



SUSQUEHANNOCK HIKER

Summer 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 Wanda Shirk

Summer on the STS

Even when streams are low, hikers appreciate the log-and-cable bridges across many of our streams. Pictured is a bridge across Cross Fork Creek south of Short Run Rd. Mark Kelly put cables along two new log crossings of Cherry Run in STS mile 22 this year.

Summer 2021 promises more Happy Trails. STC members have cleared most sections of the STS in our annual "Spring Around the Trail" endeavors, and many day hikers and circuit hikers have been out enjoying the trails and our shelters. Among other seasonal activities, the STC participated in the Galeton "Wing Fest" with a club table and booth in May, members manned Water Station 19 for the God's Country Marathon in June, and several hiked behind our tool trailer (aka "rolling bill board") in the Galeton Independence Day Parade. Monthly meetings have resumed.

Hope to see you at one soon! Wanda Shirk

President's Message

Wanda Shirk



“On Foot in Potter County.” That’s always been the slogan of the STC’s quarterly *Susquehannock Hiker*, like the NYT’s “All the news that’s fit to print” or WaPo’s “Democracy Dies in Darkness.”

On FOOT. That’s our story, and we’re sticking to it!

I’ve always been sorry that I missed the chance to meet Earl Shaffer, the first Appalachian Trail thru-hiker, when he spoke at one of the first STC meetings. However, I’ve been privileged to meet some of the other hiking legends-in-their-own-time who have now finished their journeys, such as John Eastlake and Bob Webber. Another of Pennsylvania’s hiking greats I got to know was Tom Thwaites. Tom had a particular aversion to motorized travel through the woods. In his curmudgeonly way, he used to make comments like, “Little known fact: ATVs spew beer cans out the back.”

Tom said that if we had known, in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, of the incursion of motors that would come in subsequent decades, we would not have used the word “trail” in our organizational names (Keystone Trails Association, Mid State Trail, Susquehannock Trail System, etc.), but “footpath.” “Trail” now can be for snowmobiles, bikes, ATVs, equestrians, and other uses, and it would have been better if we had clarified with our word choice the intent of our quiet, single-track, forest pathways.

I think of the Teddy Roosevelt adage, “Talk softly, and carry a big stick,” modified by hikers to “*Walk softly, and carry a big stick!*” Jim Owen, Triple Crown thru-hiker (Appalachian, Pacific Crest, and Continental Divide Trails), always closes his letters and emails with the words “*Walk softly.*”

Cindy Bower’s article in this issue notes that ATVs do not “go lightly” in our woods.

When I read about invasive species taking over, I am reminded that human beings are the most invasive species of all. One of my “Top-Five-Best-Books-Ever”

is *The Sixth Extinction*, by Elizabeth Kolbert. Our planet has had five major extinctions in geologic history, such as the one when Earth was hit by an asteroid, resulting in climate change that wiped out the dinosaurs and other species of the Jurassic Age. Our geologic time period is now called the Anthropocene, the age of man’s dominance, with extinction of 20% of plant and animal species going on right in front of us. From chestnut and ash trees to endangered honeybees and dozens of other animals and plants... Well, I can’t get off on that tangent right now. Read the book.

Money talks. ATV manufacturers and dealers have sold Americans on the idea that traveling by ATV instead of on foot is the fun way to go. Certainly, it is, if you love noise and don’t care to hear the birds sing or the brook babble or the stream rush over the rocks. Certainly is, if you love dust in your face. Certainly is, if you don’t care to spot a trillium or a red eft along the trail. Certainly is, if you like working extra hours to buy riding machines, trailers for hauling, and tanks of fossil fuel to keep going.

The current state recreation plan prioritizes a pilot program IN THE SUSQUEHANNOCK STATE FOREST to expand ATV trails. Our forestry maintenance office had planned to repair a horribly rutted stretch of Footbridge Camp Lane, mile 18 on the STS, last year or this spring. (This would facilitate our building the proposed Bolich Run trail shelter. We can’t get materials in under the current conditions.) However, forestry now reports that they have orders to put all maintenance efforts into the ATV trails program, and nothing else can be worked on until who-knows-when. Sorry, STC. ATV money speaks loudest.

