



# Great Eastern Trail Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 1, January 2011

By Timothy A. Hupp

**Please feel free to print out or copy and distribute this newsletter**

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*Note – this is the first newsletter of the Great Eastern Trail. I have had an interest in the progress of the building of the GET, and I'm finding information I've wanted published lacking, at least in an integrated place. Further, most organizations have a newsletter, and this trail and organization did not. The closest thing was a blog at the GET website ([greateastertrail.net](http://greateastertrail.net)) and no entry had been made since March 2009. Many things had happened with the Trail are not well known. So I take it on myself to start a newsletter. I hope many people can contribute as word gets out.*

*Tim Hupp*

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## 2010 on the Great Eastern Trail

This past year many events have taken place as the building and consolidation of the Great Eastern Trail has continued.

PATC (Potomac Appalachian Trail Club) completed the Devils Nose Reroute of the Tuscarora Trail and built the Spruce Pine Hollow Shelter in northern West Virginia. This was celebrated on the last weekend of September with several hikes and other events as part of "Celebrate Tuscarora".

PATC also had 3 worktrips on the Carr Mountain Trail in the Headwaters Section. About 2 more miles of trail were constructed.

Tom Johnson decided to use the Alternative A road walk to bridge the gap of the Allegheny Trail south of I-64 (this is essentially a rejection of the [Proposed Reroute](#) I had written, rejected primarily due to traffic conditions). This route takes the Slash Lick Road off the Allegheny Trail

west to WV 92, south to White Sulphur Springs, CR 50 south, CR 50/2 to Sweet Springs, WV/VA 311 to Paint Bank, VA and VA 600 and CR 17 to Laurel Branch, WV, where the Allegheny Trail picks up again.

The TuGuNu Hiking Club was organized in West Virginia to build and maintain the GET across the state on the route planned in 2009.

PMTA (Pine Mountain Trail Association) dedicated a shelter in Kingdom Come State Park, Kentucky.

CTC (Cumberland Trail Conference) completed 1.25 miles of trail in the New River Segment and 3.89 miles in the North Chickamauga Gorge Segment.

*Can you think of a better name than "GET Newsletter"? Surely, with a trail known as "GET", we can come up with a pun-ny newsletter name better at getting attention. Email your suggestions to [Hupp\\_Tim@msn.com](mailto:Hupp_Tim@msn.com), or mail to 3723 Brown Mountain Lane, Elkton, VA 22827.*

# Featured Section:

## Headwaters Section

by Tim Hupp

This is the section of the Great Eastern Trail that fills the gap between the Tuscarora Trail to the north and the Allegheny Trail to the south. Also known as the Tuscarora – Allegheny Link, I chose the name “Headwaters Section” as these trails go on the mountains that make up the headwaters of the Potomac, Shenandoah (both forks), and James Rivers. The section is 165 miles long and is principally on North Mountain (on which the Tuscarora Trail continues another 40 miles) for about 25 miles and on Shenandoah Mountain for about 60 miles. Most of this section is in the George Washington National Forest, with the southernmost part in Monongahela National Forest and T. M. Gathright State Wildlife Management Area. It crosses the Virginia/West Virginia border at least five times, and it straddles it in several places.

This is fairly remote area, especially on Shenandoah Mountain. Generally the trails go 7-10 miles between access points. There are two 20+ mile sections without crossing a paved road. The scenic points of interest are Big Schloss and Tibbet Knob on North Mountain and High Knob and Reddish Knob on Shenandoah Mountain. Also of interest are Hidden Valley and Lake Sherwood near the south (or west) end of the section.

The Headwaters section crosses the following primary roads: WV/VA 259 (mile 32), US 33 (mile 62), US 250 (mile 93), US 220 (mile 134), and VA 39 (mile 150). The GET route goes through the villages of Bergton, VA and Mountain Grove, VA, and it passes not far from Warm Springs, VA.

From north to south, the GET follows (not counting state roads):

*North Mountain group:* Mill Mountain Trail (orange blazes), Tibbet Knob Trail (yellow), North Mountain Trail (orange), and Snyder Trail (blue);

*Shenandoah Mountain group:* Blue Hole Road [FSR 302], Carr Mountain Trail (yellow), German River Road [FSR 232], Hall Spring Road [FSR 85], Shenandoah Mountain Trail (yellow), Shenandoah Mountain Road [FSR 85], North River Trail (yellow), and Shenandoah Mountain Trail (yellow);

*Ridge crossing group:* FSR 1325, Piney Mountain Trail (blue), Muddy Run Trail (blue), Jackson River Trail (blue), Hidden Valley Road [FSR 241], Bogan Run Trail (blue), High Top Tower Road, Meadow Creek Trail (blue), Lake Sherwood Trail and Upper Meadow Trail (blue).

