



# GET Hiking

## Great Eastern Trail Newsletter

Volume 15, Number 1, April 2026

By Timothy A. Hupp

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

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## GET SIGNS REMOVED FROM CUMBERLAND TRAIL

In early 2025 most GET signs (the 4” diamond markers) were removed from the Cumberland Trail, effectively making the GET a “secret trail” along the Cumberland Trail. The signs were mostly placed by members of the CTC in agreement with a Memorandum of Understanding between the CTC and the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park, and a few by me after consulting then head ranger Bobby Fulcher.

But there have been a few changes. A directive from the state of Tennessee required new sign rules, and there were some unauthorized signs placed near trailheads along the Cumberland Trail, so the order was given to take down nearly all signs near the trailheads.

Plans are to replace the removed signs with new signs, but it is unclear at this time how the signs would be replaced. At this time the JPWCTSP has GET diamonds available to be replaced.

## 2026 Upcoming Events

MAY 14-17, 2026 – TRAIL CARE EVENT (Mid State Trail) led by KTA. Based at Ravensburg State Park.

MAY 17, 2026 - SPRING HIKE - .75MI  
 MEETUP LOCATION: Old Seeger Picnic Area  
 MEETUP TIME: 1:00 PM  
 OVERVIEW: **Loop** | This hike is for those with young families or those looking for an easy stroll through the forest.

HIGHLIGHTS: Alan Seeger Natural Area, traverse bridges crossing the Standing Stone Creek, slip through tunnels of Rhododendron.

HIKER PREP: Sturdy footwear, water, snacks. Hiking poles may be helpful. \*Please note hikers should be comfortable getting a little dirty as the trail can be wet in the spring. [Click here](#) for Strava Route.

JULY 11, 2026 - MAPLETON'S CELEBRATION HIKE - 7.2MI

MEETUP LOCATION: Mapleton Riverside Park

MEETUP TIME: 10:00 AM

OVERVIEW: **Out-and-back** | Traverse from Riverside Park through the borough of Mapleton, enter State Game Lands 071 and ascend Jacks Mountain to Windy Vista.

HIGHLIGHTS: Mapleton Riverside Park, Mapleton Borough, SGL 071, Windy Vista Overlook, Views of Scrub Gap, Industrial History Observation.

HIKER PREP: Sturdy footwear, water, snacks. Hiking poles may be helpful. \*Please note hikers should be comfortable getting a little dirty as the trail can be wet in the spring. [Click here for Strava Route](#).

JUNE 11-14, 2026 – TRAIL CARE EVENT (Mid State Trail) led by Tony Barr ([mongorides@gmail.com](mailto:mongorides@gmail.com)). Based at Tenley Park in Everett, PA.

JUNE 18-21, 2026 – TRAIL CARE EVENT (Mid State Trail) led by Pete Fleszar ([tioga@hike-mst.org/717-576-3112](mailto:tioga@hike-mst.org/717-576-3112)). Based at Hills Creek State Park, PA.

JUNE 25-28, 2026 – TRAIL CARE EVENT (Mid State Trail) led by Jason Davis ([Statecollege@hike-mst.org](mailto:Statecollege@hike-mst.org)). Based at Camp Mt. Luther, PA.

JULY 18, 2026 – TRI STATE FESTIVAL (Cumberland Gap, TN)  
Downtown Cumberland Gap, TN  
Exhibits of Long Trails (GET, Cumberland Trail, Pine Mountain Trail, Warriors Path, and Pioneer Trail) that pass through historic Cumberland Gap.

AUGUST 29, 2026 - SUMMER NIGHT HIKE - 5MI  
MEETUP LOCATION: Butler's Knob Shelter  
MEETUP TIME: 7:00 PM  
OVERVIEW: **Out-and-back** | A close group hike leaders will escort attendees along the SST to the Hall of the Mountain King to see the stars.  
HIGHLIGHTS: Unique Night Hike, Star Gazing, Campout location available.

HIKER PREP: Sturdy footwear, water, snacks. Hiking poles may be helpful. \*Required: Headlamp or flashlight [Click here for Strava Route](#).

AUGUST 30, 2025 - NIGHT HIKE AT BUTLERS KNOB (Standing Stone Trail)  
MEETUP LOCATION: Butlers Knob Shelter  
MEETUP TIME: 7:00 PM  
OVERVIEW: **Out & Back**, 5.69 Miles, Rocky Night Hike  
HIGHLIGHTS: Hall of the Mountain King, Throne Room, Butlers Knob Shelter  
HIKER PREP: Head lamp, Sturdy footwear, water, snacks. Hiking poles may be helpful. [Click here for Strava Route](#)

