



SUSQUEHANNOCK HIKER

Winter 2021

On Foot in Potter County...God's Country



PO Box 643 • Coudersport, PA 16915 • www.stc-hike.org • info@stc-hike.org

The purposes of the STC are to build and maintain trails, aid in the conservation of wetlands and wildlife, and promote good fellowship through the medium of hiking and nature study.



Photo by Curt Weinholt

Cherry Springs Fire Tower Cabin

2020 in Review: A Banner Year for the STC

By Wanda Shirk

Perhaps never before in its history, and without doubt never before in this century, has the STC had such a productive year! At least half a dozen remarkable achievements have made 2020 notable with record-breaking accomplishments. These highlights include a new high number of volunteer hours on the trail, the posting of mile markers, the re-routing of the Hogback

section, the establishment of three FKTs on the trail, a new arrangement with forestry for the STC to lease the Cherry Springs Fire Tower and Ranger Cabin, and the nomination of the STS for DCNR's 2021 Trail of the Year designation.

Trail Maintenance: Volunteer hours for trail maintenance in 2020 totaled 3023 hours, which is double the usual number of reported hours and a third more than the previous record, set in 2018. (See Bill Boyd's report on page 7.)

Mile markers: Orange discs purchased from Voss Sign Company of Syracuse, NY, were placed around the trail in April and May. The 4" circles say "MILE" at the top and "STS" at the bottom, with large numerals in the center. Hikers enjoy spotting them to note their progress and to compare their location on the ground with their maps and guidebooks. The markers also help trail maintainers locate blowdowns or other problems reported on the trail. Extra "Mile 84" discs are available for \$5 (plus \$1.50 for postage). They make good souvenirs for anyone, especially circuit hikers. They can be nailed where they will bring back memories or can be used as coasters for drinks.

Reroute: One of the biggest problems of the STS for over 50 years was the Hogback Trail section, which posed three undesirable obstacles. First, there was the section around mile 16 that was always marred by foot-sucking muddy stretches that resulted in what hikers decried as unavoidable "muck foot." There was no way to rehabilitate this stretch, short of perhaps constructing many yards of puncheon. Narrow sidehill that needed hours and hours of benching for remediation was a major difficulty in mile 17. The final problem, right before crossing Hogback Run at mile 17, was a meadow where tall grasses, goldenrod, and various weeds grew up every summer and completely obliterated the trail, with no trees to blaze through in the meadow crossing. Hikers often struggled to find the trail in mid to late summer, and clearing the meadow required a hike of almost two miles each way carrying the unwieldy brushcutter, so that usually didn't happen.

The re-route of miles 15.3 to 17.8 is on the Bolich Run Trail, which parallels the Hogback Trail, about 200 yards east of the Hogback Trail. The BRT is a lovely, wide, grassy, fairly level forest road, lined by tall trees. It will be a joy to hikers, whereas the Hogback Trail was often described as the part of the STS which hikers liked least -- or maybe even despised. Larry Holtzapple and Doug Wetherbee deserve a lot of the credit for the reroute, with help from section maintainer Mark Kelly. The new trail section is virtually identical in length to the original and did not require mile marker changes around the trail.

FKTs: No one ever attempted to set or post an FKT -- Fastest Known Time -- record on the STS prior to 2020, but with many endurance competitions shut down for the

year, top trail athletes set out on their own on many trails to test their mettle. GPS logging these days makes verification of these solo efforts possible, and the FKT website describes trails and gives the records for three categories. For supported runs, the jogger/hiker is met at intersections by friends or family who supply water, food, changes of shoes or clothes, and other needs. For self-supported runs, supplies can be cached ahead of time at locations near roads. For unsupported runs, the trail runner must carry all his food, drink, and clothing changes for the duration. Records established this year were logged by Koloman Erway for supported (27 hr, 22 min), Bob Stewart for self-supported (42 hr, 58 min), and Jason Wish (31 hr, 12 min).



Photo by Curt Weinhold

Trails which are poorly blazed, overgrown, and laden with blowdowns and debris are not fun for any hikers, and especially not for people trying to complete feats of endurance. When we knew in advance about an FKT attempt, our maintainers knocked themselves out with extra trips carrying chain saws and brushcutters to make the trail as clear as possible.