To extol here the benefits of walking would be preaching to the choir. We know the benefits to health -- mental and physical -- that come from walking in the woods. We not only want our children and grandchildren to have footpaths, but we hope that they will walk them -- *exercise!* -- and learn to “live simply so others can simply live” by focusing on nature’s green instead of bankers’ green. So the STC continues to advocate for preservation and protection of hiking pathways.

*On Foot in Potter County,
Walkin’ Wanda*

Welcome New Members

- Richard Chomik, Newtown, PA
- Bradley & Jennifer Gleason, Bath, NY
- Ron Heath, Galeton, PA
- C. James Kittleson, Corning, NY
- Gail Stahl (Cherry Springs Country Store), Coudersport, PA
- Brent and Laura Bryant, Genesee, PA
- David and Pam Semanik, Walton Hills, OH
- Margaret McDonald, Coopersburg, PA

Trail Report Spring 2021

By Bill Boyd

Maintenance of the STS is moving right along, with 865 hours recorded as of 6-23-21. All but about 5 of the maintenance sections have been gone through and mostly cleared. But with a couple of quite strong wind and rain events we've had, it's almost a sure thing that there will be additional blowdowns to be encountered along the trail. It's just a fact of life when you have 84 miles of trail through mostly wooded terrain. Some we'll get to in our routine trail care, but it's also a big help when hikers and backpackers report them. With the system now marked each mile, that should help locate the problems, otherwise one can use roads, streams, and other landmarks to pin down the locations.

We're into the mowing season now, so some stretches are getting the DR and Swisher treatment. One recently done stretch is the newly relocated section of the Hogback Trail, from Log Grade Trail (mile-15.33) and Bolich Run (Mile-17.76). At the Log Grade Trail sign watch for new directions. Turn left off the STS onto Log Grade Trail, cross a small stream, and in a few more yards turn right off this trail, and continue uphill to an old haul road. Turn right on that, and follow it for about 2 and 1/2 miles. You'll then see a clearly marked and signed trail downhill to the right, which brings you back to the STS a short distance from Bolich Run. After crossing the double-log bridge, you emerge into a small meadow, the site of one of our next shelters.

Improvements to Camp Lane by DCNR are on hold. (See Wanda's "President's Message, Ed.) When this is completed, we will have access to get shelter materials to Bolich Run. In the meantime, we're hoping to start on the Sunken Branch shelter, which will be located south of Sunken Branch Road, at about Mile-78.7.

Thus far we have had at least 60 volunteers helping with trail care, and we thank each and every one!

New Circuit Hiker Award Recipients

1238- Garrett Talkington
1239- Cullen McDowell
1240 Maddie Erickson
1241 Sam Raisch
1242 Brian Crownover

Camporee:

Thursday-Sunday, August 12-15.

We will be at Ole Bull State Park, as usual. The wonderful folks at the park have granted us free camping for three nights at sites 44, 46, and 49 (all conveniently across from the shower house) and sites 55, 56, and 60 down at the end of the park. First come, first pick for campers. There's electricity at all the sites, and plenty of space for tents to set up as well as for campers and RVs.

Those who live locally and do not want to camp are encouraged to join us for our Saturday night meeting at the park's large pavilion.

Our picnic meal will start at 5 on Saturday, with the meeting to follow at 6.

20 years ago, at the 2001 STC Camporee



Photo by Dave McMillan

Wanda Shirk with her backpacking hammock

The Lick Ridge Trail

By Jim Bowser

Lick Ridge Trail is relatively unknown except for those with cabins in the area or hunters who know of the good deer and turkey populations that frequent the adjacent forest. Lick Ridge Trail begins on Boone Run Road near the intersection of Switchback Road. The trail heads southeasterly approximately 2 miles and ends at Cross Fork Trail. Cross Fork Trail is cleared from Lick Ridge Trail, following Cross Fork Creek downstream 1/2 mile, and ends on the Susquehannock Trail System near Footbridge Camp. Access to this trail intersection is off Short Run Road. If you look at a map of the Susquehannock State Forest, in the vicinity described, the trail that appears to go straight through the forest, that is Lick Ridge Trail.