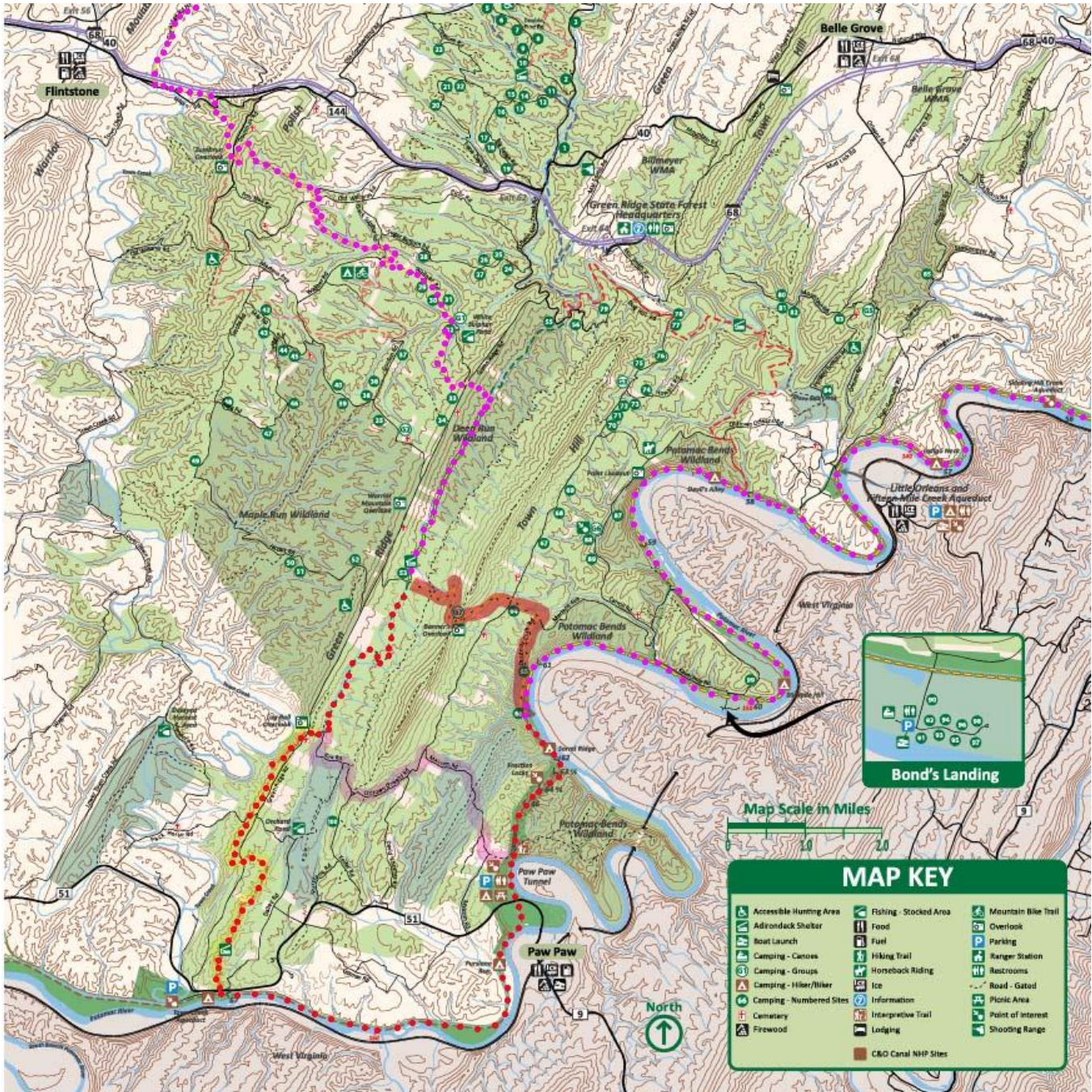
OCTOBER 11, 2025 - SST & MST COMBO HIKE (Standing Stone Trail)  
MEETUP LOCATION: Bear Meadows Natural Area Parking Lot  
MEETUP TIME: 10:00 AM  
OVERVIEW: Point to Point w/ Shuttle, 5.61 Miles  
HIGHLIGHTS: Bear Meadows Natural Area, Detweiler Run Natural Area, and Alan Seeger Natural Area.  
HIKER PREP: Head lamp, sturdy footwear, water, snacks. Hiking poles may be helpful. [Click here for Strava Route](#).

OCTOBER 17, 2026 - FALL HIKE - 5MI  
MEETUP LOCATION: Top of Jacks Mountain via Lucy's Furnace  
MEETUP TIME: 10:00 AM  
OVERVIEW: **Lollipop** | Follow the SST through the fern field, down to Smoke-Ums Spring to visit the newest SST campsite. Continue on the proposed Charcoal Trail to see former charcoal hearths and collier huts.  
HIGHLIGHTS: Smoke-Ums Spring Campsite, Historic Charcoal Hearths & Collier Huts, Shorb's Summit.  
HIKER PREP: Sturdy footwear, water, snacks. Hiking poles may be helpful. [Click here for Strava Route](#).

# Trail Updates

## Maryland

The Great Eastern Trail route through the Green Ridge State Forest and the C&O Canal Trail has been relocated, partly by encouragement of the people involved with the Tiltrock Loop. The Tiltrock Loop is the part of the Great Eastern Trail bifurcation in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the relocation is in the western route of the bifurcation.



The purple dots show the current and old GET route; red dots are the relocation. The old route is the orange highlighted line.

The relocated route is longer, but it replaces a 4.3 mile gravel road walk with hiking trail and the C&O Canal Trail. It adds a shelter and two Biker-Hiker Campsites. Also, it includes the Paw Paw Tunnel. The relocation includes 8.2 miles of trail within the Green Ridge State Forest and 8.4 miles along the C&O Canal Trail.

## West Virginia

### Allegheny Trail



The NEW Turner Shelter is open in Section 4 on Peter's Mountain. This is the first ALT shelter in Monroe County.

It is the second shelter on the GET portion of the Allegheny Trail, not far north of the Appalachian Trail.

**UPDATE:**

# Hang Rock Raptor Observatory



Hi Folks,

This mid-winter update on the Hanging Rock Raptor Observatory project comes to you from the small group of volunteers who have been working diligently over many months to coordinate the rehabilitation and re-opening of this most unique and beloved facility on Peters Mountain. We'll begin this report with a word of thanks to those of you who have expressed your support for our efforts via financial contributions, offers of assistance, and strong words of encouragement.

In spite of delays due to the holidays and winter weather, our team has met several times since last fall in Monroe County and elsewhere. Some on-site evaluation work has also been performed on the mountain to assess the structural integrity of the tower as well as potential emergency access routes that will be used for the construction work. Participants in those site visits have included professional engineers and architects, trail construction designers, building contractors, project administrators, and wildlife experts.

All of this effort is focused on developing a formal Scope of Work, Timetable, and Budget for the project. We have also been in direct contact with a variety of private funding sources who have expressed interest in providing significant challenge grants that will allow us to leverage the nearly \$20,000 that has been contributed over the past year via a simple grass-roots effort.

