



# ***GET Hiking***

## ***Great Eastern Trail Newsletter***

Volume 4, Number 1, February 2015

By Timothy A. Hupp

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

### **Second GET Thru-hike attempt**



Taylor Pannill and Stuart Hickey started their trip in Alabama on February 1, 2014. They intended to hike north on the GET, and when that was complete, they would go up to Katahdin, and thru-hike the AT southbound. Their trek was being recorded at: <http://appalachianloop.tumblr.com/>.

They started in winter weather, and it continued for some time. Their trek included weather disasters, such as an ice storm collapsing their tent, very tough bushwhacking, and expected and unexpected hospitality—they had friends, both old and new help out with driving to town and giving places to stay, especially in bad weather.

Taylor and Stuart managed to follow the Cumberland Trail a little more closely than Jo and Bart did the year before (who swung west and hiked the Sequatchie Valley), but they also were given rides over some long road walks, primarily in Georgia and in northern Tennessee.

After two months, they were in West Virginia, crossing the TuGuNu section with help of the locals. Around this time, their log has few words, but a lot of pictures. They were looking ahead to reach Pearisburg, VA—they are both Virginians. But Taylor suffered from a pinched nerve in his back, and even after several days of rest, was unable to continue. He struggled even walking short distances. Stuart continued north from there in April, but he quit after reaching Warm Springs, VA, about 115 miles north of Pearisburg.

*Questions to Taylor about his trip:*

*How much wrong way & return hiking?*

Stuart and I got very lucky several times and ended up avoiding a lot of potential backtracking. If I had to guess, I would say we only ended up hiking backwards a grand total of two or three miles, no more than a quarter mile at any one time. We had a Garmin GPS as backup and were very careful to avoid wrong turns. But when we did end up off the path Stuart and I, for the most part, would elect to bushwhack a direct line back to the trail or reroute ourselves to meet up with the trail ahead of us instead of losing progress by hiking back.

*How much of GET was road walk?*

It's difficult to say, but it is more than most trails. There were several sections of trail that followed paved biking and horse-riding trails, but were recreational only, so no car traffic. While those bits of trail were in the woods and did not present any of the larger issues that a true road walk does, the pavement was rough on our feet.

*Longest?*

The longest sections of road walk we elected to bypass. I know there was a big section in Georgia and a few smaller ones along the Cumberland Trail that, because of weather, supply, and safety concerns, we decided to avoid altogether. The longest in my opinion was the first thirty or so miles of the trail. Starting out on pavement was rough on the feet.

*Most enjoyable?*

There are two instances that stand out in particular. The first was after Tim (McGraw) left us in the snow after our lovely break with everyone in West Virginia where we hiked an empty mountain-top road that was simply beautiful in the falling snow. We eventually ended up hiking a half-paved road following along a river bed that will remain one of my fondest memories of the hike.

The second section of road I particularly enjoyed walking was the empty mountain-top road we walked the last three days before crossing the WV-VA border into Narrows, VA.

*Least enjoyable?*

As I mentioned, the first thirty-ish miles of the trail were challenging road walk. I also remember one very short section out of Matewan where I got very close to having to kill an aggressive dog. And there was the section of road in to Wartburg that I remember wanting to be over.

*Camping/Shelters?*

The aspect that appealed to us both was that we were happy to cowboy camp in the open or put up the tent when we found a particularly wonderful spot. Not planning our days around hitting a shelter at night gave us a lot of flexibility and allowed us to squeeze a few more miles out of each day.

I will say there were several really nice shelters that we simply skipped or used only for a lunch break because they were only ten or twelve miles from the last shelter.

*Greatest distance in one day?*

Probably the greatest memory from the trail was our 40 mile day. Stuart wanted to push to make it to our next resupply drop before the post office closed for the weekend so we ended up making the decision to hike straight through the night and on in to the next day. But that was an exception. Our second longest day was probably around 26 miles.

*Needs most improvement?*

The Cumberland trail. The whole Cumberland Trail experience was one wild ride. I absolutely loved this section of the GET, and hated it too. The sections of established trail really are extraordinary, but the Cumberland Trail is broken up into quite small sections of hike-able trail by uneventful, and sometimes long, road walks. We managed to bypass a lot of the more dangerous and annoying sections of road by slack packing through a lot of the trail with two fellow hikers from the area, Patch and Belch.

I would also agree with what Bart said in the last newsletter, that there is a significant absence of GET diamond trail-markers along the way. I don't think we saw our first one until we got into Georgia, and even after that they were few and far between.

Since the hike, I saw that an article in a Chattanooga magazine about our hike and I was also asked by Yonder, the outdoor adventure app, to write a brief article describing the adventure.

