



## The Keystone Hiker - April 2020

---

### Member's Corner

### Hiking and COVID-19

Dear Hikers,

Exercise, fresh air, and nature are important to our well-being, but in these extraordinary times we need to take unusual precautions. We recommend that you get outdoors when it is safe and permitted, and ask you to avoid high-traffic trails. Choose a less-traveled trail and one that is near your current location to reduce your risk and slow spread of the COVID-19 virus to other people and to new communities.

Currently, state parks are open to “dispersed” activities like hiking, but their facilities are closed. [Find up-to-date information here.](#)

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy has asked hikers to avoid the AT because its recent surge in popularity has made social distancing too difficult. [Find those details here.](#)

If you’re looking for another trail, start with [KTA’s major trail finder](#). If you find a trailhead parking lot is full, consider hiking a less-used section or a side trail. [Maps and guides are available here.](#)

I hope this issue of the Keystone Hiker had found you safe and healthy.

May our state’s wonderful trails continue to benefit us all.

Yours for trails,  
Katie Barker  
President, Keystone Trails Association

---

### Kids Trail Ambassadors

Congratulations to Arlene, Esther, Isaac, & Lillian, on joining the [Kids Trail Ambassador Program](#).

Trail Ambassadors pledge to help KTA achieve its mission of providing, preserving, protecting, and promoting hiking trails in Pennsylvania by:

- Advocating for our trails (encouraging others to Leave No Trace)
- Caring for our trails
- Telling friends and family about nearby trails
- Encouraging others to take a hike
- Showing their Trail Ambassador card and spreading the word about why hiking trails need KTA!

Thank you to the young men and women who chose to help KTA protect Pennsylvania's hiking trails by becoming KTA Kids Trail Ambassadors!

---

## See Nature in the Best Light Possible

Nature is something that is best experienced up close and personal, with as unobstructed a view as possible. Hiking up a mountain on a sunny day to see the wilderness in all its glory is one of life's greatest pleasures. But the sun is not always our friend, especially when the trail changes. Moving between forested trails and open fields or hills can cause uncomfortable changes in light, making it difficult to not only immerse yourself in your surroundings, but also difficult to see the trail itself.



In the past, the only solution to this was to be constantly taking sunglasses on and off, or use slow photochromic lenses to help mitigate light changes. But now thanks to advances in material science, this is no longer an issue. Electrochromic auto-darkening eyewear, similar to photochromics but powered, can switch between light and dark states in seconds, making sure your eyes are always comfortable.

While not totally necessary, a set of auto-darkening sunglasses can really change your hiking experience, allowing you to see the world around you in perfect detail, without having to worry about changing light conditions.

But even among these new technologies, not all are created equal. There are competing approaches to electrochromic technology, with differing strengths and weaknesses creating different patterns of use.

- Metal-oxide electrochromics are the oldest (>50 years) technology currently available. Currently only present in planes and building windows due to their high power draw, these electrochromics are slow, inefficient and not durable. Decades have been spent trying to improve the technology, but to no avail.
- LCD electrochromics use liquid crystals to change color, similar to an LCD television. They boast almost instant switching times, but offer relatively poor visibility, poor contrast and substandard reliability, as the lens can only switch so many times before it gives out.
- Conducting polymer based electrochromics are the newest technologies available, using various electricity-sensitive color-changing chemicals to achieve the color switch effect. They are also capable of *creating any state of*

darkness in between the lightest and darkest setting. This set of technologies varies greatly, but currently offers the best overall performance.

The first pair of auto-darkening sunglasses using a new conducting polymer technology are FADES Sunglasses from AshChromics. Boasting a patented dual-polymer design and special voltage algorithm, FADES blow older technologies like LCDs and photochromics out of the water. A 2-second switching time, intermediate states of darkness, and all-week battery life make FADES stand out amongst the crowd.

FADES Sunglasses are available for pre-order now, and are shipping out on 4/13/20. Please visit [ashchromics.com](http://ashchromics.com) for more information. KTA members can save by entering the promo code *KEYSTONE* at checkout.



## Volunteer's Corner

### April Trail Care Events Cancelled

The scheduled Trail Cares on the **West Rim Trail** and **Alleghany Front Trail** in April have been cancelled in the interest of volunteer health and safety. We encourage individuals to do whatever trail maintaining they can in this period of limited group contact.

We will assess the situation going forward in mid April to determine the status of the May **Chuck Keiper**, **Black Forest** and **Mid State Trail Tioga Region** events. Please plan on attending but be aware of the latest updates on the KTA website or by contacting the designated leader. Give back to the trails that give so much to us.