It's important to note that we are coordinating all of this due diligence with the staff of the Eastern Divide Ranger Office for the Jefferson/George Washington National Forest in Blacksburg. We are especially grateful for the high level of cooperation we have received from the Forest Service staff in that office.

To recap, while there may not have been much in the way of announced results in recent months, a lot of work has been taking place. We intend to provide a more detailed update in early spring once we get locked in on some of the funding and construction-related deadline.



## TuGuNu

The newly-opened 2-mile section of the Mary Ingles Trail by Bluestone Lake has been flooded repeatedly in the last two years, and it is no longer maintained. Officially, it is closed, although the trail grade remains, with flood debris covering parts. For now, the GET follows WV 20 from Hinton to the Bluestone Park Road. There is construction of the gates of the Bluestone Dam, and while this is going on, the lake cannot be drained as well during floods.

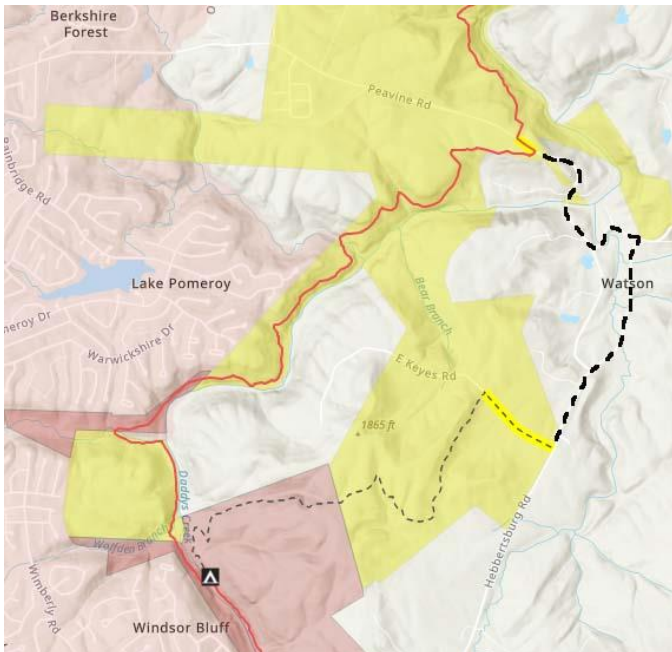
GET signs now mark the route through Twin Falls Resort State Park. About 5.6 miles of trail route passes through the Park.

# Tennessee

## Cumberland Trail

### **The Daddy's Creek Section is Open!**

The Daddy's Creek Section from Peavine Road to the Daddy's Creek Campsite is officially open, and we are excited to share it with you. This new stretch highlights some of the most peaceful forest landscapes and scenic ridgelines along the Plateau and adds meaningful mileage to the vision of a fully connected Cumberland Trail. Take a look at the official map and start planning your next hike through this beautiful new addition. See Other Updates for construction of this section.



The dashed line shows the old hiking route, including the road walk. A new bridge needs to be placed over Daddys Creek at the campsite. Until then, the creek will need to be waded.

### **Trail Closure**

The Cumberland Trail between Devils Racetrack and Eagle Bluff (2.26 miles) near Caryville, TN remains closed.

### **No Parking on TN 30**

No parking is allowed along TN 30 west of Dayton, TN. The Cumberland Trail crosses here with the Graysville Mountain section to the south and the newly opened Morgan Creek section into the Laurel-Snow Natural Area to the north. When I was there in April 2025, there were no signs other than the ones threatening to tow any cars parked along TN 30.

If you wish to hike from this point, please have someone drop you off there.

# Alabama

## Pinhoti Trail

### **Jogloma-Scott Lake Project**



Photo Credit: Mollie Kate Erwin, Alabama Forestry Commission

The Alabama Trails Foundation announced the successful installation of a new 60-foot steel pedestrian bridge at the Jogloma-Scott Lake site along the historic Pinhoti Trail. This significant infrastructure upgrade marks a major step forward in the Foundation's mission to improve safety, accessibility, and trail continuity for hikers traversing the Appalachian foothills.

The steel structure spans Dry Creek, near Jogloma-Scott Lake, replacing what was previously a difficult crossing for hikers with a new destination. The bridge ensures a safe, dry passage over the water, protecting the riparian ecosystem from foot

traffic erosion while providing a reliable crossing during high-water events.

The bridge was made possible through the support of the Alabama Trails Foundation, Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Power Company Foundation, Innovate Alabama, American Honda Motor Corporation, and the USDA Forest Service.

## Other News

### New Year, New Name - Same Mission

As we head into the new year, Cumberland Trails Conference is now **Cumberland Trail Conservancy**. Our new name better reflects our role supporting the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail State Park through partnerships, stewardship, and on-the-ground trail construction.

In our prior name, the word *Conference* captured our focus on bringing people together—landowners, agencies, volunteers, and advocates—to make the Cumberland Trail possible. Today, as the trail grows closer to completion and our work increasingly centers on caring for what has been built, supporting long-term stewardship, and finishing the remaining miles, we felt a shift to *Conservancy* better reflects who we are and where we're headed.

While our name has changed, our mission, our team, and our commitment to building this trail for the public remain the same. Thank you for being part of this next chapter.

### Construction on Daddy's Creek Section

The CTC is currently replacing a road walk with trail in the Keyes-Harrison Wildlife Management Area in the Daddy's Creek Section.

March 2025 was a highly productive month for the Cumberland Trails Conference, thanks to the

tireless efforts of our trail crew, dedicated volunteers, and the enthusiastic participants from Illinois State University's Alternative Spring Break program. Throughout the month, over 500 feet of new trail was constructed, including the installation of 58 stone steps, pavers, and several sections reinforced with crushed rock to create a durable trail tread.

