

# BRUSHWHACKER

Spring 2005

Somewhat regular publication of the Mid State Trail Association



## Latest News on the PENNDOT Highway Occupancy Agreement

Tom Kelliher

Late last month, Mid State Trail Association received an Opinion Letter from attorney Richard Saxe of Fluke Weiers, P. C. addressing the concerns we have with the Highway Occupancy Agreement (HOA) which PENNDOT has requested we enter into. The HOA covers parallel and crossing occupancies of PA 49 in Tioga County, the region through which we are extending Mid State Trail so as to connect with Finger Lakes Trail.

The two main points brought up in the letter are:

- 1) There appear to be no existing regulations which require a group constructing a footpath to obtain a Highway Occupancy Permit or enter into an HOA. It appears that the only justification PENNDOT is giving for this request is an internal Strike-Off Letter.
- 2) Even if there were a regulation authorizing an HOA requirement, MSTA may not be legally authorized to enter into it because we are only a licensee of the land surrounding the PA 49 corridor, not the landowner.

The Opinion Letter has been passed on to PENNDOT counsel for review. They have indicated that they disagree with the letter and are preparing a response. In the meantime, we are preparing a revised list of our concerns in regard to the HOA. We will pass this along to Chris King, of the PENNDOT Montoursville office. PENNDOT counsel would like to meet with us and Chris King in order to work through our concerns.

We agree that it is best for all concerned to have some sort of agreement reduced to writing. We believe that a face-to-face meeting will go far to resolving the outstanding issues. We remain hopeful that an outcome satisfactory to all parties will be achieved.

---

## Keystone Trails Association Trail Crew and Care on the Mid State Trail

Once again the KTA will be sponsoring trail crew weeks on the Mid State Trail. The crew assembles on Tuesday evening and works full days on Wednesday through Saturday and a half day on Sunday. Join the crew for all or part of a session. More information on what to bring and what is provided is available from the KTA website. The KTA provides meals and a place to camp. Join the crew for a week, a weekend, or a day. There are tasks for everyone. The KTA also sponsors other trail crew weeks on other trails and trail care weekends throughout the year. Please contact Joe Healey to sign up.

Contact information below.

### Trail Crew

June 8 to 12, 2005. MST Everett Region, Crew Leader John Stein

June 15 to 19, 2005. MST Tioga Region. Join the Crew in the Grand Canyon area of Pennsylvania. We will stay at Twin Streams Campground in Morris. Leader promises one of the best sections yet! Crew Leader Pete Fleszar

### Trail Care Weekend

November 2005, MST Everett Region, camp at Woy Bridge Campground, Leader John Stein

Contacts: KTA trail crew, Joe Healey, 93 Cedarwood Drive, Laflin, PA 18702, 570-655-4979, email: jnlhealey@aol.com and Keystone Trails Association at [www.kta-hike.org](http://www.kta-hike.org) or [info@kta-hike.org](mailto:info@kta-hike.org)

Trail Care, John Stein 717.533.3679 or Keystone Trails Association  
Pete Fleszar, [msttioga@epix.net](mailto:msttioga@epix.net)

---

The *Spring meeting of the MSTA* will be held on June 11, 2005, at 7:00 p.m. in Everett, Pa., in the conference room at the Everett Borough Building. B

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 first meeting of the year.

Current officers, elected for two year term until winter 2007:

Tom Kelliher, President  
kelliher@goucher.edu  
410.931.2946

Ed Lawrence, Vice President  
cathyed@nationi.net  
570.925.5285

Jean Aron, Secretary  
shorthiker@aol.com  
814.466.9260

Andrea Commaker, Treasurer  
Ascl@psu.edu

**Mid State Trail Association  
PO Box 167  
Boalsburg, PA 16827**

The Mid State Trail is divided into four regions with a manager for each region. Managers are:

Pete Fleszar, Tioga Region  
msttioga@epix.net

Joe Healey, Woolrich Region  
jnlhealey@aol.com

Tom Thwaites, State College Region  
ttt2@pennswoods.net

John Stein, Everett Region  
Steinhike@cs.com

MSTA web site

[Http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA/](http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA/)

To join the MSTA please send your name, and address, with dues to the MSTA. Dues are \$10.00 per family per calendar year or portion thereof. Please indicate if you would like to oversee a part of Pennsylvania's wildest trail. 🌀

