — out for the entire week. The crew was dubbed Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.

State of the Budget

Tom Kelliher — The MSTA total assets stand at \$21,850.73 at the end of the second quarter of 2002. There was a loss of \$489.83 at the end of the first quarter due to printing expenses. Maps and guide sales picked up during the second quarter, leaving us with a gain of \$1,407.39 for the first half of 2002.



The rock gang: Mark Christie, Tom Kelliher, and Carl Lorence.

Spring Meeting Minutes

Tom Kelliher — The spring meeting of the MSTA was held at the Rothrock State Forest headquarters on June 3. Nine people attended.

Tom Thwaites unsuccessfully tried to contact overseers who had not returned their annual reports. Most of the overseer gaps, comprising several sections, are north of Woolrich. There are no maintainers on the Reeds Gap Spur. The park manager would like to see the spur kept open. There is a secret overseer, very handy with an axe, on the Ironstone Loop.

Tom Thwaites read a report from Ralph Seeley on the April 30 meeting with BOF concerning the proposed Memorandum of Understanding. There are some differences over multi-use trails. KTA would like to reserve the right to decline maintenance responsibilities on multi-use trails. BOF will delineate multi- and single-use trails. BOF reserves the right to re-open old forest roads for logging. David Gregg wants to hold off on current MSTA problems until the MOU is in place.

John Stein spoke about the Baker tract along Snake Spring Valley Rd. With permission from Mr. Baker and a hunting club on property north of his tract, four miles of road walk could be eliminated. Mr. Baker sounds receptive to hikers, but stipulated no motorized vehicles and no horses. We have permission to scout and flag. The Snake Spring Valley road walk is currently the



John Stein and Harold Woodruff planting a signpost in SGL 73.

most dangerous part of the trail.

The revised trail maintainer's manual was discussed.

Tom Thwaites discussed the alternative of acquiring options on land so as to know when land is being put up for sale. An option gives you the right to make the first offer on the land. Options on Mark Farmer's property and Yellow Creek would be quite desirable. (Later it was discovered that acquiring an option entails certain responsibilities that the MSTA probably would not want to accept.)

Tom Thwaites reported that the PSU Visitor's Center is not willing to accept MST brochures even though they receive numerous requests for hike suggestions in the area! The Trail House in Frederick, MD, however, is willing to help us out.

Pete Fleszar reported progress on the northern extension. Good progress has been made from Hills Creek State Park to the NY border. Had a meeting with the park manager, Roland Berger, and the Corps of Engineers. Time to make a decision.

Tom Thwaites has excellent pruning saws for all overseers. Contact Tom to get yours.

The KTA Trail Crew will spend June 19-23 working on the MST near Everett. Work includes

planting signs, building stone steps, and installing stiles on Mark Farmer's land (Mark Farmer subsequently balked at stile installations).

Jean Aron gave the Treasurer's report. The bank balance of \$5,207.36 was moved from PNC Bank to Omega Bank. We are still in the red for the year from printing maps and guides. The relative gain from Feb. 4 was \$335.13. May maps and guides sales were slow. We need more outlets. The REI store in Conshohocken was not interested in carrying maps and guides sets.

John Stein asked about the upcoming leadership reorganization. There will be three trail bosses added to the leadership.

The next meeting will be Sept. 9 at R. B. Winter State Park.

Baker Tract

Tom Thwaites, John Stein — There is only one piece of land along Snake Spring Valley Road that goes all the way from the road to the southern end of the isolated piece of SGL 73 on top of Tussey Ridge. With the help of Merl Waltz (DF of Buchanan SF) who was also looking up land owners yesterday I determined these 296 acres belong to Jacob H Baker of Canton, GA! A real absentee land lord. The northern corner of the tract is across the road from the Church of the Brethern and the southern end is coincident with the south end of the isolated piece of SGL 73. Look for these landmarks on map 215.

If all this works out we could reduce road walking on Snake Spring Valley Road by some three miles.

Mr. Baker has indicated on phone he has no problem with MST on ridge; hesitated on access from road up to ridge. Perrin who farms land, may object to using farm road for access. We talked about ways we could work that out. He suggested that we contact Bernard & Rodney Hersherberger (1Mi. south) Dokenours(?), and Deiberts — all property owners south of him.

