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.
Summer 2026



Top: The Bicentennial wagon train heading east over Denton Hill in 1976 is a classic of interest both for the wagon train and for the original "Northern Gateway" sign for the STS. Bottom left: Barry Fry, Wanda Shirk, John Zimmer, Lori and Aniela Szymanik-Oliver, Janet Smith, Bill Boyd, Ron Heath participated in the parade. Bottom right: Ron Heath, Lori Szymanik-Oliver and daughter Aniela, and John Zimmer all carried American flags in the 2026 parade. (Photo credits: Top photo: Curt Weinhold, July 4, 2026 photos contributed by Barry Fry)

The STC Celebrates America's Birthdays

We have always been deeply grateful for the incredible privilege of living in the United States of America and being surrounded here by the beauty of the Susquehannock State Forest. The club has celebrated our great country and heritage by participating annually for many years in Galeton's Independence Day parade, held this year on a hot July 4 Saturday morning. Bill Boyd drove the STC tool trailer -- our "moving billboard" painted years ago by Joe Allis. Lois Morey co-piloted in the truck, while others from the club walked behind. As the club passed the judges' stand, we were able to announce that the STC has ten shelters around our 84-mile trail, and every one of them sports an American flag.

Tim Morey grilled hot dogs for the paraders and others at the Morey estate for our annual post-parade celebration. We also thank Angela Jackson for manning our STC table and booth at Galeton's "Red Suspender Weekend," with assistance from John Zimmer, Brent Bryant, and Sherry Zurlo.

Here's to the Red-White-and Blue! Long may it wave! Let us each pledge continued devotion to our country … and our trail!

President's Message

Wanda Shirk



Carrying their hiking boots in bags, Wanda Shirk and Sue Wright cross Deer Creek on the North Country Trail west of Clarion, Pa., on June 17. (photo by Joanne Heimer)

My Favorite Sections

From time to time I am asked, "What is your favorite section of the STS?"

I once asked my eleven-year-old granddaughter Elyse which was her favorite pet. They have a dog, a cat, eight chickens, five goats, fish aquariums, hermit crab terrariums, and sometimes assorted other livestock. Elyse reacted with shock to my question: "How can you ask that? It's like asking a parent 'Who is your favorite child?'!"

I am not sure how many times I have been around the full STS circuit. I backpacked it 2000 and again in 2001, and I circuited with Lori Szymanik and Susie Gribble to install mile markers in 2020. I've led a few slack-pack groups of day hikers completing the trail, and I've spent uncountable hours doing trail maintenance in needy sections. If you give me a number between 1 and 84, I can tell you where the trail is in that mile and what the trail in that section is like.

As with all long-distance trails, the scenery varies. There are climbs, ridge walks, and descents into valleys. There are hardwoods, hemlocks, pines, laurel sections, and meadows. Depending on the season, there are patches of spring beauties, vast areas of ferns, stretches of stinging nettles, and occasional briars. There are benches, shelters, bridges, historical sites, and a couple of narrow vistas.

So... Favorite section(s)?

Taking a poll could be interesting. If hikers name a favorite, it is often the Hammersley. I remember trail-father Bob Knowles saying he loved best the upper Hogback, before mile 15, with its open understory and the headwaters of Hogback Run. Some love stretches like the Scoval-Osborne branches and the Splash Dam trail, with beaver ponds, dams, and lodges.

Almost all hikers would concur that streamside sections are hard to beat. In the spirit of can't-name-just-one-favorite, let me list a few beauties, all creekside, that come to mind:

* The Lyman Run section, with the hemlock understory between the two bridges, mile 6.6-6.8
* The hemlock woods west of Footbridge Camp Lane, mile 18.6-18.8 (2025 reroute)
* The Frazier Farm section to Abbott, south of Short Run Rd., mile 19.3-19.8
* Greenlick Run, mile 39.0-39.7 (2019 reroute)
* The Osborne Branch section just before the confluence with Porter Branch, mile 44.0-44.3
* The Elkhorn Run area before entering the Hammersley stretch, mile 53.2-53.5
* The stretch along Sinnemahoning Creek where many have enjoyed camping, mile 62.7-63.2

Our creekside shelters at Bolich Run, Morgan Hollow, the Wild Boy, and Ford Hollow are also at primo-spots. Going through Ole Bull State Park is quite pretty, too!