In preparation for the Alternative Spring Break event, the crew spent an entire week clearing the corridor, removing thick mountain laurel, and marking sections for volunteer work. Their prep work paid off. During the event, the volunteers removed over 2,600 feet of duff and cleared more than 50 stumps, significantly accelerating the finishing process. In total, 28 students from Illinois State University and 9 local volunteers contributed their time and energy to the project. Their efforts will help us catch up on trail footage delayed by recent weather challenges.

April 2025 was a demanding but rewarding month for our trail crew as they tackled some of the Cumberland Trail's steepest, rockiest, and root-choked terrain. Over the course of several tough weeks, the team completed more than 1,895 feet of new trail.

The crew installed a total of **64 stone steps and numerous pavers**, carefully working through steep hillsides, dense root systems, rocky soil, and several boulder fields. Notable highlights included a tricky **40-foot boulder field crossing**, a small creek crossing reinforced with stone steps and pavers, and stretches of crushed rock tread to stabilize the path. In addition to building trail, the team also cleared **0.4 miles of dense trail corridor** through thick rhododendron and mountain laurel. Despite the slow, labor-intensive work, progress continues on this incredible section of the Cumberland Trail — and we can't wait to share the finished product with hikers soon.

A huge **thank you to our volunteers** who pitched in this month as well! On **Friday, April 11th**, three dedicated volunteers removed **75 feet of duff**, several stumps, and a large number of rocks at a section where the ASB volunteers left off. Their hard work and willingness to take on tough, hands-

on trail tasks make an enormous difference in keeping the trail moving forward. We're grateful for every hand that helps shape this trail.

## May 2025

Over the past month, the trail crew has made steady headway despite challenging conditions on the Cumberland Trail. Crews completed over 1,600 feet of new trail tread, carefully navigating rugged terrain, wet weather, and some tough natural obstacles along the way.

The work included the installation of 45 stone steps and pavers, along with more than 70 feet of crushed rock tread in wet and slippery sections. Several segments of trail passed beneath large, dripping bluffs where crews used paver stones and crushed rock to firm up the trail surface and improve hiker safety. In one particularly difficult stretch, two car-sized boulders had to be moved to clear the corridor, and a hammer drill was brought in to carefully shape a passage over a giant rock slab. The team also encountered an eerie patch of forest filled with standing dead trees, likely the aftermath of an old wildfire. This area demanded extra caution as crews worked to remove roots and thick layers of decaying duff while keeping a vigilant eye on unstable trees overhead.

Persistent rainstorms limited work hours on several days, but the team pressed on. They uncovered two fully running natural springs under a bluff, requiring heavy digging in muddy conditions and additional stonework to build a sustainable path through the saturated ground.

Through it all, the crew's determination and teamwork have kept the trail moving forward, overcoming each new obstacle with skill and grit.

## June 2025

It's been a tough but productive month out on the trail! Despite battling steep terrain, thick duff, dense laurel, and relentless summer heat, our hardworking crew made steady progress.

Over the past several weeks, 1,230 feet of new trail has been built, including 26 stone steps and pavers and 3 drain crossings.

The crew contended with thick duff, some as deep as 8-12 inches, and plentiful stumps, all while navigating the challenges of a heat dome and unpredictable afternoon thunderstorms on the plateau. To help ease the daily hike in and out of the worksite, a new access route was flagged and scouted, which should save valuable time and energy in the weeks ahead.

## July 2025

Throughout the month of July, the trail crew made steady progress through some of the most challenging terrain encountered so far, completing over 1,250 feet of new trail. Much of the work took place along steep, rocky hillsides and dense boulder fields, requiring intensive rock and stump removal to establish a safe and durable tread.

Crews installed nearly 100 stone steps and pavers to navigate difficult grades and stabilize the path, and multiple drain crossings were constructed to manage water flow. The team maneuvered through tight corridors between large trees and boulders to stay within property boundaries and avoid reroutes. One particularly demanding section involved paving an entire 50-foot boulder field by hand.

As the trail began its climb around private property, workers encountered areas where the corridor was not yet cleared and even had to remove a large fallen oak tree that blocked the way. The final week of July was marked by sustained heavy rock work through a 100-foot boulder field on a steep incline.

Despite the rugged conditions, the trail crew's persistence and skill continue to push the trail forward.

## August 2025

The trail crew made steady progress throughout August, completing a total of 1,153 feet of new trail despite challenging conditions.

This month's accomplishments included reaching and crossing Trail Branch, with corridor clearing extending 400 feet beyond the crossing. Along the way, the crew constructed 23 stone steps and installed stone pavers and crushed rock to stabilize tread in rocky and poor-draining areas. They also carried out finishing work such as repairing inslopes, resetting loose steps, clearing downed trees, and cutting back foliage. In addition, the trail was blazed between Peavine Road and Trail Branch,

preparing the area for final connections once bridge construction is complete.

Volunteer Tyler Flack joined the crew during one workday to lend a hand on the Trail Branch section, adding to the sense of teamwork and accomplishment. With the Trail Branch bridge nearly finished, the team is well-positioned to complete the final connections in the weeks ahead.

September 2025

### **Construction on the Bird Mountain Section**

September brought a mix of challenges and progress for the trail crew. Early in the month, the team cleared an access road, removing briars, debris, and even four bags of trash to make the trailhead safe and accessible.

Over the weeks, the crew completed more than 1,500 feet of trail, moving from old roadbeds to steep, wooded slopes. Along the way, they installed grade dips, stone steps, and pavers to improve drainage, removed large trees and countless grapevines in the aptly named “Grapevine Gap,” and dug deep cuts to create stable, full-bench trail tread. The old roads proved tricky, with ruts, rocky terrain, and evidence of boar activity requiring careful reshaping and drainage work.