*And what have you been doing since the hike?*

Unfortunately, our thru hike turned into a half-thru-section-hike when I had a major back injury arise

immediately after we reached the halfway point in Virginia.

Since then, I have been focusing on recovering. I graduated college and moved from Virginia to Colorado where I'm hoping to finish my recovery and pursue a career in the outdoors and in writing. I've recently begun to hike again and am hoping to be back for the second 800 miles of the GET sometime soon.

Other Notes:

\* When we went to the major outdoor store in Chattanooga (River Rock?) we had to explain to the staff what the GET was and that Chattanooga was the official trail town. Since then, there was the article written in a Chattanooga magazine that should increase awareness of the trail in the area, but there is still much work to be done in the way of getting the word out there, not only in Tennessee but along the length of the trail.

\* Our experience was unique in the same way that Bart and Jo's hike was because of when we decided to hike it.

## Trail Updates

### Pennsylvania: Mid State Trail:

**Section 2:** NB km **20.02** to end - Trail has been relocated westerly (further than in 2012) onto a gravel SGL access road, passing a remote parking area, then into private land on a gradually descending bench (just east of a very active stone quarry, STAY ON TRAIL) to emerge on along SR 1004/Ashcom Rd just east of its PA Turnpike underpass. **The Cornell Road bridge on the south end of Section 3 over the PA Turnpike (I-70/76) was permanently removed.** There is a pull-off parking area between Turnpike and quarry on Ashcom Rd, south side of Ashcom Road and just north (compass west) of Turnpike underpass.

### Section 3:

Campsite is available near north end of Section 3. RV camping area (tents allowed) on Smith family property behind mobile home community. Very clean shower house. \$20/night at honor box on entry. Accessible only from **north** (PA 36 to Old 36) side of Yellow Creek,

We ran into several circumstances that slowed us down and that would have stopped many hikers in their tracks. We prepared for snow but instead encountered a lot of ice. Accumulating ice that collapsed our tent, froze our boots solid, brought down countless trees across the trail, froze our breath in our beards, etc.

\* A few times along the trail we were treated very suspiciously by locals because they simply had no idea there was a hiking trail nearby. We were warned that we could be mistaken as thieves more than once. While nothing ever came from it, there were a few tense moments where we felt a little out of place. Hopefully as traffic picks up along the trail, these issues will disappear.

\* Blazing in some sections seemed incomplete or ages old, and in a few cases, contradictory or confusing. A quick check of our Garmin would confirm we were still on the right track, but a hiker without that to fall back on could get lost or turned around much more easily.

west of trail near downtown Loysburg. **DO NOT** approach the campsite along the south side of the creek due to impassable gates, 24 hour monitored security, and wrong side of side creek. Signs have been placed from the new Yellow Creek bridge.

A disconnected segment of MST (2 km) is now blazed from the beer distributor on E Main St/Business US 30 in Everett Borough, northerly through Tenley Park and then easterly through Everett Area School District property (well out of sight of the high school) to the point where Stein Ln passes under bypass US 30. There is as yet no way to pass from Stein Ln to Blue Triangle on the north side of US 30. A brochure map is in preparation.

### Section 17:

Clay Mine Rd - DCNR has established a small stone surfaced hiker parking area, marked by a routed sign, about 200 m north of (around a curve from) the actual spot where MST crosses this gravel Forestry road. There is also now a two-car stone surfaced parking spot, in what was a muddy mess at the south end of the Beer Can trail, close to the Clay Mine Road ford crossing of Stony Fork.

### Section 18:

Part of MST Section 18, km 0.92 to 7.13 NB (5.69 KM), on private property in Duncan Twp, Tioga County, is closed indefinitely due to heavy construction activity. **(This is the same section that had the Oct 1-Jan 15 hunting season closure.)** As during hunting season hikers will need to detour along SR 3009 through downtown Antrim, turning at the stone church to continue to follow SR 3009. We appreciate your understanding during this time and it is not known when the trail will be able to be reopened. The interim road route is blazed yellow and is described in the 12th edition Guide.

Cumulative revisions since 12th edition Guide, for newly blazed and new off-road trail from Tokarz Rd to PA 660, included in current Temporary Map T18 and page 2 partial Guide revision):

Tokarz Rd to Haverly Hill Rd - remains unblazed for now.

Haverly Hill Rd to Hickory Ridge Rd - new off-road trail (2014), with parking area on Hickory Ridge Rd courtesy of the private landowner.

Hickory Ridge Rd to Cherry Flats Rd - interim yellow blazed gravel roads.

Cherry Flats Rd to Miller Hill Rd - new off-road trail (2013).