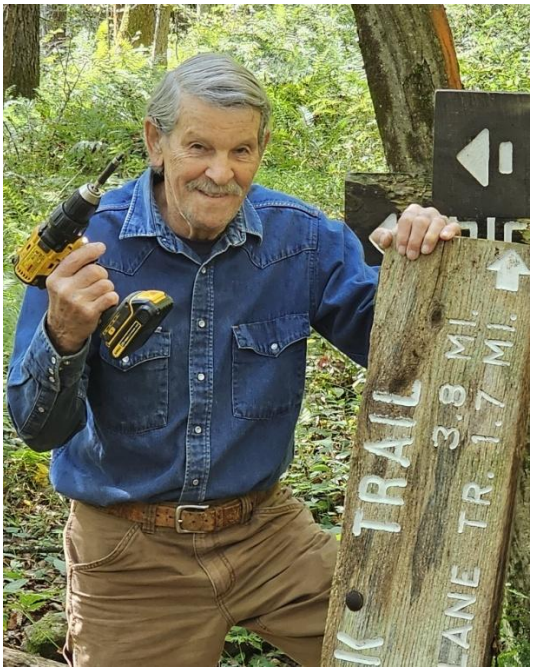
If your list compares to mine, the Frazier Farm trail section made your top ten – or maybe top five – or maybe is your favorite section, if you dare to pick a fave. It saddens me, then, that since our bridge over Cross Fork Creek washed out two years ago, we've had to recommend that hikers road-walk from Short Run Rd. along Cross Fork Rd. for seven-tenths of a mile when Cross Fork Creek waters are cold and deep. Sometimes a barefoot wade is fine and is worth the effort in order not to miss the beautiful Frazier-to-Abbott trail section, but other times, as the contrasting pictures from the Lyman Run tributary on page 4 illustrate, a "wet crossing" can be more than miserable: rushing waters could knock a backpacker off his or her feet.

Any decent trail club knocks itself out to eliminate road-walk sections. A roadwalk in mile 19.3-19.9 turns one of the best sections of the trail into arguably the worst section.

Here's hoping our men can make a new bridge happen over Cross Fork Creek in 2026!

Trail Report

By Bill Boyd



And the STC rambles on, with over 1150 hours of trail care recorded as of the end of June. For those interested, we keep a close recording of the hours worked at STS trail care. I think our record is around 3000 + hours. This may not be a banner year, but then it might be, with another 5 months to go. As a matter of fact, on one of our best days, our crew of six put in two log bridges, one at Little Lyman stream, and the other at Cross Fork stream. And the date? 12-15-15. The work crew for that day was John Zimmer, Larry and Violeta Holtzapple, Jerry Johnston, Bill Boyd and Mark Kelly. When that day was over we made an unwritten agreement, " we won't do that again." Two in one day was a little much.

Then darned if Debby didn't come along and dislodge the Cross Fork stream bridge and deposit it downstream about 100 yards. We think we can pull it back into place at a slightly different location, with a couple of cable pullers. We will need some muscle though - but the club has plenty of that.

When we are not out there working on the trail, you may see us at the various civic events, where we have an informational booth set up. So, stop by either place and see if you can lend a hand - it is always appreciated, not only by us, but by the many hikers who visit our area to enjoy our hospitality and great trails. One hiker even remarked "the STS is the Gold Standard of hiking trails!".



Bridging Cross Fork Creek: The Challenge

By Wanda Shirk

(Lyman Run photos by Curt Weinhold, Finger Lakes photos by Barry Fry)

The two photos on the next page are of the same location: a bridged crossing of a tributary of Lyman Run about a mile past the suspension bridge over Lyman Run at STS mile 6.6. One picture shows the creek in shallow summertime glory; the other shows it at high water on March 11 of this year.

For decades hikers and backpackers had to cross this tributary without a bridge, but the STC took on bridge-building projects as well as shelter-building projects starting about ten years ago. The “worth-a-thousand-words” pictures illustrate the value of a bridge. It’s not always summer!

I remember barefoot crossings of many creeks when I backpacked the STS. Especially in miles 19 to 22, it seemed I was forever stopping to take shoes off and put them back on, or spending time struggling to balance on tree limbs or trying to re-arrange stones for rock hops.



Over the past 25+ years, I've hiked over 4000 miles of trails in Pennsylvania and New York and on the Appalachian Trail. Never did I come upon a bridge and say, "My, I wish they wouldn't have bridged this stream. I would so much rather pick my way down that dirt bank and go through the water and work my way up the muddy bank on the other side. In fact, I think I will. I'll skip the bridge!" I've even been impressed and delighted when logs or planks crossed ditches and gutters that were dry as often as wet.

When I backpacked the Quehanna, I marveled at the frequent and different bridges. I declared the QT tobe one of my three favorite trails. Hiking 500 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail, what impressed me most was an incredible bridge built by the Bullthistle Club just north of Rt. 23 (FLT map 23, mile 7.5) with four built-in benches and signs giving distances to locations in both directions. As I look forward to completing the North Country Trail in western PA, what I anticipate most is half a dozen bridges, each unique, that hikers have raved about. Hikers and backpackers really love bridges!