Officer Election at Fall Meeting

Ralph Seeley — As a member of the two-person nominating committee, I want to state where things stand now. At this time, three people have agreed to be the trail bosses, one for each section:

Joe Healey, Tom Thwaites, and John Stein from north to south. The boundaries of the sections can be worked out later.

The presidency is wide open, Tom having stated that he will not continue. Jean Aron has suggested that the governance shift over to a council arrangement, but still someone has to be the convenor of meetings, and someone has to be the mouthpiece of the organization.

It seems to me that those who would like to abdicate their present positions could look around for someone to take their place. The nominating committee is fresh out of ideas.

Letter to the Centre Daily Times

Tom Thwaites — Several years ago a friend of mine was maintaining his section of the Mid State Trail on Bald Mountain near US 322. A group of backpackers came along and took him to task for making so much noise on the Labor Day weekend when hikers were using the trail. They also wondered out loud if he was trying to get time and a half by working on the weekend. My friend explained that he couldn't clear his section of the trail during the week as he had a job in town. On weekdays he was a dentist and only on weekends could he cut back our state weed, I mean flower, to keep it from taking over the trail. Only half believing him the backpackers moved on.

Another time two maintainers encountered two equestrians on Mohn Mill Road in Bald Eagle State Forest. "How many hours of community service did the Judge give you?" asked the horsemen. "We are volunteers maintaining our sections of the Mid State Trail" replied the maintainers. The equestrians would have none of this. Possibly they had experience with community service and were sure they recognized it when they saw it.

It is a well kept secret that most hiking trail maintenance in Pennsylvania is performed by volunteers. If you want to hike a trail in Pennsylvania that is maintained by a paid crew you will have to go the Laurel Highlands Trail and pay user fees if you camp at the shelters along that trail. On other trails you will have to put up with volunteer maintenance but the trade off is no user fees.

I estimate the total number of volunteer maintainers on all of Pennsylvania's trails to be only 1000 or one tenth of one percent of all the hikers in the state. Power tools like chain saws and motorized brush whackers produce noise and air pollution but without them only a couple of hundred miles could be maintained rather than the thousand miles or more maintained by this handful.

Land Sale Defended

(Following is a letter from Donna Litke regarding the recent sale of her family's land.)

Isn't it interesting that some local ATV enthusiasts are upset about the sale of our family's 12,000-acre property to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in both Centre and Clinton counties? Let me set the record absolutely straight.

First, the offer to purchase this property was available to anyone, and the ATV members never once put in an offer. However, now that the land has been sold, these very people are complaining and crying foul and that their riding trails are being "taken away." Maybe I'm wrong, but did they ever own this property in this first place? And doesn't the owner have the right to sell this land to whomever he chooses?

Second, our tax bills just kept coming. Is there any ATV rider out there who offered at any time to help pay our property tax or our insurance for all the legal liability surrounding your stunt riding and damages that your machines have made? No. You have continually ridden without permission in the most scenic and sensitive areas of the property for years, and now, the free ride is over.

Instead of complaining about the changes you will have to endure, you should be saying "thank you" for what you got for nothing and thinking about how to improve your public image, which I might add is, in my opinion, at the lowest possible level.

Finally, I find it rather disturbing that ATV riders buy these vehicles knowing full well that accessible property for riding is, and has been, limited for their usage. An ATV trail moratorium recently was put on State lands because of the environmental damage caused by this very group.

Over the years, these blatant trespassers have enjoyed using our land without our family's permission, and they're very fortunate that the Litke Family Partnership chose not to sell it for camping, hunting and even landfill-related development. The state's plan to put a large ATV riding area on part of this property is very fair and an excellent compromise with the hunters, hikers, bikers and fishermen who will all benefit from this purchase.

Our father taught all of our family members how to share. It's rather pathetic to see adults who don't understand that basic golden rule.

Donna L. Litke
Litke Family Limited Partnership, State College

Statistical State Forest Hiking Opportunities

Pete Fleszar — I had a thought while looking at the back of the DCNR 2002 map and made some interesting discoveries just in time for Hiking Trails Week. Maybe this is old news to some of you, maybe it isn't, but I thought I would share my findings.