---

### 2020 Trail Care Schedule

Visit <https://www.kta-hike.org/trail-care-and-trail-crew> for more info

- May 7 - 10: CHUCK KEIPER TRAIL**
- May 14 – 17: BLACK FOREST TRAIL**
- May 28 – 31: MID STATE TRAIL, Tioga Region**
- June 6: HICKORY RUN STATE PARK**
- June 11 – 14: NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL**
- June 20: GOLDEN EAGLE TRAIL**
- June 25 – 28: MID STATE TRAIL, Woolrich Region**
- July 9 – 12: LOST TURKEY TRAIL**
- Aug 6 – 9: MID STATE TRAIL, Everett Region**
- Aug 13 –16: PINCHOT TRAIL**
- Aug 20 – 23: THUNDER SWAMP TRAIL SYSTEM**
- Aug 27 – 30: THE DONUT HOLE**
- Sept 18 – 20: TUSCARORA TRAIL**

## More Volunteer Opportunities with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

(WPC volunteer opportunities are canceled through April 12, 2020)

**June 6:** Lower Elk Creek Nature Reserve (Erie Co.) – Trail maintenance/clean-up. The reserve consists of over 90 acres located on a major tributary to Lake Erie. The trail is a popular access route used by anglers.

**July 25:** Bear Run Nature Reserve (Fayette Co.) – Trail maintenance. Bear Run Nature Reserve consists of over 5,100 acres in the Laurel Highlands of SW PA. The reserve contains over 20 miles of hiking trails, as well as backcountry campsites.

Please contact Andy Zadnik to volunteer  
412-586-2318, [azadnik@paconserve.org](mailto:azadnik@paconserve.org)  
For more info visit <https://waterlandlife.org/>

## Hiker's Corner

### 2020 Photo Contest

The 2020 Winter/Spring Photo Contest is now open! Get your cameras ready in the new year and share the awesome views you find with us.

Submit your photos at <https://www.kta-hike.org/contest.html>

The winner will be announced in July and will receive a free 1 year membership and KTA hat.

---

### DCNR ATV Policy

DCNR released a [draft policy](#) that would rescind the moratorium on ATV trail development on State Forest land. KTA submitted the following letter in response during the public comment period:

March 24, 2020

Sec. Cindy Dunn, Secretary  
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
Rachel Carson Office Building  
PO Box 8767  
Harrisburg PA 17105

Dear Secretary Dunn:

Formed in 1956, the Keystone Trails Association (KTA) represents and advocates for the interests and concerns of the Pennsylvania hiking community. We currently represent over 44 hiking clubs and conservation organizations as well as thousands of individual Pennsylvanians who hike and enjoy the Commonwealth's outdoor resources. We are NOT an anti-ATV organization, in fact, many of our members own and operate ATVs on private lands, but we do oppose any expansion of the policy allowing their usage in our State Forests.

ATVs have a place on private lands such as farms, construction sites and logging operations. But as a recreational vehicle, they are incompatible with the aims of public resource ownership: the preservation of clean air, clean water, and wildlife habitat, as well as the facilitation of recreation that respects the carrying capacity of the resource. They don't belong on our state forests, unless used for search and rescue, for actions relating to the management of the natural resources, or in providing access for a person with a disability. Expanding their usage by adding trails or connectors flies in the face of sound resource management.

KTA's concerns are many:

1. Environmental degradation, increased sedimentation, erosion and harm to EV/HQ streams.

2. Personal liability – who pays for medical bills and property damage?

3. Sound/air pollution – state forests are a place users go for peace and quiet, to get back to nature.

**KTA recommends that DCNR develop sound polygons to evaluate impacts. Then protocols must be created around these polygons so buffers can be put in place to protect campers, hikers, equestrians, cabin owners, private property, etc.**

4. Enforcement and maintenance costs – DCNR currently does not have the resources needed to address either of these issues.

**KTA recommends funding be secured and maintenance plans developed BEFORE any consideration is given to expansion.**

5. Potential for negative impacts to private lands and trespass issues.

**KTA recommends law enforcement be secured and in place before any consideration is given to expansion.**

6. Potential impacts to our footpaths - ATVs make a mess of trails designed for other users. They ruin hiking, walking, ski and snowmobile trails by making them both dangerous and difficult for others to use. ATVs are not the only activity that creates an impact on the environment, but the impact of an ATV on a per-user basis is self-evidently disproportionate to other activities.

**KTA recommends funding be secured and maintenance plans developed BEFORE any consideration is given to expansion.**

**KTA recommends law enforcement be secured and in place before any consideration is given to expansion.**

7. Traffic Safety – ATVs on state forest roads raise a host of separate issues:

Consumers are told by manufacturers, the federal government, consumer and public health and safety advocates, and the ATV trade association that riding ATVs on roads is dangerous, but by changing its ATV policy, DCNR is sending a contradictory and dangerous message by legalizing ATV use on state forest roads. (See: Proposed DCNR ATV Policy pages 4-5) Further, other users may lose access if roads are closed to traditional uses.

**KTA recommends no state forest roads be opened for use by ATVs.**

Opening the door to further ATV expansion in our state forests, would be an unprecedented step, one which ignores the opinions of so many other users. We respectfully ask you to table this ill-advised policy change, return to the moratorium, and instead work to find other ways to expand ATV opportunities that keep our state forest heritage intact.

