

BRUSHWHACKER

Summer 2005

Somewhat regular publication of the Mid State Trail Association



PennDOT Highway Occupancy Agreement (HOA): Resolution at Last

Tom Kelliher

In late May, we learned that DCNR and PennDOT had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on April 14 concerning proposed footpath at-grade crossings of State highways (available online at <http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA/mou.pdf>). This MOU covers only those proposed crossings for which the highway is bounded on both sides by DCNR owned or controlled lands. The MOU does not pertain to the Appalachian Trail, nor does this MOU address our situation in Tioga County within the PA 49 right of way.

Under the MOU, DCNR will provide PennDOT with a crossing plan, showing any proposed signage, highway markings, etc. to be placed on either the footpath or the highway. PennDOT will review the crossing plan, and conduct a traffic safety study, if necessary. If the crossing plan is unacceptable, PennDOT may either make changes to the plan or require that DCNR make changes to the plan.

"Footpath sponsors" (such as MSTA) will be responsible for maintaining the footpath and any footpath facilities (signage, etc.) as described in the crossing plan so as to safely accommodate hikers and motorists. DCNR will be secondarily responsible for this maintenance. PennDOT will be responsible for maintaining the highway and any highway facilities (signage, roadway markings, etc.) as described in the crossing plan.

Because DCNR is assuming secondary responsibility for these footpath crossings, PennDOT will require neither proof of financial responsibility, security, nor an HOA.

In mid-May, MSTA sent a detailed reply to PENNDOT Secretary Biehler, laying out our concerns with the HOA itself and the process by which it was created (available online at <http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA/HOA/Reply/>). This reply included the Opinion Letter we had

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Chain Saw Workshop

The Link Trail Hiking Club and Keystone Trails Association will be sponsoring a chain saw workshop at Gettys Ridge Camp (Some may know this as Rich Scanlon's Camp) near Greenwood Furnace State Park. The workshop will be October 7 to 9. Register by September 17. Contact Carl Lorence, pastumbler@aol.com, 717-234-1521 or Rich Scanlon, richards@acsworld.net, 717-242-1644.

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

Trail Care Weekend

November 4 to 6, 2005, MST Everett Region, camp at Woy Bridge Campground, Leader John Stein

In 2006, June 14 through 18 in the Tioga Region the KTA will be sponsoring a trail crew week on the Mid State Trail. Camping will be at Twin Streams Campground in Morris, PA. 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

Contacts:

Trail Care, John Stein 717.533.3679 or Keystone Trails Association

Joe Healey, 93 Cedarwood Drive, Laflin, PA 18702, 570-655-4979, email: jnlhealey@aol.com and Keystone Trails Association at www.kta-hike.org or info@kta-hike.org, PO Box 129, Confluence, PA 15424

The *Summer (Autumn) meeting of the MSTA* will be held on September 24, Saturday, at Little Pine State Park. Meet at pavilion number 2 by the water at 1:00 p.m. Potluck lunch at 12 noon. 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.
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received from Fluke Weiers, P.C. Shortly thereafter, PENNDOT began negotiating with DCNR to craft an amendment to the original MOU covering the entire lengths of the 18 State Forest Hiking Trails. The amended MOU will cover the PA 49 right of way. This negotiation has completed successfully; the amendment is currently being executed.

Recently, we received a response (available online at <http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA/HOA/DoTResponse/>) from Secretary Biehler regarding our concerns with the HOA and its creation process. I believe our concerns have been allayed by the MOU and the amendment. We all look forward to soon completing the work within the PA 49 right of way. I was pleased to see that PENNDOT will develop a separate agreement addressing footpaths not covered by the amended MOU and that PENNDOT will shortly convene a meeting with KTA to discuss footpath crossings. MSTA will participate in this meeting.

