



February 2017

# THE KEYSTONE HIKER

Preserving Pennsylvania's Footpaths since 1956

Contact us: 46 E Main St, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 / 717-766-9690 / shaxby@kta-hike.org

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## MEMBER CORNER

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### Registration Now Open for KTA's Spring 2017 Hiking and Meeting Weekend



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### New Event!

### The Black Forest Trail Slackpack Thruhike!

May 19-22

Check the Events page on the website for information.

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### Keystone Trails Association Welcomes New Members!

Did you know that KTA is a membership-based organization?

Since 1956, we have depended on contributions from hikers and hiking trail advocates like you to help us achieve our mission of providing, preserving, protecting, and promoting recreational hiking trails and hiking opportunities in Pennsylvania.

KTA extends a warm welcome to our **210** newest members, who joined KTA between July 16, 2016 and January 15, 2017! Thank you to the following individuals and families for joining Pennsylvania's only statewide hiker advocacy organization:

Mark Beaver  
Lucille Cantwell  
David Walton  
David Webb  
Bronson Christopher Clark

Brittany Evans  
Lynn Fiery  
Matt Fiery  
Lisa Fogg-Evans  
James Henry

Robert Higham  
Laura Houck  
Matt Kurowski  
Samuel Lapp  
Ken Martin

Kristin Omlor  
James Patounas  
Abigail Pflumm  
Alexes Shelton  
Alyce Stiles  
Bryan Sullivan  
Michael White  
James Gradizzi  
Kelly Marsico  
Judy Mcelwain  
Deb Reis  
Fladmark Woodworks  
Piljo Yae  
Carlos Inacio, Jr  
Connie Monaghan  
James Tubay  
Ann Dybalski  
Cody J. Lewis  
James D. Lewis  
Brian Smyth  
Robert Middeke-Conlin  
John White  
Jill Galusky  
William Koontz  
Heather Sickinger  
Raymond Sickinger  
Carl Stauffer  
Erica Wood  
Jacob Benoit  
Matthew Bluske  
Avegail Borines Colegado  
Vincent Carrano  
Nicholas Ciprero  
Amy Ciprero  
Michael Dibiase  
Michael Fitzgibbons  
Tyler Gault  
Steve Gergely  
Colleen Gergely  
Mike Julian  
Grace Julian  
Karl Kuhn  
Melanie Kuhn  
Robert Martin  
Eric Miller  
Douglas Morgan  
Sean Otto  
Justin Smith  
Ron Sutton  
Douglas Abram

Christian Glotfelty  
Jodi Myers  
Stephen Nowak  
Michelle Rice  
Nate Seigel  
Nathaniel True  
Eric Wilkins  
Laura Heacock  
Julie Hunter  
Sheri Rothrock  
Glenn Stauffer  
Celeste Jones  
Howard Lenzer  
Rayanne Aiken  
Alex Galasso  
Matthew Lepera  
Carly Rose Snare  
David C. Smith  
Stephen Aldridge  
Mary-Anne Westfall  
Lori Kerr  
Dan Kerr  
Virginia Morin  
James Devine  
Rachel Schmid  
Louisa Amsterdam  
Robert Leverock  
Marybeth Lewis-Leaman  
Brian Mcpherson  
Shaun Thomas  
Anna Vandam  
Emily Hribick  
Joe Hribick  
Margaret Drake  
Andrew Evick  
Bryan Niederberger  
Ryan Shenck  
Dianne Franco  
Katie Mae Diller  
Kim Gibson  
Steven Holgate  
Janet Mason  
Lori Miller  
Tyler Seiverd  
Abigail C. Weidner  
Ryan Barr  
Leigh Anne Crouthamel  
Jonathan Frederick  
William Kreider  
Pamela Runkle

Christopher Callan  
Renee Callan  
Benjamin Hollinger  
Marissa Mckinley  
Terry Walker  
Andrew Weismantel  
David Bruce  
Timothy Coldren  
Carly Gable  
Rebekah Low  
Beth Schneider  
Ashley Betlock  
Jeremy Bryington  
Stacie Clune  
Omar Esh  
Daniel Howell  
Chris King  
Robert Kraiss  
Eric Loose  
Alicia Nademus  
Susan Neff  
Claire Piorkowski  
Dan Piorkowski  
Amanda Rosencrance  
Derek Vaughn Shaw  
James Walker  
Shanna Wiand  
Veronica Williams  
Karl Barrus  
Tracy Caldwell  
Tony Caldwell  
Erica Caldwell  
Helder M. Falacho  
Patrick Kinnier  
Kelly Kline  
Ki Mun  
Robin Ports  
Mike Rotkiske  
Caitlin Rotkiske  
Jonathan Sensenig  
Katherine Solitrin  
Brian Weismantel  
William Miller  
Timothy Wyant  
Christine E. Inman  
Doug Van Brunt  
Sherry M. Ferguson  
Linda Poluch  
Amelia De Chicchis  
Magdalena O'Brien

Scott Robinson  
Tom Schwarz  
Laura Turner  
Rhonda Hough  
Andrea Burns  
Dana Collingwood  
Richard Ford  
Sandy Beck  
Eric Durante  
Debora F. Follin  
John Lingenfelter  
Robert Mitchell  
Christopher Beiter  
Ashlee Smith  
Steven Adams

Alfred Fornicola  
Theresa M. Vitolo  
Diane Aiken  
Jack Peck  
Judith Gantz  
John Smith  
Fr. Charles Zlock  
John Cosenza  
Asuncion Arnedo  
Amy Neff  
Mark Hilliard  
Kimberly Bachman  
Steven Bachman  
Angela Cosenza  
Steve Dargitz

