

SUSQUEHANNOCK HIKER

Newsletter of the Susquehannock Trail Club

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.

Fall 2022



Photo by Curt Weinhold

Elk on the Trail

One of the highlights of any hike is seeing wildlife and in the past three years elk sightings have become more common. A backpacker is almost as likely to see an elk as to see a deer, perhaps because deer will flee before hikers notice them, but an elk might just stand and chew her cud. The most common place to spot an elk on the trail is on the gas pipeline (mile 42) or along Scoval Branch (mile 43). Kristin Joivell saw an elk cow rise from the meadow grass and thought at first it was a

llama! If you are driving, the most likely place in Potter County to spot elk is along East Fork Rd. in Conrad, west of Cherry Springs State Park on the way to the STS crossing at the Williams Farm.

In September, a great bull elk made its way to Coudersport, and Curt Weinhold photographed it for the front page of the Potter Leader Enterprise.

Now THAT's the way to shoot an elk. No permit required! Just take a hike!!

President's Message

Wanda Shirk

Jim Bowser's Legacy

Jim Bowser was one of our surprises, and he kept on surprising.

In July 2015, the STC learned about an opportunity to join a community foundation in Potter County. We could set up an endowment fund – something we barely understood – that would provide a future for the trail we love. We had no money for starting such an investment, but the idea was to find 25 people who would make a substantial donation. Their “life membership” contributions would start the fund. Could our little group find, within five years, 25 people who could come up with \$500 (or \$400, for senior citizens) to make this happen? We decided to try.

The surprises started. The biggest surprise to us was that although we thought of ourselves as just a little band of Potter Countians, we had friends in far places! Among the first 15 life members were trail-lovers from *five different states*. Besides Pennsylvania, there was New York (Clair Almeter, later joined on the NY list by his daughter Pat Childs), Connecticut (Frank Eppinger), FLORIDA – of all places! (Jim Bowser) – and then Ohio (Rick and Carolyn Oyen).

Within two years, we had 27 life members, exceeding our goal. Bill Haram and Lorena Meunier and later Sam Hobbs from Delaware added a sixth state, and the Kemp family from Texas added state number #7!

Getting to know some of these folks who come to us from a distance has been quite a joy. Jim Bowser, whose family had a camp in the middle of the Susquehannock State Forest, retired and began spending more of his summers at the family's Potter County camp – a smart move, as most Floridians would probably have to agree! Jim became one of the club's top trail maintainers. He and I carried a brush cutter from McConnell Rd. to the heart of the Hammersley on one memorable summer day – ten miles round-trip! Jim regularly sawed blowdowns and mowed the East Fork Crossover Trail, and he cleared and blazed other trails near his cabin that he had loved from decades past.

I did not know Jim had a blood cancer, which he fought off and on. Funny-stupid thing: In 2017, I had breast cancer and lost all my hair with the chemo. One person I did not want to know about my cancer was Jim. Somehow, I wanted to protect the strong woman, “Wonder Woman” image I had created and cultivated. It was humbling to me to learn that winter that Jim was a cancer-fighter as well as an all-out trail worker. I could admit my cancer, then, to anyone. Cancer-fighters are strong people.

Jim thought he was in remission. The cancer would come back in occasional bouts, and he would fight and win them. Until he didn't. Jim had just completed some extensive remodeling of his family camp and had invested in a router to make new signs for the STS, when --- ZAP! The cancer returned with a bang, and we were all shocked to learn that on a trip back to Florida, Jim died rather suddenly on October 31, 2021, age 70.

Then came another big surprise. Jim had left a bequest in his will for the STC.

At our September meeting, we discussed what to do with his gift. One big concern our club has had is the recruitment of a next-generation work force. Most of our local members and our trail maintainers are now in the septuagenarian range. We need to recruit members and maintainers who will take our places to keep the STS cleared and wonderful for the decades to come.

The Rachel Carson Trail Conservancy calls their maintainers “stewards”. When a new trail steward is recruited, two things happen. One is that a club mentor takes the new steward on a walk-through of his or her section and discusses what things need to be done: blazing, lopping, mowing, brushcutting, trail widening or leveling, or perhaps even adding potential amenities like a cleared campsite area or a bench on a hilltop. The other thing is that the new steward gets a kit that includes a pair of loppers, a good folding saw, a quart of paint and a couple brushes, and a weed whip. (Their certified sawyers even get a chain saw with two extra blades and safety gear!)