Miller Hill Rd to Mudge Rd - interim yellow blazed gravel roads (*off road trail under construction*)

Mudge Rd hunting season detour - now yellow blazed to near PA 660.

### Section 19:

Gas drilling and pipeline work is under way on private land in this section. At this time we think any interruptions in the route will be short term in nature and able to be detoured using the nearest road. Please download the current maps.

### Section 20:

South side of Scenic View Dr - New home has been built in what was described as certified organic pasture in the 12th edition Guide. The "friendly" bull and his harem of cows have departed. The new owners have graciously allowed MST to remain open on their land with a slight adjustment to the angle the trail crosses Scenic View Dr, staying east of their new driveway.

North side of Scenic View Dr - RV's Mt Top/Tioga Heritage Campground has returned to its old name Scenic View Campground. Phone number 570 835-5700.

Between campground/Scenic View Dr and Smith Hill Rd - No longer need to call ahead to hike (as Guides before 12th edition said to do), trail rerouted into woods at hunting preserve. (4/09) However, logging is in progress in this area. Can be detoured on Scenic View, Mann Hill, and Smith Hill roads, the former blue blazed route if you used to didn't call ahead.

Baldwin/Shepard Creek Rd is closed to vehicles due to a washout. Reported still to be passable for hikers.

### Pennsylvania: Standing Stone Trail:

#### A New Year, and a New Trail

The Standing Stone Trail as we once knew it is no more. Many great things happened last year, not the least of which is the fact that the trail was cleared out from start to finish. However, this year, it seems there's a new start or a finish (depending on if you go south or north). In this, we have added the section known as Greenwood Spur, which connects the Standing Stone Trail to its bigger neighbor, the Mid State Trail. The new trail adds 6.88 miles onto the revised length of 75.2 miles, which was where the trail stood in early November. Now, we are at 82 miles long – provided that bears don't scare you off the trail and force you to duck and run for cover in such a way that adds on an additional mileage total! As a result of this land acquisition, the highest point on the trail is no longer Butler Knob (2,320 feet) or the readjusted total at Shorb's Summit (2,321). Instead, it is now the Greenwood Tower at 2,380 feet.

In addition, there were also reroutes along the trail. For instance, there were significant changes on Cove Mountain, which is located at the beginning of the trail, and there was a reroute that made Hooper's Gap into a beautiful thoroughfare through some serious rocky terrain.

Many men and women donated their time to these causes and the various other Old Timer's Days and the hardworking guys on the rock working crews that the Standing Stone Trail Club is famous for.

If you would like to join these crews, we would like you to!

### Virginia/West Virginia: Tuscarora Trail

The relocation on Great North Mountain between Capon Springs and Shawneeland has been built, but is awaiting link-up with the National Forest south of Capon Springs Road to officially open.

## Virginia/West Virginia: Headwaters Section

In March 2014, trail was graded at the south end of Shenandoah Mountain down to VA 678, using Forest Service land to replace a private land trailhead, and bringing it closer to parking on VA 678 by Cowpasture River.

## Virginia/West Virginia: Appalachian Trail

The relocation of the AT, which co-locates with the GET on Peters Mountain, was completed in 2014.

The Narrows Now Trail Club has chosen to route the GET from Narrows to the AT by trails near Mill Creek, thus avoiding a dangerous road walk on VA 100 between Narrows and Pearisburg, VA.

## First GET Thru-hikers complete Western Branch of GET

Jo “Someday” Swanson and “Hillbilly” Bart Houck were the first to successfully thru-hike the Great Eastern Trail in 2013. When they did, when they got to Hancock, MD, they took the eastern branch, along the Tuscarora and Standing Stone Trails. But in doing so, they missed hiking the western branch, which includes Green Ridge State Forest, MD and the southern part of the Mid State Trail in PA. So in 2014, they decided to get together again to hike the western branch. They started in the north and hiked south to Hancock (July 4, 2014). They posted their trip, as well as a comparison of the eastern and western branches, at <http://www.gethiking.net/> (You’ll have to check Older Posts down to that time period.) This hike was 166 miles long (as best as I can determine, so they now have a total of 1774 GET miles

## 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	214 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.

#### Hikers and Total GET miles hiked

Jo Swanson	1774
Bart Houck	1774
Stuart Hickey	915
Taylor Pannill	800
Sue Turner	720
Lois Ludwig	561
Bill Shaffer	545
Rick Guhse	437
Tim Hupp	422
Tom Johnson	382
Lloyd McAskill	321
Mark Sleeper	318
David Frye	305
Jim Sims	242