Despite tough terrain and weather interruptions, the crew’s dedication paid off, leaving trails safer, more sustainable, and ready for hikers to enjoy once the trail is open. Each step brings the Cumberland Trail closer to its goal of a continuous, high-quality path from Cumberland Gap to Signal Mountain.

October 2025

### **Construction on the Bird Mountain Section**

Our trail crew has been hard at work over the past several weeks, completing more than 1,140 feet of new trail and installing 22 stone steps and pavers to improve stability and drainage. Much of the work has taken place along an old roadbed where the crew built sections that allow for better water flow and long-term durability. Highlights from recent weeks include the construction of a 25-foot crib wall across a wet drainage area and the careful placement of stone pavers to create safe crossings during wet weather.

As the team continues to move forward, they’ve transitioned into steeper, more rugged terrain that requires deeper cuts and precise benching. Despite challenging conditions and abundant downed trees, the crew has maintained steady progress, even clearing an additional 1,000 feet of future trail corridor. Their persistence and craftsmanship are shaping another impressive segment of the Cumberland Trail that hikers will enjoy for years to come.

November 2025

### **Lone Star Section Preparations**

This month, the team scouted over 5.5 miles of the future Lone Star section of the trail, documenting conditions, mapping access points, and tracking the route with GPS. With the corridor fully surveyed, crews now have a detailed plan for construction.

January 2026

### **Bird Mountain Section Construction**

Over the past several weeks, our trail crew has completed more than 700 feet of new trail on Bird Mountain, navigating steep sidehill terrain and building durable tread with stone steps, pavers, and reinforced drainage crossings designed to handle heavy water flow. The crew also cleared extensive corridor through dense vegetation and multiple blowdowns, setting the stage for continued progress.

When freezing temperatures made digging impossible, the crew shifted to a different section of trail, focusing on Alternative Spring Break preparation. This included clearing blowdowns and improving access along the trail to ensure the route is ready and safe for upcoming student groups. Even with winter’s challenges, the team stayed productive - building where they could and preparing where it mattered most.

### **Flagg Mountain Unveiled as Pinhoti Trail’s Official Southern Gateway**

**WEOGUFKA, AL** — A historic dedication ceremony took place last week on **Flagg Mountain** in Coosa

County, officially establishing the mountain's iconic stone tower as the southern terminus, or "Mile 0," of the Pinhoti Trail, including unveiling a survey marker highlighting the starting point. The event also celebrated water coming to the mountain, and revealed new signage that details the trails found both on Flagg Mountain and the full route of the Pinhoti Trail in Alabama.

### **A New Beginning for a National Treasure**

The ceremony, attended by state and local officials, State Forester Rick Oates, from the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC), Paul DeMarco, President of the Alabama Trails Foundation, and a cadre of dedicated Pinhoti Trail volunteers, marked another pivotal moment for Alabama's outdoor recreation community.

"Flagg Mountain is more than just a beautiful peak; it is now the definitive starting point of a 350-mile journey that links Alabama's wilderness to the Appalachian Trail," said Paul DeMarco. "This project is a testament to what we can achieve when we commit to preserving and improving our natural assets for public enjoyment. The heavy lift you see here today from the Alabama Forestry Commission has provided a real starting place for the Pinhoti Trail. Not just a sign at a trailhead, but a meaningful connection to our built environment, to our history as a state, and to the Appalachian Mountains on which we are standing."

### **Enhanced Hiker Resources**

A key highlight of the day was the celebration of a major infrastructure project: the successful installation of a Stewartville Water Authority extension to the summit. For the first time since the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed the tower in the 1930s, the facilities at the top of Flagg Mountain have **reliable, potable running water**. This improvement drastically increases the safety and quality of the experience for hikers, campers, and the caretaker who resides on the mountain.

### **New Maps to Guide the Journey**

To further support trail users, the event featured the official release of **new map signage** for both the Flagg Mountain trail system and the Alabama section of the Pinhoti Trail.

- **Flagg Mountain Day Map Signage:** A map of all the trails found on Flagg Mountain, highlighting mileage for each trail, the connections, and trailheads.
- **Full Pinhoti Trail Map Signage:** The Alabama Trails Foundation unveiled the latest iteration of the complete Pinhoti Trail map, incorporating roadwalks, shelters, and trailheads, providing a glimpse into the trail at the official starting point.

Officials expressed hope that the combined improvements will not only attract more visitors, boosting local tourism in Coosa County, but also serve as a strong base for the countless volunteer hours necessary to maintain the trail's beauty.

**About the Alabama Trails Foundation:** The Alabama Trails Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering the development of Alabama's outdoor recreation economy by assisting in the planning, development, and maintenance of trails.

**About the Alabama Forestry Commission:** The Alabama Forestry Commission is the state agency responsible for protecting and sustaining Alabama's forest resources for present and future generations.

# Hikes and Hiking Groups along the Great Eastern Trail

23 DAYS – 4/15 - 5/7/2024

## A THRU-HIKE ODYSSEY ON THE CUMBERLAND TRAIL

*Curtis Wasner thru-hiked the Cumberland Trail starting at Cumberland Gap and hiking south. Only the first 3 miles are open trail; beyond that he had to hike the ridge crest on Cumberland Mountain, sometime with old trail, sometimes without. After that he had trail to walk, but sometimes road walk. On some of the more dangerous roads he did get a ride. The last part of the hike, south from North Chickamauga Creek, is not part of the Great Eastern Trail. Here is what he wrote about his hike:*

The Cumberland Trail daringly traverses the narrow ridges, and dives without inhibition into the gorges of the Cumberland Plateau. The plateau is a demanding landscape; it remains one of the least populated regions in Tennessee. For good reason; the terrain is some of the harshest, unapologetically rugged and gloriously undomesticated. Yet, the plateau possesses a serene and natural beauty largely unmatched. The trail offers more vistas per mile hiked, more waterfalls per mile hiked, more interesting tales and history than perhaps any other long-distance trail east of the Mississippi River.