With Jim Bowser's legacy, the STC is discussing maintainer kits for our new recruits and other ways to attract younger workers. Stay tuned for details. And Jim: From all of us, Thank you.

Trail Report Fall 2022

By Bill Boyd

A considerable amount of the trail care is usually done during these past three months, June, July, and August. And it consists of weed whacking nettles, briars and ferns, anything that can be a nuisance to hikers. Some stretches are mowed with the walk-behind mower, and each year we find even more sections that can be mowed. The best part of mowing is that a pass in and out leaves a nice, mowed path around 4' wide, which hikers appreciate judging from the comments we receive from reading the circuit-hiker logs.

And right up there on the positive remarks list are the trail shelters. This year the planned shelter at Bolich run has been delayed mainly because of a short stretch of old haul road, that is in such bad condition we are doubtful that we can take a trailer-load of materials into the site. Some work has been done to try to improve this lane, but it remains in poor condition. We are still hopeful that we can get some stone into some of the worst of the ruts.

Then there are the ever-present blowdowns - we've come to expect those with 84 miles of trail through mostly wooded terrain. Some are just dead trees which have fallen, and some are trees which have been blown over during some of the wind events we get. I've said this before but it's worth repeating - a maintainer had just finished clearing his section and as he was getting into his truck, he says "I think I heard a tree fall." Just a little humor there, but the truth is the chainsaw operators are kept quite busy, and they are much appreciated. Some stretches of laurel and barberry need chopped back periodically - for this the brushcutters with the metal blade work well. Some have used the hedge-trimmer type of tool, and this also does a good job.

A couple more streams have been bridged, in the upper part of Stony Run. In this case, flattened log bridges were used. Also, some new signs have been placed. And now we are mostly self-sufficient as far as signs are concerned. We can mill boards from a log with our Alaskan Mill, plane these boards and rout, stain and paint them. Some of the trail signs have been out there for around 40-some years and are in bad condition. So, they will be replaced in time. And amazingly, some locust posts have been out there about as long, and some are still good after all these years.

June accounted for 216 hours of trail care, July 251, and Aug. 325, for a total of 792 hours for this period. Our yearly total, so far, is nearing 1900 hours. And the thanks all go to a group of about 51 (so far) all-volunteer maintainers. The STC accomplishes this solely with dues and donations.



Photo By Larry Holtzapple

Club members who see a need and take initiative to take care of it are a special species! Larry Holtzapple noted that some of the older signs on the trail were hard to read, so on an early September Saturday he set out on his own, without being asked or prompted, to remedy the problem. Taking a small jar of white paint and patiently filling in the grooves of routed signs that had aged and weathered, he made a big difference on several signs along our trails. Thanks, Larry! (By Wanda Shirk)



Photo By Larry Holtzapple

Scoval Branch Shelter Dedication

By Lois Morey

Tuesday, August 23, 2022, was a perfect day for the trip down to the Scoval Branch Trail on the STS at MP 42.5. We were taking the picnic table, built by Bill Boyd, to be placed at the shelter with the inscription “In Memory of Lewis and Janette Baker”. For those of you unfamiliar with our story, my parents and I hiked the entire trail in 1969 and were Circuit Hikers #1, 2 & 3. We felt it fitting that this first shelter built in 2016 be dedicated to them in their memory.

The Scotch Pine logs for this shelter were donated from my property, felled and cut to the lengths needed, and hauled to a local sawmill where they were milled with a slab off three sides so we could have a flat wall inside. DCONR (forestry) approved the site and the project began.

Lewis and Janette’s grandson, Tim Morey, made the laser-engraved sign which he and great-grandson, Noah, attached to the inside wall of the shelter that day.

We also enjoyed a picnic while there in one of the most serene and beautiful sections of our trail system.

My parents would be pleased to be remembered and honored in this way. Being simple country folk, they took delight in all of nature and thoroughly enjoyed hiking and helping to finish clearing and marking of this new hiking trail here in Potter County.

