



GET Hiking

Great Eastern Trail Newsletter

Volume 12, Number 1, March 2023

By Timothy A. Hupp

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

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Cumberland Gap, TN Holds Tri-State Festival

Historic Cumberland Gap was the site of many settlers moving west in the 1700s and 1800s. It is now the home of Cumberland Gap National Historic Park and has many hiking trails in the area. But so far they don't reach too far and they don't connect to the nation's many long trails, such as the AT.

The Great Eastern Trail goes through Cumberland Gap, but the surrounding areas have not been built yet. There is the Cumberland Trail, of which 3 miles leads into Tennessee, but then it dead ends with a gap of about 30 miles to where the CT takes up at LaFollette. North from Cumberland Gap, the GET eventually will be put on the Pine Mountain Trail, which is still many miles to the north.

So the Cumberland Gap has been a neglected part of the Great Eastern Trail.

But that may be about to change. Cumberland Gap (TN) resident and CT volunteer Mary Mars has organized the first Tri-State Festival, bringing not only a festival town, but with the purpose of bringing the different trail clubs with plans at Cumberland Gap together to share plans and perhaps get going with building the trails. Besides the GET, CT, and PMT, there is also the Warriors Path and Boone Trace Trail, which lead north from Cumberland Gap.



Cumberland Gap, TN viewed from Pinnacle Overlook. Cumberland Mountain at the right, leads SW into Tennessee.

Mary Mars brought all these together for the festival. There was a party on July 15, 2022, followed by the festival on Saturday, July 16. Trail groups each had their own tables under canopies, and the Cumberland Trail was represented by both the Cumberland Trails Conference and the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park.

(Continued on page 2)

Dixie Rainey (née Greer) has helped with this GET Hiking newsletter. She is also known as "Star Left," and she hiked the GET from New York south to Gore, VA in 2015. She has written several items in this newsletter.

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These booths were set up along the main street in the morning, and then the crowds came. We talked with a lot of people about our trails.

Besides the trail groups there were also some vendor booths, with sporting goods and some treats. Also there were some recreation setups with a climbing wall, slides, and others.



Pine Mountain Trail booth.



Great Eastern Trail booth. (L to R): Allen Miller, Tim Hupp, Larry Zehnder, Linda Hixon.



Booths of (R to L): CT State Park, CTC, GET, PMT, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park.

“GET” to Know Tim Hupp

by Dixie Rainey

Tim Hupp is the current President of the Great Eastern Trail Association (GETA). Tim started working on the Great Eastern Trail (GET) in 2009, and he began writing the GET newsletter in 2011. Prior to Tim’s involvement with the GETA, Tim was a member of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC). At the time, there were already two members of the PATC on the GETA Board, so former GETA President Tom Johnson proposed that Tim join the West Virginia Scenic Trails Association (WVSTA) to be one of the WVSTA’s representatives to the GETA.

Although it wasn’t officially the GET yet, Tim’s first encounter on the GET was July 4, 1974. That summer, Tim attended a week-long backpacking camp and was expecting to hike on the Appalachian

Trail (AT) in the Shenandoah National Park. Instead, the camp did a trip on Great North Mountain. On the third day, Tim and the other backpackers hiked the Mill Mountain Trail, which went by Big Schloss and onto Wolf Gap. That night, the group camped at Wolf Gap. There was a cherry tree there, and they made a dessert from the cherries.

Tim has lived in Virginia his entire life, and he enjoys hiking trails with wildflowers and running creeks. Tim’s favorite hiking season is Spring, although he likes to hike during any season whenever it’s not too cold. Tim enjoys having oversight of the GET project, and although there are many challenges that go along with it, Tim’s hope for the GET is to have a hike-able route in the next

few years with places to camp within reasonable distances. As far as the GETA, Tim would like to

have some ambitious people come on board, including some that could take his place someday.

Upcoming Events

Alternative Spring Break

Cumberland Trails Conference hosts an annual event where college students from all over the country volunteer to build trail with us during March. This year we are hosting the event in Rhea County during the weeks of March 5th - March 18th. If you would like to volunteer for trail building during ASB please contact Savana Keeton for more information.

savana@cumberlandtrail.org

March 17th & 18th @ 9:00am eastern – March volunteer event: Meet up at: Dayton Welcome Center. Physical address is 107 Main Street, Dayton, TN 37321. From here we will carpool to trailhead off of Hwy 30 as there is limited parking.

Tools will be provided. Please bring work gloves, dress appropriately for weather, wear sturdy shoes, and bring water.

Lunch and snacks will be provided.

Please meet crew by 9:00am ET at the Dayton Welcome Center
The workday will be from 9:00am to 3:30-4:00pm.

Questions should be directed to:
email: savana@cumberlandtrail.org

Standing Stone Trail Club Spring Meeting – April 1, 2023, 9 am to noon, at Rothrock State Forest Headquarters, Huntingdon, PA.

Great Eastern Trail Association Board Meeting – April 15, 2023, 9 am to . . . , at Mullens Opportunity Center, Mullens, WV.

Wildflowers & Wonders April 29, 2023, 5:30-8:00 pm Eastern – this is an evening to celebrate CTC’s work building, maintaining, and educating folks up and down the Cumberland Trail corridor. Art will be available for auction which will benefit CTC and funding efforts in the construction of the Cumberland Trail. We are excited to see everyone at this inaugural event and look forward to growing it each year!

Your ticket purchase will include hors d’oeuvres, wine, beer, and helping us finish the Cumberland Trail! Dress is cocktail casual. We hope guests will have a great time amongst like-minded individuals while supporting a great cause! To be held at Trinity Chapel in Dayton, Tennessee
Physical address: 240 1st Avenue, Dayton, TN 37321
Ticket price: \$40 per person

Trail Updates

Pennsylvania

Standing Stone Trail

Highway US 22 Crossing Complete -- Finally!

