



GET Hiking

Great Eastern Trail Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 2, November 2012

By Timothy A. Hupp

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

Cumberland Trail's New River Section completed

(from CTC newsletter)

On April 15, 2012 the construction of the New River Section of the Cumberland Trail north of Frozen Head State Park was completed. With this section, the New River Segment, all 40 miles, is completed. Along with contiguous portions of the Frozen Head section and the Cumberland Mountain section, 58 continuous miles are completed, the longest segment of the Cumberland Trail (the second longest segment, the Three Gorges Section is 31 miles).

The New River Segment (formerly called the Smoky Mountain Segment) goes through the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area, which was created in 2004. The construction of parts of the Cumberland Trail began in 2006. The effort was hampered by a lack of resource funding and changes in CTC staff, but still continued. In August 2009, the CTC was awarded a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant, which allowed funding for land acquisition, construction, trailhead support facilities, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the trails. This funding allowed for building materials and mechanical equipment, but it was volunteers who got the trail built (20,640 hours donated).



Further construction is going on at other parts of the Cumberland Trail, with a 6 mile section at Black Mountain in the Grassy Cove segment having a grant for work.

Pineville signs on!

The City of Pineville (WV) has signed on, allowing the Great Eastern Trail to pass through town. For long-distance hikers, Pineville is a perfect trail town with easily accessible food, laundry, and internet. For locals, the trail through town will provide an awesome chance to explore the surrounding area.

Mayor Tim Ellison signs a memorandum of understanding between the City of Pineville and the Great Eastern Trail! Thanks for your support!

Barclay Run Shelter Dedicated

The Barclay Run Shelter on the Tuscarora Trail near Gore, VA was dedicated on August 25. This is the third shelter built on the Tuscarora Trail in the past few years. Now there are six shelters in this section (Capon Springs Road to Hancock, MD); it is only the lack of a shelter in the Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area that prevents the section from having one every 8 to 12 miles within it. Permission to build such a shelter was again denied by the State of West Virginia this year.

Barclay Run Shelter was built with PATC funds in 7 work trips during 2011. This year two more work trips were needed to install the final flooring and put on the second coat of stain and paint on the shelter and privy. Thirteen volunteers worked on this shelter. It took 763 work hours and 260 travel hours to build this shelter. The total cost was less than \$7,000.

This shelter is 12' x 14' with 12' x 8' sleeping area and a 12' x 6' covered deck with cooking table. The construction is a hybrid post and beam with board and batten sides. All the posts and beams are pressure-treated lumber for longer life and the sides are red oak planks treated with a preservative to prevent/inhibit insect activity and stained to protect it from the weather. It is on a concrete foundation with access to the sub flooring.

The roof, with a generous overhang and front and rear "beak" has bullet proof Plexi-glass in the gables for stopping the wind and to allow light into the interior.

In addition to the milestone celebrated at the Aug. 25 dedication, we also saw a change in leadership of the Tuscarora Trail Central District as Walt Smith stepped down and John Spies became district manager. Many thanks to Walt for all the years of service to PATC and we welcome John as our new leader.

TuGuNu News

In the early planning of the total GET route, the longest gap between established trail sections was between the Pine Mountain Trail at Breaks Interstate Park and the Appalachian Trail in Virginia (first expected at Burkes Garden). A conference in 2009 chose a new route, going farther north across southern West Virginia. From the Pine Mountain Trail the new planned route headed north and crossed into West Virginia at Matewan, then headed east through the R.D. Bailey Wildlife Management Area, Twin Falls Resort State Park, Camp Creek State Forest, Pipestem State Park, Bluestone State Park, Hinton, and then headed south along the New River partly through Bluestone Lake Wildlife Management Area. From there it goes into Virginia, through Glen Lyn and Narrows before reaching the Appalachian Trail.

A local hiking club was organized, and they called the proposed trail the TuGuNu Section, named for the Tug Fork (the river that defines the border between West Virginia and Kentucky) at Matewan, the Guyandotte River, which is impounded by the R.D. Bailey Dam, and which flows through the towns of Pineville and Mullens, and the New River, which flows north through Virginia and into West Virginia by Hinton, and is a popular sporting river.