Our STS bridges have usually been simple and quite satisfactory, just a dropped-and-somewhat-flattened tree trunk with a cable handrail attached to 2x4s. Major exceptions are the Joe Allis bridge over Jacob Run at mile 6 and "Ted's Truss" over Young Woman's Creek at mile 36.8, as well as the suspension bridges over Lyman Run at mile 6.6 and the second crossing of Cross Fork Creek, mile 20.5.

Hurricane Debbie took out three STS bridges on August 9, 2024. Doug Wetherbee replaced the one over Stony Run. A landowner, at tens of thousands of dollars of expense, replaced the bridge over Sinnemahoning Creek at mile 63 near the former Williams farm. Our sturdy bridge over the first STS crossing of Cross Fork Creek, mile 19.7, has still not been replaced, and the club has been debating what to do about it.

Some argue that we had no bridge there prior to 2019; that hikers and backpackers should accept the rigors of "wet crossings"; that many other trails – notably the AT in Maine and our neighboring Black Forest Trail, with no maintaining club – have multiple unbridged stream crossings; and that we have an easy road walk option available, just .7 mile on gravel Cross Fork Rd.



A cost estimate for a bridge with steel supports suggests that about $4,000 could get us a bridge that would last decades. The club has the money, but our thrifty members hesitate to spend such a sum. We are exploring other options, but it's hard to get tree trunks or even telephone poles to span the minimum of forty feet.

STC life member and guidebook writer Ben Cramer, who has hiked over 6000 miles on Pennsylvania trails, wrote to express his opinion: "Majority rules, but consider me skeptical toward those who think it's 'fun' to get wet in the middle of a six hour hike. Did you ever donate to a small grassroots group and say, 'I hope they put my money in a bank account for years to come and make a little interest'? Me neither. So don't sit on it. Use it. You have an immediate need to replace a damaged bridge and the money to get stuff done. No time like the present."

Wilderness trails can't be "handicap-accessible," but we can do our best to make them not ultra-challenges for elite hikers but safer and friendlier for even children and oldsters.

Is there something better we could do with the money from our generous donors? I think not. But we'll see what the club thinks. Stay tuned!





Finger Lakes Trail bridge with built-in benches and signage, built by the Bullthistle Hiking Club.

Bridging Gravel Lick Run

By Wanda Shirk



A bridging project that has been on the club's to-do list for several years was completed on Monday, June 8, with valued maintainer and sawyer Ron Heath knocking it all out in one 8-hour day.

The photo sequence first shows Ron cutting the tree, which was dropped with precision across Gravel Lick Run at STS mile 61.8, where high waters in the spring resulted in many hikers and backpackers getting wet feet in the past if their jump ended short of the far bank.

The second photo, with an orange blaze visible on a tree on the left, shows the felled maple trunk across the creek and Ron starting to level a walking surface.

In the third photo, the de-limbed log is shown flattened, and the fourth and fifth pics show the four 2x4s and cable handrail installation, similar to the STS bridges over the Lyman Run tributary at mile 6.8 and Little Lyman Run at 19.8. Ron has also built simple "balance beam" bridges over Yochum Run (mile 20.8) and on the East Fork -Shinglebolt Trail.

Landowner cooperation at Gravel Lick Run was secured over past years by Gary Buchanan and followed up by Larry Holtzapple, who assisted Ron, submitted these photos, and reports that landowner Larry Moist is very pleased with the bridge and even helped haul the chainsaw and tools with his UTV.

Hike Report

By Pat Childs
(585-610-0715 childs4@roadrunner.com)

Cherry Springs - On May 25, 2026, Sherry Zurlo led Barb, Curt, and June on a nearly 6-mile hike from Cherry Springs firetower to Short Run Road. Despite calf-high wet grass, everyone enjoyed the 3-hour trek.

Along the way, we cleared a blocked stream flowing over the trail, took photo and bathroom breaks, and tasted wild cucumber. Curt was a fountain of information throughout the trip, capturing great photos along the way.



Laural Hike - On a sunny June 20, 2026, Larry Holtzapple led Curt, Wanda, Pat, Doug, Helen, Barb, and Amy (photographed by Elizabeth Kapoor) on a scenic four-

mile hike. Starting at Cherry Springs vista, we followed the STS north, taking Wingard and Hopper House trails to bypass Cardiac climb.
The trail featured rich green ferns and stunning mountain laurel in pink and white mid-bloom. After checking out a well-stocked lean-to, we descended trails freshly cleared of fallen branches by Larry's crew. To see the laurel and historic firetower without the steep hills, simply hike south on the STS across Route 44.



Sinnemahoning and Austin Dam - On June 24, 2026, Curt and Penny arranged a glass-calm kayak tour of Sinnemahoning State Park Lake. Guided by park educator Bob Edkin, our group of eight paddled past bank-burrowing beaver dens, fish spawning beds, snake-sunning spots (we found a shed skin!), and turtles.