This newsletter is published approximately once each season and distributed to members of the MSTA. Opinions expressed are those of the listed authors. The Editors encourage submission reflecting all viewpoints for publication, but reserve the right to edit for reasons of space or to prevent violent confrontation. You are encouraged to submit your material by email, disc, or CD.  
Newsletter editor, Mike Cosgrove, 610.449.4612  
[Hiking.midstatetrail@snip.net](mailto:Hiking.midstatetrail@snip.net)

## Hiking on the Mid State Trail

May 28th at 1pm. We start at Hills Creek S.P. going out on the MST, then looping back on the old road to Hills Creek again. Information contact Wild Asaph Outfitters, 12389 Route 6, Wellsboro, PA 570-724-5155 and ask for Liz or [dothemountain@yahoo.com](mailto:dothemountain@yahoo.com).

**Bedford Hiking Group sponsors two hikes on the Mid State Trail.** Contact John Stein, info on page 1. Unless otherwise indicated, hikes will be roughly from 9 am to 11 am, sometimes lasting until noon.

Hike 1. Saturday, May 28, South Tussey Mountain. A medium hike mostly along the contour of the ridge. Will visit some unique ridge-top vernal pools.

Hike 2. Sunday, Nov. 27 Mid State Trail A vigorous hike from Biddle Road to Everett. This should burn at least some of those Thanksgiving calories, 12:30 to 4:30 pm.

## Hiking Week in Pennsylvania

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) along with the Keystone Trails Association will be sponsoring a hiking week in Pennsylvania. DCNR staff and volunteers from the hiking community will be leading hikes all over the Commonwealth with some on the MST. This year, hiking week will be **Saturday, May 28 through Sunday, June 5**. All of the scheduled hikes have leaders. Most hikes are on the two weekends of the event, but several weekday and evening hikes also are offered. Special hikes include night hikes; wildflower walks; hikes for people with disabilities; pet walks; geology walks and much more. Most hikes will take place in state parks and state forests, with some hikes on the Appalachian Trail, in Allegheny National Forest, and in city and community parks. For more information and a list of hikes contact DCNR or your local park or on the web at [dcnr.state.pa.us/info/hikingweek](http://dcnr.state.pa.us/info/hikingweek).

Better yet, lead a hike yourself on the MST and contact DCNR to be put on the list.

## Scout Philmont Troop Takes Shakedown Hike on the Mid State Trail

*Ken Hoffman, Crew Advisor, [kshoffman@comcast.net](mailto:kshoffman@comcast.net)*

State College region, from Seven Mountains Scout Camp to Poe Paddy State Park

On Saturday, April 09, 2005, after a very chilly 29°F (sorry, -1°C) night's stay at Seven Mountains Boy Scout Camp, Philmont training crew 620-A3 ventured onto the blue blazed trail leading to the MST at Stillwell Hollow. By arrival at Poe Paddy State Park, everyone knew how to convert kilometers to miles. The scouts also practiced their "leave no trace" backpacking technique.

Our crew comprised of nine scouts and three scouters from Royersford and Glenside Pa.. This was the third of four "shake-down" hikes in preparation for our June 20 trip to the Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) mountain range at Philmont Scout Camp in New Mexico.

Everyone in our group was very pleased with the layout and natural beauty of the trail. We have hiked many miles of the A/T and in our opinion the MST beats it "feet down". It is so refreshing to hike a trail free of litter, graffiti on trees, and signs of ATV use. The "secret" of the MST is now out!

We did, however; encounter the destructive force of Mother Nature. along the trail in Stillwell Hollow the winter storms left one large tree after another along the trail. Bushwhacking around the downed trees with 35 pound, (sorry

155 newton--16 kilo) packs, and through the mountain laurel proved very taxing on everyone. We removed as many small branches as we could but had to leave many behind. Everyone in the crew was looking forward to signing the two trail registers at Long Mountain, but they, also were destroyed.

The trail proved a very good test for our skills and gave us a list of things that we need to work on to get ready for the 12,400 foot, (sorry, 3780 meter), peaks at Philmont. Unfortunately, we learned the lesson of staying together. While descending the tricky switch-backs into Poe Paddy, a scout zigged when he should of zagged. After staying put, we found him five minutes latter.

Many thanks go out to the caretakers of this section for providing a great area for us to hike.

