



The Keystone Hiker - December 2019

Member's Corner

Message from the President

Dear Fellow Hiker,

When you need to go for a hike to exercise, get away, or join friends, where do you turn? If you're like most of us at KTA, you'll end up on one of Pennsylvania's incredible hiking trails!

Why?

Because you know our trail system is outstanding and maintained faithfully by volunteers who, like you, support KTA's mission to provide, protect, and preserve PA hiking trails.

My 2020 goal, as KTA's new President, is to continue to preserve these treasured trails in their remote, natural, and accessible condition. We want you, your friends, your family and Pennsylvanians everywhere to have an opportunity to experience the beautiful outdoors today and for years to come. There are few better places where we can really appreciate our state than on its many, wandering footpaths.

As a supporter of our trails, please consider **a gift of \$50 - \$100** or whatever you can give. Your donation goes a long way to assist us in our trail maintenance and advocacy efforts.

With your support, KTA volunteers cleared and reopened the main loop of the Thunder Swamp Trail System, and received a Certificate of Appreciation for leading much-needed improvements in Hickory Run State Park. KTA also maintained some of the most inaccessible sections of the Mid State Trail, which was named the 2019 Trail of the Year.

You are the valuable piece of this organization that helps us do so much and makes Keystone Trails Association great. We're counting on loyal friends like you now more than ever!

Every day, KTA's mission is made possible with your support. We simply can't do it without you. Your support makes a real, lasting impact on the preservation and protection of our trails.

***I hope you can consider donating to help all of Pennsylvania's residents
enjoy the beauty of Penn's Woods.***

Yours in hiking,

Katie Barker

Katie Barker
KTA President

Welcome to the Board, Silas Chamberlain

Silas Chamberlin, a native of rural York County, Pa., spent the summer of 2003 as a college-student summer crew worker with the Adirondack Mountain Club. This accelerated his interest in hiking and trails and eventually led to his Lehigh University Ph.D. dissertation, which became the basis of the 2016 Yale University Press book *On the Trail: A History of American Hiking*.



Silas is an independent scholar who speaks and writes widely about current and past trail policy. He has led or participated in dozens of long-distance trail development projects and trail advocacy initiatives.

Support Trails with your Holiday Shopping

Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2111213> to donate a small portion of your Amazon purchases to KTA, at no cost to you.
Bookmark the link to use at checkout!

Hike Leaders Needed

Volunteers make much of our work possible. Hike leaders bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and camaraderie to our events, whether they're an expert on the trail or navigating it for the first time. Anyone can be a leader if you're a strong hiker and navigator and can keep a group happy and engaged out on the trail.

If you would like to be a hike leader for a Slackpack trip, Hiking Weekend, or other event, please [contact us](#).

KTA for the Holidays



Need a gift idea for a hiker in your life? Why not gift a [KTA Membership](#)? It comes with a subscription to The Keystone Hiker and a discount on maps, trail guides, and more in our [store](#).

Volunteer's Corner

Upcoming Trail Care

Stay tuned for the 2020 Trail Care Schedule

Trail Care Hours

Don't forget to submit your club's trail care hours for 2019. Volunteer hours are how we measure our impact and show the public, the media, and other organizations the important work of our members.

Send your 2019 trail care hours to Casey Schneck at ktaadmin@kta-hike.org or visit <https://www.kta-hike.org/volunteer-hours.html> for more info.

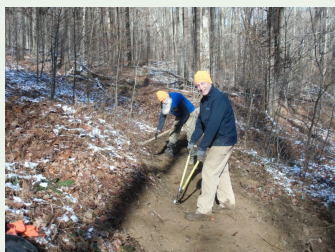
Snow on the Bucktail Path

Submitted by Ed Lawrence

Flurries were in the air for the last Trail Care of 2019. An inch of snow eventually accumulated in the higher elevations, but participants were warm and comfortable in the Brooks Run fire tower cabin with its stone fireplace and ample wood supply provided by Elk State foresters. On the trail, volunteers had to watch their footing as a combination of wet leaves and the layer of powder made for a sometimes slippery treadway, but that did not keep them from getting a good measure of needed upkeep accomplished.



Nine participants put in a total of 140 hours of work focused on the section of the trail between the Mowray access trail north to where the trail crosses Steam Mill Road. The corridor of this beautiful section that parallels McNuff Run had become overgrown with saplings and other intrusives, so a crew lopped out the entire section and a brushcutter was run where needed. Meanwhile, a crew of diggers rebenched sections of the treadway that needed to have the slope adjusted and widened. This section is now in much better shape than before the weekend work began.



On Sunday the crew lopped and cut blowdowns on the section off Ridge Road south of the fire tower. The crew ate supremely well in the evenings thanks to Tony Robbins bringing a pan of his 3 alarm Buffalo Macaroni & Cheese and fiendishly delicious Deviled Eggs and the culinary prowess of Donna Thompson and Jenn Ulmer who provided pulled pork on buns and chili. WoW. After dinner conviviality was conducted in a semi-circle around the flickering warmth of the fireplace.