Trail relocation for a safer crossing of high-traffic US 22 is complete.

· Newly completed trail relocation on the Borough of Mapleton property allows access to the Juniata River and aqueduct remnants of the 1828 Pennsylvania Main Line Canal.

- Trail relocation on the north side of US 22 on private property is complete.
- Hiking club insurance concerns were addressed in an effort to complete the legal agreements required by Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to cross US 22. This process has become the catalyst for statewide hiking club insurance reform. For the first time in its history, the SSTC used Keystone Trails Association grant money to purchase liability insurance. Liability protection will help ensure that the club remains financially secure in the long term. This risk reduction is particularly relevant given that the Thousand Steps portion of the trail is very popular, with 42,000 hikers counted in 2020.

Work Projects Planned for 2023

1. Rebuilding a section of trail on Stone Mountain just south of Greenwood Furnace, involving the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps under the direction of our club.
2. Working with DCNR to proceed with rebuilding broken or missing bridges across Detweiler Run. Currently DCNR is going through the permitting process and has sent engineering specifications for review. The trail club has also received a \$500 grant toward this project.
3. Redesigning, publishing, and printing a revised trail brochure. The Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau has been asked to assist in this effort.

Additional Tasks Planned for 2023

1. Where the trail crosses private land, we plan to contact private landowners to discuss any concerns they might have, and if necessary, addressing possible remedies. There are several specific landowner concerns that we hope to address soon:
 - A large section of private property has been leased to a hunting club, which has posted no trespassing signs and gates to limit hiker access to the trail from October through December each year. For the short term, trail signage should reduce hiker confusion, while for the long term, trail relocations will be considered.

- A large parcel of land owned by the Silver Knob Hunting Club is adjacent to an area popular for day hikers. To alleviate associated land access and parking concerns, we will investigate a relocation onto Mount Union Water Authority (wildlife habitat) land managed by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

2. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation plans a temporary closure of Meadow Gap Road in late 2023 to replace a bridge, although an alternative route will be proposed.
3. Trail relocation to the popular Throne Room is anticipated to continue after a several year break.

Tennessee

Cumberland Trail

The Cumberland Trail is a Tennessee State Scenic Trail, and is incorporated in the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park. Most (but not all) of it is part of the Great Eastern Trail. It runs from Cumberland Gap in the north to Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park located on Signal Mountain, while the Great Eastern Trail splits off at Montlake Road to go toward Chattanooga.

Some of the most scenic parts of the Great Eastern Trail are along the Cumberland Trail—waterfalls, gorges, cliffs, and views.

The Cumberland Trail is still under construction, and currently is a series of built trails separated by gaps. These gaps may have convenient road walks between trailheads; some are a lot less convenient. Efforts are being made to fill in these gaps, but the State Park and the Cumberland Trails Conference face a number of obstacles in closing the gaps. In some cases, they still have to get permissions to build the trail over the land, in others the land is available, but much trail work needs to be done.

In the past year there have been a new opening of trail, but so far the web sites (State Park and CTC) have not updated their maps. The opening is:

- The TN 30 connection to the Graysville Section: For years, the Graysville Mountain Section had been a 9-mile dead end trail, ending almost within sight of TN 30. Now that this is open, this section of trail can be used for a CT thru-hike.

There are some constructed parts, but not officially open.

- Hinch Mountain – Soak Creek Section: This connects the Brady Mountain Section to the Stinging Fork Section. According to Ranger Anthony Jones, “it is NOT open at this time. There are still things we need to do in there to officially open it to hikers.” This section will allow thru-hikers to avoid a long road walk. This portion of trail closed a gap.
- Head of Sequatchie Section: There is a loop trail from Head of Sequatchie State Park which has been completed, but it does not currently connect to the Cumberland Trail.

Some parts are under construction:

- On Bird Mountain, the trail is being constructed between Frozen Head State Park and the loop up from the town of Wartburg. This work is being done largely by State Interpretive Rangers working out of Frozen Head State Park. Another team is to be recruited to finish the project. This project would close a gap.
- On Crab Orchard Mountain, between Daddys Creek and Ozone Falls, work has been done by Chad Michael’s construction company. Permission to use the I-40 right-of-way still is needed. This project would close a gap.
- The largest gap is between Piney River and the Laurel-Snow Natural Area, about 15

miles by air, but will be considerably longer by trail. The CTC has been doing a lot of challenging work in the Piney River gorge, to a point about halfway through. There are still land acquisitions and permissions to obtain, and it is likely a long road walk will be required for some time even after a hike route is established.

- Between the Laurel-Snow Natural Area and TN 30, work has begun by CTC. When done, this will close a gap.
- South of Graysville Mountain, the trail continues to McGill Gorge, which has a bridge and a waterfall. From there to the Three Gorges Segment, some trail has been built on the State Park land, but beyond the permission will be needed to build trail and to close this gap.

This still leaves:

- Cumberland Mountain north of LaFollette – It is about 30 miles by air from Cumberland Gap to LaFollette along the crest of Cumberland Mountain. For the most part, the Cumberland Trail is not open here, although in the early days of the Trail, it was built (and the old description is on the CTC web site). Because of the few access points, this segment of trail is hard to build and maintain. Also there have been many ATV incursions, often tearing up what trail had been there and causing confusion as to where the trail went.

Before his retirement, Superintendent Charles Sellars of the National Historical Park prepared a plan to fill in the gap. This plan is currently a Categorical Exclusion Request and needs a NEPA before any construction begins.