A lot of groundwork needed to be done before the Great Eastern Trail became a reality in this part of West Virginia. Local authorities, landowners, state authorities, and local people needed to be on board, and things done in ways that are to their liking. A more precise route would need to be established on the ground, problems would need to be addressed, and only then can the route be blazed.

Although permissions are still required, there is a hikeable route east of Camp Creek State Forest, some on trails, some on roads. West of Camp Creek SF, much of the route has been adjusted—the route shown on GET maps now is not quite where the current plan is. The current plan has the GET going through the towns of Pineville and Mullens, and it follows a more southerly route west of Pineville.

At the beginning of 2012 only about 5 miles of the TuGuNu section of GET was blazed, and that on existing trails in Twin Falls State Park. During the year, over 30 miles have been blazed of the 165 miles from Glen Lyn, Virginia to Matewan, West Virginia. The new sections include the Zion Mountain Section, the Pipestem Section, the Mountain Creek Section and the Avalon&Egeria Sections.

The Zion Mountain Section begins just outside of Hinton at Zion Mountain Road and follows small roads through very pretty countryside for 9.15 miles before ending near the Bluestone WMA border & the Bluestone Conference Center. Although these 9.15 miles are on roads, they provide very dramatic overlooks of our mountains, along with some farmland views and some spectacular oak trees.

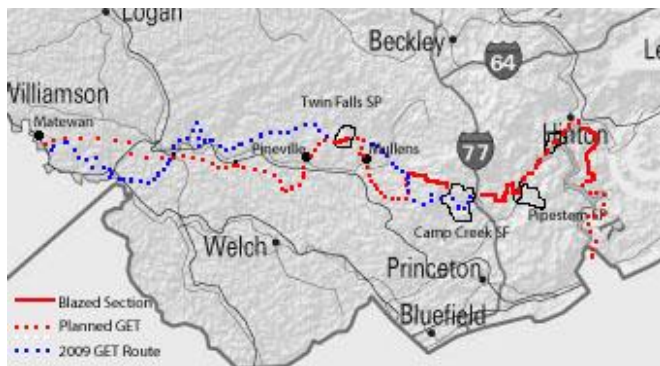
The Pipestem Section is 2.5 miles long and includes the Farley Loop Trail and woods road leading toward the road to Dunn.

The Mountain Creek Section is 9.7 miles long and goes from Dunns to Houchins Road near the Camp Creek State Forest.

The Avalon Section is 4.6 miles long and goes from the west side of Camp Creek State Forest and goes to CR 1 near Egeria. The Egeria Section continues from CR 1 to a road along Bluff Fork, about 6 miles (most, but not all of the Egeria Section has been blazed).

In addition to the blazed sections, a total of 87 miles of proposed trail has been GPSed, or digitally mapped and distanced.

The areas of progress are mostly in the eastern portion of the whole section.



In addition to blazing parts of the trail, GET has official sanction from the towns of Matewan (summer 2012), Pineville (March 2012), and Mullens (first town, before 2012).

We hope that 2013 can follow on the progress, and considerably more can be achieved in this next year. Thanks much to Joanna Swanson, who has ended her job with VISTA, and who plans to thru-hike the GET in 2013.

MOU signed with US Forest Service

(from GETA President Tom Johnson)

On November 20, Michelle Mitchell of the Southeast Regional office in Atlanta informed me that the draft MOU has received its final coordination. We are working on some formatting issues, and once that is done I will sign and send to Atlanta for their signature.

This is the same MOU that we had hoped to sign at our Board meeting last May. But it is worth waiting for. It doesn't just let us begin deciding where to blaze and put up our logos. The real importance is that it finally validates the GET as a pre-existing agreement that does not fall under the 2-year-old FS ban on all new recreational facilities (like hiking trails). We have been grandfathered into the existing system, based entirely on some emails that I exchanged with GWNF supervisor Bill Damon in 2003. Many staff members in the FS considered those emails to be too informal to amount to FS sponsorship of our route.

Just How Long is the GET?