It was in the 1960s that my father took the family on a hike on Lick Ridge Trail. My uncle and a few of his friends camped near there next to a spring, hunting off Boone Run Road. In 1936, they acquired a lease from the State of Pennsylvania to construct a cabin. With oak boards cut from trees on our family farm, they constructed this cabin. Visiting our family cabin brought me to this part of the Susquehannock State Forest. Shortly after I began coming to the forest, I recall my father saying that he had observed a hunter on Lick Ridge Trail having difficulty getting over a fallen tree on the trail. After that, our family, when visiting Potter County, would go and clear Lick Ridge Trail. We cleared the trail in all seasons. That is where I learned sawing a frozen log can create sparks. We continued to maintain this trail for many years until the area was timbered and trees were felled across the trail and not removed. Too much work my father said. At that time, we stop maintaining the trail.

In the last 10 years I resumed clearing the trail but could only do so for about 3/4 miles, up to a new clear-cut area. There, the briars had grown so thick that the trail was lost. Use of the trail was limited to the two ends which the hunters use.

My father passed away in 2016 and I decided that in memory of him I would like to have Lick Ridge Trail re-opened. Some of the STS trail club members had the opportunity to meet my father in 2016 as he spent several days helping to construct the initial shelter on the STS system at Scoval Branch.

I talked with Christian Nicholas, District Forester at the Susquehannock State Forest office, and found that they were supportive of having Lick Ridge

Trail opened. Paul Tubbs with DCNR Forestry went out and flagged Lick Ridge and Cross Fork Creek Trails, and an effort began to have these trails reopened. I believe Paul spent the most time on the trails, clearing the many downed trees and removing the saplings growing in and adjacent to the trail. Nate Confer with DCNR Forestry also spent time in the field helping to have the trail re-opened. I accompanied DCNR staff on at least three occasions and made many visits myself clearing the trail. I was told that Lick Ridge Trail was going to be deleted from the 2018 edition of the Susquehannock State Forest maps until I expressed an interest in having the trail reopened.

Work to recover Lick Ridge Trail was on a time available basis. From 2017 to 2019, the trail's route was located and cleared of all major obstacles. In 2020, in what I hope will be the beginning of regular maintenance, I cleared and then blazed both trails for the very first time.

In 2018, while hiking the STS Trail in Hogback Hollow, I encountered two hikers from Philadelphia. I asked them where they were planning to hike and they told me that they had started at the Cherry Springs fire tower and were going to take the STS Trail down to Lick Ridge Trail and take Lick Ridge Trail back to the railroad grade, where they would return to the STS below the Cherry Springs fire tower. I politely advised them they would not be able to make that hike since Lick Ridge and Cross Fork Trails had not been cleared and were not blazed. I suggested that they hike down to the beaver dam near Bolich Run and return to the fire tower on the STS.

STS club president Wanda Shirk expressed an interest in developing day hikes that would utilize a portion of the STS with hikers looping back to their starting position. The hike that these gentlemen from Philadelphia were wanting to make is a great day hike and is now possible. With the clearing and blazing of Lick Ridge and Cross Fork Trails, a hiker can leave the Cherry Springs fire tower and take the STS down to Footbridge Camp and the intersection with Cross Fork Trail. Take Cross Fork Trail 1/2 mile to intersect Lick Ridge Trail. Follow Lick Ridge Trail two miles up to Boone Run Road. Take Boone Run Road to the dead end which intersects Boone Trail. Follow Boone Trail (along the old Boone Run Road which is now abandoned) up to Railroad Grade Trail, and follow the railroad grade back to the STS and then back to Cherry Spring fire tower.