After lunch at 40 Maples, we explored the park's historical exhibits. We also highly recommend visiting the nearby Austin Dam Memorial Park. Be sure to drive all the way down to the base pavilion—the historic photos and data there are a must-see!



Camporee 2026

By Janet Smith

Attention! The time is fast approaching for attending this year's STC Camporee.

August 6th Thursday through August 9th Sunday at Ole Bull State Park. We are looking forward to renewing friendships, sharing stories and making new memories. Please contact one of the following members to notify the team of your plan to attend. We would like a head count for planning the meeting and events. If you are planning to come for the day/ meeting and social time or for camping, workday or just fun please let us know your intention.

Pat Childs: childs4@roadrunner.com

Susie Gribble: 4everurfaithful@gmail.com

Angela Jackson: angelamjackson83@gmail.com

Barb Miller: barbmill@fastmail.com

Janet Smith: jsmith2202@verizon.net

Camping is FREE and the club has the following campsites reserved in

area #1. 10 sites: 46-48-49-50-51-53-63-64-66 & 67. The sites are at a first-come basis and can be viewed on the state park website.

There is a workday on Friday, our meeting is Saturday at 2:00 P.M with a dish to pass first followed by the meeting. Hikes are planned and can be added or adjusted as interest is indicated. Dust off your boots, tweak your best recipe, bring your smiles and share some outdoor time with the Susquehannock Trail Club.

STC MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Lois Morey, Corresponding and Membership Secretary



Welcome New Members in 2nd Quarter
Regular Memberships:
Richard Chomik, Doylestown, PA
Dan & Lenora Kudrick, Coudersport, PA
Chris LeBlanc, Morrisville, NC
Robert Pingar, West Chester, PA
New Life Members:
Robert & Anita Davis, Troy, PA

STC Officers for the 2 year term 2026-2028
Voted in at the May 16. 2026 meeting held
At the PA Lumber Museum:

President: Wanda Shirk
Vice President: Janet Smith
Recording Secretary: Lori Szymanik-Oliver
Corresponding Secretary: Lois Morey
Treasurer: Jay Stuckey

Advisory Board:
Jan Halter
Barb Miller
Chad Rugh
Curt Weinhold
John Zimmer

FROM THE ARCHIVES: In the Beginning….
It was 60 years ago in the year 1966 that a local businessman, William D. Fish, Jr., who was then editor and publisher of the weekly newspaper Potter Enterprise" (now "Potter Leader-Enterprise"), conceived the idea of establishing a marked hiking trail through the wilds of Potter County. His idea was supported and promoted by the local official tourist promotion agency, known then as PCRI. Meetings were held and committees formed to pursue this original idea.
That year was just the beginning as many tentative routes were suggested and explored. To go back further in time, let's find out why there were so many trails and routes to consider. In the early 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) created a network of foot trails throughout the Susquehannock State Forest for access by fire fighters. All these trails were given individual names for reference when a quick response was needed to fight forest fires. Many of these fires were in remote areas caused by the use of steam locomotives and could only be reached on foot. Over time, a great number of these fire trails were no longer necessary and had been neglected due to modern fire suppression methods, particularly that of fighting fires from the air.
Thus, the idea came about to connect a series of these almost-forgotten fire lanes to create a single loop trail for day hikers and wilderness backpackers. Also considered and utilized were old woods roads and railroad grades to complete the proposed 85-mile circuit. Initial flagging of the proposed STS was not started, nor the Susquehannock Trail Club (STC) organized, until the following year in 1967.
Today we have a beautiful well-maintained 84-mile loop trail that the late "Bill" Fish envisioned 60 years ago. Sadly, he died at age 56 on May 29, 1977, after a two-month battle with cancer.
He was an early charter member of the Susquehannock Trail Club and had earned the club's Circuit Hiker Award in 1973, becoming Circuit Hiker #60. He will always be remembered as the father of the Susquehannock Trail System.

New Circuit Hiker Award Recipient

1371 - Chris "Chicken Fat" LeBlanc, Morrisville, NC
1372 - Curtis "Bear Bait" Mamzic
1373 - Joseph Joyce

Susquehannock Trail Club
PO Box 643
Coudersport PA 16915



UPCOMING EVENTS

August 6-9 : Camporee, Ole Bull State Park

Meetings

Meetings begin with a pot-luck lunch at noon, followed by club mtg. approx. 1-2 p.m. Bring place setting and dish to share.

Sept. 12: Lyman Run State Park pavilion

Oct. 10: Yard/pavilion - Lois Morey's place
996 Rt. 6 West, Galeton
(bring a lawn chair if you can)

Nov. 14: Pa. Lumber Museum meeting room

Dec. 19: Pa. Lumber Museum meeting room
~ Christmas Party