Warren Devine	205
Carol Devine	187
Nancy Ruggles	146
Sam Goldsberry	142
Marty Dominy	130
Shad Baker	103
Michael Seth	97
Chad Churchman	90
Linda Clark O'Brien	90
Malcolm & Lynn Cameron	89
Mary Huffer	73
John Spies	71
Brian Hirt	71
Christa Neher	62

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

*And report your miles!*

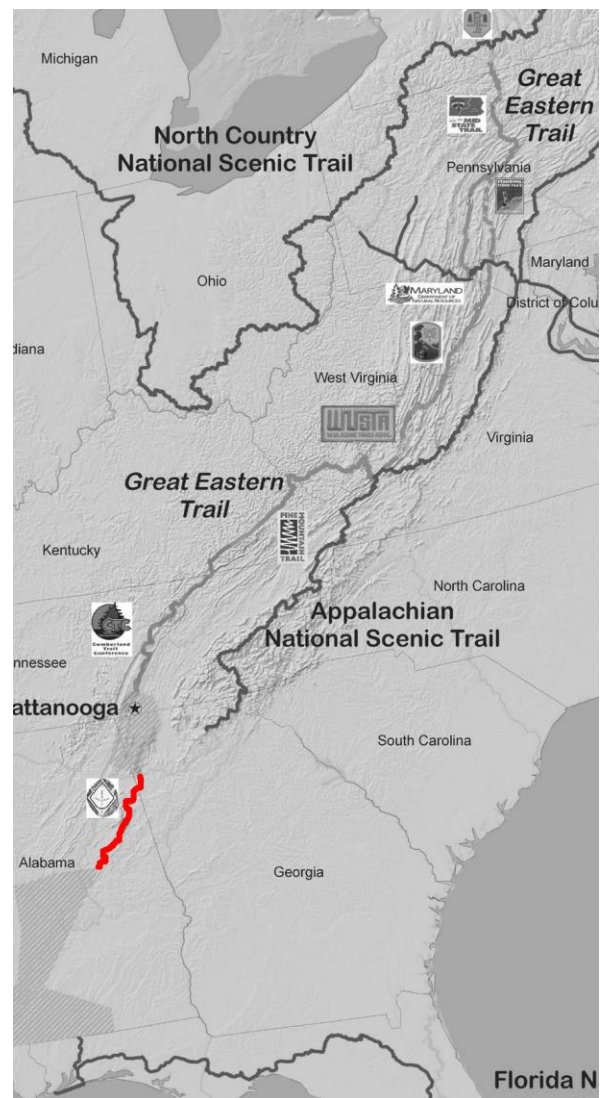
#### **Featured Section:**

##### **Pinhoti Trail**

by Tim Hupp

The Pinhoti Trail makes the southernmost link of the Great Eastern Trail (at least for Phase I), stretching 339 miles from Flagg Mountain near Weogufka, Alabama to the Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia. Alabama has 178 miles and 161 in Georgia, but only about 21 miles in Georgia are part of the GET.

The Pinhoti Trail was built as a connection between Alabama's trails (some in the Mt. Cheaha area were built in the 1930s) and the Appalachian Trail. The formal effort to link Alabama to the Appalachian Trail began in February, 1985 (Happy 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary!) with the incorporation of the Alabama Trails Association, whose membership began construction of Section 13 at the High Point Trailhead / US 278 and going north to the Georgia state line. At first the Alabama part was entirely Talladega National Forest, but now it reaches south to Flagg Mountain near Weogufka, which at 1141' is one of the southernmost Appalachian mountains exceeding 1000' in elevation. (The Benton MacKaye Trail connects with the Appalachian Trail at its southern terminus on Springer Mountain, swings west connecting to the Pinhoti Trail, then it swings north and east meeting the Appalachian



Trail again at the south end of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in North Carolina.)

From the south end there is 7 miles of trail

north from Flagg Mountain, then about 17 miles of road walk until the trail enters the Talladega National Forest. The trail goes more into the mountains, reaching the highest point at Hernandez Peak (elev. 2344') in Cheaha State Park at mile 78. Mt. Cheaha, the highest point in Alabama, elev. 2407', is a mile past Hernandez Peak, off the Pinhoti Trail. The first shelter is 1 mile north of the southern terminus of the Pinhoti Trail near Flagg Mtn. It is brand new and constructed this year, 2015. There are also two camping platforms in the same area on the banks of the Weogufka Creek. The second shelter is Blue Mountain Shelter at mile 81.2. It is 33 miles to the next shelter, which is the first of 8 in a 60-mile stretch. The last one is just over the border in Georgia, and the state line is at mile 171.2. There is another road walk before the trail enters Chattahoochee National Forest. It is about mile 214 (Starling Mill Road) that the GET route leaves the Pinhoti Trail, heading west to Little River Canyon in Alabama, then heading north to Chattanooga, TN.