Cherry Springs Ranger Station: The Cherry Springs Fire Tower and ranger cabin just off Rt. 44 at approximately STS mile 13.8 is one of the trail's many historical features dating back to CCC days, like the dynamite storage building at mile 10.7. The STC rehab'ed the "D-Mag" (dynamite magazine) several years ago: Joe Allis put on a new door and added a deck, Vinny Rose did some re-pointing of the bricks, and Larry and Doug cleaned the place up and built a fire ring and benches. This year, the STC was given a new offer from DCNR - the Cherry Springs ranger site.

In the past, a Coudersport boy scout troop leased and maintained the Cherry Springs fire tower property and ranger cabin. The scouts were no longer interested in doing the maintenance work or bearing any associated expenses. Their scout leader, Gary Buchanan, has been an active STC member for four decades, and he proposed that the STC take over. The arrangements will

require the STC to maintain the Mt. Brodhead trails in the area as well as the ranger cabin, but in return, we get use of the cabin and grounds. Any STC member interested in using the cabin can contact STC president Wanda Shirk to make arrangements. The cabin has electricity, a stove, a microwave, a refrigerator, a fireplace, a wood stove, a comfy recliner, and a bunk bed. There is no water, but the outhouse is very clean, with white-painted interior and hand sanitizer.



Photo by Curt Weinhold

In the long run, the forestry department wants to restore the cabin to what it would have been like for the ranger in the 1930s. Presumably, this will mean removal of the electric appliances and the recliner, and when the restoration takes place, the property will revert to forestry. The STC's lease-type arrangements will be terminated at that point. However, the money for the forestry department's restoration project is not in any budget in the foreseeable future, so we expect to enjoy perhaps a decade or more of use of the cabin and grounds.

Trail of the Year: In November, newsletter editor Dave McMillan put all the many puzzle pieces together to submit a lengthy application to DCNR for the STS to be considered for 2021 Trail of the Year. Part one of the application required 300 word essay answers to half a dozen questions about things like the history of the trail, maintenance procedures and objectives, community involvement, and goals. Club officers wrote the required responses. Part two asked for letters of support for the trail. We got non-profit support letters from the PA Lumber Museum, Friends of Ole Bull State Park, and Friends of Lyman Run State Park. Business and community support letters came from the Susquehannock Lodge, Kettle Creek Adventures Lodge, and the Kettle Creek Outdoor Association. Ginny Musser, Kevin Busko, Kristin Joivell, Daryl Warren, and Bill Moon wrote hiker endorsements, and Bill Boyd and

Wanda Shirk wrote letters from the volunteer maintainer and club perspective. Finally, the application included about a dozen photos to support the nomination.

We will know some time in January whether we get the "Trail of the Year" honor. We have without doubt the best application for a hiking trail, but the state has many fine rail trails, such as the Pine Creek Rail Trail in our area, and many other rail trails in other parts of the state, not to mention park trails and city greenways of various sorts, so we do not know what our competition could be like. Pennsylvania has many great trails. We are hopeful, but if we do not get the nod this year, we will re-apply every year until we do. We all know the STS deserves it! There is not a better long-distance loop trail for hikers and backpackers anywhere else in Pennsylvania!

Welcome New Members

- Heidi Opperman, Boyertown, PA
- Troy Heckman, Boyertown, PA
- Arthur Veilleux, Belmar, NJ
- Jason Wish, Bellefontaine, OH
- Barb Miller, Westfield, PA

New Circuit Hiker Award Recipients

1227 Robert Farrell

1228 Erina MacGeorge

1229 Kevin Hunninen

1230 Kristen Hunninen

1231 Brent Edwards

Spring Circuit Hike Series

By Wanda Shirk

Two people have indicated interest in a series of hikes to complete a circuit around the trail. Although we will not have indoor meetings for the foreseeable future, hikes are outdoors, so we can set them up for a small group. Participants should be aware that shuttles or car-spotting will require sharing space in a vehicle with a few other people, presumably wearing masks for that distance. Anyone interested in joining such a hike series should email Wanda Shirk (wshirk49@outlook.com) to be put on a contact list for information. Hike dates will be established in the spring to accommodate both the weather and the schedules of those interested. Anyone interested in just particular sections -- such as needing to hike the Hammersley or other trail segments to complete your circuit log -- should also let Wanda know of your interest. This will be a great way to get out in the spring and to get the coveted STS circuit hiker status!