We had just finished our picnic lunch when it started to rain. What better place to be right then but at the shelter where we could all huddle in during the short storm to keep dry. We spent that time telling stories of those early days and sharing memories of Lewis and Janette. In addition, we celebrated August birthdays for both Lois and Tim.

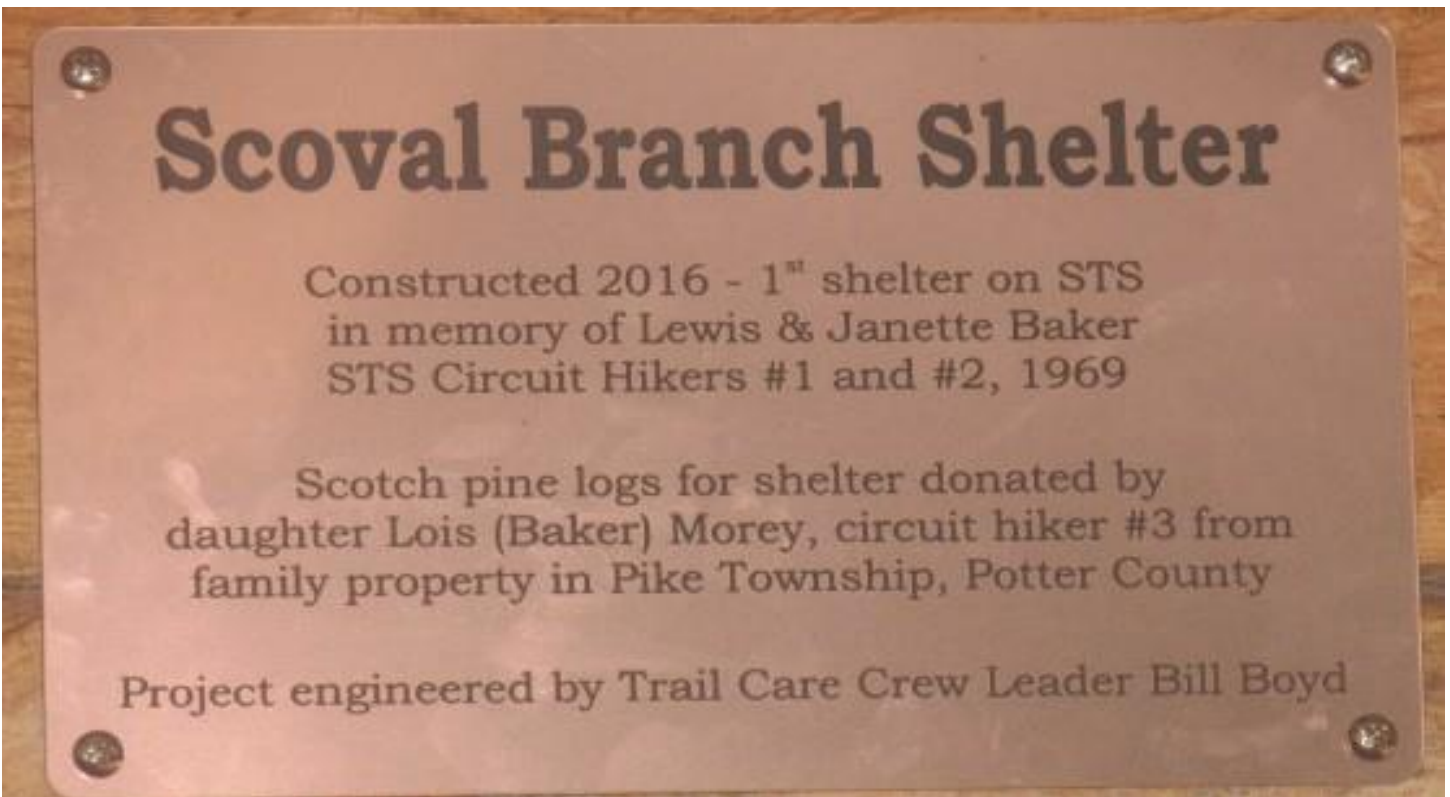
On this special outing as well as Tim and Noah were Tim’s wife Erin, their daughter Lila, Bill Morey, Bill Boyd, and long-time friend of the family Rick Jones.