This question was given to me (Tim Hupp) as a challenge from Lloyd McAskill, to put in this newsletter. I intended to look into it, but before I did any work on it, Warren Devine prepared a table of distances of the sections of the GET. There are some complications, such as two branches of the Trail north from Hancock, MD. In addition, not all the trail has been built, so unfinished sections are often just estimated. I made some adjustments, and surely further corrections will be made as parts are finished. The sums we come up with are:

Flagg Mountain to North Country Trail:

| | Finished miles | Miles open to hiking |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Using west branch | 1687 | 1321 |
| Using east branch | 1641 | 1282 |
| Total trail miles | 1812 | 1453 |

How Many GET miles have you hiked?

An awful lot of people have **not** reported their GET miles—unless no one has hiked much of the Mid State, Standing Stone, Tuscarora, Pinhoti, and other constituent trails that make up the GET.

Here's the breakdown of the constituent trails, GET miles only:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Crystal Hills Trail | 48 miles |
| Mid State Trail | 322 miles |
| Standing Stone Trail | 78 miles |
| Tuscarora Trail | 132 miles |
| Allegheny Trail | 41 miles (plus gap) |
| Appalachian Trail | 21 miles |
| Pine Mountain Trail | 44 miles (trail only) |
| Cumberland Trail | 131 miles (so far) |
| Pinhoti Trail | 199 miles |

If you have thru-hiked any of these trails, you have this many miles of the GET.

There are also segments of combined shorter trails:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Headwaters Section | 165 miles |
| TuGuNu Section | 100 miles |
| Lookout Crest Section | 87 miles |
| ...plus a few others | |

I'm trying to give credit for those who have hiked significant miles of the GET. If you have hiked at least 50 miles of the GET, please report it to me at the email address given at the end of the newsletter. I haven't got much response from the last newsletter.

You may include miles of exploring for GET routes, and if it has two branches, you may count the miles hiked on both. Count only the trail miles—if you've done a section twice, you don't double the miles. Also, do not count side trails, but if you hike a close parallel trail, you may count that if you go that way instead of the main trail.

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Sue Turner | 720 |
| Bill Shaffer | 545 |
| Rick Guhse | 437 |
| Tim Hupp | 401 |
| Tom Johnson | 365 |
| Lloyd McAskill | 321 |
| David Frye | 276 |
| Jim Sims | 224 |
| Warren Devine | 205 |
| Carol Devine | 187 |
| Sam Goldsberry | 142 |
| Marty Dominy | 130 |
| Nancy Ruggles | 113 |
| Michael Seth | 91 |
| Shad Baker | 90 |
| Malcolm & Lynn Cameron | 89 |
| John Spies | 71 |
| Chad Churchman | 58 |
| Mary Huffer | 50 |

So get out and GET Hiking!

And report your miles!

Featured Section:

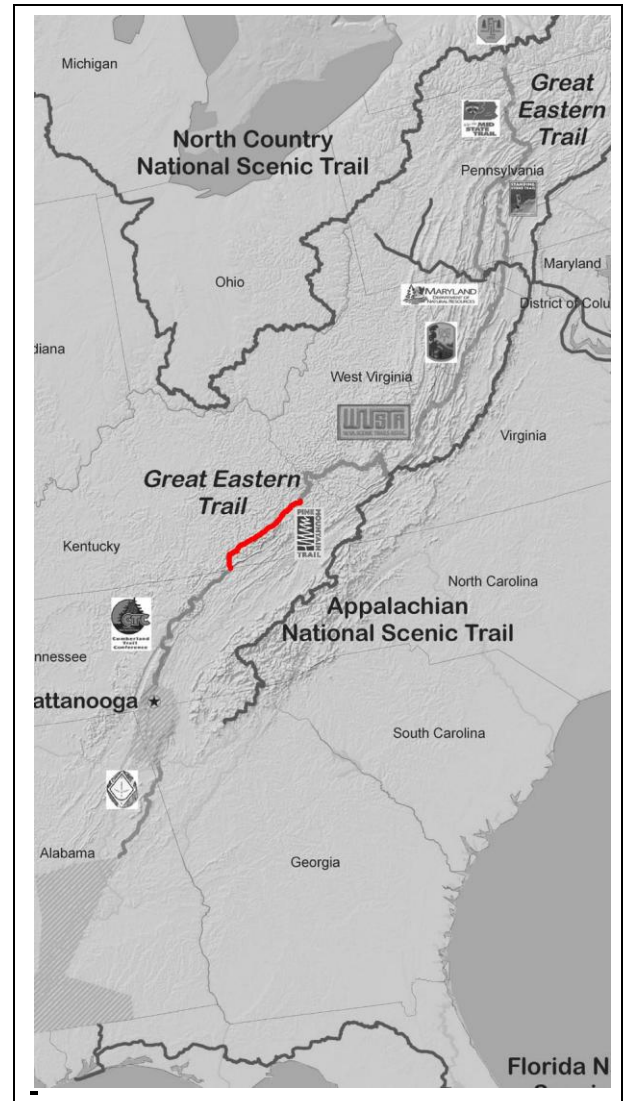
Pine Mountain Trail

by Tim Hupp

Pine Mountain is a long, narrow ridge that extends south from Breaks Interstate Park between Virginia and Kentucky. For the first 30 miles, the crest of this ridge defines the boundary between these two states, and south from there is entirely in Kentucky. (The ridge extends about 15 miles into Tennessee—I-75 goes on top of that part of the ridge, but the Pine Mountain Trail does not go that way.) Several towns exist on each side of the mountain; some prominent ones are Cumberland, Harland, and Pineville, all on US 119, and along the Cumberland River, which flows south/west on the south/east side of Pine Mountain, passing through a water gap at Pineville, KY.

The entire Pine Mountain Trail is part of the Great Eastern Trail. It has been built on the Pine Mountain ridge from Elkhorn City, KY south/west 42 miles to where US 119 crosses the ridge (US 119 mostly parallels the ridge, west/north of it north of this crossing, and south/east of it south of this crossing). South of that point, there is a narrow paved road, the Little Shepherd Trail, which continues south/west along Pine Mountain for another 23 miles. This is considered part of the Pine Mountain Trail, and Great Eastern Trail, as well.

The Pine Mountain Trail is maintained by the Pine Mountain Trail Conference (not to be confused with the Pine Mountain Trail Association, which maintains a different Pine Mountain Trail in Georgia). The PMTC is extending the Pine Mountain Trail southward from Kingdom Come State Park near Cumberland an additional more than 40 miles to near Pineville, where it turns directly southward about 12 miles on some ridges almost perpendicular to Pine Mountain and Cumberland Mountain to connect with the Cumberland Trail in Tennessee at Cumberland Gap National Historical Park.



The Pine Mountain Trail has traditionally been blazed yellow, but is now in the process of changing over to fluorescent green.

The northernmost section of the Pine Mountain Trail, from Elkhorn City, KY to US 23, is known as the Birch Knob section, and it is 28 miles long. It includes features as the Elkhorn City Overlook, a cave, Skegg Overlook, Golfish Pond, Skeet Rock Knob, Natural Bridge Ledge, Big Toe Site Rock, Birch Knob Observation Tower, Overlook at Quarry, and Rock Overlook, with numerous named gaps. Also nearby are Jenny Falls and Mullins Pond. The Trail goes mostly on the ridge crest, but sometimes along small creeks that flow between two crests, and sometimes sidehilling.



Pictures taken on Pine Mountain by Brett Bently



The next section is the Highlands section, from US 23 to US 119, 16 miles long. It includes features as Twin Cliffs Overlook, Adena Spring Shelter, Wildcat Rock, Mayking Rock, Slip and Slide Rock, Box Rock, Mar's Rock, High Rock, Lemon Squeezer, Eagle Arch, and Flamingo Shelter.

The third section is the Little Shepherd Trail, a paved road with little traffic along the crest of Pine Mountain. It leads from US 119 through Kingdom Come State Park (and Black Bear Shelter), a distance of 14 miles, and continues another 24 miles, partly through Kentenia State Forest, to US 421.

Further south, the Pine Mountain Trail will need to be built a distance of about 30 miles, on to Pineville, KY, home of Chained Rock, which will not be on Pine Mountain Trail, but may be in sight.

The southernmost section will be the Wilderness Road section, which will be about 15 miles long and connect Pine Mountain to Cumberland Gap, where it will meet up with the Cumberland Trail, another section of the GET.

North of the Pine Mountain Trail, from Elkhorn City, KY is the planned Energy Trail, connecting to the TuGuNu Section at Matewan, WV.