Jennifer Fowler  
Charles Frost  
Danielle Frost  
Frank Hoffman  
Dawn Kulbacki  
Donna Stolz  
Susan Weida  
Karan Pruszynski  
Louis Sabo, Jr  
Benjamin P. Ziegler  
Daniel Miller  
Kristi Miller  
Jennifer Kaye Runkle  
Christopher Wilson  
Sarah Wilson

KTA relies heavily on its members' dues contributions to fund its work in support of Pennsylvania's hiking trails. Hiking may seem free, but hiking trails are not a work of Mother Nature—they are built and maintained by people who care enough about hiking to devote their precious free time to ensure hikers can benefit from Pennsylvania's trails. Each year, hundreds of volunteers contribute thousands of hours of their time to building and preserving the state's trails. Volunteer programs like KTA's Trail Crew depend, in part, on financial support from people like you so that our committed volunteers can continue to keep your favorite trails accessible and safe. Join KTA today for only \$15—and make a difference in your neck of Penn's Woods!

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## **The KTA Board of Directors Held a Meeting on January 7, 2017**

The Minutes, the Executive Director's Report, and the Treasurer's Report are available to reference on the KTA website under "News."

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## **Notice to Council: KTA's Board of Directors has Recommended a Change to the By-Laws to be Approved in April by the Council**

The proposal will change the term of the president of the Board of Directors. "An individual may serve no more than three consecutive 1 year terms as president."

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## **Website Update! Thanks to Our Rock Star Volunteers, KTA-HIKE.ORG Gets an Upgrade**

Desktops and Mobile-Phones Welcome. Launching early February.

## Perks of Membership



Keystone Trails Association Members Now Enjoy a 10% Discount  
when they shop at Appalachian Outdoors in State College

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## YOUR HIKING ADVOCATE

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### Advocacy in 2017

by Joe Neville, KTA Executive Director

We believe KTA will face the following issues in the upcoming year:

1. A proposal that would allow political appointees to make decisions on Public/Private Partnerships such as golf courses, water parks, office buildings and hotels by allowing private sector development in State Parks.
2. Sunday Hunting – the Pennsylvania Game Commission and National Rifle Association are planning a “major push” to revise the law to allow more opportunities for hunters to hunt on Sundays.
3. A regulatory change that would charge ALL users of state gamelands (hikers, birders, dog walkers, trail runners, etc.) a fee to access those lands and trails.

We're announcing the launch of a new feature on the website:

### **Legislation KTA Is Following**

Stay tuned for breaking developments in our newsletter or, request to be added to the Action Alert network: send an email to [shaxby@kta-hike.org](mailto:shaxby@kta-hike.org).

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### **The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* Interviews Joe Neville**

[about the Allegheny National Forest proposing to open up some hiking trails to mountain biking.](#)

Update: KTA has taken a position opposing mountain bikes in Tracy Ridge.

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### **Tracy Ridge Project – MSTA's Letter to the Forest Service**

by Ed Lawrence, MSTA Volunteer and KTA Trail Care Chair

## Introduction

These comments on the Allegheny National Forest's "Tracy Ridge Shared Use Trail Project" proposal were submitted on behalf of the Mid State Trail Association in response to the proposal's 41 page Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA was itself developed by the ANF in response to public comments generated by the original "Scoping Proposal" which had set out the parameters of the project which would open sections of the currently 'hiking only' Tracy Ridge Trail System to mountain bikes. These comments are meant to bring to the attention of the Forest Supervisor the weaknesses, inconsistencies and contradictions in the EA, proposal and project.

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To the Attention of Forest Supervisor Sherry A. Tune:

### Tracy Ridge Shared Use Trail Project Proposal

#### Comments:

These comments are being sent to you on behalf of the Mid State Trail Association (MSTA), an all-volunteer organization dedicated to maintaining, improving, and protecting the Mid State Trail (MST) and the quality of the hiking experience that it provides for its users. The MST, Pennsylvania's longest and wildest footpath, is a Department of Conservation and Natural Resources designated 'hiking only' trail.

Regarding the Proposed Tracy Ridge Shared Use Trail Project, the MSTA opposes the Forest Plan amendment that would remove the bike prohibition and we oppose the recession of the 1994 order that prohibits bicycle use. We support Alternative No.1 / No Action.

We agree with the validity of the 2007 Forest Plan assertion that 'bicycle use is unsuitable' on Tracy Ridge Natural Recreation Trails based on the 1994 finding that 'the soils and topographic conditions of the area do not support' their use. The Proposal's Environment Assessment (EA) seeks to discount this finding by saying that 'no analysis has been found to substantiate these statements'. However, the EA also tells us that mountain bikes were known to be riding the area prior to the finding, and so we must conclude that there were sufficient problems with that use that triggered the prohibition. It is probable that on-the-ground trail conditions at the time prompted and corroborated the 1994 finding.

This also explains why the trails would have been in need of rehabilitation. We believe that deference should be given to the competence of this professional site specific assessment that would have been based upon direct observation. Prohibiting mountain bikes from using the Tracy Ridge Trails was a sound and correct management decision then, and remains one now.

The Proposal and EA consistently refers to these trails as being 'underutilized' by the hiking community as an underpinning and rationale of the proposal, but without supplying any benchmark standards or criteria for what would be considered optimal utilization for this area. Tracy Ridge's use levels are compared unfavorably with other hiking destinations in the National Forest but, again, without any context to determine if these other areas may, in fact, be being over-utilized. The proposal also glosses over the extent and degree to which use figures for these areas may be skewed by the presence of a trailhead bathroom. Sometimes more use is not ipso facto better use, from either a recreationist's viewpoint or a management perspective. The lack of a substantive use metric and analysis is a major failing to a proposal that then becomes premised upon a subjective, pejorative and nebulous concept of 'underutilization'.