State of the Treasury

Andrea Commaker, Treasurer

MSTA Funds as of July 31, 2005

Money Market Account: \$6,0893.00

CD: \$15,880.08

CD-Land: \$15,466.84

Mid Atlantic Foot Trails Coalition News

Tom Kelliher

One of our hopes when we began the project to extend the Mid State Trail to link to a spur of the Finger Lakes Trail was to enable the creation of a long distance hiking trail. That hope may be realized sooner than think, although we have some outcrops to negotiate before we reach the summit.

Potomac Appalachian Trails Conference (PATC) member Lloyd MacAskill brought new life to an old idea building a long distance footpath parallel to, and west of, the Appalachian Trail. Pete Fleszar followed up on this idea by suggesting that the proposed trail be extended north, following the Mid State and Finger Lakes Trails.

Two coalitions, the Southeast Foot Trails Coalition and the Mid Atlantic Foot Trails Coalition (MAFTC), have been formed to pursue this trail idea, for now called the "Atlantic Crest Trail." MAFTC was formed during a May meeting at PATC's Gypsy Spring cabin. MAFTC is comprised of MSTA, PATC, Link Trail Club, and Finger Lakes Trail Conference, with assistance from American Hiking Society and National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance division.

Current activities are naming the trail and signing a Letter of Agreement (LOA, available online at <http://phoenix.goucher.edu/MSTA/MAFTC/LOADraft.pdf>). This LOA has caused some concern among MSTA board members. Some of the concerns include:

1) Overnight facilities: Does this mean trail shelters, tent pads, or some other constructed and maintained camping areas? We have objections to such developed facilities. Are shelters an idea whose time has gone? Are the numerous camping sites described in the MST Guide sufficient? This must be clarified.

2) MST control: Assurances were given during a preliminary meeting in spring 2004 that each partner club would maintain control over its trail. The LOA would commit us to forming an executive body that governs the Coalition.

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Tioga Region Report

Pete Fleszar, Tioga Region Manager

BIG DIG AT BLACKWELL (again)

KTA Trail Crew came to visit Tioga Region again in June, to clear much blooming laurel and dig many meters of sidehill. In a new endeavor, the crack rigging crew also dragged appliances, scores of tires, and tons of other illegal trash off MST near Cowanesque Lake. Participating in the Trail Crew for the week were Joe Healey, Pete Fleszar, James B. Denny, Tom Kelliher, Steve Acker, Jon Bauer, Tom Thwaites, Barb Wiemann, Tom Bastian, Jack Bushey, Wanda Shirk, Betty Clark, Joe Clark, Elwood Loudenslager, Jeff Clarke, Bill Dietrich, Dave Walp, Bob Best, John Stein, Carl Davis and Jeff Willard. Those who helped with the litter cleanup on Saturday: Ed Lawrence, Catherine McLaughlin, Scott Fannin, Jeff Richardson, Tina Richardson, Ken Horting, David Leber, and all the others just named. Many people from the local area also came out for the day. For the week trail crew performed 664 work hours and 118 travel hours for a total of 782 hours. As a result, we should be able to announce another new section soon. It will connect to the rest of MST through a short interim link on Pine Creek Rail Trail.

Several hikers have already been out on the new section, and one group of backpackers posted to a national message board about seeing beautiful waterfalls, and bald eagles soaring from the overlooks by the "Grand Canyon".

Parts of the new section will be a sure bet for hikes at the KTA meeting in Wellsboro next spring. A trail crew next year is planned (see front page) as there is a lot more to do. For a sneak preview of where we hope to be next year, check out <http://landrus.blogspot.com>.

CHARLESTON TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE FORMS

Several folks from Tioga County have met a couple of times at Wild Asaph Outfitters, with our hostesses Liz Berkowitz and Jenny Borneman, to begin to figure out how to get across Charleston Township. Many private land parcels and (shudder) several PENNDOT roads separate Tioga State Forest land from Hills Creek State Park. The group has begun this great task with much enthusiasm, and there have been promising developments. We will hear more later.