My family and I would like to especially recognize and thank Bill Boyd for his initiative in spearheading this project and to everyone who had a part in all aspects of building the shelter from start to finish. We appreciate and say thanks to all of you.

Photos by Lois and Tim Morey



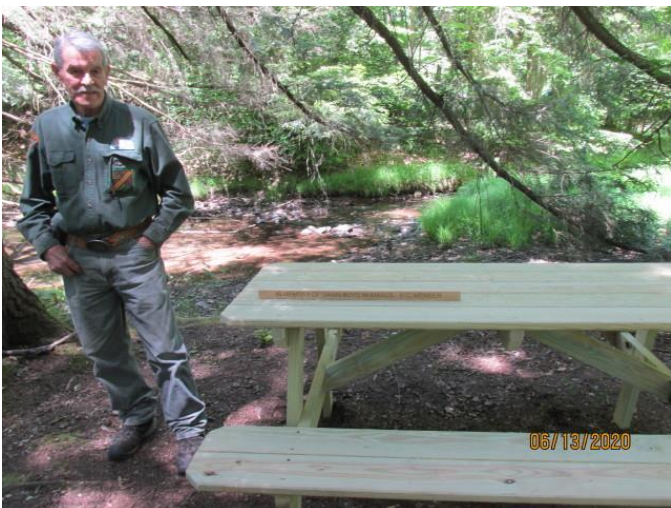
L to R – Rick Jones, Bill Morey, Lois Morey, Bill Boyd, Tim, Erin, Lila and Noah Morey,



Picnic Tables

By Bill Boyd

My first Camporee experiences with the trail club were in the Group Camping Area at Ole Bull State Park. This area is where campers can just set up camp wherever there's space. It was many years ago, but I do recall the awful condition of some of the picnic tables. It wasn't too long when we began to be allotted sites in the more organized section of the campground, courtesy of park management. This was a nice upgrade for us, as each site had a picnic table and a fire-ring. But here again I couldn't help but notice the condition of most of the tables, and it wasn't good. I had built a couple of tables prior to that, so we talked it over, and I suggested maybe we could supply some new tables to the park, as a sort of thank you. So it was agreed and I proceeded to check out their table construction, so that ours would be a close match. The ones I had built weren't quite as heavy-duty as the park tables were, so I went with all 2x6 construction, top, seats, legs and all. They turned out to be a good match, so each year the club has funded a new table and we have delivered them to the park. And they are indeed heavy-duty - I load them with my Kubota and the maintenance guy at the park unloads the same way. And to move them around takes four quite healthy people. The park management and some of the campers have voiced their appreciation, so we believe it to be a worthwhile venture. If you ever camp at Ole Bull look for a table with an engraved strip on the end that says, "Donated By The Susquehannock Trail Club." This year we delivered our 10th table.



Trail Signs

By Wanda Shirk

One of the club's investments in 2022 was a set of sign-routing equipment to update and add to signs around the trail. Bill Boyd has been working with the equipment and so far has completed signs for two locations. One is just before the big suspension bridge over Lyman Run, about STS mile 6.7. The other is across the road from Patterson State Park where the Plantation Trail heads toward the Sunken Branch Shelter, which is at mile 78.7. Both signs are within yards of the road, if anyone wants to check them out.

The placement of the signs will help advertise both our trail and our shelters to people who camp at Patterson or Lyman Run State Parks and happen to see them. It may give some folks an idea for a short out-and-back overnight hike to a shelter.

A major objective of the new signs is to help backpackers know how far it is to the next shelter *and* where they might need to fill water bottles before they arrive at the shelter. Especially with newer shelters, backpackers sometimes don't have the information, and the "how far" info is very helpful. If you've ever had the experience -- as I have -- of setting up camp in a rather bad spot and then finding a prepared campsite only 100 yards later, when you start out the next morning, you have some idea how much the advance information might have made your experience better. If only you had known! Knowing what to expect for water acquisition and for shelter or a campsite is valuable. Even day-hikers like to know the distance to a prospective place to stop for a snack. On a rainy day, it's nice to know when there's a roof ahead or a place where a dry seat might be found for a break on a wet morning.