While these trails have now been cleared and blazed, there are no signs to assist hikers to navigate these trails. I have prepared a trail sign plan for this looped hike which DCNR has approved. I have begun to make the signs, which I hope will be placed in the field this year.

When hiking the first mile of Lick Ridge Trail starting from Boone Run Road, you'll be surrounded by ferns in a mixed forest of black cherry, beech and maple trees. Further on you'll pass through a pine tree plantation, planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. You then hike into another mixed tree forest, without the heavy ferns. The last leg of the hike to the STS takes Cross Fork Trail. Cross Fork Trail follows a long forgotten logging road, along Cross Fork Creek. Here, white pines and hemlocks dominate the forest adjacent to the trail. A beaver family recently moved into this section of the stream and their work, from the dams to the chewed saplings and their skid trails, is great to see. While recently hiking on these trails, I observed deer, turkey, coyote, squirrels, chipmunks, birds, and a non-poisonous snake.

Editor's Note: Jim Bowser is an STC life member and elected STC advisory board member who officially lives in Florida but spends much of his time in spring, summer, or fall at his Potter County Camp. He regularly is among our Top Ten Maintainers for volunteer trail hours.

HIKING IN THE SIERRA

By Tom Lyon

I almost wrote "in the Sierras", before I remembered that you're supposed to refer to those mountains in the singular – something I never seemed cut out to do. So, for hiking in the Sierras, now, I choose a loop from Horseshoe Meadows that goes over New Army Pass at about 12,000 feet, runs down west and then south to the Pacific Crest Trail (there are a hundred beautiful campsites on the way), then returns to the starting point, including on the return more fine campsites at Chicken Spring Lake.

Miles? I don't know for sure, but it might be twenty or thirty. If you're coming from sea level, like my wife Jan and I, you probably need at least a day in camp at the

foot of New Army Pass. You have to manufacture some new red blood cells for the altitude, and that takes time.

Fortunately, your camp that first night is somewhere in the Cottonwood Basin, and you can't miss: there's beauty all around. I recall in particular a Bald Eagle who came swooping and gliding down low, to visit us, it seemed. You can almost feel your blood gearing up for the climb. The very air has a bite to it. This is late August—no mosquitoes.

On the second morning then, you say you're ready, and you start up to the pass. It's up and up, and more up. Finally, you are above timberline, you're walking on grass now, and seeing the Sierras from what feels like, suddenly, an entirely new viewpoint. You rest on a boulder. It seems like you're a kid again: you've hiked from the John Muir Wilderness over a 12,320 foot hump into the Kings Canyon Wilderness – from this boulder it's all downhill—and filling your lungs with the thin air, you feel like hollering or something.

Soon you're back in the woods again, but you haven't lost the new feeling. It's yours, and it stays alive through making camp – it's there even though you're weary – and when it's "hiker midnight" (actually anytime from 7 PM on) you're on your back, flat on the ground, and falling . . . asleep.

The rest of the hike is fine, very fine in fact, though as you descend through the meadows and the Jeffrey Pines, you keep looking back over your shoulder toward the high mountains; there's something there, up there, something alive, and you've got to come back to it.

Editor's Note: Tom currently lives in Carlsbad, California. He began backpacking August 1951 on the Appalachian Trail. His best-remembered trip was a 23-day hike over the Franklin Mountains and the main Brooks Range (Alaska) with his oldest son Max. In his words, "Entirely trail-less and wild, wild, wild--". He has been a member of STC since 1993 and earned Circuit Hiker Award #909 in 2003. He has since hiked the circuit several times and is planning yet another trip east. Tom is an Octogenarian and still goes out on weekly hikes, often to the Anza-Borrego Desert. He is very familiar with Potter County, having spent summers in his youth at his grandparent's farm near Carter Camp.

Northcentral Pennsylvania: Future ATV Amusement Park with Trees?