Kids on the Trail

By Wanda Shirk

Our hearts have gone out to the world's youngest generation in this pandemic year. Schools and many camps and clubs closed, and children were often confined for days or weeks in confined areas. A lucky few, however, were introduced this spring and summer to the Susquehannock Trail System. We smile to see boys and girls in our forests, hoping that the trails we provide, protect, preserve, and promote will be enjoyed by generations to come. *Cheers* to the dads and moms, aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas, and just plain "grown-up friends" who took kids to the trails this year. Here are a few of the 2020 "Kids on the STS."

* June Caldwell took her granddaughter Maddy for hikes on the Ridge Trail, the first mile of the STS. Maddy was really happy to make it to Mile Marker 1. Counting the four-tenths mile of access trail from the parking lot, the round trip was a substantial 2.8 miles -- quite a hike for a 5 year old!



Maddy Photo by June Caldwell

* Lori Szymanik, STC recording secretary, took her friend Heather's daughter, Baylee Hazel, on several hikes, which included Ridge Trail to Lyman Run Road (seven miles) and Cherry Springs Fire Tower to Short Run Rd. (five miles). Baylee, age 11, wants to do more hiking and camping on the STS.



Baylee & Lori Photo by Lori Szymanik

* Allan Reed, of Mansfield, took his grandsons Allan (age 13) and Jack (age 11), of Ulysses, on five STS hikes, averaging over seven miles each. They started on Denton Hill and completed the STS as far as Young Woman's Creek at the southern crossing of Twelve Mile Rd., mile 37. Grandma Vonda Reed facilitated the hikes by dropping her husband and their grandsons off at each day's starting trailhead and then meeting them at hike's destination. They all camped at Ole Bull State Park for five days and nights, taking advantage of the free camping available to STC members during our August camporee, and hiking every day. Grandpa and the boys are definitely planning to finish the trail and become official circuit hikers!



Allan & Jack Photo by Allan Reed

* Chad Rugh and April Castano have done trail work on many sections of the STS: carrying a chain saw up Cardiac Club or out the White Line Trail, running a trail mower in to Spook Hollow, and carrying a brush cutter and loppers in to clear heavy laurel east of Shephard Rd. in the Green Timber Hollow area. Other times they've showed up to help scout out the new shelter site at Bolich Run and to cut sluice pipes to the 12' lengths needed for the road drainage on Footbridge Camp Lane. Their son Henry, age 6, has been going along, picking up feathers and leaves and other little treasures, or toting his sword, and learning how to work while he absorbs the pleasures of the forest and trails. Chad and April -- and Henry! -- also hosted the STC for our July 4 meeting at their lovely stream-side home this summer.



Henry Photo by Chad Rugh

* Bill Moon first hiked the STS circuit with his mom when Bill was a high schooler. Now Bill is dad to Billy Moon, and uncle to Charlie and Cooper Eskesen. Bill and his brother Joe Moon took Billy and their nephews (sons of their sister Jess) on an adventurous three-day, two-night back-packing trip from Denton Hill to Ole Bull State Park. The 8 and 9 year old boys all earned KTA's "Young Hiker Award," given to children under age 12 who hike 25 miles some time during a year. Bill and Billy have another overnighiter planned on the STS for October, and next spring and summer the whole group plans to continue their progress around the circuit.



Cooper, Billy, Bill Moon and Charlie Photo by Bill Moon

* Tom Oliver is the recreation forester for Tioga State Forest and a prize-winning lumberjack who has competed and performed with axes and saws in events from Potter County's Woodsman's Carnival and Barkpeeler's Convention to statewide and regional competitions. Tom and Lori Szymanik have just purchased the former home of the STC's past president and secretary Wil and Betty Ahn, along Rt. 6. Tom and Lori took Tom's son Asher Oliver on his first backpacking trip this September, and the six-year-old made it up over the Twin Sisters Trail to the Hammersley Pool and back again the next day. If you hike into the Hammersley and see trees that were cleared with an ax, "Bob Webber" might come to mind --- but no, this year that expert work was done by Tom. YAY!



Asher, Tom & Lori Photo by Tom Oliver

Bill Moon provided a support letter for the STC's application for Trail of the Year that we thought we should share. Ed.