SECTIONS NEED OVERSEERS

The following new sections need overseers:

- * Blackwell to Clay Mine Rd, on the Canyon's East Rim
 - * Clay Mine Rd to Stony Fork Creek, including "Beer Can Spur" back to Clay Mine Rd
 - * Stony Fork Creek to Rattler Rd
- Contact Pete Fleszar.

Easement in Perpetuity Agreement to Protect the MST Available

John Stein has a sample Land Easement In Perpetuity agreement that he will share with any trail club that is interested in using it. According to Stein, the attorney who helped me said we may use the MSTA agreement as a form anywhere in Pennsylvania

For a copy of the form and the approved by notary page, contact Stein at STEINHIKE@CS.COM.

Everett Region Report

John Stein, Everett Region Manager

The Mid State Trail is pleased to announce the Nov. 5 flagging cutting inauguration for the new off road trail section covered by agreements for easements in perpetuity in Bedford County. The ceremony will be held at 9 AM at Game Land 73 on Upper Snake Spring Valley Road near the historic Civil War Trench. Afterward, everyone is invited to participate in a seven-mile hike of the new section. For further information about the MST (Everett Region) in southern Pennsylvania or directions to the Nov. 5 event, contact John Stein.

Construction of this new trail segment is the result of a generous gift from Charles and Jane Williams, who provided a permanently protected corridor for the trail, cooperation from the William Greenawalt family, and newly worded Pennsylvania Game Commission Agreements. As a result, five miles of road walking have been eliminated, and the MST is one segment closer to fulfilling its long term goal of relocating the trail to remote, primitive natural areas. The KTA Summer Crew continued construction of the new trail section in June.

RESOLUTION NO. 2005-07-02 EVERETT BOROUGH COUNCIL BEDFORD COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT ROUTING THE MID-STATE TRAIL THROUGH TENLEY PARK **Whereas**, the Mid-State Trail now extends through portions of Everett Borough; and **Whereas**, Everett Borough is one of only two "trail towns" on the Mid-State Trail; and **Whereas**, the Everett Borough Council and the Everett Recreation Board wish to promote recreation and tourism in Everett Borough and the surrounding area; and **Whereas**, the Everett Borough Council owns and maintains Tenley Park as a public recreation area; and **Whereas**, the Everett Borough Council and the Everett Recreation Board believe that routing the Mid-State Trail through Tenley Park would benefit people using both the Mid-State Trail and Tenley Park; **Therefore Be It Resolved**, that the Everett Borough Council supports routing the Mid-State Trail through Tenley Park. Duly adopted this 11th day of July, 2005, by the Council of the Borough of Everett, in lawful session duly assembled. Everett Borough Council Bedford County, Pennsylvania

ATTEST: Carl F. Michael III Borough Council Vice-President
Gwen S. Douglas Everett

Borough Secretary

Woolrich Region News

Joe Healey, Woolrich Region Manager

Since there were numerous utility poles recently replaced in the Woolrich area, on June 4, Boy Scout Troop 7 from Williamsport set out with Joe and Lorraine Healey and re-blazed a road walk of approximately 7 1/2 kilometers on the Mid State Trail from Pine Road through Woolrich to Mill Road. Although the area that was repainted was entirely on the road, surprisingly, quite a bit lopping had to be done to clear branches away from the blazes. Whatever blazes were left were all but invisible. Now Woolrich has bright and shiny blazes. The Scouts that were involved were Ryan Deleo, Adam Isaacson, Adam Neidig, Alex Neidig, Morgan Smith, Alex Strohl, Assistant Scoutmaster Tim Neidig and Scoutmaster of Troop 7, Jeff Strohl. The Troop is interested in becoming a group member of the MSTA. In addition, they also expressed an interest in maintaining a section of the trail in that area. On behalf of the Woolrich Region and all of the Mid State Trail Association, thanks are in order for a job well done.