What we do know about the Tracy Ridge Trail System is that in the 1990s it was, according to the EA, a 'magnet for day hiking and backpacking'. This description is supported by the Allegheny National Forest Hiking Guide put out by the Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club (Fourth edition, 1999) which says that the Tracy Ridge Trails get 'heavy' use. The EA also tells us that the Forest Service 'has not adequately maintained the system for a number of years', and that after being abandoned due to 'limited resources' use of some sections of the trail has reportedly diminished. It should not be a surprise that hikers would lose interest in those parts of a trail system that are not being adequately maintained. However, did the Forest Service ever reach out to hiking organizations before determining that the only salvation for Tracy Ridge was to open it to mountain bike use? The Keystone Trails Association (KTA), Pennsylvania's only statewide hiking organization, has had a robust Trail Care Program since 1985 that helps to maintain hiking trails across the state, but has never been contacted about partnering with the ANF to address the maintenance issues at Tracy Ridge.

The EA also consistently labels the Tracy Ridge Trail System as a prospective 'high quality' biking opportunity, but is it really? According to the EA, mountain bikers prefer a single track trail that offers 'variety', 'flow', 'slope', 'curve', 'technicality' and 'sinuosity'. However, in order to allay concerns about user conflict, the trail is described as being wide and flat, or relatively flat with excellent sight lines, or, elsewhere, as having a mostly gentle grade. The pictures of trail segments included in the EA also show a trail that does not conform with bikers' preferences. The EA further states that the machine built Jakes Rock Trail will have the sought after 'flow', as opposed to Tracy Ridge which is 'fairly flat' with 'rooty/rocky uneven tread' which, it says, makes it good for 'beginners and intermediate riders'. This hardly seems to be the constituency that this proposal was supposedly developed for or the type of trail riding these groups reportedly want. The EA also makes the claim that there will be little incursion on the North Country Trail because the trail sections that reach it will be signed as closed to bikes and 'not easily rideable by the casual mountain biker', but the 'casual mountain biker' is not going to be the problem and is not this proposal's targeted demographic. Experience shows that trail sections that are 'not easily rideable' are the very ones coveted by hard-core biking enthusiasts.

#### OTHER POINTS OF CONCERN:

Although the EA portrays, and downplays, shared use conflict and particularly the diminished quality of experience for hikers as a subjective he said / she said issue, its choice of the Morrison Trail, where bike use is described as being 'somewhat limited' or 'somewhat low', as the prime example of a shared use trail without incidents seems beside the point. The lack of user conflict complaints on the ANF can perhaps be attributed directly to the fact that, according to the EA, shared use trails have 'low bike use' or are 'not favored' for riding. Interestingly, the EA again uses the Morrison Trail as an example of a trail that does not 'show any additional wear from bikes', but why should it if it is seldom ridden? We agree that this Proposal 'will undoubtedly increase the potential for user conflict'. The EA is also quite clear in its bias prioritizing the experience of the mountain biker, although the biker's subjective desire for a so called 'remote backcountry feel' is never questioned or scrutinized. Hikers, however, who do not enjoy the experience of being jolted out of that ineffable mental zone that hiking can produce, by a bicycle bearing down on them are told, quite bluntly, that if they don't like it they are welcome to go elsewhere.

The EA states that the Proposal was 'carefully crafted to keep bikes off of the hiking-only North Country Trail', but, realistically, looking at the map, is a bike rider really going to ride 2 miles down the south leg of the Tracy Ridge Trail, coming to a supposed dead-end trail junction and then turn around? That is highly unlikely. Experience tells us that there will be a percentage of riders who will ignore any signage or 'education' in pursuit of the adrenaline thrill. For this same reason, some percentage of mountain bikers will not "stay on the trail corridor because it is the easiest path to travel" as the EA says it 'expects'. They will, in fact, do the opposite, and go off trail for exactly that reason. The EA also claims that the 'area will be monitored for compliance', no doubt with the same lack of resources that were used to maintain the trails to begin with. We believe that this Proposal

will not only 'increase the potential for bike trespass on the North Country Trail' but actually facilitate it, putting at unnecessary risk a section of the NCT that is 'highly valued' by the hiking community.

One of the prime reasons given for opening the Tracy Ridge Trail to bicycles is the need for a new source of maintainers. The EA suggests that the system will collapse unless the Proposal is implemented. It states that 'currently there are no organized groups that provide maintenance' on the 34 mile system of trails. Yet, two paragraphs later, it contradicts that assertion when it says that the 'NCTA chapter maintains the NCT portion' which accounts for about 1/3 of the system. Again, what outreach has the ANF done to hiker groups for assistance before concluding that mountain bikers are the only group that can save Tracy Ridge? Indeed, will mountain bikers even actually log-out down trees or will they simply build ramps to juice jumps like they do on other trails in Pennsylvania, turning the system into a biker friendly obstacle course?

In conclusion, and for the reasons discussed above, the members of the MSTTA believe that this Proposal should not go forward.

Thank you.

Edward Lawrence

President (Volunteer) Mid State Trail Association

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## MAINTAINER'S CORNER

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### It's Here! The 2017 Trail Care and Crew Schedule!

Before you go, please read out Trail Care and Crew page on [kta-hike.org](http://kta-hike.org) for helpful information and applications.