Struck by its very existence, traveling north to south from Tri-State Peak in Cumberland Gap to Signal Point near Chattanooga, I set out to thru-hike the Cumberland Trail. I connected the various

recognized sections with burdensome bush whacking and short sections of road walking. Over twenty-three days, hiking more than 325 miles; the experiences unexpectedly composed an epic odyssey.

I became enchanted by the rock formations, having been heaved up from the Earth's depths millions of years ago, the storm-gnarled trees somehow evading the 20th century axe, and the raucous creeks and rivers that danced sensuously down toward the bottom land. These are the individual threads of the plateau meticulously woven together creating a tapestry that enveloped me each day.

The Trail exacts a hefty admission price. The physical challenges are unparalleled. If I found myself off trail, the answer was almost always, "Go up, you'll find it". I was bitten by a feral dog; questioned by a zealous prison guard; and filtered water from muddy eroded ruts along an ATV track. I endured/welcomed multi-day stretches of no human contact and daily evaded serious contact with Poison Ivy.

Having jumped off the hamster wheel of everyday 21st century life - distant, cherished memories were evoked, spiritual revelations unfolded, and new boundaries for physical endurance and gritty determination were discovered.

Follow the chronicles, day by day, of this thru-hike odyssey on the Cumberland Trail. A crown jewel for Tennessee, and probably one of the state's best kept secrets.

## Mission Completed: Bushwhackers Complete The Cumberland Trail



The Cumberland Trail Bushwhackers- Chris Love, Jim Darr, and Pat Buckner-have achieved their ambitious goal to section-hike the completed Cumberland Trail (CT) segments by the end of 2025.

The group began their adventure in late December 2024 regularly hiking the completed CT segments through October 1, 2025, with a major goal of encouraging others to explore and experience the natural beauty as well as rewarding challenges of this trail. Information obtained at Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park indicates the CT is comprised of approximately 221 open trail miles with an additional 63 trail miles under development.

The CT Bushwhackers have logged a total of 374.76 CT Miles, exceeding the total Cumberland Trail mileage estimate of 284 miles- combined open trail and trail under development. Their total includes out-and-back mileage required of certain trails due to distance and parking constraints as well as CT connector and spur trails. The non-repeated portion of the total CT mileage was achieved through strategic planning and placement

of shuttle vehicles at key trail heads and parking areas. The hikers concluded their CT journey by completing the Upper Piney River and Laurel Snow-McGill Creek Segments.

Upper Piney River delighted the group with its numerous carefully laid paving stones and steps while the McGill Creek Segment provided a pre-Halloween show with what appeared to be Joro Spiders and their wire-like webs over overarching the trail. Chris marked the completion of the journey dressed as the beloved character, Father Mulcahy from the M\*A\*S\*H TV series.

The following is a breakdown of the Major CT Segments and corresponding mileage completed by the CT Bushwhackers:

Cumberland Mountain-34.20  
 New River-59.20  
 Bird Mountain-8.50  
 Obed Wild & Scenic River-48.70  
 Crab Orchard Mountain-23.90  
 Grassy Cove-42.60  
 The Falls-24.60  
 Piney River-33.05  
 Laurel Snow-24.91  
 Three Gorges-40.20  
 North Chickamauga Creek-21.40  
 Tennessee River Gorge-13.50

Total Miles-374.76

Memorable moments on the CT:

Jim: Relentless trail debris clearing earning him the trail name, Tasmanian Devil. A sudden confrontation with a rattlesnake on Arch Mountain while clearing debris; thankfully he was wearing snake gaiters. Losing prescription glasses while clearing trail on a Three Gorges Segment.

Chris: Trail humor in the form of various characters— Civil War Confederate Soldier, Sasquatch-Big Foot, Ghoulish Pete, Ghost of Davey Crockett, & Father Mulcahy from the M\*A\*S\*H TV Series. Also, jumping into North Chickamauga Creek fully clothed including hiking boots. Chris provided excellent navigation by keeping the group on track numerous times when unable to find trail markers and trail heads. He was always able to come through in a pinch, e.g., night-time.

### Cumberland Trail Sections Hiked:

Falls/Bruce Creek Falls, engineered in the 1980s to

prevent erosion from nearby Interstate 75.

The Frozen Head State Park Section proved to be physically challenging with an elevation change of approximately 2700 feet, summer heat, humid conditions, overgrown trail sections, and downed trees from a recent storm. Along the ridge line, the group was rewarded with the picturesque Mushroom and Castle Rock Formations. The descent through the park's shady campground was a welcome relief after hours of climbing.

The Cross Mountain/Frenchman's Grave Section is the highest mountain in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee, with an elevation of over 3500 feet. The exertion required for this long upward trek was challenging, but patience and persistence paid off with cooler temperatures and a breeze after conquering the ascent. Wildlife sightings were an additional bonus with elk and bear tracks found along the way, plus a family of wild boars and piglets foraging on the trail. Bushwhacking was required to traverse a particularly rugged section of the trail near Interstate 75 while a thunderstorm brewed overhead. Adrenaline was mustered as the Bushwhackers eagerly made their way to the trailhead parking lot before heavy rain enveloped the area.

Chris regularly demonstrates his navigational, logistical, and mapping skills by assisting in planning the Cumberland Trail adventures. Recently, he provided topographical map reading and baseplate compass training sessions to prepare the group for unforeseen challenging trail and wilderness survival conditions.

## July Update

The Cumberland Trail Bushwhackers- Chris Love, Jim Darr, and Pat Buckner-continue their ambitious mission to section-hike the entire Cumberland Trail by the end of 2025. Since the last newsletter, the trio has logged additional miles on the Cumberland Mountains Segment, including Devil's Racetrack, Eagle Bluff, and Tank Springs Sections, as well as the Frozen Head State Park and Cross Mountain/Frenchman's Grave Sections bringing their total miles to 266.86, with 198.01 of those being non-repeated.