From that point, the Pinhoti continues north and east following ridges in the Chattahoochee National Forest for miles and reaching Civil War fortifications near Dug Gap where troops from General Sherman's forces fought Confederates in the spring of 1864. From Dug Gap, the Pinhoti uses road walks to cross the Conasauga River Valley and reenters the Chattahoochee National Forest for 35 miles of backcountry, mountain hiking before reaching the crest of the Blue Ridge and intersecting The Benton MacKaye Trail which leads 70 miles southeast to Springer Mountain and the Appalachian Trail.

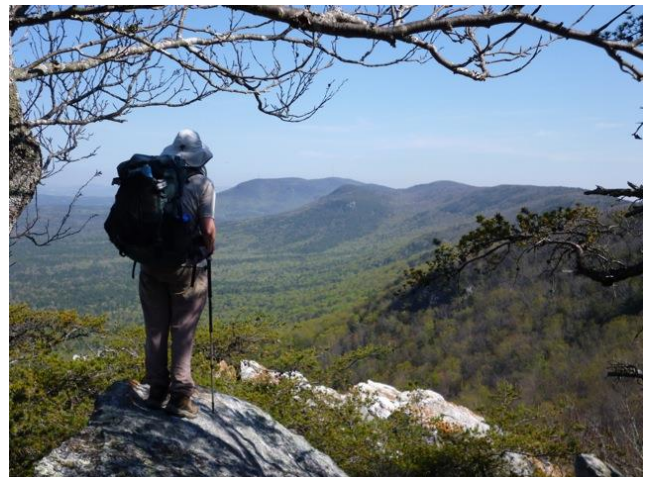
Some features on the Pinhoti Trail include many good views, gorges and steep ravines, small waterfalls, and a few lakes. Plants include Long Leaf Pines, Shag- Bark Hickory, Oak Leaf Hydrangea (state wildflower), Indian Pinks, Butterfly Bush, and American Beauty Berry. Long Leaf pine is usually associated with the southern Coastal Plain, but in Alabama it grows along and below the ridgecrests followed by the Pinhoti. The name 'Pinhoti' is the Creek Indian word for 'turkey home or home of the turkey' and a former blaze was the turkey foot. Some of the wildlife you may encounter include turkey,

raccoons, Armadillos, Possums, Deer, Coyote, Hawks, Buzzards and Owls. There are some road walk sections that have many miles without campsites, but the longest of these is beyond the GET exit. There are at least 3 more shelters planned in addition to the 10 in place. Most of these are south of Mt. Cheaha, where there currently are none.

As far as trail maintenance, Alabama Trails Association (ATA) is active and does a lot. Anniston Outdoor Association (AOA) did maintain their section last fall from US 431 south to CO Rd 24. Vulcan Trail Association (VTA) still claims their section from Adams Gap south to Clairmont. Alabama Hiking Trail Society (AHTS) is very active especially on Rebecca Mountain and Flagg Mountain. The Metro section of the AHTS did about 4 work trips the past 2 years on the Chocolocco section south of CR 55 and in the Cheaha Wilderness.

John Calhoun and a few others do a lot of the work during the year on their sections, often working sections the less-active clubs claim. Other active individuals - Todd Henderson (organizer for the Pinhoti 100 ultra marathon), Dan Bedore, Marion & Emily Campbell, Blister Bob Burger, and several members of the AHTS including Rick Guhse'.

I want to recognize John Calhoun and Mike Leonard for hundreds of hours of dedicated service to the Pinhoti Trail over decades, in addition to off-trail work including working with state agencies. They and also Rick Guhse helped me with this article.



Mt. Cheaha from Pinhoti Trail (photo by Warren Devine)

## Upcoming Events

**AHTS 2015 Conference** will be March 20 - 22 2015 at Popular Point Campground. A number of speakers are scheduled along with a number of hikes. The speaker for Friday night is Darryl Patton, and on Saturday night it is Gene Espy. [Register for the Conference here.](#)

**Annual Spring Breakaway** March 8 – April 4, 2015 at Fort Bluff Youth Camp, for work on the Cumberland

### Cumberland Trail Plans

A recent series of meetings with the Cumberland Trail Conference (CTC), the Tennessee Trails Association (TTA), and the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park (CTSP) which is overseen by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) in late 2014 and early 2015 have resulted in a four-year plan to complete the Cumberland Trail. The CTC Board met on 12/6/2014 and 1/24/2015, the TTA Board met on 2/6/2015, and meeting of representatives of each group (including State organizations) met 2/13/2015 with an agreement to share Board members, mission statements, and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to coordinate work on the Cumberland Trail.