#### **April 28 - 30: Trail Care**

Black Forest Trail

Leaders: Jenn Ulmer / Donna Thompson

[hawk2373@yahoo.com](mailto:hawk2373@yahoo.com)

570-854-8316

Ruth Will Cabin at Pump Station Fire Tower

570-925-5285

Camp: Colton Point S.P., Group tenting area #1

#### **May 6: Code Orange**

Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center

Leader: Lisa Miller, Center Manager

[lisamill@pa.gov](mailto:lisamill@pa.gov)

610-796-3699

Meet: 9:00 a.m.

Camp: Fri./Sat. at French Creek S.P.

#### **May 30 - June 4: Trail Crew Week #1**

North Country Trail in Butler County

Leader: Dave Adams

[davenjean@zoominternet.net](mailto:davenjean@zoominternet.net)

724-453-1685

Camp: stay in Davis Hollow Cabin, or camp outside, cabin located in Moraine S.P.

#### **June 6 - June 11: Trail Crew Week #2**

Thunder Swamp Trail System

Leader: Ed Lawrence

[cathyed@frontier.com](mailto:cathyed@frontier.com)

570-925-5285

Camp: Resica Falls Boy Scout Camp

#### **May 19 - 21: Trail Care**

West Rim Trail

Leader: Ed Lawrence

[cathyed@frontier.com](mailto:cathyed@frontier.com)

#### **June 13 - 18: Trail Crew Week #3**

Chuck Keiper / Donut Hole Trails  
Leader: Tony Robbins  
tony.robbins.kta@excellservices.com  
570-437-0065  
Camp: Western Clinton Sportsmen's Association

**June 20 -25: Trail Crew Week #4**

Mid State Trail, Everett Region  
Leader: Deb Dunkle  
dhdunkle@gmail.com  
814-652-2227  
Camp: Tenley Park, Everett

**June 27 - July 2: Trail Crew Week #5**

The Baker Trail  
Leader: Dewaine Beard  
dewaineb@gmail.com  
412-719-9904  
Camp: Creek Bend Campgrounds

**July 7 - 9: Trail Care**

Mid State Trail, Tioga Region  
Leader: Pete Fleszar  
tioga@hike-mst.org  
717-583-2093  
Camp: Hills Creek State Park, Organized group  
tenting area

**August 4 - 6: Trail Care**

The Pinchot Trail  
Leader: Jeff Mitchell  
jmitchmitch@hotmail.com  
570-441-2952

Camp: Manny Gordon Picnic Area, Pinchot State  
Forest

**September 15 - 17: Trail Care**

Tuscarora Trail  
Leader: Ben Auer  
auer.ben@gmail.com  
608-772-1715  
Camp: PATC cabin at Little Cove

**September 29 - October 1: Trail Care**

Reeds Gap Spur  
Leader: Jenn Ulmer / Donna Thompson  
hawk2373@yahoo.com  
570-854-8316  
Camp: Reeds Gap S.P. sites 8 -14

**October 7: Code Orange**

Gifford Pinchot State Park  
W/ Friends of Pinchot S.P.  
Leader: Steve Stroman  
stevestroman@hotmail.com  
717-350-0437  
Meet: 8:30 at Quaker Race day use area off Pa. 177  
Camping available Fri. & Sat.  
Friends Group will host Sat. evening cookout for  
volunteers

**November 3 - 5: Trail Care**

Bucktail Path  
Leader: Rick Hiemenz  
mustardgarlic@hotmail.com  
814-706-8218  
Camp: Brooks Run Fire Tower Cabin

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## Trail Care 101: Workshop



Saturday, April 22, 2017 , 9 am—3 pm  
Whipple Dam State Park, Petersburg, PA

Join Keystone Trails Association for Trail Care 101

- Have you wanted to join a Trail Care, Trail Crew, or Code Orange but felt unprepared?



- Are you interested in finding a way to give back to the trails?
- Are you curious about why trails are built and maintained differently, in different places?
- Learn the skills, the lingo, the why and how of trail care, and the safety precautions you need to know to be a Trail Maintainer!

Tentative Trail Workshop Schedule:

9 am—12 pm: “Trail Care 101—The Open Classroom” taught by Ed Lawrence, KTA Trail Care Chair

- What are the projects, duties, and tools you’ll encounter at Trail Care, and how to handle them
- Do’s and Don’ts: Trail Care Leaders don’t all agree, but they can all be right
- What projects are planned for the 2017 Trail Care and Crew Schedule with KTA
- Judgment-Free Q&A

12:30 pm—3 pm: Hike around the lake for hands-on training and discussion of lessons learned.

- Apply what you learned in the morning as you see trails with new eyes, and get answers to all the new questions that arise.

Sign Up by April 14. Lunch included.

Visit our Events Page for the registration form, and mail with payment to KTA. Direct questions to [info@kta-hike.org](mailto:info@kta-hike.org).



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## Feed the Crew: Cooks Needed

by Ed Lawrence, KTA Trail Care Chair

If you’d rather ply a spatula than a Pulaski on a weeklong trail maintenance event, the Thunder Swamp Trail System work crew would greatly appreciate your cooking talents. Based out of the Resica Falls Boy Scout Camp from Tuesday, June 6, to Sunday, June 11, this crew week needs a cook. Nothing better than the smell of French toast and turkey bacon wafting through a campsite to get volunteers excited about rolling out into a sparkling Poconos morning. Contact [cathyed@frontier.com](mailto:cathyed@frontier.com) for more information about what it takes to put on the apron.

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## FOR HIKERS

**100-Mile Challenge Profile: Donna Stolz**

**Your full name:** Donna Beer Stolz

**Any nicknames?:** DB

**Your age:** 57

**Your hometown:** Originally from Northern Central Massachusetts, but have called the Pittsburgh Area home for 26 years.

