



# GET Hiking

Great Eastern Trail Newsletter

Volume 3, Number 1, February 2014

By Timothy A. Hupp

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## First GET Thru Hikers Successful

Joanna “Someday” Swanson and Bart “Hillbilly Bart” Houck started their thru-hike of the Great Eastern Trail in Alabama on January 10 and finished in New York on June 18.



Bart and Jo in Warm Springs, Virginia

Beginning in the snows of January, Joanna Swanson (our West Virginia VISTA volunteer) and Bart Houck, a resident of West Virginia, started out to thru-hike the GET. This had been attempted once before, by Hammockhanger (Sue Turner), but was still out there unfinished.

Joanna had an advantage. As a VISTA, she had been working on the trail connection in West Virginia, and had mapped out much of the trail through that state. And she was already acquainted with much of the route by communicating with Board members.

They began in January because Joanna’s VISTA job had terminated in late 2012, and she was

looking for adventure. Bart? Oh, he wasn’t sure what he was looking for – perhaps a unique experience. (If that is what he was looking for, he got it.)

They thought they were safe, beginning in Alabama. But it was a year of heavy winter snow in Alabama, and the two struggled through the Alabama section of the Pinhoti trying to stay warm. In a snowstorm near Cheaha State Park they were rescued by park service personnel and spent the night in a motel, but it was a close thing.

As they moved north, the weather moderated. By April they were on the Headwaters section of the GET, and GETA president Tom Johnson found them on the trail and drove them to the meeting in Chattanooga.

Tim Hupp offered Joanna some questions about their trek for this newsletter:

**Total miles in the hike?** *1608 miles*

**How much was GET (including productive road walks)?** *All of those 1608 were GET but we did hike a couple of sections twice. In Georgia, we weren't aware that a roadwalk had been abandoned. We walked the roadwalk, found out about the newly-designated trail, and were able to backtrack and hike the newly-official section of trail. That happened in Chattanooga too. This just shows how quickly the GET is happening!*

**How much wrong way & return hiking?** *Well, we did 36 miles that didn't "count," not included in the 1608 total. Some of that was wrong-way, but not a huge amount. 36 miles includes things like walking into a town to resupply, but not walking around a*

*town once we were there. 36 miles doesn't include when we took days off and took a walk for fun (because what else do people do on zero days?).*

*We only had 2 major events where we had to backtrack. One has had the blazes fixed already, so it's no longer an issue. The other happened when we got separated from each other, which was our fault.*

**How much of GET was road walk?** *That is a tough call. I think maybe 30% is a fair number, if you count the forest service roads. I don't have all the guides that I did because much of it was computer-printed and didn't survive the elements to get mailed home! We were able to hike a couple sections that weren't officially open yet (but will be very soon), which cut down on roadwalking.*

*I will say that I was not excited about roadwalking, but I found that I really enjoyed it when it was rural and/or when it led into a town.*

*Resupply was very easy in many spots because we were routed through small towns. We did not hitch-hike.*

#### **Road walks:**

**Longest?** *Probably the Sequatchie Valley, which was the way we chose to link some of the Cumberland Trail sections. That might have been about 40 miles or so. At the rate the CTC is going, the next hikers will not venture into the Sequatchie Valley but should be able to more easily link the sections. When we got to Leggett Road (north end of 3 Gorges Section of CT), we had to turn left or right. I was too intimidated by large roads and overall logistics if we turned right, so we turned left. Considering roads we encountered later on in the trip, the large roads I was afraid of probably would have been okay, but that was the first spot where we didn't have a plan, a recommended route, we didn't have anything except a map. I'm glad we went that way. We had a fantastic time in the Sequatchie Valley and I wouldn't want to give up those experiences.*

**Most enjoyable?** *Bart says Sequatchie Valley because of the barns. I vote for King Coal Highway in West Virginia due to minimal traffic, great views, a shoulder that is 2 lanes wide, and potential pizza delivery.*

**Least enjoyable?** *Route 52 in West Virginia. Don't ever walk that. We will have an alternate roadwalk in place within a month - we have plans, just need to drive it and confirm that it works.*

**Number of Zero days?** *Too many and not enough! We took a time-out in WV to heal my ankle. My left ankle got seriously hurt in Georgia and without a rest in March, it would have quit working entirely. That was my biggest problem of the entire trip, even worse than getting food poisoning in Chattanooga. Bart hyper-extended his knee on our fourth day but made it anyway.*

*It took us about 5 months, but really this trail could be hiked in 4 easily, and 3 for the overly-ambitious. We realized early on that we could do a lot of good along the way, and so we decided to take our time. Each interview ate up a big chunk of the day. I estimate that we spent the equivalent of three weeks doing interviews - and maybe more than that. We often left town a lot later than we intended because we had people to talk to, and that's fine. It was worth it - lots of people stopped us along roadwalks to say they'd heard about us and hadn't known about the GET before.*