The Cumberland Trail is the major part of the Great Eastern Trail in Tennessee. The CTC was organized in 1997 as a subsidiary of the TTA. The Cumberland Trail has also been recognized as a State Park of Tennessee, known as the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park (CTSP) which is overseen by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, a branch of the government of the State of Tennessee. So far 178 miles of trail has been built (includes side trails and parts of the CT that are not part of the GET), and 143 miles of trails remain to be built.

But things were not looking very well in mid-2014. Like many, I was surprised when I first got notice on May 10, 2014 that the CTC had been dissolved. But it seemed like everything was in the dark. There was no mention of it on the CTC or the TTA websites, there was no Tennessee government announcement, and no major newspapers reported it. But Larry Hill of Soddy-Daisy, TN investigated what he could on behalf of CTC and its

Trail. See

<http://cumberlandtrail.org/website/event/annual-spring-breakaway-2015/>

**Carr Mountain Trail Work Trip** April 11, 2015 - We hope to clear blowdowns and blaze the trail to Forest Service specifications. Contact Tom Johnson, [johnts25@gmail.com](mailto:johnts25@gmail.com)

April 24-26, 2015 – **GETA Board Meeting** at Woodmont Center in Maryland.

---

dedicated volunteers. He found some things, but many parties to the act did not respond. He offered a petition to Governor Bill Haslam to look into this. You can find his petition at: <https://www.change.org/p/bill-haslam-please-governor-investigate-the-role-tdec-officials-had-in-influencing-the-tennessee-trails-association-tta-to-dissolve-the-cumberland-trail-conference-ctc>

Things started to change, although not fast enough for some. The TTA board met again on June 28 and the CTC was reinstated. But more work needed to be done as the various groups either were at odds or what they had agreed to needed rewriting. It would seem that both sides of the dispute might suggest the other side was slowing things down with regard to getting the Cumberland Trail built.

In the meetings mentioned above, CTC has decided to become an independent 501(c)(3) organization, but it had to downsize some—close an office in Crossville and reduce some other expenses. The different groups (CTC, TTA, CTSP, and TDEC) have agreed on a 4-year plan to have a “soft opening” of the corridor for thru-hiking, meaning some road walks may be necessary at that point, but it would be amenable to thru-hikers, which is the situation on the other trail components of the GET. But the plans make an emphasis on trail building the next 4 years.

Currently land acquisition is 91% complete for the Cumberland Trail with an additional 5-6% “in the works”. In other words, 29 miles still require acquisition and 22 of those are in active negotiation.

CTC does plan a Breakaway 2015 (see Upcoming Events) with dozens of college students on spring break assisting, and for 2015, the plan is to work in the McGill Gorge, which is between the Rock Creek Gorge and the Graysville Mountain sections. They plan

to hire a coordinator of trail building and late some part time assistants. Also they want to rebuild the volunteer base and they hope to have 10-15 “wagon masters” by fall, 2015. CTSP will also hire more rangers. It is hoped that volunteers can be adding onto trail (beyond Breakaway) this year.

## Editorial

I would say that compared to my expectations about the GET, the past year didn’t live up its billing. Yes there have been some things completed. But speaking for myself, many things did not happen that I thought would. I was expecting that we could complete the Carr Mountain Trail, that I would clear the Shenandoah Mountain North Trail (US 33 to past Bother Knob), that the GET Guidebook (White Sulphur Springs, WV to US 48/SR 55) would be published, and that we could put up some GET signs on the National Forest Trails the GET follows. What happened?

We did 3 Carr Mountain Trail worktrips, but with as few as 3 people showing up, we didn’t get the whole project completed, and I found I could still get off trail trying to follow it. I did 4 worktrips on the Shenandoah Mountain North Trail, and although a lot of work was done, there was a mile in the middle that was so grown-in in places that I lost that trail, too. I worked on the Guidebook very heavy in January and February, and thought I had completed it. Then the publishers had a few things to add. This took months more, and though they were eager to get it published, and I included the suggestions, it still has not been printed, and I haven’t heard when it would be. And no authorization has come from the Forest Service to allow GET signs to be put up. The MOU with the Forest Service states that it will, “Work with GETA and other interested user groups to create a consistent, minimalistic sign and identifying features plan for the GET route on National Forest System lands that is respectful of existing trails and mindful not to create sign pollution.” The MOU has been in effect for 2 years, and the only work has been to refuse to allow a single sign. Is one tiny sign on an average of 5 or 6 hiking miles constitute

But 2015 is a rebuilding year, so don’t expect ¼ of the undone trail to be done. The operation should be larger in the years to come with increasing momentum.