**How long have you been hiking:** about 45 years

**What is your earliest memory of hiking?** Mount Monadnock in southern New Hampshire when I was less than 10 years old.

**Or most memorable hiking experience?** Hiking 170 miles of the Long Trail in Vermont in 2016. Did parts solo, but other parts with friends. Saw a black bear and a bull moose on the trail! Loved meeting people from all over the world, esp. on the part of the LT that was on the Appalachian Trail in southern VT.

**Why did you decide to take the 100-Mile Trail**

**Challenge?** Anything that gets me outside any time of the year makes me happy.

**What are some of the trails you plan to hike on to meet this goal?:** The NCT in Allegheny Forest, Laurel Highlands, The Baker Trail, the AT in PA.

**What is your #1 favorite hiking trail in PA, and why is it your favorite?:** I am on the Board of the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy and we oversee the Rachel Carson Trail, the Baker Trail and the Harmony Trail. I have lots of fond memories of the Baker and the Rachel. But I am really interested in seeing more trails in PA.

**What is your favorite thing about hiking?:** Nature. Birds, flowers, plants, bugs, animals, rocks, weather.

**Who is sponsoring you so far (friends, family, co-workers, hiking club, etc)?:** Family so far. Looking for other sponsors.

**How did you hear about KTA/ first get involved with KTA?:** The KTA is a “clearinghouse” for all PA trails. The go to place to find out what hikes/trails are available.

**Do you have any advice to new hikers?:** Make it your hike. If you want to learn bird watching, wildflower identification, figure out animal tracks, or identify all those so many mushrooms that pop up all year long, that is great. If you rather the hike be a mechanism for challenging yourself physically, that’s great too. Another option is to just enjoy quiet time with friends and/or family, and that in itself is calming. And don’t forget the seasons. A hike on a trail in summer will be totally different in winter or in early spring or fall. But remember, any one hike can be many things, so make it what you want it to be. There is no correct “way”, otherwise you won’t be inspired to get out on the trail.

**What is the one thing you’ll never hit the trail without?:** Tied: 3 things: Trekking poles, water, camera.

**Do you have a favorite nature/ hiking quote that you can share with us (either your own or someone else’s)?:** No excuses!



**Anything else you'd like to share with us?:** I am so appreciative that we have trails to hike on. I am committed to make sure we keep them for our children and our great, great, great grandchildren and beyond!

*(learn more about the 100-Mile Trail Challenge on our home page, [kta-hike.org](http://kta-hike.org))*

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## **Did you Hike a First Day Hike?**



Tell us your story!  
Share your pictures!

Jody Phillips, KTA and Berks Community Hiking Club member, submitted this picture from French Creek State Park's incredible turnout.

*Send all pictures and documents to [shaxby@kta-hike.org](mailto:shaxby@kta-hike.org)*

## **The Keystone 49: Peakbagging in Pennsylvania (Climbing the Keystone State's Beautiful Mountains and Vistas)**

by Jeff Mitchell

Check out Jeff's incredible list and take note when he's bushwhacking if you're planning to take his advice.

<https://endlessmountains.wordpress.com/2016/12/25/the-keystone-47-peakbagging-in-pennsylvania-climbing-the-keystone-states-beautiful-mountains-and-vistas/>

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## **Walk with Gantz: The Loyalsock Trail**

by Dave Gantz, KTA Board of Directors

*Dave recently dedicated himself to writing a monthly column about backpacking trails he's hiked in Pennsylvania.*

The Loyalsock Trail (LT) is a well-maintained, linear trail traversing approximately 60 miles of Loyalsock State Forest in north-central Pennsylvania. The western trailhead is on Route 87 northeast of Williamsport, Lycoming County; the eastern trailhead is just off Route 220 near Laporte, Sullivan County. Numerous side trails provide alternative hiking opportunities throughout the state forest. Backpacking the entire trail requires multiple days of consistent climbing and descending. The effort is worth it, though; the LT features several waterfalls and stunning vistas. The trail is maintained by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, along with volunteers from the Alpine Club of Williamsport and KTA. There have been several relocations and trail updates in the last few years. The main trail is now blazed with yellow discs with a red LT label.



Recently, my buddy Eriks and I enjoyed a 3-day end-to-end hike of the LT. Six o'clock AM Friday morning didn't come easy; hiking is free, but getting on the trail is not, and sometimes we hikers have to work hard to earn 3-day weekend adventures. Anyway, we started at the eastern end of the LT, which is backward in the eyes of most LT hikers. We thought it best to navigate the long shuttle drive on day 1 rather than day 3.

First lesson of the weekend—distinguish between the yellow discs with the LT label and the yellow discs with the X or XX label.

We learned this less than a half mile from the start. Second lesson—if you enjoy rocks, the Haystacks area is



really, *really* great.

If you don't know anything about rocks, the Haystacks area is still spectacular and could be an idea summer swimming hole. Third lesson—wear blaze orange. It's officially late fall in Pennsylvania when you have to yell over the sound of crushed leaves to talk while walking. The presence of armed humans hiding in the woods while wearing blaze orange is also a dead giveaway. Really, though, we saw about a dozen people on Friday, which was strange for us rural central Pennsylvania folk, but we managed.



We descended steeply into Worlds End State Park on Friday afternoon and climbed back out of the valley before dark. The elevation change was tough, but I'm glad that we got through it on day 1. The day ended at a nice, backcountry campsite just outside the state park boundary.