- Emory River – Between Wartburg and Nemo Bridge (over Emory River) all the land needed has been acquired, but no work

has been started. This would close a gap, but in the meantime a fairly direct road walk is present.

- Daddys Creek – Between the Devils Breakfast Table Section and Daddys Creek Section there is currently an approved road walk of about 2.2 miles. The replacement trail has been designed but not described for bidding. CTC has worked on part of it.
- South of McGill Gorge – The trail has been opened as far as a bridge over McGill Creek near a waterfall. Additional work has been done in State Park property, going up onto the escarpment, but there is a property between there and Leggett Road where permission is needed to build the trail. This section would close a gap.

As far as hikeable sections of the Cumberland Trail, for some time there has been the 51-mile section from LaFollette to Frozen Head State Park and 31 miles at the Three Gorges Segment. With recent completions, from Nemo Bridge to the current end on Hebbertsburg Road (along Obed River & Daddys Creek) there is a 30-mile section of trail, and from Ozone Falls to what is already done on Piney River is about 39 miles.

Once the part over Crab Orchard Mountain is done, these two sections would add up to about 76 miles, not counting what may be done on Piney River, which would further add to it.

The Bird Mountain Section will add to the 51-mile section making it about 56 miles.

Alabama

Flagg Mountain Caretaking

In 2021, “Nimblewill Nomad”, who had been caretaker at Flagg Mountain, the southern terminus of the GET, did a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, plus the approach from Flagg Mountain to Springer Mountain on the Pinhoti Trail and Benton MacKaye Trail to become the oldest AT thru-hiker at age 82.

On July 11, 2022, he resigned from caretaking at Flagg Mountain.

I've contacted Randy & LuAnne and they will continue caretaking Flagg for the remainder of this month, plus through August and later, as needed. So transitioning shouldn't prove a problem--finding another AHTS volunteer, or perhaps time even for Forestry to create a permanent assignment station for an AFC ranger.

Please know that these last four years in my life have proven to be one of the most enjoyable and productive times in my life. For your friendship and support, indeed, to all within the Alabama Forestry Commission and Alabama Hiking Trail Society--to all the dear, dear "Friends of Flagg," thank you!

God Bless,

Sunny (Nimblewill)

www.nimblewillnomad.com

Cumberland Trail



The Cumberland Trail wanders among the remnants of the Cumberland Mountains that once rose as high as the Rockies. The trail represented a barrier to all who dared push through storied gaps westward onto and over the Cumberland Plateau. It now provides a linkage north to south, forming natural connections and opportunities for scenic vistas and curious geological formations. Several hiking trail segments, totaling more than 185 miles, are now complete and ready to hike.

2/12/2018

As of 2023: **Red** – open trail
Green – under construction or not yet open
Blue – planned, not started

VARIOUS NEWS ITEMS

Happenings in the Standing Stone Trail Club, Inc.

Changing Club Leadership:

An urgent issue has been filling open positions within the club. Fortunately, several qualified individuals have stepped forward:

1. Vice-president. Rebecca Miller has agreed to fill this position, effective April, 2023. Rebecca has been active in the club for several years, and is a high school teacher in Lewistown. Thanks to Jim Garthe for his years of service in this position.

2. Secretary. Lindsey Hamilton has volunteered to fill this position, effective April, 2023. Lindsey lives in McAlisterville, PA and is an active hiker who enjoys taking her children on any adventure. Lindsey first got acquainted with the Standing Stone Trail during her many trips to the Thousand Steps, and now can be found about anywhere on the trail. When asked why she volunteered to be secretary, she noted how impressed she is with the trail and wanted to play a larger role in managing it. Thanks to Genny Volgstadt for her years of diligent service in this capacity.

3. Web master. Rebecca Miller has made updates to our website and continues to find ways to improve it. Thanks to Eva Zeisky for her many years of service as a very fine web master.

4. Newsletter. Recently, Kylie Houser has relaunched three professionally-done and very well-received editions of The Rock Hopper newsletter in electronic format.

5. Tool master. Joe Clark has held this position for over two decades, but to our regret Joe has resigned. Thus, we have decided to relocate the tools from Joe's residence to a permanent storage facility at Greenwood Furnace State Park, in conjunction with the Friends of Greenwood Furnace. The Park is now managing a significant portion of our inventory of power and hand tools, including storage,

maintenance, fuels and lubricant supply, battery charging stations, and sign-out procedures. Ethan Lashlee has agreed to oversee the entire process of managing these tools. Ethan lives near Huntingdon PA and enjoys hiking, mountain biking, and wildlife photography. He was first introduced to trail work through the local mountain biking associations where he is still active. Ethan learned of the tool master opening and was happy to volunteer, especially given his experience maintaining trails and love of the area.

6. Trail master. Ken Horting has held this position for around a decade, but to our regret Ken has resigned. We sincerely appreciate the boundless energy Ken afforded to the trail and the SSTC. We have drafted a job description to describe the job responsibilities, and have one person interested in the position, Ashley Donaldson. Ashley hails from Ligonier, PA and is a lifelong hiker and trail runner. She is a motivational running coach associated with the Trail Sisters organization and treasurer of Women in GIS. Ashley intends to put her project management skills to use as the trail master and looks forward to working with the club.

7. Projects manager needed. To move forward expeditiously, we are putting out requests for a leader to establish new—and reconfirm existing—landowner agreements. The person in this position will also look for new routes to eliminate the only road walk on the SST, which is Meadow Gap to Three Springs, a distance of 5.4 miles.