By Cindy Bower

Many of us have been witness lately – to the changes in the tranquility at Lyman Run State Park; to the convoys of roaring ATVs on public roads, trails, and even municipal streets; to the dust, erosion, and destruction of vernal pools and other sensitive wet areas in fields and forests; and to the all too often complete disregard by riders for ATV regulations that help keep not only the riders but everyone else safe as well.

As preposterous as it may sound, this may be the future of our northcentral public lands – not only State forests but also State parks – if the provisions of the 2020 Fiscal Code are allowed to hold.

What is the Fiscal Code? Its intended purpose is to provide the legislative means to pay for the annual budget. However, the current legislative mandate has gone far beyond that. The 2020 Fiscal Code provisions are legislative mandates to DCNR, approved by the Governor, to develop major new ATV initiatives in our State forests and parks for the purpose of helping the local economy, without any evaluation of the impacts of the trails to the ecosystem of the forest or to the other quiet uses, as protected by Article I Section 27 (Environmental Amendment) of our State Constitution.

At its June 12, 2021, meeting at Lyman Run State Park, STC voted to join the Pennsylvania Environmental Defense Foundation (PEDF) in its latest consideration to block these 2020 harmful mandates to our public lands. PEDF may also consider challenging the entire use of ATVs in our State forests and parks, including DCNR's approval of current ATV use in Lyman Run State Park.

In another case, PEDF challenged the 2010 Fiscal Code because it mandated DCNR to lease State Forest land for oil and gas extraction, and the Supreme Court found those provisions unconstitutional.

Passed by Governor Wolf and the General Assembly on November 20, 2020, the Fiscal Code mandates

- that DCNR develop, open and maintain an ATV trail connecting the Whiskey Springs ATV Trail with the Bloody Skillet ATV Trail by utilizing existing State (PennDOT) roads and State Forest roads by April 1, 2020 [Section 1720-E(a)(1)]. NOTE: April 1, 2020, precedes the passing of the Fiscal Code.

- that DCNR implement the full Northcentral Pennsylvania initiative and create a network of ATV trails that would connect Clinton County to the New York State border by using State (PennDOT) and State Forest roads by April 1, 2024 [Section 1720-E(a)(2)].
- that DCNR establish a regional pilot permit program for ATV use on DCNR lands (State forests and State parks) [Section 1720-E(b)(1)].
- that DCNR, as part of the pilot program, by December 31, 2020, (i) evaluate State Forest districts, including Elk, Moshannon, Sprout, Susquehannock, and Tioga, for roads and trails to serve as potential regional connectors and to provide local access or serve as a trail complex for ATV use; and (ii) perform an assessment regarding charging fees for access to the DCNR pilot area [Section 1720-E(b)(2)].

For more information about PEDF, and for links to the 2020 Fiscal Code and DCNR's current ATV policy, please visit www.pedf.org.

Both STC and PEDF recognize that not everyone who owns or rides an ATV does so in a manner detrimental to our public lands and watercourses. But ATVs do not “go lightly” in fragile areas, and the lands guaranteed to us and future generations by Article I Section 27 of Pennsylvania's Constitution are fragile lands. “*The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic values of the environment.*” To these values, ATVs are an affront.

If our public lands are further developed, sliced, diced, and subjected to invasive species and further harms, the ecological values of the forest, and the biological diversity that is so critical to its integrity and importance – locally and globally – will continue to be defiled and lost. The people as a whole will have lost. All for the pursuit of amusement.

Editor's Note: Cindy Bower is a STC life member, STS circuit hiker, and a board member of PEDF, the Pennsylvania Environmental Defense Foundation.

Memories of the Ahns

By Penny Weinhold

Wil Ahn, long time S.T.C. President, passed away in March of 2020. He was predeceased by wife, Betty in Dec. 2017. Having moved to Potter County from Bucks County, he & Betty operated the Susquehannock Lodge from 1963 to 1988. Owning the lodge brought many outdoor enthusiasts & a numbers of Hiking Clubs. The pair cooked generous meals for guests and had many return patrons. After the 84-mile Susquehannock Trail became a reality in 1967 a Trail Club was formed to maintain the circuit. Monthly meetings were held, many at the lodge. Some time ago, the Club sponsored trips to Banff, Alberta, Canada, Colorado, Isle Royale National Park, Lake Superior & the Adirondacks.