The fourth lesson—tough for me to admit—is to go the correct way. Yup, you guessed it—we started day 2 heading in the wrong direction. To our defense, though, we'd collectively walked over 2,500 miles in the previous 11 months, so mistakes will happen; plus we questioned our decision for a full half mile before consulting our trail guide and subsequently turning around. Day 2 (our second attempt) began with a warming climb, followed by a mellow road walk. Eriks and I didn't stop at the local watering hole, but I'm interested in hearing from any hikers who've visited it. We did encounter wonderful waterfalls and vistas in the afternoon. There are plenty of campsites all along the LT, so we didn't have a problem finding an open spot just before dark.



The wonderful autumn weather continued on the last day of the trip. The trail was still great, and we were still working hard to get to the vistas. This leads to the fifth and final lesson—the western side of the LT definitely has a lot of elevation change.



One advantage to walking westbound on the LT is the long, fun, final descent. Eriks and I hit this descent at dusk. I fell at least twice on the steep slope, but it was a good time overall. My car was still in the parking lot, and the motor turned on! Soon we were headed home, happy to have spent 3 more days on trail.



by Gerry Rowan

I was working on a big item from my bucket list. A summer off and spent on a grand tour of hiking, camping, backpacking, and fly fishing. The idea was to hook up my travel trailer in late May and not return home until after Labor Day. I left on a Monday morning in early June from my home in the Lehigh Valley, traveling north into the Poconos for a few days' stopover at Tobyhanna State Park. I took time to visit the nearby State Game Lands 127 to access Brady's Lake and hike behind the lake. One of the largest and longest-surviving beaver dams in the state is there. Every few years I make a pilgrimage back to the beaver dam, where I'll often sit along the shore to enjoy the placid setting—listening to the sounds of the woods and noting the wildlife gathering to take advantage of the pond.

My plan was to move every week to a new campground. Leaving the Poconos, I headed north into upstate New York, traveling through the Catskills and farther still into the Adirondacks. Then I headed southwest for a stop in the Finger Lakes region. The Corning Museum was on my list for another visit. From the Finger Lakes I traveled west to Presque Isle State Park, where I spent a week hiking and fishing. I used 2-man kayak—truck-topped during my travels—to fish the lake for bass. This was an old standby kayak—big and clunky yet stable on the water, with enough room for fishing tackle.

I had an overall plan but no schedule. Early each week I'd pack up the trailer and move on. Once in place, I followed my whims and the weather—doing day hikes, overnights, kayaking, and fishing as the situation presented itself. I also explored any towns I happened to travel through—sampling the local fare, shopping for food and camping necessities, and occasionally having a meal at an interesting restaurant.

I had planned this trip many times in my mind. Made a list of camping gear: tent, instant-up awning, cooking gear, sleeping bag, and the like. Carefully planning to keep the weight as low as possible. Everything would be packed into the truck cab with enough room for a large cooler. This was specifically geared up for the trip to Boundary Waters wilderness of Minnesota. I could part the trailer and head off into the Quetico wilderness.

This trip was among the big items on my bucket list—2 weeks canoe-camping and fishing at Boundary Waters. I arrived in Ely in the middle of my second month out, where I installed the trailer in a campground, picked up my canoeing permit, and rented an expedition canoe. My kayak couldn't hold enough gear for a 2-week trip. I shopped for supplies and arranged for a tow service to get up the lake in a hurry for the first 9 miles, kick-starting my trip. I followed my "flight plan" and stuck to the suggested schedule, moving on each day to the next campsite. That worked well. If you stay on schedule, you're unlikely to overrun or be overrun by other canoe-campers. It feels like you're alone in the woods, even though campers are in front of and behind you doing the same thing.

All in all, the trip was much better than I'd expected. Definitely a double or triple star on my bucket list. That long, slow paddle back down the lake on the last day was a sad trip. But it was time to move on. I skirted Lake Michigan and Chicago and headed into southwest Ohio. My destination was Barkcamp State Park, where the woods, streams, and landscape really made me feel I was home. I found the same mix of trees in the woods, as well as the same plants, flowers, and wildlife, as in Pennsylvania.

I spent a week there; then I headed east into my home state to Ohiopyle and the state park there. I was pleasantly surprised to find my campground site wooded, with plenty of shade. I had to skirt the town since the drive out of town up to the campground was too steep to haul a trailer. I unhooked from the truck, leveled the

trailer, dropped the outriggers, hooked up the electric, rolled out the awning, and I was set. By this time in my trip, I could do a setup in about 20 minutes. Now it was time to explore the town and do some food shopping.

The town and state park were the crown jewels of this trip. The Youghiogheny River; the Laurel Highlands; the hiking trails, whitewater rafting, and kayaking; the Baughman Rocks and Ferncliff Peninsula Natural Area; the stores and restaurants; the Frank Lloyd Wright houses of Fallingwater and Kentuck Knob—who could ask for more?

Where to start? Go on a whim, or make a plan? It made sense to do a little thinking. Crowds of people would seek whitewater rafting and kayaking, as well as the Wright houses, on weekends. So I made those activities weekday-only events and made hiking, fishing, and other activities weekend events. Local restaurants were lunch-only destinations—no crowded dinner scenes for me.

Every state park in the area seems to have the term *Laurel* in its name. You'll find names like Laurel Summit, Laurel Hill, Laurel Mountain, and Laurel Ridge on maps, and meandering through the area is the Laurel Highlands Trail. Naturally, the state flower—mountain laurel—is abundant in the area. In fact, there's a lot of both laurel and rhododendron in the forests there. I was too late to see the explosion of color from the laurel in bloom, but from the dried flower buds I could see that the display had been beautiful. I made a mental note to get back there in July when the rhodies were blooming.