## Everett Region Report

*John Stein, Everett Region Manager*

Reported for the year 2004, 383 hours: (up 83% from '03) Through your efforts Pennsylvania's longest hiking trail is alive and healthy. Many agencies and private property owners have indicated they appreciate our volunteer "eyes and ears" on their property, pictures of issues and problems, reporting of observations, trash pickup, as well as trail work. Lands are safer with you out there at any time.

A long paved road walk of MST section north of Everett is on Snake Spring Valley Road (SR 1005) from US 30 to SGL 73. The Keystone Trail Association (KTA) volunteer trail construction and maintenance crew under the leadership of Joe Healey began work on a new MST wilderness route section between Everett and Loysburg this year. We are off to a good start in moving 5 trail miles off the Road. In addition to PA Game Commission approval, we are most appreciative of Charles and Jane Williams, Bill, Cheryl, and James Greenawalt, Bernard, Jane, and Rodney Hershberger, and Ross, Randall, and Mildred Smith for providing a trail corridor on their lands.

As a KTA designated Endangered Hiking Trail in 2002 with three new agreements now the MST is much less endangered since considerable distance is now protected in perpetuity. However, much more Everett Region effort is needed to lock up this unique trail for future generations.

The Yellow Creek Crossing Project near Loysburg has received nothing but favorable comments. Before someone is injured on the existing bridge, a safe, durable, bridge for use by over nine user groups plus MST hikers is anticipated. Concerned donors have been sending funds to support this.

Major long term MST Everett Region route improvements include Game Lands 118, Everett Tenley Park, and Tunnel Connector.

Four region OVERSEER openings are available. Perhaps you know someone who qualifies?

Please consider donating to the Yellow Creek Bridge project. Send contributions to the MSTA marked for such.



Scouts enjoying a break in the woods.

*Photo Ken Hoffman*

Everett Region Monday, April 18, 2005

The ten of us (not including other regular OVERSEERS) during March 30 through April 15 put in 357 hours of equipment preparation, travel, scouting, community relations, trail construction, and regular trail maintenance. After about 16 hours more on the trail, we will be ready for the KTA crew in June (June 7 - 11, 2005) when the REAL WORK begins on finalizing the reroute to Tussey Ridge to eliminate 5 miles of road walking.

MSTA thanx to all who helped!!

## State College Region Trail Report

*Tom Thwaites, State College Region Manager*

Much of Pennsylvania was hit by an ice storm on 4 & 5 January of this year. This storm caused wide spread and enormous damage to hiking trails over much of the state. On the Mid State Trail damage was heaviest on ridge tops. Damage extends from south of PA 26 to north of PA 45.

Last weekend Trail Care found the Link Trail on Stone Mountain had virtually ceased to exist. It took a crew of 12 with four chain saws to reopen the Link from Greenwood Furnace Park to Stone Valley Vista. This section was reported to the KTA web site but no other damage reports have been received to the best of my knowledge. Other trails known to be damaged are the Allegheny Front Trail in Moshannon Forest and Pinchot Trail in Lackawanna Forest. This winter's trail damage is the heaviest in at least 35 years.

Since the signs with the KTA web site address that we posted last year have mostly been removed, hikers don't know how to report trail damage. With no damage reports coming in trail maintaining clubs think things are OK and that this was just an average winter. Hikers will simply continue to bad mouth the trails where they encounter ice storm damage.

Northern boundary of damage on MST appears to be Buffalo Mountain north of Cinder Pile Spring. Southern limit is unknown. MST has been cleared from PA 45 to Stover Gap Road, Little Flat Trail cleared from Kettle Trail to North Meadows Trail. This section took 3 days of work. North Meadows Trail has virtually ceased to exist between MST and Bear Gap Road, Jackson Trail cleared from PA 26 for 2.1 kilometer, MST cleared from PA 26 to Indian Steps Trail?

## Tioga Region reports hours

*Pete Fleszar, Tioga Region Manager*

For the year 2004 a total of 491 hours have been reported for work on the MST in the Tioga Region. Of this 292 are on trail work time, 175 travel time and 24 preparation time. Forty four maintenance trips were made. Not all overseers have reported hours so even more time has been spent. And this does not include Keystone Trails Association Crew or Care hours or time at off trail meetings!