The Ahns eagerly took part. Betty, as Secretary, recorded events.

The couple loved dogs, especially huskies. To Wil, this was like his “slice of Alaska”. Asked if he’d ever travel there – He’d reply, “in my dreams”.

Wil led a number of hikes over the years; notably, a fall backpack trip on the northside of Denton Hill, had many participants. An evening campfire got everyone better acquainted. One winter the Lodge hosted a (just for fun) cross-country ski race. There was much rivalry between Deitmar Weitz, Buffalo, NY and Larry Peterson, Wellsboro. The finish was close; all were hoping for a rematch. Well, some events only come along once in life. One Springtime, a group of about 10 took a rafting trip thru PA. Grand Canyon. Wil & several others started singing some old tunes. Although it was a Saturday, ‘Cruising Down the River on a Sunday Afternoon’ was clearly a favorite.

Another time, when summer was in full bloom Wil led several off Route 44 to the Bolich Run area. On reaching the actual stream, all decided it would be the ideal place to build a Brewery & name the product Bolich’s Burpless Beer – enterprising fellows!

The Club’s 25th Anniversary observance was held in 1992, during the Summer Camporee at Lyman Run State Park. An average crowd was expected. Bill Morey, Galeton, offered to B.B.Q. chicken. Wil began phoning folks to please attend, resulting in two more hefty orders of chicken placed to the supplier. Much thanks were

heaped on Bill & his assist, Lois, for lip smackin’ good eating.

In fitting with the Club’s 50th Anniversary in Oct. 2017, 51 diners filled the Susquehannock Lodge. Years before, Ed & Carol Syzmanik, former lodge guests, had bought the business. Now, Wil was their dinner guest. Wife, Betty, sadly, could not attend, as she was a patient in Cole Hospital, Coudersport, at the time.

Betty & Wil were remarkable in many ways. In 2020, Joe Allis, of Galeton constructed a wonderfully designed, inscribed bench honoring the couple. This is situated at the head of the Ahn Trail which connects the Susquehannock Trail to the Lodge.

For those who knew the Ahns well...their memory lives on !



Canoe / Kayak Trip

Those wanting to canoe, or kayak can plan to join us at Hills Creek State Park, 111 Spillway Road, Wellsboro

August 18th...(rain date Aug 19th)

Leaders are John & Jan Halter, (experienced paddlers)

Meet at 3:00 PM at the rental concession by the beach

The lake is 137 acres

Rentals are \$17.00 per/hr

Pack a personal picnic & join the group afterward if you wish

Contact Penny Weinhold

Ph. 814-274-9858 penny1@zitomedia.net

Please respond by Aug. 18, if interested.



Susquehannock Trail Club
PO Box 643
Coudersport PA 16915

2021 Event Schedule

Saturday, July 10	Monthly meeting & July Picnic	Home of April Castano, Chad Rugh 70 Old Shovel Rd., Coudersport Starts at noon
Thursday-Sunday, August 12-15	CAMPOREE	Ole Bull State Park Campground Sites 44, 46, 49, 55, 56, and 60
Saturday August 14	Monthly meeting	Ole Bull State Park Pavilion Dish to share meal followed by meeting Starts at 5:00 PM
Saturday, Sept 11	Monthly meeting	Home of Donna Batterson Academy Hill Road, Coudersport (Watch for signs) Picnic at noon followed by meeting
Saturday Oct 9	Monthly meeting	Lyman Run State Park Pavilion Picnic at noon followed by meeting
Saturday Nov 13	Month meeting	Home of Bill Boyd 208 Summit Road, Coudersport Dish to share meal at noon followed by meeting