*We also spent time in West Virginia flagging trail and doing events with the towns there. The Chattanooga board meeting took half a week by itself. We got shuttled to and from Woolrich, PA for a Trails Day event in their store, which was so much fun and such a great chance to reach out to the PA trail folks! So, all this stuff took a lot of time and the next people who hike it may or may not do any of this. It made our trip so much more rich.*

**Number nights at friends' houses?** *In West Virginia we were really taken care of. We spent a total of 34 nights with friends and family during the trip, about half of that in West Virginia.*

*In addition to those 34 nights, we spent 6 nights with total strangers (Board members don't count as strangers even if we didn't know them well.) Two of those nights with total strangers were at the sites of future hostels!*

**Number nights at shelters?** *19 nights*

**Number nights at motels (or functional motels)**

**such as hostel or bed&breakfast)?** *25, plus 3 when we visited Chattanooga for the board meeting.*

*This number would go down dramatically if the next people don't start in January! We had to wait out some snowstorms. We both really enjoyed the additional challenge of starting in January, even if it meant more nights inside.*

**Number nights tenting?** *60 nights*

**Greatest distance in one day?** *23 miles*

### **Trails:**

**Most scenic (can be more than one)?** *There were so many different kinds of beauty - if you want a list, we can list a highlight of each state, but it's like picking a favorite kid. :) Should we pick a highlight of each state?*

**Most enjoyable?** *Bluestone Turnpike Trail (connecting Pipestem and Bluestone State Parks in WV) - we hit this stretch of trail on a perfect spring day. We saw a lot of wildlife and it was just warm enough to play in the river.*

**Needs most improvement?** *Not a particular trail, but an overall trend of sparse GET diamonds. Obviously clubs are working on this, but the presence of the GET in signage (and kiosks) will lead to greater local awareness - something that is very much lacking in most spots along the GET.*

**Most remote?** *Cumberland Trail north and south of Wartburg*

**Most "busy" (with hikers)?** *Standing Stone Trail's 1000 Steps on Memorial Day!*

**Most difficult hiking on trip?** *There are so many different kinds of difficulty. This is a tough question! I will say there were a couple of rocky sections in Pennsylvania that were tough - but not as many rocky miles as I thought there would be!*

**How many time interviewed for TV or Newspapers?** *I lost count after 40. There were more than that.*

**Who got to the finish line first?** *When we got*

*within a tenth of a mile, we held hands and approached the shelter together. We stood by it and counted to 3 so we sat down at the exact same time.*

*No one will ever know who was first. We also hiked together to the North Country Trail, just behind the shelter.*

**What did you do once you finished?** *We stayed at Moss Hill Lean-To that night to say goodbye to the trail. We made a fire and Pat Monahan brought some food down for us. The next morning he picked us up and we toured Corning before the relay-race team of Pat, Pete Fleszar, and Peggy Pings got us back to Mullens. It was a beautiful end of the trip, and we so appreciate everyone's help in making it happen.*

**And what have you been doing since completing the hike?** *Planning another adventure. Bart wants to thru-hike the Allegheny Trail. Jo wants to move to Chattanooga. Bart has been working as the athletic trainer for Wyoming East HS football team. Jo worked as a temporary caretaker in Minnesota and hiked the Boundary Waters' Kekekabic Trail this fall. We presented at the ALDHA Gathering and are writing articles.*

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## **Trail Updates**

### **Pennsylvania: Mid State Trail:**

Section 1 (south end) – Hard work by KTA Trail Crew recovered most of an old CCC trail, shortening and easing the path in the southern portion of Martin Hill Wild Area.

Section 3 – As part of a \$223,500 project funded by a PA Recreational Trails grant matched by local contributions, a 26 m bridge was constructed across Yellow Creek [about 10 miles north of Everett], eliminating a failed bridge and 10 km unblazed roadwalk detour.

Section 10 – PA DCNR closed Paddy Mountain Tunnel just north of Poe Paddy State Park [about 25 miles due east from State College] due to rockfall, pending rehabilitation work. Temporary bypass route was opened over tunnel.

Section 15 – KTA Trail Care treadway work significantly eased a difficult passage by lengthening a steep switchback in upper Second Fork Ramsey Run valley.

Section 18 – Local volunteers opened 1.44 km off road route on private land, shortening and dividing into two the remaining unblazed portion of MST.

### **Virginia/West Virginia: Tuscarora Trail**

A major relocation on North Mountain north of Capon Springs continues to be built. A 16 mile section mostly in a valley that includes 5 miles of road walk is to be replaced by a mountain trail about 8 miles long that features two major rocky viewpoints. Opening of the relocation is expected in summer 2014.