The Cumberland Mountains Segment demonstrated the beauty of the area with some breathtaking views overlooking the Powell Valley with the towns of La Follette, Jacksboro, and Caryville below and the Cumberland Plateau and Smokey Mountains in the distance. Window Rock provided a unique lunch spot while the Eagle Bluff and Devil's Racetrack

Overlooks did not disappoint with their rugged rock outcroppings and views of the valley below.

Chris, known as the group prankster, executed yet another successful stunt. On the pretense of looking for a rock formation, he returned to the trail dressed as a ghoulish figure named Pete who had a wicked smile and mischievous demeanor. Laughter and praise followed for once again injecting trail humor with his antics. The downward trek to the Little Egypt area of the trail revealed the wonders of Triple Falls/Bruce Creek Falls, engineered in the 1980s to prevent erosion from nearby Interstate 75.

## Hiking through the wilderness area of Cross Mountain.

Pat: GI Jane (trail name) crawling under and over huge, downed trees on the trail and getting wet feet rock hopping across creeks. Also, good at spotting snakes.

Animal Sightings: 2 copperheads, 3 rattlesnakes, 3 unidentified snakes, elk herd, wild boar family with piglets, deer and box turtles, a wild goat, an otter, toads, squirrels, chipmunks, hawks, crows, and turkey buzzards.

Most Challenging Day: Night-time hiking in the wilderness of Anderson and Cross Mts - followed by a surreal night hike down railroad tracks, to a road march to trailhead, and then an hour drive to shuttle vehicle. 20 miler day

Temperature extremes – Brady Mt Feb icy conditions to 80 plus degree hike up Cross Mt in July.

Most Challenging CT Segments: New River Segment - Anderson, Cross, Arch Mts Sections plus Cumberland Mt Segment -Tank Springs to Devils Racetrack Section.

Most inspiring and unexpected meet ups on the CT Trails– Pete Bernsten Arch Mt & Shauna Wilson & Crew Peavine to Daddy's Creek New Construction.

The CT Bushwhackers are appreciative of the support and assistance of the Cumberland Trails Conference, Tennessee Trails Association Statewide & Plateau Chapters, and Friends of the Trails. These organizations have regularly published the trekkers' CT progress in their newsletters. The group is grateful for the useful information and guidance provided by the Cumberland Trails Conference Office Administrator, Savana Keeton, plus the exceptional trail building and

maintenance skills provided by Shauna Wilson & Crew

and trail volunteer, Pete Berntsen.

April 1-11, 2025

GETA President Tim Hupp, along with Doug & Marcie Schubert and Bill Amonette, set out to stay in Chattanooga, TN and hike the Great Eastern Trail in that area. This was mostly on the Cumberland Trail, including the Graysville Section and the Three Gorges Segment, plus a section in the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park. This happened in a rainy time, which enhanced the stream flow, so we were treated to many waterfalls along the way. We were also treated to many cliffs above us, some views, and nice bridges across some rocky creeks. But we had some question about the distances of the Cumberland Trail in the Three Gorges. The shortest distances were given on the State Park interactive map and their signs. The CTC website gave distances a little longer, but our phone aps gave greater distances. Estimates based on hiking time were longer yet. One section that was measured at 0.3 mile on the CTC website took us 55 minutes to hike. I know we are slow hikers, but really?

Bill had a swollen knee, and had to drop out of hiking on the third day.

Our trip included a visit to Ruby Falls, whose parking lot the GET goes through. We also had meetings with the Friends of Hixon and a meeting with Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly.



Doug & Marcie Schubert, Susan Crowell, Tim Hupp, Linda Hixon, Allen Miller at North Chickamauga State Park.

June 23-28, 2025

Hiking with Doug & Marcie Schubert, Tim Hupp completed hiking the Mid State Trail on a trip to northern Pennsylvania. Staying in Mansfield, PA, they day hiked the northern end of the MST, passing Cowanesque, Hammond, and Hills Creek Lakes. This was a mix of trails in public lands, some private land, and some road walks, mostly gravel roads.

If we had come a week later, we would have had clearer trails, as there was a Keystone Trails Association work trip covering this section. At one point we hiked through grass that was 8 feet tall! Fortunately, the trail was cleared by the end of the trip.

Doug and Marcie added 33.5 miles of GET (including 2.9 road walk in New York). Tim added a total of 40 miles (had to hike a section missed the year before).

August 8-15, 2025

*Lavern Beachy hiked north from Cumberland Gap, hiking the Pine Mountain Trail, the Pike Energy Trail, and part of the TuGuNu section, in Kentucky and West Virginia.*

Hey everyone, I am Farmer. I have been section hiking the GET for the last several years. This past summer, I hiked from Cumberland Gap, North to Justice, West Virginia. This is approximately a 210-mile section. It includes the Cumberland Gap Park, the entire Pine Mountain Trail, and of course lots of roads to connect everything together.

Okay, to address the elephant in the room, road walks. If you are the type of person that despises road walks, then this section isn't for you. However, if you are the least bit curious of how people in different communities live, then this is a great learning experience! Keep in mind this is Coal country. Walking the back roads and hollows of this region, tells the story of coal mining and how it affects people.

Now on to the fun parts! The route through Cumberland Gap Park was great. Lots of wonderful vistas looking out in multiple directions. Pine Mountain Trail followed the ridgeline of Pine Mountain through areas like Kentenia State Forest, Kingdom Come State Park, and eventually all the way north to Breaks Interstate Park. Lots of great views scattered throughout the entire length of the trail. Two that were really memorable to me were Mars Rock and Birch Knob.