I first hiked the Susquehannock Trail System in 2002. I was 14 years old and wanted to hike the trail with my best friend who was moving away from the area. We were exposed to the trail and the adventures it offered by Wanda Shirk, our high school English teacher. Her tales excited us and brought to our imagination visions of all it had to offer. Needless to say, we were underprepared and overpacked - while physically we were in good shape the 50+ lb. packs on our backs only allowed us to complete a short section of the trail. Later in the summer my mother and I were able to complete the trail as she had also wanted to experience the trail for herself. It was one of the best memories I have ever shared with my mom and I know she loved the experience as well! I remember hiking the last day of the trail with her in two pairs of heavy hiking socks and no shoes. It was the most comfortable my feet had been after 6 days on the trail.

Now I am grown and have children of my own. In such a fast-paced world that we live in that is dominated by screens I wanted to find a way to share with my 9 year old son my passion for the outdoors. This past summer I hatched a plan to hike a portion of the Susquehannock Trail System with my brother, my son and my two nephews who were also 9. I dusted off all my old equipment and started taking my son on long walks. We started with a half mile and before the trip we were up to 6 miles with packs. I typed up a document for all the boys to sign and called it "Adventure Quest" and had them pledge to do their best on the trail and to help out their team. Our group started the trail at the Northern Gateway and spent 3 days and 2 nights on the trail. The boys fell into step quickly and often took stops to eat berries they found along the way. They all enjoyed being the trail blazer and took turns leading our group on the winding trail through the trees. While being a leader they loved watching for the blazes and mile markers often saying they thought certain miles were longer than others. The STS is such a well maintained and marked trail that they never had a problem staying on the trail or navigating its turns.

Some of their highlights included staying at the TNT shack that the Susquehannock Trail Club had refurbished for weary hikers. There was also a rustic checkers set at the TNT shack that the boys enjoyed

playing on in the evening while we cooked supper. They enjoyed the meandering trail on the side hills, that I affectionately called "Goat Paths" - and held my breath as the boys teetered on what seemed to be the edge of the trail. I learned to relax on the trail and let the boys experience it and they maintained their sure footing and didn't take any spills. They loved looking for frogs and crayfish at the water crossings, while my brother and I enjoyed resting on the benches along the trail that the STC had installed to honor their members. The boys also enjoyed swimming under a bridge and got a huge kick out of it when several ATVs went by and saw us stripped down to our underwear trying to dry off in the sun. They also enjoyed the river crossings where the STC has constructed log bridges over some streams and at other larger crossing they have more intricate cable suspension bridges put into place - the boys loved the log crossing while their uncle and I enjoyed the ease of the suspension bridges. Regardless of the type of water crossing suspension bridge or log, these are a welcome sight for older hikers hoping to keep their feet dry and young boys who love to balance and jump on bridges. Scratching their names in the trail logs when we came upon them, I think gave them a little boost of confidence along our journey and was another highlight of our trip. Their biggest accomplishment was completing the trail to Cherry Springs and getting their Young Hiker awards through the Keystone Trails Association, a feat that I don't think many 9 year olds have accomplished. The boys are all excited to go back and complete the STS in the spring and stay at some of the shelters that the STC has constructed along the way and earn their Circuit Hiker awards.

The Susquehannock Trail has provided three generations in my family with memories that we will forever cherish. The trail is well marked and supremely well maintained. The only other person we passed while on the trail for 3 days was a member of the STC cutting blowdowns off the trail. The member said that he would cut a large tree off the trail if we wanted to wait, but the boys were happy to clamber over its branches. The trail markers keep hikers well aware of their progress and the trail is so accommodating that even three nine-year-old boys, who are accident prone, were able to navigate its boundaries without incident. With beautiful vistas and serenity for miles the Susquehannock Trail holds a special place in my heart and it's my hope that in this fast-paced world that we live in today the trail holds a special place in my son's heart as well.