### **Virginia/West Virginia: Headwaters Section**

In early 2013 road walks in Bath County and Rockingham County, VA were blazed. Apparently “Green glo” comes in two hues—one a turquoise color and the other a greenish yellow. In keeping with GET traditions of using differing colors of blazes, both hues were used in blazing.

Altogether, four road walks totaling 21 miles have been blazed.

### **Virginia/West Virginia: Allegheny Trail**

There is a gap in the Allegheny Trail south of Interstate 64, about 25 miles by air. There is an approved GET road walk around, about 45 miles.

But new progress is being made in making a route available for the Allegheny Trail in this gap. There are four problem points: 1. over Brushy Mountain, 2. crossing the CSX Railroad, 3. Access to Thomas Spring on Peters Mountain, and 4. on Peters Mountain between VA 311 & Laurel Branch, WV. A suitable road over Brushy Mountain has pretty much solved problem 1. Permission for trail access has been established for 3., and searches continue on the other 2 problems, with some good leads.

### **Kentucky: Pine Mountain Trail**

The PMT added 5 miles of trail-bed in 2013. This was previously blazed trail that was being used, but which had never been dug out (it was

simply 'walked in' by hikers). The area had been prone to brushing over during the growing season and the pathway sometimes became obscured. This led to hiker confusion and several folks losing the trail. The stretch was 5+ miles from the nearest access road, so it had been difficult to get volunteers to work on it. The PMTC used funds raised from a half-marathon and a \$5,000 donation (from a land sale by a member) to contract a mini-excavator operator to construct the trail. To discourage ATVs and other non-permitted uses, USFS signage (Carsonite posts) were installed at every major crossing and boulders were put back in the trail as the excavator retreated upon completion of the trail. Hikers can easily walk past the boulders, but ATV's cannot. Bollards will also be installed at pinch-points. The trail is 4' wide. The grades are much gentler than the old path and the trail winds gently along the contours, taking in nice points of interest and snaking through cliffs, which can later be used as control points for gates, bollards, etc.

The PMT also began the process of switching to reflective, aluminum-backed blazes on a portion of trail where an ultra-marathon is being planned. The blazes were easier to install than paint, cleaner, will require (hopefully) less labor and expensive over their life-span and will make night-hikes more attractive.

The Birch Knob Shelter was completed in early 2013. The shelter is on the Birch Knob Section and is located below the viewing platform or roughly 0.3 mile from the USFS parking area at Birch Knob. The shelter sleeps 12, has a covered porch, bear pole, fire-pit, a loft with a window and hitching posts for horses (this portion of the PMT is open to horseback. A privy is planned. At 3050', this is the highest shelter on the PMT.



A vaulted toilet was installed through a \$17,000 donation by the Harlan County Fiscal Court. The CXT toilet is frequently seen on USFS or NPS lands. This particular unit is located 200 yards from the Black Bear Shelter on the PMT and is available for visitors using Kingdom Come State Park. It has been an asset to the PMT and other users.

The US 23 Trailhead construction has begun. The excavation for the site development will be concurrent with the development of the private property, which the trail-head will share.

Though this was not our first choice, the owner was forced by VDOT bureaucracy to sale the property and place a stipulation in the sale that would require the new owner to set aside a trail easement, parking for ~10 cars that would be used exclusively for PMT users, a sign with road frontage on US 23, and enhanced trail access (ramp, turn-style or boulder blockades to prevent ATV access). The work has hindered trail use on this portion in 2013, but should be completed by mid-2014.

## **Georgia**

There has been progress in Georgia on two fronts. The first is along the Pinhoti Trail near where it enters Alabama. Land was purchased by The Conservation Fund two years ago for a trail corridor. In January of 2013, 2.3 miles of trail were opened for use starting 2.8 miles south of Cave Spring, GA and leading to Santa Claus Road. In Spring of 2014, another 1.2 miles of trail will open on the tract. This segment will lead from Santa Claus Road across Georgia Highway 100 to Esom Hill Road. A purchase of additional property this fall will allow a completely off-road trail connection to the section of trail leading into Alabama.

On Lookout Mountain, Cloudland Canyon State Park, Lula Lake Land Trust, Friends of Cloudland Canyon State Park, Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association, and various other groups completed the last two phases of the Cloudland Connector Trail. With its completion, there is now a continuous 17-mile segment of the Great Eastern Trail on the mountain. The trails used include the West Rim Access Trail, West Rim Trail, Overlook Trail, Bear Creek Trail, Backcountry Loop Trail,

and the Cloudland Connector Trail. This segment runs from the West Brow of Lookout Mountain in the state park to Nickajack Road near the East Brow and Lula Lake. There is currently a gap of just over six miles between Nickajack Road and another 8-mile long GET segment in Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park.