(One other note—there will be a solar eclipse that crosses the CT on August 21, 2017)

“sign pollution”? And “work with”? I can’t get my emails answered unless I state I’m going ahead with it!

It hasn’t been just me—things seem to be at a standstill in Bath County, VA. Several trail sections have been approved for years, but there has been no go-ahead. Further south, we have a gap in the Allegheny Trail, and at least two sections of proposed trail have been flagged and awaiting approval, and nothing has happened.

I haven’t heard of further trail routing or blazing on the TuGuNu section.

The Energy Trail (in Kentucky, north of the Pine Mountain Trail), which had been reported to getting started, has at my last hearing, died—the man in charge of that is no longer there. It still may be done, but will almost need someone to start it over.

And the Cumberland Trail Dissolution, even if temporary, did not come across as good news, or even as expected. And those who planned to thru-hike the GET in 2014 made it only half-way.

Finally, I have found just writing this newsletter to be a monumental undertaking!

So 2014 was a disappointing year for the GET, or at least as I’ve seen it. But we should note that we did make some progress, just not as much as expected. More work will be done on Shenandoah Mountain and Carr Mountain this year. Hopefully, the guidebook may be published. And the stalling on the signs and new trail sections doesn’t undo what we have.

Things appear to have turned around on the Cumberland Trail, and there are high expectations for the next 4 years. There are recent developments in Alabama which sound good, too. So let us hope that 2015 will be a year of GET progress!

# 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.

## Connections

Since the Appalachian Trail and the Great Eastern Trail are parallel, we are considering the trails that connect the two. In fact since the GET follows the AT for about 20 miles at Pearisburg, VA and Peters Mountain, they are connected for that distance. But there are also some trails that connect the two.

### Georgia-Pinhoti Trail & Benton MacKaye Trail

As the article in this issue about the Pinhoti Trail states, the Georgia Pinhoti Trail continues east from where the GET leaves it to meet the Benton MacKaye Trail, 119 to 140 miles away. The Benton MacKaye Trail continues east to Springer Mountain, the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. It also goes north, then back east to meet the AT near Fontana Dam in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park.

### Tuscarora Trail

This blue-blazed trail is 252 miles long and connects to the Appalachian Trail at both ends. The GET follows the Tuscarora Trail for 130 miles from

Mill Mountain Trail in Virginia/West Virginia to Cowans Gap State Park in Pennsylvania. The south end is in the Shenandoah National Park, and from there it is 53 miles to the GET. This portion crosses the Shenandoah Valley, mostly on road walk, and Massanutten Mountain, on Forest Service trails.

The north end is not far from the Susquehanna River and Duncannon, PA. It is 70 miles to there from Cowans Gap State Park, following ridges and valleys.

### Potomac Heritage Trail

This follows the C&O canal towpath along the Potomac River. The AT crosses the Potomac at Harpers Ferry, WV and the GET crosses at Hancock, MD. The GET (east branch) and Tuscarora Trail follows the PHT about 8 miles before turning north. From there it is about 55 miles downriver to Harpers Ferry. The trail is not direct—it follows the meanders of the Potomac, but it is nearly level.

### North Country Trail

The GET's north terminus is on the North Country/Finger Lakes Trail. Although it is not all built yet, eventually, the North Country Trail may connect to the AT. There is trail construction needed in the Adirondack Park, and there are plans to extend the NCT east into Vermont to connect to the AT, or at least the Long Trail, which then connects to the AT.

## Losses

### Thomas T. Thwaites (1931 – 2014)

*“Why do large numbers of hikers venture into the wet, wild woods with biting insects and stinging nettles, on trails lined with roots and studded with rocks? There is something different and deeply appealing about hiking in the out-of-doors. The wilder and more beautiful the land, the better the hiking. Clearly, these experiences are spiritual. It is the deep, but bright, secret of hiking. Spiritual experience is essential to our well-being, so hiking remains popular.”* — Tom Thwaites



Thomas Thwaites, 83, died of heart disease on Christmas Day, 2014 at Foxdale, PA. He was the father of the Mid State Trail and the man who thought up the idea of the Standing Stone Trail. Other identities were: Penn State physics professor, Faculty Adviser to the Penn State Outing Club, Keystone Trails Advocate, Author of the series “50 Hikes in ...Pennsylvania” (West, East, AND Central) as well as the author of the guidebook for the Mid State Trail and various other writings. He was a husband, father, and grandfather and beloved and respected man by those who knew him. This list, while brief, stands as the testament to a man