- Bill Moon

Trail Maintainers for 2021

From Reg. Box @ Mile 0, to: _____

Thompson Rd. 2.76 miles, Curt & Penny Weinhold

Lyman Run Rd. 3.91 miles, Joe & Barb Allis

Sunken Br. Rd. 4.22 miles, Doug & Jane Wetherbee

Rt. 44 2.84 miles, John Eastlake

Short Run Rd. 5.74 miles, Mark & Denise Kelly

Rt. 44 at Ole Bull 7.13 miles, Lowell & Barb Luft

12-Mile Rd. 4.06 miles, Jack Buckwalter

12-Mile Rd.@ Young Woman's Creek. 6.51 miles,
Charles Kern

Greenlick Rd. 3.57 miles, Allen (Buzz) & Gary Russell

Shephard Rd. 5.96 miles, Dave & Brenda Cardellino

Cross Fork 3.22 miles, John Zimmer

The Pool – 4.7 miles, Dan & Kirsten Dorshimer

McConnell Rd. 5.2 miles, Chris & Karen Bell

East Fork Rd.@ Wms. Farm 4.35 miles, Gary & Alice
Buchanan

Haul Rd. @ Old Stove Site 3.75 miles, Wanda Shirk

Wild Boy Rd. 2.08 miles, Jeff Nolt

Prouty Lick Rd. 3.0 miles, Pat Childs

Hockney Junction 1.24 miles, Tod Twichell

Rt. 44 @ Patterson Pk. 2.81 miles, Brian & Julie
McCusker

Sunken Br. Rd. 2.25 miles, Bill Boyd

Reg. Box Mile 85.0 - 4.37 miles, Chad Rugh & April
Castano

West Branch Crossover Trail 5.7 miles, Joe Nachtwey

East Fork Crossover Trail 8.3 miles, Tom Oliver &
Lori Szymanik

Trail Maintenance 2020

By Bill Boyd

The year kicked off early with crews putting up mile-markers at each measured mile along the trail. These are round plastic disks placed on both sides of a tree, which can be seen by hikers traveling in either direction around the loop. These are said to be a help to hikers in determining how far they have hiked and how far they have yet to go. Also they will be of help to trail maintainers when someone reports a blowdown or other serious problem - if the nearest marker is reported it will help to locate the problem much easier.

All 20 of the maintenance sections were worked on - everything you can think of, from removing blowdowns (a never-ending chore), to lopping, blaze-painting, mowing, brushcutting, weedwacking, benching (leveling) some spots, new and refurbished signs, rerouting a bad section, and placing some log benches. Only one hitch was the postponement of building another trail shelter, this one at Bolich Run, at Mile 17.8. This was because the access road is in such bad shape that we couldn't get a loaded trailer to the site. We were developing a plan to improve a section, when DCNR stepped in and offered to upgrade this road, (which is on state forest property), for which we are very grateful. So that shelter will hopefully be put up in early 2021. In the meantime, we located and marked another site for a shelter, which was approved, so we may end up erecting two next year. We also have a couple of other shelter locations in mind - when we are done the STS will have a nice series of trail shelters to benefit hikers and backpackers.

One change was made to trail care sections - we divided the 10 mile Hammersley stretch into two sections, each about five miles, to make it a little more manageable. And we are happy to announce that we have volunteer maintainers for all sections, plus our two crossover trails. Also, our club has assumed the maintenance on the Mount Brodhead Trail. This involves a loop both north and south of Rt. 44, from Water Tank Vista to the new Kiosk at Log Grade Trail. Total distance for the two loops is 7.8 miles, and for now the upkeep will be a group effort.

We are ending the year with trail care hours totaling 3023 hours, which is the most ever recorded for the club (next highest was 1865), and with 60 volunteers. We are looking forward to 2021 for a much less stressful time - hopefully, virus-free, and all of our members in good health.



Susquehannock Trail Club
PO Box 643
Coudersport PA 16915

2021 Event Schedule

In accord with public health policy -- and our own self-interest and desires not to get sick or carry a virus to anyone else -- STC meetings have been suspended from November 2020 through at least April 2021. We are especially sad to miss our annual Christmas party and the festivities of our annual February Frolic, but hosting super-spreader events is not on our agenda!

We hope that by May most of us will have been vaccinated against Covid-19, and we MAY meet in MAY! We usually meet on the second Saturday of each month, but we may go later in May, hoping for warm weather for an outdoor meeting. We are also considering moving our spring and summer picnics from 5 p.m. to noon, followed by early afternoon meetings and possibly a hike afterwards, when spring brings back long hours of daylight.

Watch the spring newsletter or the STC website for a schedule for spring and summer meetings. Tentatively, we will meet at noon on June 8 at Lyman Run State Park, and also tentatively, we will have our camporee at Ole Bull State Park as usual during the second weekend of August 12- 15.

We miss "precedented times"! Cheers to going back to some kind of normal and "LOTS OF FUN IN '21!"