There is a proposal before Little River Canyon National Preserve and DeSoto State Park (Alabama) for a route along a series of existing trails on Lookout Mountain. Little River Canyon National Preserve has produced a draft General Agreement for use of the DeSoto Scout Trail, the Little River Trail, and Martha's Falls Trail. Fifteen miles of existing trail in both the National Preserve and the state park are part of the proposal.

Attached are pictures of Great Eastern Trail in Georgia. 103 is one of the signs at a road crossing south of Cave Spring, Georgia. 057 is of Cloudland Canyon (right on the GET). 026 is the Nickajack Road trailhead at the north end of the Cloudland Connector Trail (GET).

## **Alabama Pinhoti Trail**

The Pinhoti was finished on Rebecca Mountain over a year ago. There are Kiosk with maps at both ends - Bulls Gap (Hwy 148, 11.2 miles east of Sylacauga) and FS Rd 603-A (Driving directions - go about 3.3 miles east of Sylacauga on Hwy 148, turn south of FS 603 or Trammell Motorway, go about 2.5 miles then turn left or east on FS603-A, go about 1/2 mile and turn right or south to the new small parking area and trailhead). The road walk from the Weogufka/Flagg Mt area is blue blazed all the way to the southern or eastern end at FS603-A. It uses (from south to north) Coosa County Rd 41, then Talladega Co, Rd 66, then Red Bud Road & Lake wood Circle (around the Joy Lake area) to connect with the southern end of Trammell Motorway of FS 603 at its junction with Hwy 511. From that junction it is about 1.3 miles north to FS603-A where you'd turn right or east and head toward the new trailhead. The trail on Rebecca Mt. is about 12 miles long.

In December 2013, the Conservation Fund acquired a 77 acre tract of land that begins directly

across Old Jackson Chapel Road from the start of the section of the Pinhoti that runs west and south to the state line and Indian Mountain

From that point, the 77 acre tract runs east to Esom Hill Road following Hematite Branch to the pond , and beyond the pond to Esom Hill Road. In fact, the 77 acres include the pond and the north side of the pond. Old Jackson Chapel Road runs along the south side of this tract. Hematite Branch runs through it.

At the east end of the tract, the trail will be able to cross either Old Jackson Chapel Road or Esom Hill Road and enter land already owned by the Conservation Fund ( the Conservation Fund land does not show on the map but covers about 20 acres west of Esom Hill Road and south of the east end of Old Jackson Chapel Road ).

This should open an opportunity to build a small parking area across Old Jackson Chapel Road from the current trailhead.

Other Alabama news:

*We are working really hard to develop Rockford, Alabama as a trail town and making the county aware of the GET hikers. Several have stepped up in the community to welcome the hikers. I have provided shelter a few times for those that have passed thru and they are able to re-supply in Rockford as well. Hikers are welcome to contact me as their trail angel. Most hikers that contact me come into problems with weather issues when they are passing thru. The trail from Flagg to Weogufka is blazed at this point and is hard walking due to the side hill walking but it can be used if a hiker chose to do so to get off the road and see the trail. We will finish the blazing this weekend and some side hilling starts this weekend as well. We are excited to get this trail finished and get the hikers on it. Like Rick was saying Rebecca Mountain is a woods trail now and some people think the old trail that is on the Pinhoti trail alliance is still in existence but it's not. It is all woods, it's just from Weogufka to the start of the trail that is road walk now.*

*Callie Thornton*  
AHTS President

[Other sections' progress not reported by press time]

## Chattanooga – an official Great Eastern Trail Town

In a ceremony conducted in heavy rain (but under a roof), the Mayor Chattanooga, Andy Berkes, proclaimed Chattanooga as the official GET Trail Town on April 28. The event was preceded by a long series of activities, beginning with our outstanding volunteer, Jim Schroeder, pioneering a route from the Cumberland Trail through Chattanooga, connecting with the office Park Service route through the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. The permanent route remaining a work in progress, Jim designed a road walk through town to connect backpackers with restaurants, outfitters, and overnight accommodations. Now there is a link between the Cumberland Trail and the GET through Georgia.



Berke signing the proclamation as Tom Johnson, Berke and Hixon and NPS ranger Alison Bullock look on

The proclamation and ceremony was brokered by Linda Hixon of Chattanooga. This

required working with the mayor and city council, and various non-profit organizations to set up.

The event was preceded by the annual GETA Board meeting, on Saturday April 27. In conjunction with this, volunteers ran several hikes on Saturday. Our two thru-hikers, Joanna and Bart, attended and spoke at the ceremony.