Current Officers and Representatives

President: George Conrad

Vice-president: Rebecca Conner

Secretary: Lindsey Hamilton

Treasurer: Cheryl Shope

Membership chair: Burgess Smith

Projects manager: - open -

Trail master: Ashley Donaldson

Map master: Pete Fleszar

Sign master: Jim Savory

Tool master: Ethan Lashley

Web master: Rebecca Conner

GET representatives: Jim Garthe; alternates: Genny and Steve Volgstadt
Keystone Trails Association representative: George Conrad
Newsletter editor: Kylie Houser
Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee: - open

PATC Officers (as of 1/1/2023):

President: Jim Fetig
Vice President for Volunteerism: Michael Brown
Staff Director: Rob Aldreich
Treasurer: Joe Lombardo (outgoing president)

Cumberland Trails Conference Board Members of 2023:

Jameson Miller, Chairman
Dreama Campbell, Vice Chair
Nora Beck, Secretary
David Cofer
David Scott
Deb Morris
Jim Johnson
Laurel Creech
Mary Mars
Michael Looby
Will Skelton

Savana Keeton named Executive Director of Cumberland Trails Conference

A vote was passed Wednesday February 8th by CTC Board of Advisors to offer this position. Savana has been employed with CTC since August 2016 and has played several roles including Trail Builder, Office Assistant, and Operations Coordinator. She knows the organization inside and out. Her experience and knowledge are invaluable and have proven to be a positive impact on the

organization.

The Tennessee native attended Tennessee Tech and received a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries. She has helped build over 50 miles of the Cumberland Trail during her time with CTC and is very proud of that feat. Savana is a lifelong resident of Cumberland County. She is excited about this new venture as the Executive Director and looks forward to growing awareness about what the CTC does, engaging with communities up and down the trail corridor and getting the CT closer to completion.

Jogloma / Scott Lake Project

There has been a problem area along the Pinhoti Trail/GET in Alabama, directly south of Talledega. Where it passes a small lake, alternately called Jogloma or Scott Lake, the trail crosses Dry Run below the spillway.

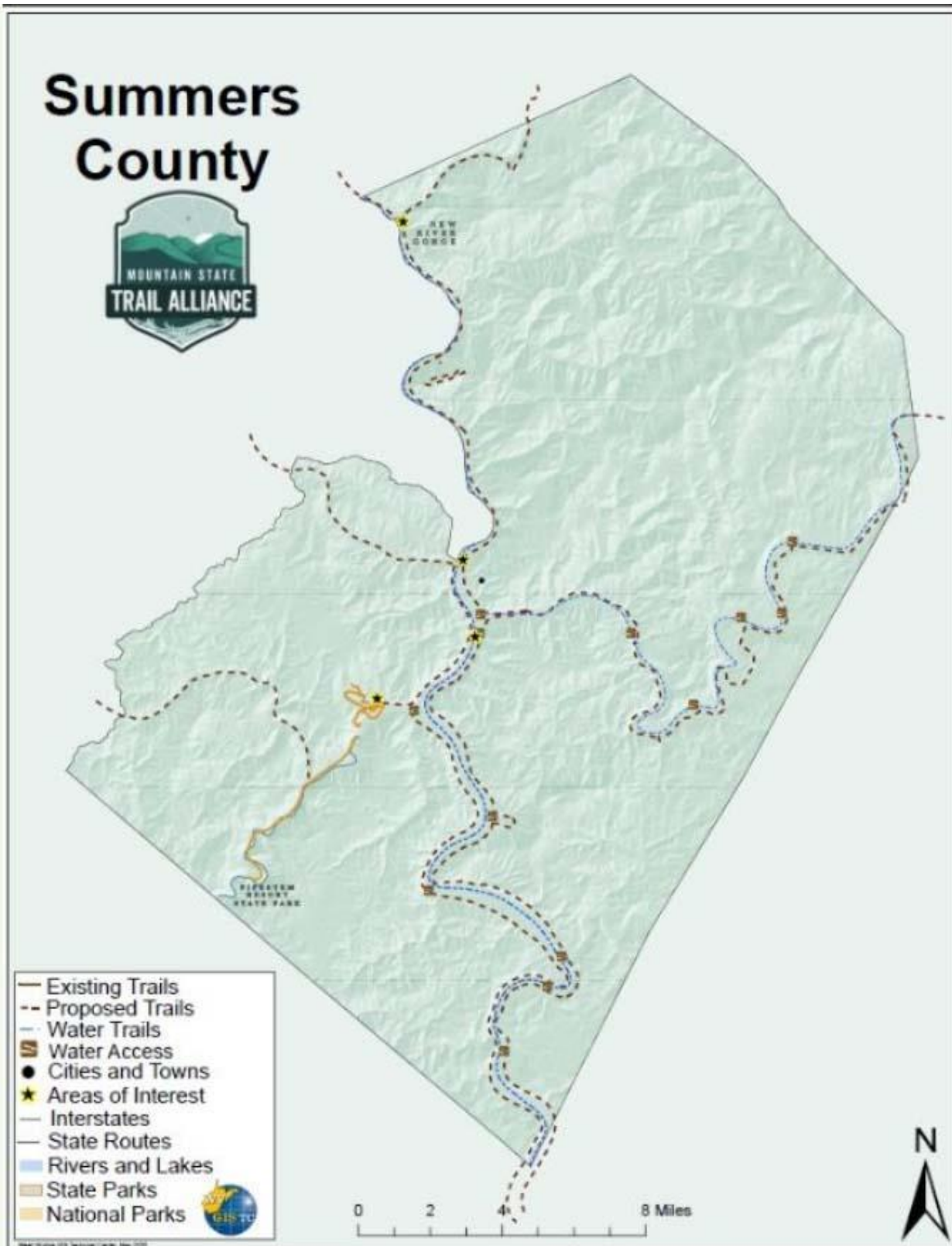
A program has started to resolve the problems there:

Existing conditions/Issues

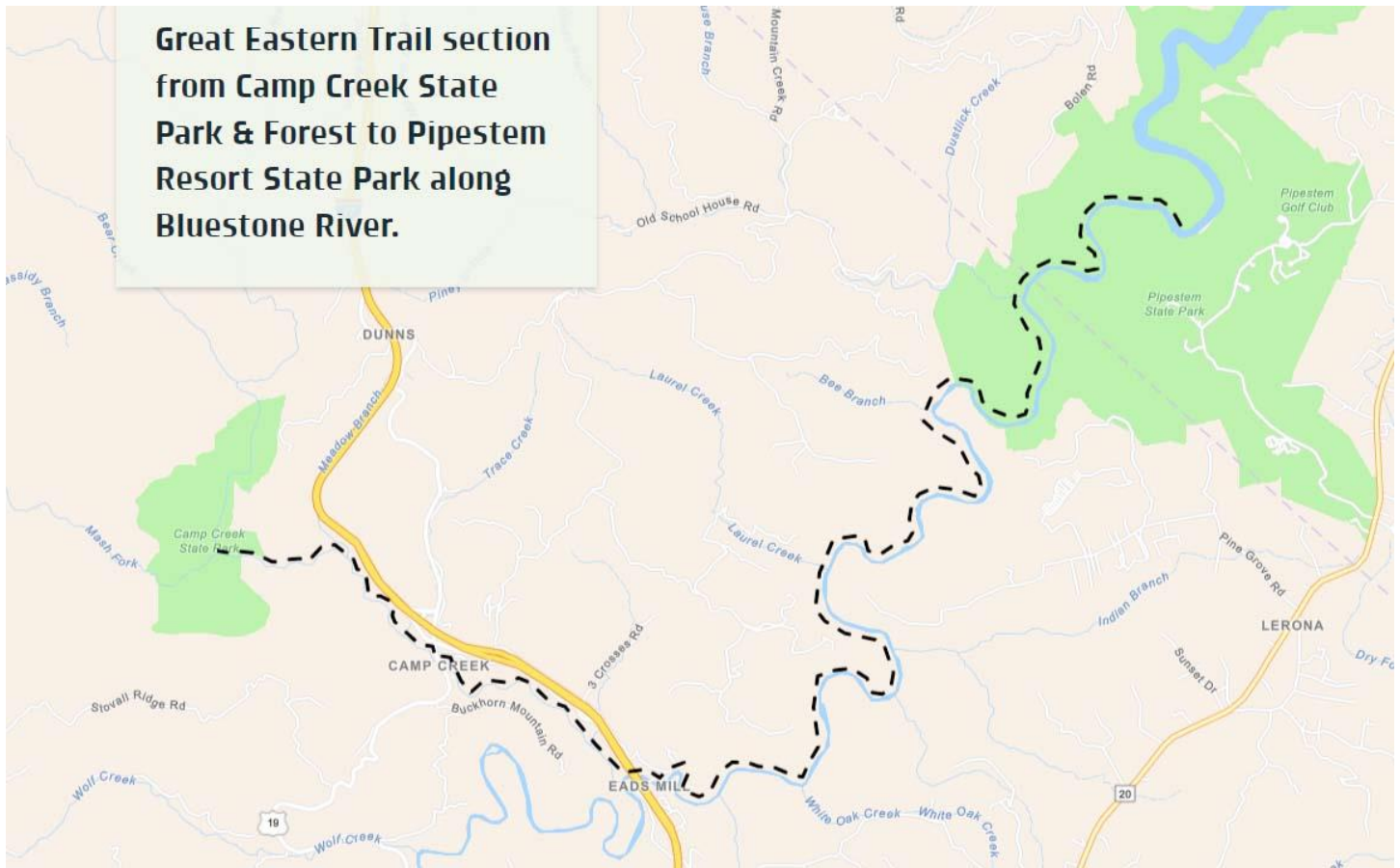
1. Safe crossing of creek is weather dependent
2. Illegal use of motorized vehicles
3. Erosion issues
4. Invasive vegetation
5. No signage
6. Failing Historic infrastructure

Proposed Site Enhancements

1. Introduce Rules and Identification Signage
2. Define Road hierarchy (whether accessible, restricted to official work, or restricted).
3. Make existing turnaround a trailhead
4. Improve hiking access to lake.



A Trail Planning map for Summers Co., WV. The New River bisects this county from S to N, with the Greenbrier River coming from the E and Bluestone River from the W. The Great Eastern Trail follows the New River from the bottom of the map on the east side, cross at Hinton (where Greenbrier River comes in from E), and continues along the Bluestone River to the SW. Upgrade from current route include trail built along the New River near Hinton.



This map shows Summers County, WV to the upper right; the rest is Mercer County. In this proposal, the GET is taken off a road walk, and replaced by new trail along the Bluestone River.