Thanks to the following volunteers who shared a unique weekend of trail work and friendship: Tony Robbins, Wanda Shirk, Rick "Handlebar" Osthermer, Henry Bonson, Donna Thompson, Jenn Ulmer, Ken Baron, Tom Bastian and Ed Lawrence. We will be returning to this venue November 5-8 of 2020. It is never too soon to mark your calendar.

BEST. TRAILCARE. EVER.

Well, that was the opinion of at least one long-time KTA trailcare weekend volunteer on the last weekend of October.

Submitted by Wanda Shirk

But before we elaborate on that, here's your PA veteran-hiker Quik Quiz: Of all of Pennsylvania's long-distance hiking trails, where is the only place where two trails run together? Both trails are over 80 miles long, and they share 8 miles. Ready with your answer? Did you know it was the DHT/STS -- the Donut Hole Trail and Susquehannock Trail System? The October trail care worked on the shared section that is in the middle of each of those trails.



*Tom Bastian, Henry Bonson, Donna Thompson, Jenn Ulmer, and Buzz Russell.
Photo by Larry Holtzapple*

The project built on the energies of 21 volunteers. Formerly, Greenlick Run had to be crossed five times - from the Bobsled Hollow side to the Italian Hollow side, back east to the Bobsled side again, then west again, then east again, then making a final crossing to the Italian Hollow side on the west. All of these were wet crossings, sometimes fordable on rocks ... but after snow melt? Very possibly boot-soakers.

The fairly narrow Greenlick valley had offered trail -- old railroad grade, actually -- sometimes on one side of the run, sometimes on the other. Tony Robbins developed and engineered the plan to bridge the first crossing and then put all the trail on the west side with no further back-and-forth.

To summarize the weekend's work: Mission accomplished. One group of workers cut a large tree, made anchors and abutments on two sides of Greenlick Run, and with much maneuvering, manual labor, and cable work, secured the trunk to make the bridge. At present it still needs to be milled -- the trunk flattened on the top, with an "Alaskan chain saw" and ripping chain - and then a handrail will be added. This finish work is planned for spring.

While the bridge project was underway over two days, several other crews were at work in the area. One crew dug sidehill trail with pulaskis and Hazel hoes to bench in the new trail on the west side of Greenlick. A group of sawyers cleared blowdowns in Bobsled Hollow. Another crew updated the blazing in Bobsled Hollow and Greenlick Run, including new blazing on the new sections of Greenlick trail, and the blazes on the east side were browned out.

In short -- two trails, the DHT and the STS, saw major improvement.

However, what made the weekend the "best trailcare ever," or at least in a good while, was the great food and lodging that workers enjoyed. KTA and the STC shared the cost of renting Kettle Creek Adventures Lodge for the weekend, where workers enjoyed primo facilities with comfy beds, a couple cozy lounges, big screen TV, and even a pool table which some volunteers enjoyed in the evenings. The Susquehannock Trail Club provided hearty, hot breakfasts and abundant evening suppers -- big crockpots of chili, with salad and garlic bread on Friday night, and then bourbon mac-n-cheese, honey-mustard baked ham, and slaw on Saturday night. Homemade apple and pumpkin pies and other desserts completed the meals both nights. It was feast time, for sure, with the camaraderie of work time buckled to the joy of bright, cozy, warm, happy evenings.

Normally we would say, "Never put a pulaski in the hands of a first-timer. He or she will never come back!" But first-timers Rob and Tracy Golder, who brought lots of energy and enthusiasm to the task, derived great satisfaction

from building new trail in Greenlick Run, and Tracy paused in her work to say to Rob, "I love this!" One veteran remarked later that he hoped we didn't spoil Rob and Tracy by having them at the "Cadillac of All Trail Cares" for their first experience.

KTA volunteers included Tony Robbins, Tom Bastian, Jenn Ulmer, Donna Thompson, Rich Mumper, Kristin Joivell, Sharon Southall, and Rob and Tracy Golder. STC volunteers were Bill Boyd, Doug Wetherbee, Gary Russell, Buzz Russell, Tod Twichell, Mark Kelly, John Zimmer, and Dave Cardillino. Workers who are members of both KTA and STC were Kevin Busko, Henry Bonson, Larry Holtzapple, and Wanda Shirk.

Note to Ted Ligenza -- you are right, the Greenlick section is in Susquehannock SF.

D-15 thanks you for the orange paint. Some of it, at least, went on Bobsled Hollow trail, which is the boundary of Susquehannock and Sproul SFs.

Hiker's Corner

2019 Photo Contest

Pennsylvania's trails take us to gorgeous vistas, scenic forests, and amazing views. Share a bit of the magic you've captured on film this year by entering KTA's 2019 photo contest. Entries will be judged by KTA staff and made viewable to the public on KTA's instagram.

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

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

Letters to the Editor

The following letters are opinions by members - not the final opinion of KTA as a whole. See the submission guidelines at the bottom of the newsletter for more information or to submit you own.