## State of the Treasury

*Andrea Commaker, MSTA Treasurer*

MSTA Funds as of 3/31/05:

Money Market Account: \$6,723.60

CD \$15,735.48

CD-Land Fund \$15,326.00

## Correspondence

### New York based Triple Cities Hiking Club

*Larry Blumberg*

Would like to thank all those who responded to my "plea" for help in providing car shuttling directions to the Tioga-Hammond Lakes Area and Hills Creek State Park trailheads. The directions were great, so great that it made it all seemingly too easy (what fun is it if you don't have to spend 45 minutes looking for the trailheads!)

We found the trail to be in excellent condition, considering that a good portion was under water from the combination of recent snow melt and the torrential rains we incurred during the hike. Tom Thwaites had asked about the MST signpost at the junction of the blue-blazed spur and the MST at Hills Creek State Park. It looked like it was literally brand new, but other signposts elsewhere had indeed been chewed by porcupines.

Below is the hike report.

Five "drowned rats" swam their way across the northern-most nine miles of the Mid-State Trail on Saturday, April 2, 2005. The Mid-State Trail, approximately 300 miles long, winds its way north-south through the center section of Pennsylvania. The northern-most nine miles connect the Tioga-Hammond Lakes Recreation Area and Hills Creek State Park, north of Mansfield, Pa and west of US Rte 15. Spurred on by pithy thoughts like "a day of hiking in bad weather beats a day of doing anything else in good weather", along with the equally pithy favorite "the worse the weather forecast, the better the weather usually is", we made our way up and over the large plateau which connected our starting and ending points. Actually, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. The high gusty forecasted winds never materialized, and the stream crossings were thankfully found in the higher elevations before they had a chance to swell up into ugly rolling boils down in the valley areas. But it was a very quick lunch stop indeed....drenched in wet clothing and with temperatures in the low 40's, it didn't take very long to chill off, just long enough to grab a bite and one of Jack's famous chocolate cookies. You know, a day of hiking in bad weather really DOES beat a day of doing anything else in good weather !!!



Bridge over Penn's Creek traversed by the MST near Poe Paddy State Park. Scouts from Philmont troop crossing the bridge.

*Photo Ken Hoffman, April 2005*

## Thru Hiker's Guide to America by E.

Schlimmer

*reviewed by Tom Thwaites*

E. Schlimmer is the author of a new book just published in March of 2005, by Ragged Mountain Press, a division of McGraw Hill.

The book describes 25 long distance trails (no circuit hikes allowed) in the US&A. Price is \$16.95 in US dollars. With 50 states and 25 hikes that works out to 1/2 a trail per state. Pennsylvania has four trails in this book: Baker Trail, Tuscarora Trail, Mason-Dixon Trail, and the Mid State Trail. It just goes to show again, as we all know, Pennsylvania is Trail Country USA. Yet all four of these trails cross PA Dot highways, so if HOA's are not withdrawn they will all vanish and return to a state of nature.



## IMAGINE IMAGINE HIKING

*John Stein, Everett Region Manager*

If you can see the next blaze you are on the trail. IMAGINE what will be visible after hot weather growth. Cut back so blazes will be seen then. Take more than enough paint. Why spend time getting to a remote trail area, and be out of enough paint for two coats?

IMAGINE when trees and vines have fallen on the trail later; the blazes will be the ONLY clear way to know where the trail is.

IMAGINE the sun shining directly in your eyes from the direction of the only blaze. One can easily not see the blaze.

IMAGINE the blaze after it has faded in color and size; not easy to see.

IMAGINE snow weighting branches down, and covering blazes.

IMAGINE hiking in the fog, rain, snow, twilight, wind, cold; and spending time to see the next blaze. We often try to work on trails when conditions are good. But backpackers and hikers are often out there in less favorable conditions.

If the tree has rough bark, scrape outer bark before painting blaze. If the tree has smooth bark, paint the blaze without scraping. Try to apply second coat of paint on the way back.

IMAGINE the blaze after many months. Will it be obscured by leaves, limbs, vines, bramble, trash trees, etc? Try to cut back EVERYTHING that will obscure the blaze during the next two years because sometimes a maintainer is unable to get back soon. Even dead limbs can later support vines which cover a blaze. Imagine a taller or shorter person; will they be able to see the blaze? Often it is necessary to get well off the trail to clear so that blazes can be seen much later.

IMAGINE where a blaze on a dead tree will be later! On the ground covered with leaves. If you see a bad blaze or one on a dead tree, leave it and put a good one nearby on a good live tree.