As we express our appreciation to Bill Boyd for taking on this new project, we also want to thank the donors whose contributions in 2022 have made the purchase of the equipment possible. Everyone's contribution counts for making our trail better: donors, maintainers, map and website makers, and volunteers who promote our trail at the many events we attend. Thanks to all!

Welcome New Members

New Regular Memberships:

- Alex Desberg, Copley, OH
- Merv Frey, Greencastle, PA
- Rachel Frey, Greencastle, PA
- Connie Hahn, Hanover, PA
- Timothy Kane, Hatboro, PA
- Gwen Ockenlaender, Philadelphia, PA
- Michael Rathi, Meadville, PA
- Michael Russell, Audubon, NJ
- Angela Jackson, Galetton, PA

New Life Membership:

- Allen Berfield, Coudersport, PA

New Circuit Hiker Award Recipients

- 1266 Mark Dickerson
- 1267 Warren Renninger
- 1268 Chad Rugh
- 1269 Jim Kittleson
- 1270 Jay Stuckey
- 1271 Rachel Frey
- 1272 Merv Frey
- 1273 Josie Swartzentruber
- 1274 Kathy Borrell
- 1275 Ingrid Cantarella-Fox
- 1276 Rick Beidman



Another trail sign brought back to life by repainting the letters. Work and photo by Larry Holtzapple

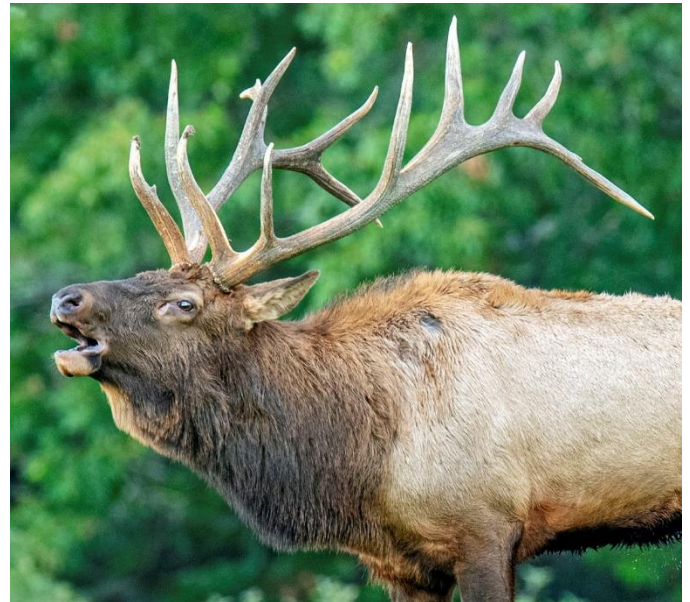


Photo by Curt Weinhold

STC Meeting Minutes

Since many members live a considerable distance from the area and are not able to attend many of the meetings, we will now be posting the meeting minutes on the club website. We hope that this will allow those members to be more connected to the club and its activities.

The minutes can be found under the “News” tab on the website. <https://stc-hike.org/meeting-minutes>

STC Club News

Bill Boyd has been writing weekly articles describing club activities for the past 15 years. These articles are published in the Potter Leader-Enterprise. As mentioned above many of the members live out of the area, and don't have easy access to these articles. We want to share this club news with those members too so we will now be posting Bill's articles on the club website. As with the meeting minutes we hope this will help keep those members more connected with the club.

These articles can be found under the “News” tab on the website. <https://stc-hike.org/club-news>

Website Traffic

Visitor traffic has continued to hold steady at about 1,400 visitors per month since the new site was launched and the FarOut Guide was released. That means that more than 10,000 people have viewed our trail and club information this year. This should lead to more visitors to the trail and hopefully more club members,



Susquehannock Trail Club
PO Box 643
Coudersport PA 16915

Event Schedule

The STC will not be having any more meetings until we can resume outdoor meetings in the spring.

Most of us are senior citizens, a vulnerable category for Covid risk. New cases in the US are currently about 90,000/ day, and deaths at 500/day. Deaths are almost all among unvaccinated people, but while the vaccinated rarely die or even need hospitalization, some get sick for a week or more. The fever, chills, headaches, fatigue, and other aspects of sickness are risks that many of us have agreed we want to avoid, by avoiding indoor meetings with a large number of people in a small space over the colder months.