There are promising funding opportunities for trail projects and more money available than usual due to the passing of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill

Transportation Alternatives (TA) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

- Federal Highway Administration funds administered by WV DOH (80% federally funded, 20% local match requirement)
- WV received \$8.3 million in TA and RTP grants for FY 2021; Summers Co. received \$50k for designing a walking bridge at John Henry Historical Park
- RTP has a maximum of \$300k of federal funds available for a grant, no maximum limit for TA
- Infrastructure bill increased annual funding of TA and RTP from \$850 million

to \$1.38 billion for FY 2022 and eventually \$1.5 billion by FY 2025

- Provisions in the infrastructure bill allow for TA grants to be 100% federally funded either fully through the TA program or with another federal funding source to replace the local match requirement
- 100% federally funding available for specific safety projects and for projects that are on, adjacent to, or connect to federal land
- [Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Implementation Guidance as Revised by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(dot.gov\)](#)

Cumberland Gap

by Mary Mars

Cumberland Gap, TN – Approximately 150 years ago, Daniel Boone and Dr. Thomas Walker blazed a trail of exploration through the Cumberland Gap in what is now Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. To reach the destination, Boone followed the paths that had already been created by the animals and the Native Americans. All of their trails led to the Gap of the Cumberland Mountains, especially considering that at the time it was the only location within a 400 mile radius that you could actually get a horse across the mountain. In the following years, thanks to the work of Boone and Walker, Cumberland Gap became the “gateway to the west”. All roads leading west came through the Gap, essentially making the town a central hub for them all.

While in today’s times, Cumberland Gap may not be a hub for all roads leading to westward expansion, it does remain a hub for multiple trails that lead outdoor enthusiasts in all directions. The city of Cumberland Gap is already the northern terminus for the Cumberland Trail and the southern terminus for the Pine Mountain State Scenic Trail. These two trails are the Tennessee and Kentucky portions of the Great Eastern Trail, meaning that one day, hikers who are traveling from New York to Alabama (or vice versa) will travel right through the small town. Additionally, the Warrior’s Path (which historically runs from the Canadian border near the Great Lakes all the way to the Gulf of Mexico) is working to build its trail from northern Kentucky down to Cumberland Gap. Lastly, the Boone Trace Trail, which follows the steps of Daniel Boone himself, is also working towards its completion in Cumberland Gap. Despite the fact that all of these trails are working to cross right through the Cumberland Gap within the boundaries of the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, none of these agencies had collaborated prior to July 2022.

On July 16, 2022 the inaugural Tri-State Outdoors Fest (TSOF) was held in the city of Cumberland Gap, TN. TSOF is ultimately a coming together of all things available in the region that fall into the

outdoor recreation umbrella. However, the festival was originally created specifically to bring together each of these trail organizations in order to educate the public on exactly what is happening in Cumberland Gap and why these trails are of such significance not just to the town but to the entire region. This opportunity to come to Cumberland Gap was the first time that many of these trail leaders had met and spoken. Upon doing so, leaders realized that creating a relationship within these conferences was ultimately vital in aiding the completion of each trail. Because of this, leaders rejoined forces in November 2022 and created the idea of the Cumberland Gap Trails Alliance (CGTA).

Work is now being done to fully create the CGTA so as to have a force in the area that is actively engaging in work with each conference, assuring that appropriate steps are being taken and that the proper people are addressed and communicated with. Additionally, the CGTA will aid the town of Cumberland Gap as it strives to become an official Tennessee Trail Town. Trail leaders associated with this project are optimistic about the opportunities that will come along for everyone involved and look forward to creating more chances for the public to enjoy outdoor recreation in the Cumberland Gap region.

for anyone interested in getting involved:

tristateoutdoorsfest@gmail.com

Update of Great Eastern Trail’s Hamilton County (TN) Working Group

Prepared by Linda Hixon

February 14, 2023

The preferred route of the Great Eastern Trail between its Cumberland Trail and Georgia Pinhoti Trail components begins with its connection to the Cumberland Trail within the North Chickamauga

Creek Gorge State Natural Area in Hamilton County, Tennessee and follows existing and planned segments of the North Chickamauga Creek Greenway Trail southward, crosses the Tennessee River via a planned shared use pathway on the C. B. Robinson Bridge, and then follows the existing Riverwalk, Guild Trail and certain National Park Service trails on Lookout Mountain into Georgia where it continues on trails developed by the Lula Lake Land Trust that lead to Cloudland Canyon State Park and a connection with the Georgia Pinhoti Trail.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has recently announced plans to designate the 7,093-acre North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Natural Area as a state park and he is asking the State Legislature for \$776,300 in his proposed fiscal year 2023-2024 budget to fund a park manager, three park rangers and five other staffers. The State Natural Area will continue to keep its designation as such and the state natural area rules and protections will still apply to that area within the state park. The State Natural Area is extremely popular with the public and the recreational use, which is particularly heavy in the summer months when people seek out the blue holes, has created a need for the State to provide appropriate infrastructure to better manage such use. Last year, \$5.5 million was appropriated for that purpose and the improvements to be made include a ranger contact station, a restroom facility, paved parking, entrance improvements and day-use improvements including providing access for persons with disabilities. Additionally, at the request of the North Chickamauga Creek Conservancy, a bill has been introduced in the current session of the State Legislature by Senator Bo Watson and Rep. Patsy Hazelwood to include in the Tennessee Scenic Rivers Program the section of the creek located within the State Natural Area. The Cumberland Trail generally follows the route of the creek through the gorge.

The activities of the Great Eastern Trail's Hamilton County Working Group include the group meeting in-person twice during the last quarter of 2022. We continue to provide information about the GET and assistance with its planning to the City of Chattanooga's Parks and Outdoors staff and have

participated in and encouraged GET supporters to attend the public meetings held for the purpose of receiving input for the City's upcoming Parks and Outdoors Plan, including a public meeting held October 27, 2022. The final draft of the Parks and Outdoors Plan is to include community-driven action items and project prioritization and it is expected to be presented to the Chattanooga City Council in the near future for its review and approval. Hopefully, adoption of the plan will lead to the City Council approving the funding needed to move forward with its implementation. The stated vision is for Chattanooga to be a city within a park.