Sunday Hunting Is Going To Happen In PA in 2020 And It Is NOT The Apocalypse For Hikers

Submitted by Jim Foster

The Pennsylvania Senate passed SB 147 on November 18, and Governor Wolf has said he will sign the bill into law soon. Among other changes, the new law directs the Pennsylvania Game Commission to permit hunting on Sundays starting in 2020. So, does this new law mean that hikers, bird watchers, and other non-hunters will be forced indoors on the Sabbath? Absolutely not!!!

Let me try to talk my fellow hikers back from the ledge with a few facts. First, the new law will only open hunting for just three Sundays each year. The law directs that one of these will be during rifle deer season, one will be during archery deer season and one will be on another Sunday. The PGC will select the three Sundays and announce them. Of course, that means that on 49 Sundays during the year there will be no widespread hunting in the Keystone State. I say "widespread" because, believe it or not, hunting is currently legal on Sundays in PA. Coyote, crows and foxes can currently be hunted on Sunday, although these are not very popular game species.

Second, Pennsylvania has been an extreme outlier when it comes to Sunday hunting. Now that PA is going to allow widespread hunting on some Sundays, only Maine and Massachusetts remain among states with an extensive ban on Sunday hunting. Delaware approved extensive Sunday hunting in 2018. Virginia approved it in 2014. West Virginia approved Sunday hunting on public lands in 2018.

It IS safe to hike, birdwatch, etc. in the woods with hunters. Non-hunters in 47 states already use the woods with hunters on Sunday. The vast majority of hunters are extremely careful with firearms. There are almost no recorded instances of a hunter shooting a hiker. Almost all hunters had to take a hunter safety course before they could get a license. Don't believe the stereotype that all hunters are gun toting fools.

It is a good idea to take some precautions when enjoying the woods with hunters. I follow a simple rule when hiking on a State Game Land or other woods where hunting is permitted. I wear some blaze orange. I don't worry about what game is in season, I always wear a blaze orange hat or vest. There is always some game species that is legal to hunt in PA. Also, even I decline to hike on SGLs at certain times. The best example is the popular two-week regular firearm deer season, which starts right after Thanksgiving. Even then, I don't feel especially nervous, if I have blaze orange on. But I enjoy the solitude of the woods, and there's not much solitude during that period.

Beyond the subject of safety in the woods, I want to point out that most hunters are environmentalists too, and you have a vested interest in their continued viability. Why is that? Many of our best hiking trails are on State Game Lands, in whole or in part. That includes the very popular Appalachian Trail. These precious wild spaces are protected and maintained by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Who provides the funding for the PGC's extensive protection operations: hunters, almost entirely. The lion's share of funding for the PGC comes from hunting license fees and an excise tax on firearms and ammunition, commonly known as Pittman-Robertson. The PGC uses these funds to protect countless wildlife species, many of which are NOT hunted by sportsmen. And, that doesn't even count the amazing work done by hunting environmental groups like Ducks Unlimited.

So, here is my message to my fellow hikers and other non-hunter lovers of the outdoors. Don't hide inside on Sundays. Get a blaze orange hat and vest and enjoy the outdoors just as you have in the past. If you happen upon a hunter in the woods, ask her or him if they've had any luck. Who knows, maybe one of them will give you some venison steak. Trust me, it's really good.

Jim Foster is a retired attorney who thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail several years ago. He is a life member and active maintainer with Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Keystone Trails Association, Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club and several other trails organizations. He serves on Governor Wolf's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation. He lives with his wife in suburban Harrisburg.

Community Calendar

KTA Events

[Spring Hiking Weekend - April 17-19](#)

Join us in Wellsboro for a weekend of hikes and history at the historic Penn Wells Hotel. Choose from a variety of hikes, easy to rugged, long or short, in and around the beautiful Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania

Horse-Shoe Trail Slackpack - April 22-26

A 5 day excursion to hike 76 miles covering half of the HST without ever pitching a tent. A second trip will tackle the other half, but you are welcome to join us for just one or both.

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.

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.

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.

Eagleton Trail Challenge

April 11th, 2020. Millhall PA

A 50km, 25km, or 10km trail race taking trekkers through the scenic, historic Eagleton fields in Sprout State forest. Total event registration limited to 250 participants. Registration closes March 7th.

Event hosted at the Sons of Italy campground, located off of Rt120W approx 6mi outside Lock Haven. Family-friendly event. Come for the trails, stay for the famous post-race food & festivities. Event info at www.runemctc.org

Trail maintenance equipment sponsored by Dotterer Equipment, Mill Hall. Timing provided by Falcon Race Timing.

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 info@kta-hike.org.

Club Spotlight

Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

The Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), volunteer-based organization dedicated to the development, protection, and promotion of hiking, biking, and walking trails throughout western Pennsylvania.

The goals of the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy include raising awareness of the benefits of community trails, getting more people interested in physical

activities, getting more people to experience the beauty of our region and the natural world, and helping people see our region as active and vibrant. Join us in our efforts and help make a difference!

The organization meets monthly in Cranberry Township, PA and has many opportunities for volunteers willing to contribute their time. From meeting with local officials about trail development and protection to participating in a trail work crew, creating newsletter or web content, communicating with the press, or volunteering for the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge, the possibilities are as varied as the backgrounds of the people involved!

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. 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.