Finding a way through Tioga County

Mid-State Trail being extended

David Thompson Sun-Gazette Staff

It began as a two-mile trail in 1969, but today the Mid State Trail is Pennsylvania's longest hiking trail at more than 260 miles. On June 14, volunteers will begin working on a 10-mile trail extension between Blackwell and Morris in Tioga County that will make it even longer. Work is being coordinated by the Mid State Trail Association, a non-profit group that was formed in 1982 to promote and maintain the trail. The association operates under the umbrella of the Keystone Trail Association.

"The ultimate goal is to extend the trail to the New York State line and link with the Finger Lakes Trail", Pete Fleszar, the association's Tioga regional manager, said during a recent interview. "That connection will enhance what is already a trail that affords almost limitless hiking opportunities," Fleszar said. "At its southern end, the trail connects with the Green Ridge Trail in Maryland," he said. "In the mid 1990s, we extended the Mid State Trail to the Green Ridge Trail, which goes all the way across Maryland," he said. "Once the trail is completed, a hiker will have access to trails from the Adirondacks (in New York) to Alabama. Even now", he said, "the scope of the trail is just a little more than a lot of people can grasp." While that statement may make some people regard the trail as a Appalachian Trail wannabe, Mid State Trail volunteers are quick to point out that their trail offers hikers a much more pristine hiking experience. "Pennsylvania has a lot of industry and people. Throughout the whole trail, you don't see that," Liz Berkowitz, volunteer overseer for a nine-mile section of the trail in Tioga County, said. "It's different than the Appalachian Trail. It definitely goes through a nice section of Pennsylvania," she said.

Another feature of the trail is that it truly is an "old-fashioned wilderness footpath," Fleszar said. No horses, bicycles, snowmobiles, ATVs or other motor vehicles are permitted. "A lot of people note the sense of isolation and solitude when you're on the trail," he said. "When you hike alone, you'll run into more bears than people."

"More often than not, if you aren't looking for the trail, you won't even know it's there", he said. The footpath is cleared just enough to accommodate a hiker and is usually marked only with orange blazes painted on trees. Signs are rare.

That reduces the impact trail construction has on the environment, Fleszar said. It also reduces the amount of maintenance the trail requires, which is fortunate, since the association isn't exactly wealthy. "We have no money. We are all-volunteer," he said. "We don't need much money except for orange paint and gas for the chain saws."

The section Berkowitz oversees traverses State Game Lands 37. The trail runs from Hills Creek State Park near Wellsboro to Ives Run Recreation Area at Hammond Reservoir, north of Mansfield. It is one portion of the Mid State Trail that is, as yet, unconnected to the main section. It is also one of the rare sections of the trail that is marked with wooden signs, courtesy of the state Game Commission. The signs are not only appreciated by hikers, but also local porcupines who apparently have found them to be something of a delicacy.

According to Steve Gerhinger, the Game Commission's land manager in Tioga County, allowing the association to build the trail had the dual benefit of opening the area up to hunters who would otherwise have difficulty getting in or out. "This is a pretty large area about 13,000 acres. It's very remote," Gerhinger said. "It helps hunters get to those areas. If you get a deer, it's a long drag out. It's a lot easier to drag if it's on a trail." The trail also gives hunters a reference point on "how to get out of there," he said.

The association approached Gerhinger about two years ago. It was interested in extending the trail from the central part of the state to the Northern Tier, he said. "They approached me with a plan. I requested some modifications of where the trail would go," he said. Gerhinger agreed that the association takes care to disturb as little of the forest as is necessary to build the trail. "They do a minimal amount of work. It is very low-impact," he said. "They did a great job. I was impressed with the work they did."