### Trail town updates

The Pike County Energy Trail received 501 c (3) designation right at the end of 2013. Trail Town developments that will link the PMT to Elkhorn City, Jenkins, Whitesburg, Cumberland, and Middlesboro are well under way. In at least three instances, the PMT will be connected to town by a spur trail that will be open to hikers and bikers.

Each trail has great historic significance and boasts incredible views, caves, 200 year old cribbing/road work, and lush forests.

Two km of future relocation route opened in Everett Borough's Tenley Park and adjacent school property. New brochure prepared showing future MST route and other trails here.

The passage of "Someday" and "Hillbilly Bart" along their 1<sup>st</sup> successful GET thru-hike was commemorated in a well attended National Trails Day event at Woolrich, Inc.'s flagship store in Woolrich. Feature articles appeared in Lock Haven, Williamsport, and Wellsboro newspapers.

### **Narrows Now Trail Club**

The first Narrows (Virginia) Now Trail Club get-together was attended by a dozen folks. I think it went quite well!

Among other things, we set the regular meeting day as second Mondays. NNTC's second meeting will be the second Monday, March 10, 2014 – 6 pm (sharp) at Narrows Gift Shop, 302 Main/Rt.100 (across from post office)

### **Pike Energy Trail (Medical Leader article)**

Pikeville, KY – A group that is working to connect Pike County to a 2,000 mile hiking trail is making progress this month.

The IRS recently designated the Pike Energy Trail Corporation as a nonprofit organization, PET President Bill Ramey reports. The organization filed its articles of incorporation in April 2013 with the Kentucky Secretary of State. The nonprofit designation completes the group's requirements and allows it to receive tax-deductible contributions from the public, government organizations or charitable agencies.

"We trail enthusiasts have put together the organization needed to build this trail," Ramey said in an email. "We have assembled the framework that can guide the construction, maintenance and the promotion of the Pike Energy Trail as a significant improvement to the trail hiking experience here in Pike County. We are ready to get boots on the ground."

Ramey said getting the first mile of the trail completed is vital to keeping the project going. "No one expects this trail project to be easy or get finished quickly, but getting this first mile of trail is incredibly important," he said. "It shows a commitment to the Pike Energy Trail that marks it as more than just wishful thinking."

Once complete, the trail will span the breadth of Pike County from the Pine Mountain Trail's Birch Knob section in Elkhorn City through hillsides and communities in Pike County to Matewan, WV.

The trail will span between 50 and 70 miles, depending on the route used. The plan is to connect the Pike Energy Trail to the Great Eastern Trail [*note-it will be **part** of the GET*], which will span nearly 2,000 miles from Alabama to New York. The Kentucky portion of the GET will span from the Cumberland Gap National Park on the Kentucky-Tennessee border to the Pine Mountain Trail and Breaks Interstate Park in Elkhorn city, to the Pike Energy Trail, to Matewan, WV.

Pike County officials have been working to obtain easements of the trail from the Berwind Land Company, Pocahontas Land Company and Norfolk Southern Railroad. The land-use agreements would allow the landowning companies or a government entity to shift the trail, if necessary, to make way for future development.

Charles Carlton, director of Energy and Community Development in Pike County, said last week that negotiations are still underway.

“We are still trying to negotiate with land companies,” he said. “One land company has shown very much progress and another less so. It’s safe to say that this is continuing. We’ve looked at alternative ways to get around where we have a problem. The point is that this is a flex trail, so it can be shifted, and we have said that from the beginning. It’s not like it’s one that is set for the ages.”

He is under a confidentiality agreement about those negotiations and cannot disclose more details publicly. He and Pike County Deputy Judge-Executive Doug Hays assured the Medical Leader, however, that building the GET connection in Pike County is still on the county’s priority list.

“We are continuing to make progress at due speed,” Hays said. “People are very hopeful about this trail. There are a lot of good people in Pike County who are very much interested in this trail and we here in Pike County government are also very much interested in it.”

To inquire about becoming a member of the Pike Energy Trail group or about donating to the project, email Ramey at [info@pikeenergytrail.com](mailto:info@pikeenergytrail.com).

## How Many GET miles have you hiked?

An awful lot of people still 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 still 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.