Moon at Mars Rock on Pine Mountain Trail  
(photo by Lavern Beachy)

I would consider this section one of the most difficult, logistics wise. Far Out only covers about 30 miles of this section. For the rest of the route, it takes a lot of studying maps to figure out water and camping solutions. It is possible to hike this route without any outside help. However, it sometimes requires a 30 mile day to reach the next decent camping option.

So yeah, this section is a bit different than most of GET. However, it's quite the experience, if you take time to chat with the folks sitting on their porches along the route. If you get lucky you might even come across a lemonade stand along the road on a hot summer afternoon!

# VARIOUS NEWS ITEMS

## 2026 - Another Year of Alabama Trails!

Paul DeMarco, President, Alabama Trails Foundation Board of Directors



### To our partners, volunteers, and trail enthusiasts:

Looking ahead towards our work in 2026, we're also looking back towards what was accomplished in 2025. Last year remains a defining chapter for the Alabama Trails Foundation, and for trails in Alabama. When we look at the progress that has been made—from Flagg Mountain and the winding Pinhoti Trail to the waters of the Cahaba River—it is clear that Alabama is no longer just a hidden gem in the outdoor world; we are well on the way to becoming a premier destination.

Together with our partners, we worked tirelessly to elevate our state's trail systems to world-class status. This year, our focus remained steadfast: completing the vision for the Pinhoti Trail by enhancing infrastructure and working in Washington D.C. on an expansion of the Talladega National Forest, to celebrating the statewide Year of Alabama Trails project alongside the Alabama Tourism Department. Trails are more than just paths through the woods; they are the backbone of our rural economies and the heart of our community health.

The year 2025 will be remembered as a

transformative period for Alabama's outdoor landscape.

- **The Southern Terminus:** We officially dedicated the Flagg Mountain Observation Tower as "Mile 0" of the Pinhoti Trail.
- **Jogloma-Scott Bridge:** We completed a 60-foot steel pedestrian bridge at Jogloma-Scott Lake. (pictured above)
- **Year of Trails:** We visited 30 counties across Alabama, adding directional signs to trails that needed additional signage, and worked with the Alabama Tourism Department to promote the best trails across the state.
- **Celebrate Trails Event:** We partnered in Spring with the National Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to celebrate biking trails across Alabama with a group of national writers.

## 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	27 miles
Pine Mountain Trail	58 miles (trail only)
Cumberland Trail	175 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
Tim Hupp	1125
Dan Bedore	1093
Mark Sleeper	1033
Stuart Hickey	915
Doug Schubert	896
Marcie Schubert	848
Taylor Pannill	800
Lavern Beachy	784
Ethan Oppenheim	774
David Oppenheim	774
Sue Turner	720
John Calhoun	632
Lois Ludwig	561
Bill Shaffer	545
Michael Zidanic “Harpo”	535
Dixie Greer “Star Left”	528
Bill Amonette	448
Rick Guhse	437
John Stein	437
Heather Houskeeper	397
Jim Sims	392
David Frye	386
Tom Johnson	382
Lloyd McAskill	321
Justin Mullins	312
Garrett Fondaule “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	178
Jane Thompson	168
John Elwood	150
Sam Goldsberry	142
Christa Neher	135
Faith Schlabach	129
Thomas Coffelt	127
Shad Baker	124
Jeff Monroe	119
Michael Seth	97
Chad Churchman	97
Mary Huffer	92
Linda Clark O’Brien	90
Malcolm & Lynn Cameron	89
John Spies	71
Brian Hirt	71
Kathy Dickenson	54



Former CTC board member Neal Richardson, who served from 2015–2017 and contributed to trail design during the organization’s transition to independence, passed away on November 10 at age 78. An architect by profession, Neal is remembered for his dedication and support. He is survived by his wife Jeanne, their children, and grandchildren.

### Photo Gallery



Blanchard Creek Falls on Cumberland Trail



Purple Phacelia Flowers



View from Bluff Trail



Bluff Trail at base of Cliff



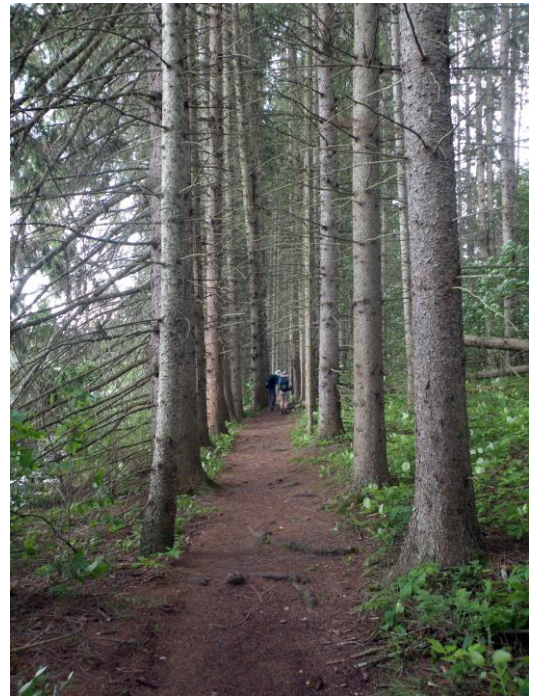
Big Soddy Bridge on Cumberland Trail (TN)



Mountain Laurel near High Knob (VA/WV)



Cowanesque Lake along Mid State Trail (PA)



Mid State Trail in Hills Creek Lake SP



KTA Work Trip on MST, June 2025



Mid State Trail in Private land (PA)



Cumberland Gap, TN from The Pinnacle



Ribbon Cutting for Northern Terminus of Cumberland Trail

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](mailto:Hupp_Tim@msn.com)

Email GETA President Tim Hupp about Great Eastern Trail: [Hupp\\_Tim@msn.com](mailto:Hupp_Tim@msn.com)