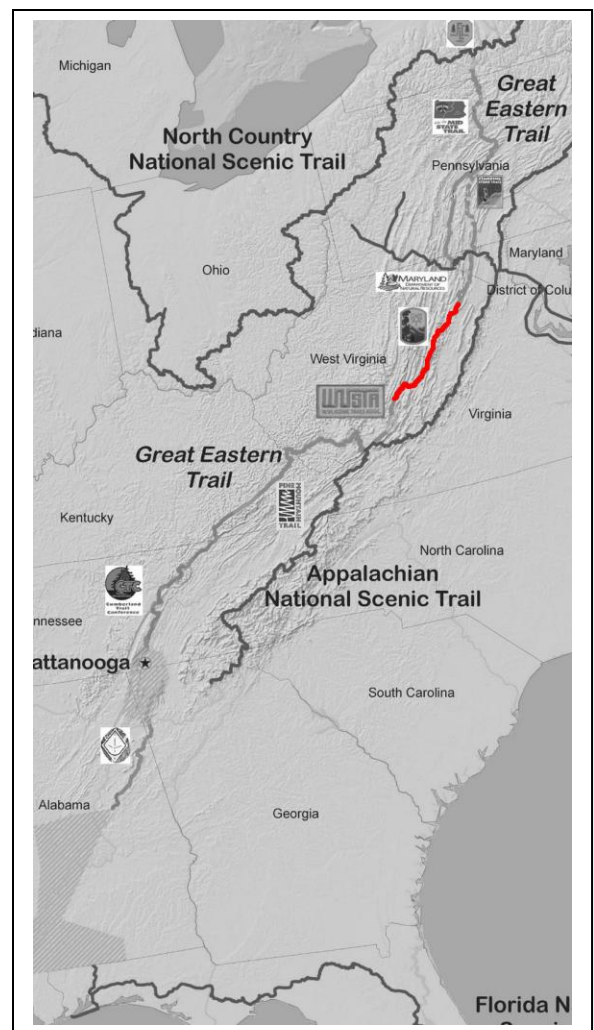
The total length of the Headwaters section of the GET is 165 miles, of which 70 miles (42%) are on roads, of which 29 miles (18%) are paved. All trails are complete except for Carr Mountain Trail (6 miles, 3.5

### Great Eastern Trail Sections:

Crystal Hills Branch (Finger Lakes Trail)  
Mid State Trail  
Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail  
Standing Stone Trail  
Tuscarora Trail

### **Headwaters Section**

Allegheny Trail/AT/Mary Draper Ingles Trail  
TuGuNu Section  
Pine Mountain Trail  
Cumberland Trail  
Georgia Pinhoti Trail  
Alabama Pinhoti Trail  
Alabama Trail



miles have been constructed, the rest is hikeable), and 0.5 mile of the Muddy Run Trail (currently guided around on roads).

There are no shelters in the Headwaters Section. There are National Forest (fee) campgrounds at Wolf Gap (mile 6), Hidden Valley (mile 139), and Lake Sherwood (mile 164). There are several nice sites for camping along North Mountain, and several places on the trails (and some Forest Service roads) suitable for camping.

There are occasional springs along the section, and the GET route follows a few creeks (German River [mile 48-51], North River [mile 78-82], and Meadow Creek [mile 159-163]). Water is also available from pumps or spigots at campgrounds.

There are stores at Bergton (mile 32), Warm Springs (mile 135), and Mountain Grove (mile

150). There are post offices nearby at Bergton and Warm Springs.

This section is not marked with the Great Eastern Trail signs—the Forest Service has not authorized it. A few signs may be found at some trailheads, but they are not supposed to be there yet. GET enthusiasts are advised not to put up any more signs until the Forest Service okays it. The only way to follow the route is to know which trails to take where. This article gives a fair guidance, and there is a guidebook posted (it includes some of the Tuscarora Trail and the Allegheny Trail), section by section at:

<http://www.brownmtnphotog.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=122>

*Each newsletter will have a featured section of trail. Next issue will include the Cumberland Trail.*