Jo Swanson	1608
Bart Houck	1608
Sue Turner	720
Bill Shaffer	545
Rick Guhse	437
Tim Hupp	412
Tom Johnson	382
Lloyd McAskill	321
David Frye	285
Jim Sims	242
Warren Devine	205
Carol Devine	187
Sam Goldsberry	142
Nancy Ruggles	136
Marty Dominy	130
Shad Baker	103
Michael Seth	91
Malcolm & Lynn Cameron	89
John Spies	71
Brian Hirt	71
Mary Huffer	61
Chad Churchman	58
Christa Neher	54

***So get out and GET Hiking!***

*And report your miles!*



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## Featured Section:

### Tuscarora Trail

by Tim Hupp

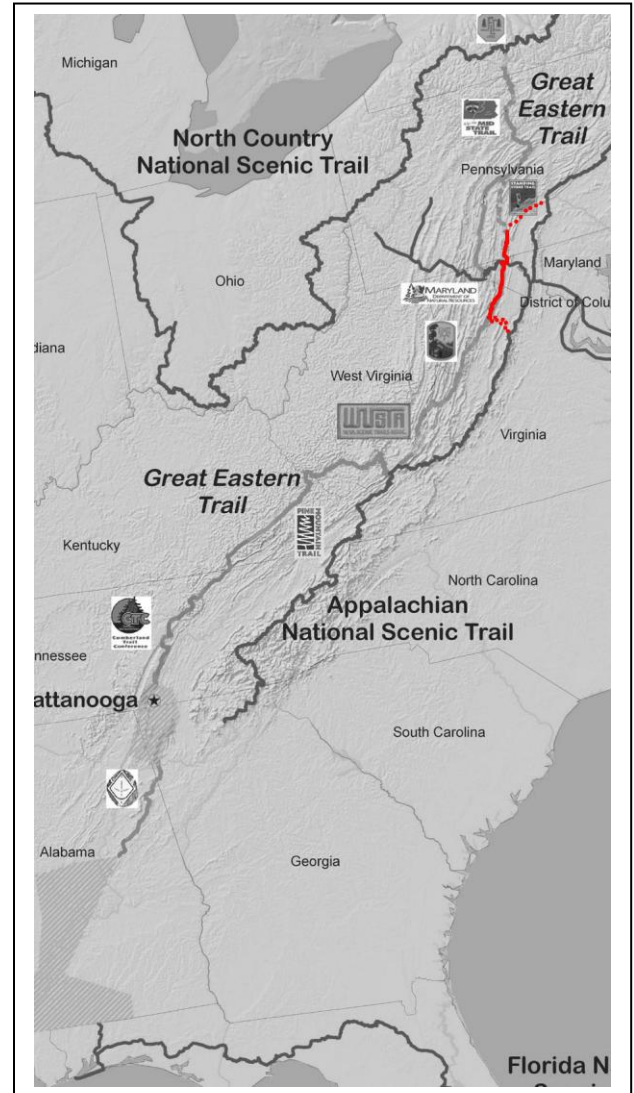
The Tuscarora Trail was built as an extensive bypass route for the Appalachian Trail, planned when it looked like the AT route in northern Virginia may no longer be passible in the 1960s. It is about 240 miles long, and has its north and south ends on the Appalachian Trail—near Hogback in the Shenandoah National Park at the south end, and on Blue Mountain near the Darlington Shelter at the north end.

From the Shenandoah National Park, the Tuscarora Trail starts west, crossing the Shenandoah Valley mostly on road walks, but with almost 20 miles of trail on Massanutten Mountain, within the Valley. Then it climbs up over a series of ridges west of the Valley, and heads north on North Mountain. This is the point where the Great Eastern Trail joins it. It continues on North Mountain as far as Gore, VA, has a valley road walk, then climbs onto Sleepy Creek Mountain, for the rest of the way to the Potomac River. After a road walk, it crosses the Potomac River with US 522 into Hancock, MD.

In Hancock, the GET splits into two branches. The west branch follows the C&O Canal path west, while the east branch and the Tuscarora Trail follow it east for 9 miles. From there the Tuscarora/GET has a road walk before getting onto Tuscarora Mountain and into Cowans Gap State Park, PA. Here the GET leaves the Tuscarora Trail to follow the Standing Stone Trail.

The Tuscarora Trail hosts 132 miles of the Great Eastern Trail, 92 miles south of Hancock, and 40 miles north of Hancock as the eastern branch of the GET. There are 7 shelters south of Hancock and 2 shelters to the north that are on the GET route.

The Tuscarora Trail is maintained by Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. Initially, south of Hancock it was known as the Big Blue (blue blazed) Trail, and to the north it was the Tuscarora Trail (orange blazed). The northern part had fallen into disrepair after Gypsy moths devastated the oaks



in Pennsylvania mountains. PATC took over that part of the trail from Keystone Trails Conference and renamed the whole trail Tuscarora while using the blue blazes for the entire length.

Initially the only shelters had been in the National Forest, only one of which is on the GET portion. Most of the current shelters on the Tuscarora Trail have been built since 2000.