On January 19, 2023, Linda Hixon (GET's Hamilton County Working Group) and Cody Roney (Executive Director, Lula Lake Land Trust) gave a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions at Outdoor Chattanooga (the presentation made to a live audience and was also live-streamed) about the Great Eastern Trail coming through Chattanooga. Linda noted that the remaining incomplete portions of the GET's preferred route between the Cumberland Trail and the Georgia Pinhoti Trail are portions of its route on the north side of the Tennessee River and the establishment of the shared use pathway on the C. B. Robinson Bridge. She said that the portion of the GET's preferred route that is located on the south side of the Tennessee River and begins with the Riverwalk at the south end of the C. B. Robinson Bridge and extends southward to Cloudland Canyon State Park and the Georgia Pinhoti Trail can currently be hiked. Linda also noted that hikers can continue from Cloudland Canyon on the Georgia Pinhoti Trail (which includes designated road walks as well as segments of off-road trail) to reach the Alabama Pinhoti Trail and can continue on it almost to Flagg Mountain, Alabama. She noted that more camping sites are currently needed along sections of the Georgia Pinhoti Trail to avoid the need for hikers to interrupt their journey in the evening to find suitable lodging. Cody discussed how the Lula Lake Land Trust has coordinated with local stakeholders to attach the name "River to Clouds Trail" to the portion of the GET's connector route extending from a point on the Riverwalk in downtown Chattanooga to and including the GET's route on Lookout Mountain, a significant portion of which

has been built through the efforts of LLLT They are making plans to promote the use of the “River to Clouds Trail” to downtown residents and hotel guests as a way they can travel from the city to the wilderness without needing to use a car.

In November 2022, Linda Hixon, as a member of the Cumberland Trails Conference’s advisory board, provided an update at a joint meeting of the CTC’s advisory board and executive board on the GET’s Hamilton County Working Group’s efforts to encourage local partners to continue to complete the local trails that serve as the GET’s preferred route and thereby close the gap between the Cumberland Trail and the Georgia Pinhoti Trail. Also in November, Linda participated in a Zoom meeting with the stakeholders from the Cumberland Gap area who are seeking to connect the Cumberland Trail with a trail within the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park that will serve as part of the needed linkage with the Pine Mountain State Scenic Trail. The energetic Cumberland Gap committee is working toward receiving a “trail town” designation for the Cumberland Gap area as part of its vision for the area becoming a destination for hiking and other outdoor activities.

In January, the Cumberland Trails Conservancy selected Savanna Keeton to serve as its executive director. Savanna’s involvement with the CTC

began in 2016 as a volunteer trail builder and led to her taking on the role of CTC office assistant in January 2022 which later that year, expanded to operations coordinator. She is wished the best of luck and much success in her new position. Although CTC has elected to focus its efforts on building and maintaining the Cumberland Trail, it remains supportive of the GET and closing the gaps needed to place the Cumberland Trail fully within the GET and considers the Hamilton County Working Group continuing its work as part of GETA to be the logical course.

(From Linda Hixon on March 16, 2023)

TN House Bill 0150, regarding State Scenic River designation of certain segments, located in the gorge, of North Chickamauga Creek, was passed by unanimous vote in the TN House today! Rep. Greg Martin joined Rep. Patsy Hazelwood, the bill’s sponsor, and co-signer Rep. Greg Vital as an additional co-signer. Next up will be a vote on the companion Senate bill, SB 0127, sponsored by Sen. Bo Watson and co-sponsored by Sen. Todd Gardenhire, and following its passage, transmittal by the Legislature to Gov. Lee for his signature.

I sent the personal “thank you” message shown below to the Hamilton County state legislative delegation today.

Plant Walkin’ on the Great Eastern Trail - Heather Houskeeper

I stood before a pond encircled in green. Like a mirror it reflected the nearby hillside plump with leafy trees and steeples of evergreen framed by blue sky. Amidst the grasses that engulfed my legs, stood waist-high milkweed, heavy with dusky pink clusters of fragrant five-petaled flowers. I was on the Great Eastern Trail.

To be honest, I’d found myself here by happenstance. I’d been thru-hiking the Finger Lakes Trail, beginning at its western end in June and followed a spidery route, twice heading north on two separate branch trails before returning to the

main trail and heading south on the Crystal Hills Trail, with which the GET coincides. It was now July, and I would head south to the New York/Pennsylvania border, before resuming my hike towards the Finger Lakes Trail’s eastern terminus. Although this hike was a good many years ago, eight to be exact, I still remember snapshots in vivid clarity.

I recall rolling meadows of knee-high daisies, wild mustard, and red clovers. I remember nibbling the spicy yellow tops of mustard, reminiscent of broccoli florets in texture and pinching just a couple

daisy heads, plucking the petals and letting them dissolve on my tongue. I remember a big ol' barn and thinking if it were to rain, surely, I could find shelter there. It rained most days on this long hike. I remember walking miles with new trail friends – the only other long-distance hikers I'd meet on this hike – one of which I've now come to hike many miles with over the years. I remember the hospitality and assistance of the GET vice president who assisted me along this section and gave me detailed directions so as not to get lost – I still did.

But the plants, oh, the lush botanical life that is to be found along this trail is overwhelming. In the woods, I tip-toed past the fuzzy pale green leaves of rattlesnake plantain, each veined in white. I brushed calves with the spikey crown-like seeds and golden flowers of agrimony. I peered into the urns of black trumpet mushrooms and wondered, at that time, if I had the courage to eat them. Now more knowledgeable, I would have plucked them for dinner in a heartbeat.