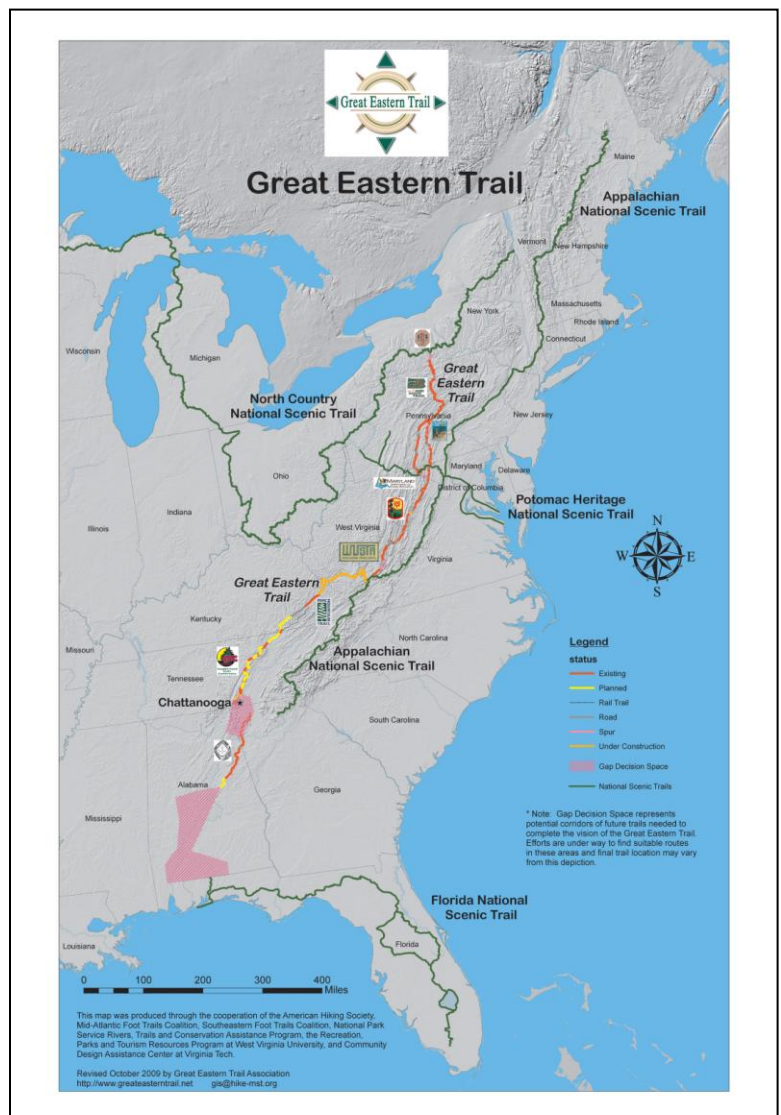
## Parallels

As the Great Eastern Trail is a second long trail in the Appalachians, there are automatically parallels between it and the Appalachian Trail. This is a series of articles discussing similarities and differences between the GET and the AT.

### Location

In general the Great Eastern Trail runs parallel to the Appalachian Trail, but it is situated further west and set further south. The AT runs from northern Georgia to mid Maine and the GET runs (as planned) from the Florida panhandle to southern New York.

The GET and AT are together for about 20 miles on Pearis Mountain, in Pearisburg, and on Peters Mountain, where the AT makes its farthest west (ridgewise) swing. Other than that the GET is west of the AT. In Virginia and West Virginia north of Roanoke, VA, the AT is on the Blue Ridge east of the Shenandoah Valley while the GET is on ridges on the west side of the Shenandoah Valley, often along the state line. I am fortunate to live in a county that has the AT along its east border and the GET along the west border.



A difference between the two trails is the nature of their termini. The Appalachian Trail ends on Springer Mountain at the south and Katahdin in the north, at summits of mountains. In the current plan, the Great Eastern Trail leads from the Florida

Trail to the North Country Trail, so each end is a junction with another long trail.

*Next issue: Conception of the Trails.*

## Trail Stories

### The High Knob Hike – October 9, 2010

By Tim Hupp

“High Knob” is a very common name in the Virginia/West Virginia area. In fact, there are four other High Knobs within 20 miles of the one of this story! High Knob near Front Royal, Virginia is also the home of GETA president Tom Johnson, the leader of this hike. Through 2010, Tom has led various GET hikes covering the section between the Tuscarora Trail and the Allegheny Trail. This one was #6.

It may seem foreboding to say that we started this hike with eleven people and finished with six. But the other 5 did intend to go back to their cars on US 33. This hike was on Shenandoah Mountain, running from US 33 to Forest Road 85 north of Briery Branch. By the map reckoning it should be 6.5 miles, plus some on a road.

Three of the hikers who would finish left two vehicles on the Forest Road, between Briery Branch and the Bother Knob trailhead, where the road forked. The other eight at US 33 decided to go on (the shuttlers had instructed us to), as there was an excursion to High Knob, just one mile away. So we set off with a few stops along the way. There was a challenging blowdown and we decided to clear it off the trail for everyone. There was some question about the trail intersection as to where to go for High Knob, but we were at the right spot, and we went on up. On top of High Knob is a stone fire tower, one of the few not removed in the 1970s. There are steps up to a platform around the top of the tower where we could take in the views. The views were good, and we could see on the Blue Ridge at least as far north as Mt. Marshall north of

*Please submit any Trail Stories you may have, either hiking or working on the Great Eastern Trail.*

Luray. There were also some spots of fall color on this early October day.