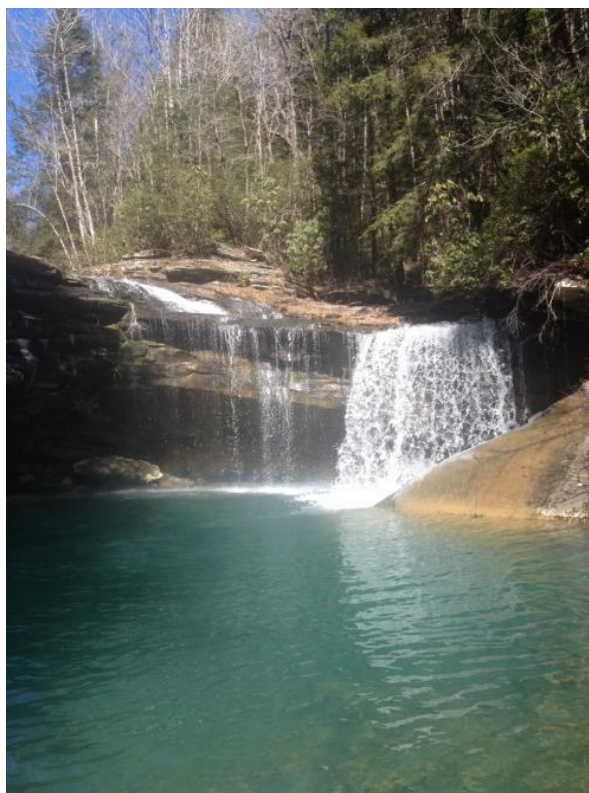
who helped make Pennsylvania hiking what it is and what it will be.

Tom graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Phi Beta Kappa, in physics in 1953. In 1959 he received his doctorate in physics from the University of Rochester and started teaching physics at Penn State. He retired in 1989. In 29 years as the faculty advisor to the Hiking Division of the Penn State Outing Club, Tom and the Hiking Division cleared trails and created new trails, including the Mid State Trail, whose 526 kilometers cross Central Pennsylvania from New York to Maryland. To help hikers enjoy the trails, Tom wrote "50 Hikes in Central Pennsylvania," "50 Hikes in Western Pennsylvania" and "50 Hikes in Eastern Pennsylvania," and a guide to the Mid State Trail.

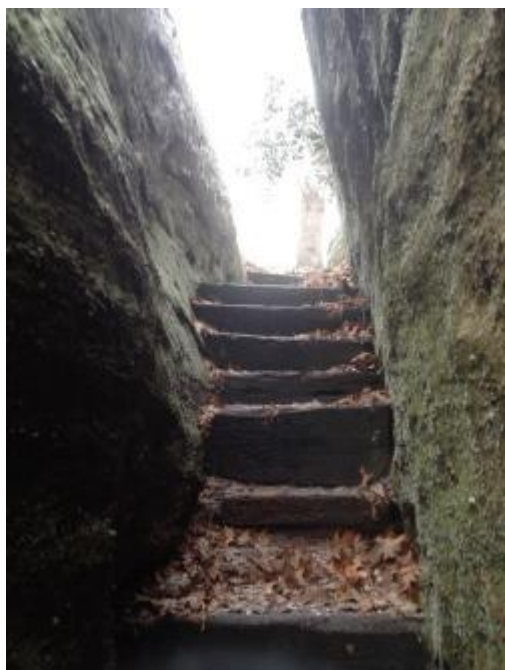
In State College, Tom and Barbara also found a circle of like-minded peers and friends whose rambles and walks in Penn's Woods led them to recognize the untapped potential for increased hiking opportunities and long distance backpacking through trail development and connectivity. This core group had both the vision and the dedication to chart a course of trail building and maintaining that would lead, over time, to the establishment of the Mid State Trail, the founding of the Mid State Trail Association, the opening of hiking and skiing opportunities along the Allegheny Front and in the Quehanna, the launching of the Keystone Trails Association's Trail Care Program and, not incidentally, inspiring generations of volunteers to join and continue their project.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Barbara, his daughter Rebecca Batt (Mitchell), his son Fredrik (Laurie), his grandchildren Emily Batt and Jeremy Batt, and his brother William (Carol). A memorial service will be held in early April. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Mid State Trail Association or Keystone Trails Association.

## Photo Gallery



Waterfalls on Cumberland Trail



(photos on this page from Taylor Pannill and Stuart Hickey's web site)



Tuscarora Trail near Gore, VA



Bogan Run Trail near Warm Springs, VA

Photos on this page by Tim Hupp.

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)

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)