Most of the present trail traverses state land, and therein lies the reason for its length, trail and trail association founder Tom Thwaites said. Thwaites, a retired physics professor at Penn State University, founded the trail in 1969 as faculty advisor to the hiking division of the Penn State Outing Club. He served as the association's president from the time it was founded in 1982 until about three years ago. He has written three books in the "50 Hikes" series, covering the eastern, central and western portions of the state. The trail takes a sinuous route so that most of it is on public land, following a zig-zag course from Blackwell to the Maryland border. The trail travels "through five state forests and a number of state parks," Thwaites said. The lack of workable routes through state land in the Northern Tier presents extension planners with the dilemma of having to ask private landowners for permission to cross their properties. As with the trail itself, the association is taking a low-impact approach when requesting that permission, Fleszar said. "If the landowners say 'no,' we find an alternative," he said. "We don't go on anyone's property without their permission." An example of one such alternative is on an isolated 10-mile section of the trail near Tioga. The trail crosses RV's Mountain Top Campground, which affords a spectacular vista of the mountains and valleys to the south. A portion of the trail then crosses property owned by the Tioga Hunting Reserve. A sign warns hikers that hunting is allowed on the reserve year round and to call ahead for permission to cross the property. If that isn't possible, an alternative route on a nearby dirt road is available that avoids the property, Fleszar said. "That's unique to that one section," he said. For the most part, property owners have been cooperative, Fleszar said. The planned extension crosses about a dozen private parcels.

Wanda Shirk, a volunteer who lives in Ulysses, has been given the job of running point for the association in their effort to contact property owners along the proposed trail route. Shirk, who recently was a contestant on the reality-based TV series "Survivor," has an easy-going demeanor that landowners find disarming, association president Tom Kelliher said. "She's a very authentic and honest person," Kelliher said. "She's been very successful with many people," Fleszar said. The proposed extension begins in Blackwell where Babb Creek flows into Pine Creek, Fleszar said. It follows the creek to its headwaters east of Wellsboro, he said. It is imperative that trail users show respect to the landowners by staying on the trail, and following the no fires, no camping rules. The association's motto is "Leave no trace." "The whole trail is based on mutual respect of landowners, volunteers and the people who use the trail," Fleszar said. The association provides signs for landowners alerting hikers that the property they are entering is a restricted to hiking only. Landowners concerned with liability issues can rest assured that they are protected by state law regarding the safe passage of hikers traversing their land, he said.

Although the proposed extension will leave the association about 30 miles short of its goal of reaching the New York border, Fleszar said he hopes that dream can come to fruition within the next 10 years. In the meantime, volunteers will be working to find landowners willing to allow the trail to cross their properties. "It's a developing process of our volunteers, talking to landowners to see what opportunities they have and showing respect for landowners who desire not to give access," Fleszar said.

The LOA does not specify the responsibilities or scope of the executive body. This must be clarified.

3) The LOA states that it is expected that most of the resources for supporting the MAFTC and its endeavors will come from Coalition members. What will be the magnitude of the funding burden and how will it be distributed?

By no means are these the only concerns, but they appear to be the key concerns. I encourage you to read the LOA for yourself. Signing this document will commit us to working toward MAFTC's vision. Is this vision compatible with our vision for MSTA? This question will be discussed and decided at the fall meeting.



photo John Stein

Let the Llamas do the work. John Stein and family transporting materials using a llama at the Everett Region Trail Crew.

Pictures from Keystone Trails Association Trail Crew



photos Barbara Wiemann

Tioga Region Trail Crew

Above: Trail crew participants using a winch to drag large items illegally dumped in a ravine. See the Tioga Region report.

Left: Crew members transporting the "big comfy couch".





Those Handsome Young Men and Women and Their Trail Clearing Machines

photo John Stein

Trail crew poses for a photograph at the Everett Region week, June 2005. From left to right, Front: Bill Dietrich, Carl Lorence, John Stein, Joe Healey, Tom thwaites, Back, Bob Best Dave Walp, Woody Loudenslager, Ron Kutz, Mary Pitzer, Tom Kelliher, and Paul Henry

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