Before long, the other the shuttlers, Lynn & Malcolm and Michael, joined us there, pictures were taken, and we started to head down. Here’s where things started to unravel. No problem with the two couples who returned to US 33 from this point. But the group was taking a long time to start



down, and Nancy, a frequent hiking companion of mine, but new to this group, got impatient and headed down. Noticing her missing, I hurried back down to the trail intersection, and did catch up with her. But she did continue ahead on the trail.

Nancy had tried to follow this section of the Great Eastern Trail last year, but she got to a point where she couldn't tell where the trail went. Now she was going ahead in this same area. I was leading the rest of the group and I came to a place where the trail crosses an old road grade coming up the side of the ridge. In this part, the trail is on the west side of the ridge, but we know it eventually gets up on top of the ridge. So it is easy to expect the trail to join the road leading up the ridge, in the same general direction. Actually, the trail crosses and continues on a mild downhill. This is where Nancy (and others on an earlier hike I had been on) had gone wrong, and she had done so again. I called her back—she was still close enough to see and hear. So the group continued on, and before long the trail was switchbacking up to the top of the ridge, climbing over a number of blowdowns.

We got to the top of the ridge, collected the group, only to find Michael joining us from the ridge where the trail hadn't gone. Not only that, but Malcolm was missing. Michael had dropped back, and in his catching up, he too missed that road grade crossing, and so followed it up to the top of the ridge. He knew he was off the trail, but he also knew it went to the top of the ridge—he just hoped he could recognize the point it got there. No problem, it's easy since there is a good trail sign there. That, and the fact that we were all there. All except Malcolm. He was in the back and was aware that Michael was missing, so he went back to look for him. Tom thought Malcolm was right behind him, and didn't know what point he went back. So Michael, Tom, and I set out looking for Malcolm, while the rest stayed by the sign. Tom soon decided to go back to the group at the sign. You don't want too many searchers in different directions, for you need to know when the missing person is found. Michael had a whistle, and used it a few times. Eventually, we heard Malcolm coming up the trail. He had turned back when Michael had first sounded the whistle, which was when he got off the trail. Now he heard it again and came forward.

I must note that this separation happened even though Michael and Malcolm were both familiar with this trail, having done it before, and they have often hiked with each other. Lessons learned: 1. Keep the group together. 2. If you realize someone is missing, make sure the rest of the group knows. 3. If you go to search someone, make sure the rest of the group knows. 4. A whistle is good, too, but it would help if you have a signal plan—e.g. different signals for “I'm lost” and “I'm found”. And be sure everyone knows which is which.

After the group got back together, Nancy became the last one to head back, so now we were down to six.

Now we found out that Tom had a birthday dinner in Charlottesville (this was his big 7-0), and we had spent one hour on High Knob and the search took another 30 minutes. We knew the ridge ahead was the most challenging part of Shenandoah Mountain, with several steep climbs over a few knobs before we got to Bother Knob. This would include the roadway splitting twice, many blowdowns, and trails grown in by plants, hard to find in places. As we went, it could be hard to tell how far along we were on the map.

It became clear that Tom could not get to Charlottesville by 6:00, so we tried a new plan: Lynn knew a way down to the Bother Knob Access Road, which would be a mile (we thought) shorter. Fortunately, she did recognize the spot, and the way down turned out to be quite steep (I was the only one without trekking poles, and I ended up down first—I had to run!). So we followed the road back until we got to the parked vehicles still about two more miles.

Things moved well after that, and we made good time on the road. I think Tom got the dinner rescheduled to 7:00 once someone made it into cell phone range, and the shuttle went quicker than we thought—it is a long shuttle from Briery Branch Gap to the US 33 parking.

The hike turned out to be 8.9 miles long taking 6.8 hours. We missed the part over Bother Knob, which at 4344' is the highest point of the Great Eastern Trail, and it has some interesting trees on it. And it would have been just 0.5 miles longer if we had gone that way. But it was productive in updating the guidebook on that section.

## Photo Gallery



Lake Sherwood from Allegheny Trail



German River Road



Field on North Mountain



Tibbet Knob viewed from VA 691

### Web addresses & emails:

GET website: <http://www.greateserntrail.net/>

GET Guidebook (Hancock, MD to White Sulphur Springs, WV):  
<http://www.brownmtnphotog.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=122>

Email: GET Newsletter: [Hupp\\_Tim@msn.com](mailto:Hupp_Tim@msn.com)

Email GETA President Tom Johnson about Great Eastern Trail: [johnts25@gmail.com](mailto:johnts25@gmail.com)