I more recently returned to the Great Eastern Trail at the southern terminus of the Mid State Trail in Pennsylvania to hike north to the Mid State Trail's northern terminus. It was there, on a lonely dirt road flanked with grassy wildflower meadows, that I'd last left the Great Eastern Trail. I began in late April amidst snow flurries and blowing wind. But the weather hadn't deterred the spring botanicals that peeked from stubby grass and bare limbs.

At my feet I found all the succulent greens a hungry hiker could desire. Chickweed, a crisp and juicy spring green, often deemed a lowly weed, lined creeks and padded mountaintops. I tucked it in cheesy pitas and dropped it in pots of noodles. Violet's heart-shaped leaves and flowering faces softened my steps and speckled my path in color. I sampled all I could. I found blue violet flowers were sweet, those of white Canada violet minty. The trees were adorned in blossoms. Sassafras, a tree perfect for not only root beer but a warming tea, stood along the ridges and craned twigs skyward, each tip splashed with yellow. Spicebush, relative to Sassafras, preferred creek-side and wore bracelets of tiny yellow blossoms around slender branches.

These twigs, too, made it into more than one cup of tea.

The weather warmed, and I carried northward, lured by catbrier's sour forking tendrils and the fragrance of wild lemon balm and catnip that grew along old grassy forest roads. I gasped at the sight of a few lone ginseng - the first I had ever spotted in Pennsylvania - and promised to keep its whereabouts

hidden. Sought after by foragers less mindful than myself, it is too valuable to pick, and could all too quickly find its demise. Pink lady slippers, and white ones too, rose from woodland path as did the nodding flowers of trout lily. These, too, I admired only, considered them a good omen to my travels, and hiked northward.

By the end of May, I approached the northern terminus. The stinging nettle, now grown tall, was irritating but all the easier for picking. I pinched leaves from stem doing my best to show no fear – they're less apt to sting this way – and dropped them in pots of steaming pasta and rice, along with the occasional oniony ramp leaf and mottled waterleaf. The once bare forests now glowed green. The striped maple leaves had come first, then all the rest, among them birch, oak, and hickory. Swaths of blue cohosh blanketed the forest floor and blue-bead lily and columbine peaked from between boulders.

And when finally, I strode that dirt road once more, reaching the signpost that marks the end of the Mid State Trail, I wished to just keep walking, following the Great Eastern Trail northward. Surely, I'd be welcomed by friends, both human and plant. But work and the responsibilities of everyday life now beckoned. Good thing, to the south, many more miles of the Great Eastern Trail unraveled, their botanicals lying in wait.

Heather's bio:

Heather Houskeeper, aka The Botanical Hiker, is an herbalist, long-distance hiker, and author. Beginning with a thru-hike on the Appalachian Trail, Heather has since thru-hiked thousands of

miles on lesser traveled long-distance trails. Heather is the author of three trail-inspired books about wild edible and medicinal plants and the Wild Food columnist for Dirt Magazine. For over a decade, Heather has guided others into the natural world through seminars, workshops, and plant walks, striving to deepen their relationship with the natural world and its botanical inhabitants. She has recently

launched the School of Plant and Place Connection, an in-person program offering herbal education in Milford, Pa. Learn more about Heather at: www.TheBotanicalHiker.com and www.SchoolofPlantandPlaceConnection.com

Socials @ The Botanical Hiker

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	84 miles
Tuscarora Trail	132 miles (now 125)
Allegheny Trail	41 miles (plus gap)
Appalachian Trail	21 miles
Pine Mountain Trail	44 miles (trail only)
Cumberland Trail	138 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 Mtn. 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.

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.

So get out and GET Hiking!

And report your miles!

Hikers and Total GET miles hiked

Jo Swanson “Someday”	1774
Bart Houck “Hillbilly Bart”	1774
Kathy Finch	1774
Steve Prescott	1735
Dan Bedore	1093
Mark Sleeper	1033
Stuart Hickey	915
Tim Hupp	875
Taylor Pannill	800
Ethan Oppenheim	774
David Oppenheim	774
Sue Turner	720
John Calhoun	632
Doug Schubert	619
Marcie Schubert	575
Lois Ludwig	561
Bill Shaffer	545
Dixie Rainey “Star Left”	495
Rick Guhse	437
John Stein	437
Laverne Beachy	398
Heather Houskeeper	397
Jim Sims	392
David Frye	386
Tom Johnson	382
Bill Amonette	370
Lloyd McAskill	321
Garrett Fondoules “Shepherd”	258
Meredith Eberhart	
“Nimblewill Nomad”	235
Burgess Smith	232
Zac Lawton “Hitch”	224
Marty Dominy	211
Warren Devine	205
Carol Devine	187
Nancy Ruggles	173
Jane Thompson	168
Sam Goldsberry	142
Christa Neher	130
Faith Schlabach	129
Thomas Coffelt	127
Shad Baker	124
Jeff Monroe	119
John Elwood	105
Michael Seth	97
Chad Churchman	97
Linda Clark O’Brien	90
Malcolm & Lynn Cameron	89
Mary Huffer	87
John Spies	71
Brian Hirt	71
Kathy Dickenson	54

Photo Gallery



North Mountain Trail with new GET sign



German River Road bend with 2 new GET signs



Rock City at Black Mountain on Cumberland Trail/GET



Bill Amonette, Doug & Marcie Schubert on Black Mountain



Brady Bluff view of Grassy Cove



From behind Stinging Fork Falls



Stinging Fork Falls



Devils Breakfast Table

Web addresses & emails:

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

GET Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GreatEasternTrail/>

GET Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Gethiking>

Email: GET Newsletter: Hupp_Tim@msn.com

Email GETA President Tim Hupp about Great Eastern Trail: Hupp_Tim@msn.com