Several sections of the Tuscarora Trail still have road walks, but they are diminishing. Currently, there is a relocation being built on Great North Mountain north of US 48/SR 55 on private land. This section is in a somewhat remote area, and includes some great viewpoints. This relocation should be open summer of 2014.

## Upcoming Events

February 15, 2014 – **Shenandoah Mountain Trail Work**. A short section at the south end of Shenandoah Mountain needs to be constructed to make access from VA 678 at the Cowpasture River to avoid private land. Contact Tim Hupp at [Hupp\\_Tim@msn.com](mailto:Hupp_Tim@msn.com) if you plan to come so we know how many tools to provide. We plan to meet at 9:00 am at the Churchville Tastee-Freez.

February 15 & 16, 2014 (Valentine's Day weekend) **Allegheny Trail Gap recon** near Paint Bank, VA. Meet at the Steel Bridge Campground (closed in winter) along Potts Creek north of the community of Paint Bank along VA-18 at approximately 3.5 miles north of its intersection with VA-311 near Paint Bank. Meet at 10PM on Saturday and Sunday.

**12th Annual Alabama Hiking Conference** March 14-16, 2014 at Moundville Archeological Park, Moundville, AL. Check the Alabama Hiking Trail Association site for details and sign up info.

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March 17-22, 2014 - **Alabama Spring Trail Work Week**. Work will be on sections of the connecting trail between Florida and the Pinhoti Trail. We'll be doing side hill work digging out a trail bed on steep slopes from Flagg Mtn. north to Weogufka. There will be camping at Poplar Springs Camp which has facilities for RV's and tents. Cabins are available. You should bring a tent, sleeping bag, sturdy boots, hat, work gloves and warm clothes. Contact Rick Guhse at [rguhse@hotmail.com](mailto:rguhse@hotmail.com) if you'd like to join us.

March 22, 2014 – **Tuscarora Trail Relocation Work Trip**. Work will be on the Tuscarora Relocation north of Capon Springs. Contact John Spies at

April 12, 2014 – **Carr Mountain Trail Work Trip**. We hope to complete digging the trail out on Carr Mountain near the middle of the trail. Contact Tom Johnson, [johnts25@gmail.com](mailto:johnts25@gmail.com)

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## Parallels

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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.

In the last issue I discussed Thru Hikers. As a follow up, I wanted to state:

In 2013, we had two people who did complete a GET thru-hike January to June: Joanna “Someday” Swanson and “Hillbilly Bart”, featured in the early pages of this issue.

Some other people are also considering thru-hiking the GET. I know of three, Taylor Pannill, Stuart Hickey, and Linda Carter-O'Brien.

Taylor and Stuart started their trip on February 1, 2014. They plan to hike north on the GET, and when that is complete, they will go up to Katahdin, and thru-hike the AT southbound. Their trek is being recorded at:

<http://appalachianloop.tumblr.com/>

Linda plans to hike the GET with her dog in several segments going southbound, amounting to a thru-hike.

### Shelters on the Great Eastern Trail

Trail shelters are a regular feature on the Appalachian Trail, so much so that one can get the impression that any trail may be expected to have them. Not so. There are many trails from a few miles to thousands of miles, but shelters are rather sporadic away from the Appalachian Trail. Not non-existent—there are some, but not everywhere.

In fact, it was some decades after the Appalachian Trail was completed before the whole trail had a regular system of shelters. In Earl Shaffer's 1948 thru-hike, he mentions the lack of shelters between the New River (then near Galax) and Shenandoah National Park. The ones there built by the Forest Service in the 1960s. Even so, there was a 30-mile stretch without a shelter near Waynesboro. Since then, two more shelters have been added within that gap, after 1990.

In 2010, the Great Eastern Trail is still being built: the majority of its distance is open on pre-existing trails, with much of the remainder planned, similar to the Appalachian Trail in the 1930s. The existing trails are in various steps of development—some are fairly well-established, some are newly complete, and some are under construction. A few

of the sections have existing shelters. Here's the breakdown:

	<u>Miles</u>	<u>complete</u>	<u>#</u>
<u>shelters</u>			
Mid State Trail	312	312	4?
Standing Stone Trail	72	72	1
Tuscarora Trail	132	132	9
Headwaters section	165	158	0
Allegheny Trail		42	1
Appalachian Trail sharing	21	21	1
Mary Draper Ingles Trail			0
TuGuNu section			0
Pine Mountain Trail		98	4
Cumberland Trail	265	126	1
Pinhoti Trail	137		8

That makes a total of 29 shelters on the Great Eastern Trail, the majority on the Pinhoti and Tuscarora Trails.

## Losses

### Two hiking dogs:

**Sid (12/9/2000 – 8/29/2013) and  
Aslan (4/10/2003 – 7/28/2013)**



For those who have viewed the GET website's photo gallery, you would have seen many pictures with dogs. Unfortunately we have lost two of these faithful friends and hikers.