Next issue: Tuscarora Trail

Upcoming Events

December 8, 2012 – Meet 10 am at the Allegheny Trail trailhead at the Jerrys Run Trail exit 1 of I-64 (Virginia Exit 1, trailhead on north side of I-64) east of White Sulphur Springs, WV and west of Covington, VA. Crews will work N & S from this trailhead. Bring your own lunch, liquid, gloves, loppers, hand pruning saws, appropriate clothing for the weather, & first aid. The WVSTA will provide yellow blazing paint. Work hike leader: Brian Hirt 540-691-9750, bchirt@gmail.com

February 2, 2013 – Meet 10 am on VA 311 pull-off atop Peters Mtn. between Sweet Spring, WV and Paint Bank, VA. Crew will scout and flag potential trail routes in vicinity. Bring your own lunch, liquid, gloves, loppers, hand pruning saws, appropriate clothing for the weather & first aid. A tracking GPS might be handy also. Work hike leader: Doug Wood 304-550-1006, chingwe1755@yahoo.com

February 16, 2013 – same info as for February 2.

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.

Thru Hikers

It was in 1948, eleven years after the Appalachian Trail was completed before Earl Schaffer became the first person to hike the whole distance from Georgia to Maine in one continuous hike. This has become to be known as thru-hiking. This is as opposed to section hiking, which is a completing the length of the trail by separate backpacking trips, or day hiking which does not camp out on the trail.

By 1948, a few people, including Myron Avery, had hiked the entire Appalachian Trail, but not in one trip, and it was not even thought possible. But Earl Schaffer did it, and three years later Gene Espy did it, too. Gradually more and more people did it, and by 2000, over 600 people completed the AT that year (this would include section hikers).

During World War 2 (1941-1945), due to the war effort, the Appalachian Trail was neglected, and parts of it completely disappeared. After the war trail club efforts were restoring the trail, and much of it would be relocated. Many places Earl Schaffer could find no trail, and just walked the roads in the right direction and would ask people where the Appalachian Trail was. More often than not, they had never heard of it, even as they stood by a trailhead.

I have not backpacked much, but I can tell from my hiking that the AT is now much clearer than when I first started hiking it in the 1970s. So even after so many years, the AT is still being improved.

What about thru-hikers on the Great Eastern Trail? Now it is not a new concept, and there are thru-hikers of many trails, not just the AT. So it is conceivable. But the GET is not complete, and hundreds of miles need to be built or at least opened. In places, very long road walks would be needed (or perhaps rides to the next trail section). But the trail sections can be difficult to follow, too. Some places have no GET signs and this in the midst of places where the route goes from trail to trail to road to trail, with no obvious reason. Work needs to be done to guide people through the GET. This is an area which takes time to develop, as does the trail building.

The GET is hikeable from Camp Creek State Park in West Virginia, north to New York, which is about 800 miles. Even so, a lot is unmarked trails, and much is road walk. South of this point, there is probably more gap than trail, with the exception of the Pinhoti Trail in Georgia and Alabama.

Sue “Hammock Hanger” Turner, current most-GET-miles-hiked person, did sort of a thru hike in 2007. She skipped some parts, as far as I can tell—Chattanooga, TN to Burkes Garden (which then was on the GET route), and Laurel Branch, WV to North Mountain, VA/WV.

We have had two hikers propose thru-hiking the GET (or at least the northern part), but they reconsidered. Some are choosing to do it at a later date. In 2013, we have two people planning on doing a GET thru-hike January to June: Joanna “Someday” Swanson and “Hillbilly Bart”. You can follow their adventures at: <http://www.gethiking.net/>

Some other people are also considering thru-hiking the GET.

Photo Gallery



Remains of Roundtop Cement Mill near Hancock, MD
On C&O Canal Path



Owl, seen along Mid State Trail



Fall colors on Tuscarora Trail, County Line Section, VAWV

Web addresses & emails:

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

GET Guidebook (Hancock, MD to White Sulphur Springs, WV):
http://brownmtnphotog.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=122

Email: GET Newsletter: Hupp_Tim@msn.com

Email GETA President Tom Johnson about Great Eastern Trail: johnts25@gmail.com