The Laurel Highlands hike was a 4-day event—2 days out, 2 days back. It was late summer, and the days were hot and the nights cool. I was living on freeze-dried meals, turkey jerky, and trail mix. The trail was bristling with other hikers who were also determined to take advantage of a few final days in the woods before Labor Day. It was 2 days to the Grindle Ridge Shelter Area, then another 2 days back to Ohiopyle. The weather was pretty good, with only a single heavy shower in the late afternoon of the first day.

Sitting in camp one morning, waiting for the coffee pot to start bubbling, I hatched a plan. I'd kayak down the Youghiogheny to its confluence with Bear Run, pull my boat into the woods and chain it to a tree, and then hike upstream to Fallingwater. I bought a kayaking permit and paid to be ferried back to Ohiopyle from Connellsville. By calculating the time I'd need to reach Bear Run and then reach Connellsville, where I'd connect with the last ferry of the day, I saw that I had 4 hours or so for a stopover at Fallingwater. A bit tighter than I wanted, but I could make it work.

The plan was to sneak up on the house and see it in the setting it was meant to relate to. Bear Run meanders through woods and rhododendrons downhill to the river. The stream has cut its way into the bedrock over the millennia. What is just a mile by direct flight ends up being somewhere between a mile and a half to 2 miles of walking—much of it bushwhacking through the woods and around ledges carved by the stream. I crisscrossed the stream, picking the best route I could, and worked my way upstream. Soon I got my first view of the house.

There it was! Magnificent, light-colored slabs of concrete glowing in the midday sun. As I continued working my way upstream to the house, I navigated many ledges and other rock outcroppings. All were in a horizontal plane, and many were cantilevered out over the stream. Now here was a house. An extension of the landscape, it seemed. Discerning where the house started and the rock ended was difficult. The masterpiece of a long and distinguished career as one of America's most influential architects. It was the perfect way to see it—first from the ledges along Bear Run, then from the leaf cover of the woods. Coming upon the house while hiking



upstream puts the house above eye level, with the stream and falls an evident part of the experience. It all had the exotic feel of a religious experience.

I sat on a flat rock outcropping, absorbing the experience for a good 30 minutes, before moving on upstream and crossing over a small bridge to tour the house. It had just been recently reopened after a major restoration. The structure had been reengineered, and the paint was new and fresh. It looked pretty much as I imagined it would when the Kaufmanns owned it. I still remember emerging from the shade of the woods into the brilliance of a late-summer midday, with Fallingwater shining in front of me and the sound of water splashing over the falls.

During my 3 months of travel, I evolved a strategy. Mondays would be my travel days, with few people in the campgrounds, lighter traffic, and no line at the dump station. On Sunday nights, I'd make a big pot of soup and bake a loaf of soda bread in a Dutch oven. That would be dinner, with enough left over for lunch and dinner the next day. Breakfast would be coffee and toasted soda bread with butter and jam. If I were feeling particularly Irish, breakfast would be toasted soda bread and butter, a slice of cheese, and a Branston pickle. That way I would not have to cook on travel days. I had many lunches of soup and soda bread in rest stops; I'd pull in and park near a picnic table, where I'd sit eating lunch and watch the world go by.

When backpacking, I've taken to freezing soup in Ziploc bags, wrapping the bags in a camp towel, and packing them away in my backpack. When they thaw, they become dinner. Depending on the season, this means fresh soup for a day or so into the hike. Add in griddle cakes or Hoppin' John, and you'll have a substantial meal.

### **Recipe for Camp Vegetable Soup**

1 medium onion, peeled and quartered then sliced

1 large leek, well washed and chopped

2 carrots, peeled and diced

2 stalks celery, diced

3 tablespoons olive oil

3 or 4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped

Single 14-ounce can plum tomatoes, chopped with can liquid

Single 14-ounce can tomato sauce or 2/3 cup tomato puree

2 quarts small-sized pasta, any variety

8 ounces chicken or vegetable stock

8 ounces spinach, well washed and drained

¼ cup basil, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon oregano flakes, kosher salt, and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cooked rice, Parmesan cheese for garnish; hot pepper flakes on the side

Add the olive oil and onion slices to a soup pot and bring to a sizzle. Reduce the heat to medium low and sauté for 8 to 12 minutes or until the onion slices are lightly browned. Add the oregano, leek, garlic, celery, and carrots; then continue sautéing for an additional 4 to 5 minutes. Add the plum tomatoes, tomato sauce or puree, and chicken or vegetable stock. Bring back to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Add the pasta and return to a simmer. Cook for 10 minutes, stir in the spinach, and adjust the seasoning. Simmer until the spinach is wilted

and the pasta is tender; then stir in the basil. Place a scoop of rice in a bowl and ladle the soup over it. Garnish with Parmesan cheese and serve.

**Substitutions:** Single 4-ounce package frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry.

**Additions:** 3 to 4 heaping tablespoons tomato paste added with the plum tomatoes; single 14-ounce can white or cannellini beans, rinsed.

**Variations:** Add chunks of any mild white fish along with the spinach; drizzle a teaspoon of extra-virgin olive or Asian chili oil over the soup in the bowls.

### **Recipe for Camp Chili Soup**

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into ½-inch dices

1 large onion, peeled and chopped

2 or 3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped

3 tablespoons olive oil

¼ cup tomato paste

Single 14-ounce can fire-roasted, diced tomatoes

½ teaspoon ground cumin

2 or 3 tablespoons chili powder

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

1 bay leaf

1 or 2 tablespoons masa harina

2 quarts chicken stock

Add the olive oil to a Dutch oven and heat to hot. Add the chicken and sauté until lightly browned. Add the onion and garlic and continue sautéing until the onion is translucent. Make a well in the center of the chicken mixture; add the tomato paste, chili powder, cumin, and paprika; sauté for several minutes; and stir into the chicken mixture. Add the remaining ingredients and stir well. Bring to a low simmer and cook for 15 to 20 minutes or until the chicken is tender. Remove the bay leaf and serve.