Obsidian "Sid" (Hupp) was a black Lab who has hiked since a puppy. He was always happy to be on the trail, and desiring to meet any new person, dog, or other animal—but he treated them with caution and respect. Only two times did he ever chase an animal (a rabbit and a cat) and he actually caught up to it, then turned around and came back. He did not have many of the bad habits dogs are known for. Along the trail, he often liked to climb up on rocks or logs. In his lifetime he hiked 809

miles of the AT and 406 miles of the GET. He has been greatly missed.

Aslan (Ruggles) was a Boxer. As a young dog he was a bit rambunctious for social hiking. In 2008 he was almost crippled by problems with neck vertebrae. He needed a harness as he couldn't wear a leash on a collar. But he recovered from that and did most of his long trail hiking after that, mostly at an age beyond the normal lifespan of a Boxer. Aslan's self-appointed job was to keep an eye on everyone, running and checking on who was way out in front or lagging behind. He finished his life with 197 miles of the AT and 91 miles of the GET.

Sid and Aslan got along very well. They usually hiked separate within the group, but had to ride together in the car for the shuttle. They never had an altercation. Once they teamed up to keep an unruly puppy in control, walking on each side just ahead of the pup, keeping him on the trail.

They hiked to near the end. At the end of June, 2013 they completed 23 miles of the AT in Pennsylvania in 3 days, although it was hard on them. Sid had been diagnosed with cancer of the lungs earlier that month. Aslan was afflicted with a growth that blocked elimination, and that brought him down quick. But 10 years is a long life for a boxer. Sid did a few hikes in August, coughing only after getting wet.

**Robert "Bobby" Fitzgerald, 60**, was last seen November 12, 2012. The Great Eastern Trail follows Shenandoah Mountain Trail here.

*(From the Waynesboro News-Virginian, 11/19/2012)*

The physically fit Robert Fitzgerald vanished after returning to the Shenandoah Mountain Trail near the Augusta-Highland county line [on US 250] to retrieve a cellphone he dropped the day before while hiking.

Augusta County Sheriff Randy Fisher said "significant alerts" by a K-9 team Sunday prompted at least one more day of searches for the 60-year-old Fitzgerald on Monday.

But on Monday night, after five K-9 teams and one ground search group had finished work, the search for Fitzgerald was suspended, said Billy

Chrimes, deputy search and rescue coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. Chrimes said the decision to suspend would not stop teams from going in again, should evidence surface of Fitzgerald's whereabouts. But he said the search for the Staunton man was suspended for now. Fisher said during a Monday morning press conference that K-9 cadaver teams were searching an area east of the Shenandoah Mountain Trail. Fisher said a dog picked up a human scent Sunday.

But the sheriff cautioned that the location being searched Monday was "very steep and very thick" with Mountain Laurel, some standing as high as 5 or 6 feet. "This is one of the more rugged areas in Augusta County," Fisher said.

Over the weekend, K-9 search teams from the Department of Emergency Management hiked the 11-mile Shenandoah Mountain Trail and 4,500 acres east of the trail looking for Fitzgerald.

It is believed that Fitzgerald was not wearing cold weather gear when he disappeared last week (November 12, 2012). His burgundy Kia was found at the head of the Shenandoah Mountain Trail, located at the Confederate Breastworks overlook. Found in the car were Fitzgerald's trail pack, rain poncho and other items. It was apparent

he was expecting to return to the car after he found the phone. The cellphone was actually recovered by another hiker, and is now in the possession of the Sheriff's Office, Fisher said. The sheriff did not speculate on Fitzgerald's possible condition, but he said there was optimism early Monday that he could be found. "Stranger things have happened," he said.

Fitzgerald was described as a man who stayed in touch with people. He worked every day, exercised with friends at the Gypsy Hill Park and the Staunton YMCA, and regularly visited his elderly mother. He also was "very familiar" with the Shenandoah Mountain Trail, having hiked the area for 15 to 20 years. Fisher said it is believed that Fitzgerald returned to the trail around the middle of the day Nov. 12.

The thinking is he traveled about six miles, making a loop that would have brought him to an area known as Fish Hollow. While items have been found during the five days of searches, Fisher said, none of them belonged to Fitzgerald.

*In the time since the search, Robert Fitzgerald has not been found. A reward is offered for anyone providing information about the whereabouts of Bobby. This offer expires May 1, 2014.*

## Photo Gallery



Cloudland Canyon



Cumberland Mountain



Pine Mountain



Pine Mountain



Woolrich, PA



Cowanesque Lake

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](http://brownmtnphotog.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=122)

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