Respectfully,  
Katie Barker  
President, Keystone Trails Association

Joan Finger  
President, Batona Hiking Club

Rich McNulty  
President, Susquehanna Trailers Hiking Club

Robert Reiland  
President, Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

Susan Weida  
AMCDV Chapter Chair

Ed Lawrence  
President, Mid State Trail Association

Joseph F. Lombardo Jr.  
President, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club

Mary Soderberg  
Vice-Chair, Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park

Tom Torres,  
Executive Director, PA Sierra Club

---

## **KTA Store Updates**

The [online KTA store is still open](#) for your map, guide book, and patch needs. Orders will be shipped as usual and should be delivered within 6 business days.

### **[Loyalsock Trail Guide](#)**

20th edition. Updated in 2020 for the most recent and accurate information.

The scenic and challenging [Loyalsock Trail \(LT\)](#) runs roughly parallel to its namesake creek. The LT frequently climbs up and down ridges and mountaintops, passing many waterfalls, lakes, ponds, and historic places. The trail is known for its many fine vistas.



## Community Calendar

### KTA Events

#### Spring Board and Council Meeting

We plan to hold this year's Spring Board and Council Meeting remotely at the originally scheduled time: 3:00 pm on Saturday April 18th. Information about how to access the meeting will be forthcoming at <https://www.kta-hike.org/spring-hiking-weekend>. We hope that a representative of each member club and each representative-at-large will be able to join the meeting at that time.

---

#### Spring Hiking Weekend Horse Shoe Trail Slackpack

Cancelled

---

#### Allegheny Front Trail Slackpack - May 15-18

Hike the AFT in 1 weekend, with transportation each day between the trailheads and the cozy Black Moshannon Lodge.

Registration ends soon.

#### Old Logger's Path Slackpack - June 12-14

Hike the 28 mile OLP that follows former railroad grades, logging roads, bark trails, and other remnants of old industrial transportation

#### Allegheny National Forest - July 24-26

Spend a weekend in Pennsylvania's only national forest. Stay in Groves Lodge as you explore the many trails and sights of the ANF.

#### Trail Challenge - Sept 12

Join us on September 12th for a one-day hiking event spanning 50 (or 25) kilometers of trails in Lancaster County

#### Fall Hiking Weekend - Oct 2-4

KTA hosts a weekend in Cumberland Valley south of Chambersburg with hiking opportunities on the AT, Tuscarora, Standing Stone Trails, and more.

#### Barcelona and Andorra - Oct 8-19

A 10 day hiking trip in Spain featuring the Pyrenees Mountains, Barcelona, and Andora. Package includes hotel accommodations and air travel.

### **Black Forest Trail Slackpack - Oct 23-26**

Hike through the 42 mile BFT in 4 days with just a day pack. Stay in comfortable cabins at Pettecote Junction Campground.

---

---

## **Warrior Trail Association Public Guided Hike**

In conjunction with PA hiking week [the Warrior Trail Association](#) is leading a public hike. Meeting at our headquarters you will be shuttled to the trail head and with your guides enjoy some of Greene County's beautiful scenery along this ancient Native American trading trail. There will be shuttles to take you back to your car every one to one and one-half miles so you can tailor the day to suit you. So bring the family and friends and enjoy a day or morning in the woods. The trail is moderately difficult with some very steep areas. Long pants and sturdy footwear is recommended.

June 6th, 9:30am  
Meet:Warrior Trail Headquarters,  
1346 Garards Fort Rd., Waynesburg, PA 15370

For more information contact Frank at 724-998-1386

---

## **Cancellations**

To protect the health and safety of our members and help reduce the spread of COVID-19, KTA events have been cancelled through the end of April. Later events are set to go on as normal and will be reevaluated closer to the date.

Many events from member clubs and outside organizations have also been cancelled. Please check for the latest information from event organizers before attending.

---

## **WANT YOUR EVENT FEATURED ON THE COMMUNITY CALENDAR?**

KTA will promote your club/organization's major events through The Keystone Hiker, Facebook, and our website. It's a perk of membership! Just submit a list with date, time, location, and link to web page for only those events that the public should see, to [ktaadmin@kta-hike.org](mailto:ktaadmin@kta-hike.org).

---

## **Club Spotlight**



# Warrior Trail Association

---

Warrior Trail predates the European settlement of Pennsylvania by several millennia. It follows a path used for 5,000 years by Native Americans going to Flint Ridge, Ohio, for trading and conferencing. The route was first studied by professors at Waynesburg College in the 1930s. The path now carries Warrior Trail, offering a hike of great historical interest, as well as pastoral farm scenery and stunning rural vistas. This is not a wilderness trail and is not suitable for primitive backpacking, but it is unique for Pennsylvania, reminiscent more of a European countryside path than an eastern American forest trail.

---

---

## **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, Casey Schneck, at [ktaadmin@kta-hike.org](mailto:ktaadmin@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.

Please reference our **[Editorial-Style Guide](#)** while you compose your piece.