**Substitutions:** Turkey (dark meat); beef, pork, or goat for the chicken; lard or bacon fat for the olive oil; sweet or hot paprika for the smoked paprika; corn flour for the masa harina; water, beef, or vegetable stock for the chicken stock.

**Additions:** Single 4-ounce can green chilies with liquid; single 14-ounce can white or yellow hominy, drained; single 14-ounce can red kidney beans.

**Garnishes:** Bottled hot sauce; sliced, pitted black olives; crumbled fresh cheese; chopped cilantro, tomato, green or red bell pepper, or hard-boiled egg; salsa.

**Camp Friendly:** Add the spices and masa harina to a small Ziploc bag at home. Substitute 2 bouillon cubes and 2 quarts water for the chicken stock (follow manufacturer's directions).

### **Recipe for Camp Mac and Cheese**

Single 14-ounce package macaroni and cheese dinner

Single 12-ounce can evaporated milk

2 quarts chicken stock

2 cups cooked ham, diced  
1 medium onion, peeled and chopped  
1 clove garlic, peeled and crushed (optional)  
2 stalks celery, diced  
3 tablespoons butter  
2 cups shredded cheese (cheddar, colby, pepper jack, Monterey jack, or Swiss)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Add the butter, onion, and celery to a large soup pot and sauté until the onion is translucent. If you add garlic, do so now and sauté for an additional 1 to 2 minutes. Add the chicken stock and bring to a rolling boil. Add the pasta from the macaroni and cheese dinner, stir, and reduce the heat to medium; then cook for 5 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients except the shredded cheese; then bring back to a simmer. Simmer for an additional 10 minutes. Add in the shredded cheese, stirring well; adjust the seasoning; and serve. Serve with a bottle of hot sauce on the side.

**Substitutions:** Water for the chicken stock; smoked chicken, turkey, or Spam for the ham; bacon fat for the butter; 12 ounces elbow macaroni and 8 ounces processed cheese food for the macaroni and cheese dinner.

**Additions:** ½ to 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper; 1 teaspoon thyme; ¼ cup chopped parsley or cilantro; single 4-ounce can roasted chilies; 1 to 1½ cups salsa stirred in at the end of the cooking process.

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## CLUB CONNECTION

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### Building the 2017 Club Calendar

Would you like KTA to promote your club/organization's major events with The Keystone Hiker, on Facebook, and on our website? It's a perk of membership. Please submit a list (ideally with date, time, location, link to web page) of only those events that the public should see, to [shaxby@kta-hike.org](mailto:shaxby@kta-hike.org).

Thank you and happy trails!

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### NCTA – Butler Chapter Sponsors Cherry Pie Hikes and Reenactments

When: Saturday February 25; 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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Where: Jennings Environmental Education Ctr. Junction of Routes 8 and 528

What: Select one of six 30-minute HISTORY hikes, Or one of three 45-minute NATURE walks, Or the 7-mile LONG hike.....and enjoy cherry pie (Donated by North Country Brewing, Slippery Rock)

How: Reserve your hiking spot early! Go to: [events.dcnr.pa.gov](http://events.dcnr.pa.gov), search "Cherry Pie"...Then select your hike.

How much: \$2 donation collected at the event

First hike starts at 9. Last hike departs at 1. Reservations a must.

Sponsored jointly by: Washington's Trail 1753, Butler Chapter of North Country Trail, Harmony Museum, Butler County Tourism, and Jennings Environmental Education Center

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## 2017 UPCOMING EVENTS

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*To learn more about each event, visit our home page to explore event listings, or the Trail Care and Crew page for the full schedule and more information. Thank you!*

February 25: NCTA Cherry Pie Hikes and Reenactments

**April 7-9: KTA Spring Hiking and Meeting Weekend - Ligonier**

**April 22: KTA's Trail Care 101 Workshop, Whipple Dam State Park**

April 28 - 30: Black Forest Trail Care

May 6: Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center, Code Orange

**May 19-22: KTA's Black Forest Trail Thruhike Slackpack**

May 19 - 21: West Rim Trail Care

May 30 - June 4: North Country Trail in Butler County, Trail Crew Week #1

June 6 - June 11: Thunder Swamp Trail System, Trail Crew Week #2

June 13 - 18: Chuck Keiper / Donut Hole Trails, Trail Crew Week #3

June 20 -25: Mid State Trail, Everett Region, Trail Crew Week # 4

June 27 - July 2: The Baker Trail, Trail Crew Week #5

July 7 - 9: Mid State Trail, Tioga Region Trail Care

**July 28-30: KTA's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Prowl the Sproul Hiking Weekend**

August 4 - 6: The Pinchot Trail Care

**September 9: KTA Trail Challenge 25k and 50k**

September 15 - 17: Tuscarora Trail Care

September 29 - October 1: Reeds Gap Spur Trail Care

October 7: Gifford Pinchot State Park Code Orange

November 3 - 5: Bucktail Path Trail Care

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## Newsletter Submissions

This newsletter is published monthly by Keystone Trails Association. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Opinions expressed are those of the listed authors. The Editor encourages submissions reflecting all viewpoints, but reserves the right to edit material. You are encouraged to submit material (even just a trail closing or care alert!) to the Program Administrator, Sara Haxby, at [shaxby@kta-hike.org](mailto:shaxby@kta-hike.org). The deadline for newsletter submissions is the 15th of the prior month. Submissions received after that time will be considered for the next month.