Right when you open the DCNR map folder, even before you get to the map there is a list of the 20 current State Forest districts, by number, name, acreage, length of designated hiking trails, etc. I must have been bored this evening because I typed the aforementioned data into an Excel spreadsheet and did a bit of minor manipulation.

First I divided the mileage of designated hiking trails by the area of each forest district, resulting in a figure of miles per thousand acres of State Forest in each district.

Then I ranked the forest districts by how much designated hiking trail is in each.

Here is what I found:

- For the State Forests as a whole, there are 1,672 miles of designated hiking trails (DHT), according to this particular DCNR data table, or 0.80 miles per 1,000 acres.
- The average State Forest district has 1.48 miles of DHT per 1,000 acres, a reflection of the concentration of State Forest land in a few large districts. The median district has 1.08 miles of DHT per 1,000 acres, so ten districts have more than a mile per thousand acres, ten

less.

- The highest mileage per acre is in the Valley Forge district, a reflection of this district's extremely small size. The next highest ranking district is the Kittanning, and I have no idea how that happened.
- The districts closest to the average DHT mileage per acre for all State Forests are Sproul and Michaux. The closest to the median are Tiadaghton and Buchanan.
- Moshannon has the highest DHT mileage per acre of any of the large (over 100,000 acres) State Forest districts (thanks, Ralph!)
- The bottom five ranking State Forest districts by DHT per acre, or by this crude measure the districts most deficient in quality hiking opportunities, are: Rothrock and Elk (tie), Weiser, Susquehannock, Bald Eagle, and the MOST DHT-deficient State Forest district is Tioga.

Available Sections

The following sections of the MST currently have no overseer. Do you know anyone who would enjoy taking care of a section? Distances are from 9th (1995) or 10th Ed (2001) and are in kilometers.

Section 2

13.26 to 14.65 Little Flat Tower Road

24.17 to 25.97 Greenwood Spur to Axe Handle Trail plus blue blazed Axe Handle to Detweiler Road.

Section 8

0.00 to 4.84 PA 44 to old Tidewater pipeline.

12.65 to 20.38 Ramsey Road to S R 4001

Section 9

0.00 to 5.05 SR 4001 at Little Pine State Park to Love Run Road

5.05 to 10.50 Love Run Road to Hackett Road.

19.61 to 26.71 Barrens Road to "Tin Shanty"

26.71 to 31.74 "Tin Shanty" to Trout Run in SGL 75

Section 11

20.37 to 23.94 Beans Cove Road to Martin Hill Road.

Section A Greenwood Spur

8.10 to 8.90 Alan Seeger Natural Area. Seeger Road to Stone Creek Road.

8.90 to 11.32 Stone Creek Road to junction with main Mid State Trail.

Section B Ironstone Loop

7.32 to 9.54 Masseyburg Road to junction with Lake Trail.

11.12 to 15.71 Lake Trail to Pine Swamp Road.

Section D Reeds Gap Spur

0.00 to 4.98 Reeds Gap State Park to Peters Trail.

4.98 to 9.65 Peters Trail to Bear Gap Trail

9.65 to 16.27 Bear Gap Trail to Little Weikert Run

16.27 to 22.28 Little Weikert Run to Poe Paddy State Park.

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 January 2, 2003.

Brushwacker on the Web

This issue and previous issues of the BRUSHWACKER are available in Adobe Acrobat format on the web. Just visit <http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA>. Coming "Real Soon Now" will be an order form for the guidebook and maps and an MSTA membership application form.

September Meeting

The next MSTA meeting will be on September 9 at the Halfway Run Environmental Center at R. B. Winter State Park. Lots to discuss!!! A potluck dinner will begin at 6:00 pm, followed by the meeting. The park phone number is (570) 966-1455.

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 2002: Tom Thwaites, President, ttd2@pennswoods.net, (814) 237-7703; Lynne Whelden, Vice President, lwgear@juno.com, (570) 323-0909; Jean Aron, Secretary/Treasurer, shorthiker@aol.com, (814) 466-9260; Tom Kelliher, Newsletter Editor, kelliher@goucher.edu, (410) 931-2946.

**Meetings are held two or three times per year, usually in winter, spring, and fall.
Next meeting: September 9, 2002 at R. B. Winter State Park**

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