IMAGINE a blaze on a rock. How long will it be before it is rubbed off, covered, or missed? DO NOT PUT BLAZES ON ROCKS.

IMAGINE missing turning blazes before a trail turn, and walking a mile or more in the fog, rain, snow, dark being tired after a long day! Every trail turn must have TWO SETS of turning blazes visible in BOTH directions. Make sure to have two blazes clearly visible after a trail turn to confirm that the turn is correct.

IMAGINE a very small limb or leaf growing near a blaze. In a year or two it could be such that a leaf or leaves cover the blaze. Cut these off when they are small, and it is easy.

IMAGINE a blaze on a small or trash tree will be spread out due to tree growth, and thus not easily seen. Try to paint on larger hardwood trees since the bark expands slower.

We use ONLY OIL BASE PAINT. Often we have to paint blazes when it is damp or cold, and oil base paint stays. Water

base paint does not last.

Mid State Trail, Everett Region, requires that one can see the next three blazes (in both directions) when standing at any blaze. Why? MST is a remote wilderness footpath, and getting in to paint is often difficult. If the next three blazes can be seen, chances are that in six months two will be eaten, obscured, or destroyed.

How good is your IMAGINATION? Try to keep these things in mind when painting blazes.

### Editor Note

Most of the content of the *Brushwhacker* is provided by a relatively few persons. We would very much like to make this a larger group. The Mid State Trail uses many trails built by Civilian Conservation Corps and abandoned logging railroads and passes many sites pertaining to our heritage, like the tunnel at Poe Paddy and the CCC camp at Penn Roosevelt State Park. The trail also passes through many areas of natural beauty and interest like the northern type bog at Bear Meadows, the magnificent view at Little Juniata, the logging rail bed along side of Detwiler Run with its area of virgin hemlock and rhododendron forest, the astounding sight of laurel in bloom on Little Flat, just to name a small portion of the sights and sounds encountered by hiking the MST. If you have some photographs of vistas, historical sites, wildlife, or other things of interest please consider submitting them for the *Brushwhacker*. Articles pertaining to the Mid State Trail are welcome as well. Photographs may be submitted as prints, slides, or digital as jpg (jpeg). Text may be submitted as email or (preferred) as an attachment in rtf (rich text format). Please send to the Association by mail or by email to: [hiking.midstatetrail@snip.net](mailto:hiking.midstatetrail@snip.net).

Thank you, and I'm looking forward to seeing and reading what you have to contribute.

*Mike Cosgrove, editor*

### Susquehanna Trail Club to lead hikes on the MST

The Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club (<http://susqatc.libertynet.org>) is planning a weekend of day hikes on MST in the Everett Region and nearby on paths in the suburbs of Beans Cove. Hikes will take place on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of Labor Day weekend (Sept 2-5, 2005). Hikes will be based at Maryland Rocky Gap State Park. For more information contact leaders Krista Cessna or Peter Fleszar, 717 583-2093, or on the web at <http://www.fleszar.org/bcann05.htm>



This is the new bridge for the Mid State Trail over Pine Creek at the village of Ramsey. In 1973 a storm washed out the previous foot bridge about 1.5 km south of this point at Camp Kline. The trail was rerouted along, and sometimes on, route 44 to the abandoned rail bridge at Ramsey. At that time the bridge was not decked and hikers had to step from tie to tie with a good view through the spaces between the ties, of Pine Creek several meters below. In 2000 the MST was rerouted to avoid the road walking, and the trail climbing Houslander Mountain with the several spectacular vistas was made into a blue blazed side trail. The bridge was decked for the Pine Creek rail trail in 2003 and the Mid State Trail now shares this crossing with the rail trail. The question remains of who is responsible for any HOA requirements. A nice loop day hike can be done by parking a car at the small space near the blue trail and ascending Houslander Mountain, then continuing to the junction of the MST at the birch grove and taking the MST south to Ramsey. If another car is parked at the lot near the canoe take out in Ramsey the road walking can be avoided. Several magnificent vistas are along the blue trail, including the “Gates of the Tiadaghton”, and the “Oxbow” in Pine Creek.

*Photo Mike Cosgrove, April 2, 2005*

---

**Mid State Trail Association**  
**PO Box 167**  
**Boalsburg, PA 16827**