STANDING STONE TRAIL CLUB

THE ROCK HOPPER

FALL 2026 EDITION



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Standing Stone Trail Club, Inc.
P.O. Box 171
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Trailinfo.sstc@gmail.com

Standing Stone Trail Leadership Team

President - George Conrad

Vice President - Rebecca Conner Miller

Secretary - Lindsey Hamilton

Treasurer - Cheryl Shope

Trail Master - Burgess Smith

Assistant Trail Master - Thomas McMath

Tool Master - Ethan Lashlee

Sign Master - James Savory

Map Master - Peter Fleszar

Membership Chair - Burgess Smith

GET Representative - Open Position

KTA Representative - George Conrad

End to End Coordinator - Kevin Morgan





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

GEORGE CONRAD

Hello friends, hikers, and members of the Standing Stone Trail Club and welcome to another edition of our newsletter, The Rock Hopper.

As you read through this edition, one thing that you are sure to notice is all the various organizations and volunteers that support the Standing Stone Trail. Simply put, the trail just would not exist without their dedication and we owe our volunteers a huge debt of gratitude. In this edition, take note of special projects supported by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps, Team Red White and Blue, Scouting America, the boroughs of Three Springs and Mapleton, and the list goes on. Other mentions are projects led by members of the trail club such as the blazing workshop, countless hours maintaining the trail, and a host of other activities completed behind the scenes to keep our organization active and growing.

With so much going on with the Standing Stone Trail, it is easy for one to think that maybe your support is not needed and there is little else for you to do. Of course this is not the case and I want to unequivocally state that we need YOU! For just $20 a year, your membership dues are the main source of revenue for the trail club to operate. This allows us to purchase fuel, pay for the website, print promotional materials, and support the other aspects of running a club. Volunteering is also important as the trail club needs support outside of just joining as a member. Of course, trail maintenance is what first comes to mind when mentioning volunteer opportunities, but there are plenty of other ways to lend a hand and many of these functions are done from home. Lastly, I would ask that you even consider being a leader in the trail club as bringing fresh energy and ideas to the table is always a good thing.

As we enter the fall and winter season, please take a moment to reflect on all the great things happening with the Standing Stone Trail and consider what you can do to play a role. A great way to learn more about the trail club and how you can support it is to attend the fall meeting set for November 7 at 9 AM in the office building for Greenwood Furnace State Park. Everyone is invited and I hope to see you there as we begin plans for 2027!

TRAIL BLAZING WORKSHOP

The SST Club hosts a blazing workshop to teach proper techniques

Many of Pennsylvania's trails use blazes to mark the route and doing so serves a few purposes. These include aiding in navigation, ensuring safety, and protecting the environment. Blazes help guide a hiker by indicating direction, such as continue straight or look out for an approaching turn, and let a hiker know who else may be using a trail by the color of the blazes. Hikers also use blazes to avoid getting lost as the blazes are visible markers that lead the way no matter the condition of the actual trail. Lastly, blazes help protect the environment by identifying an authorized trail and keeping hikers on the designated path.

Good blazing techniques should meet certain standards hikers can trust and allow for the blazes to last for as long as possible. Blazes should be placed at approximately eye level and appropriately spaced so that the line of sight from one blaze allows a hiker to see the blaze in front of them and behind them. When painting blazes on trees, blazes should be placed on healthy trees that provide a good surface to paint and trees that grow rather slowly, such as Red Oak, Black Gum, or Beech. Blazes should also be uniform in size and shade of color so hikers know what to expect throughout the entire trail.

The process of painting blazes takes some forethought before even hitting the trail as there are certain tools of the trade to use and optimal conditions for this type of work. Of course, blazing requires some paint and a brush, but one should use the same type and brand of paint throughout the trail to be consistent. People also will need some basic supplies such as a scraper to prepare the area for paint, a vessel with a handle that makes carrying paint easier, template for creating the blazes, and other paint accessories like a can opener, stirrer, clean-up rags, and solvent. Optimal work conditions include dry weather and temperatures that meet the rating for the brand of paint. Blazes should be applied to a clean surface, measure 2 x 6 inches, and always be vertical.



TRAIL BLAZING WORKSHOP CONT.

With blazes being of such high importance and taking the right materials and some thought, it is important to train those interested in painting blazes before having them do the work. In March of this year, the Standing Stone Trail Club hosted a blazing workshop at Greenwood Furnace State Park to teach people about blazing, provide them with the materials to do it on the trail, and then assign them a section of the SST to put their new skills to use. The plan is then for the participants to be the trail's blazing team who would be ready to tackle any section currently needing to be updated and ready to go whenever a need arose.

During the blazing workshop, the 2-hour event was divided into a classroom setting where attendees heard all about blazing during a presentation and then the participants went outside for some hands-on application to actually practice painting blazes under the supervision of experienced club members. As the event concluded, each participant received a blazing kit and an assignment card. The blazing kit included a quart of paint, brushes, can opener, stir stick, wire brush with a scraper, blaze template, a sharpie marker to trace the template, a cloth for clean-up, and an official parking placard. The assignment card designated the location for the work and provided information about accessing the area, exact section of trail to blaze, and other details. The attendees included some current maintainers of the SST who wanted to hone their blazing skills, but also others who wanted to volunteer in some fashion that is less laborious than typical trail work.

The Standing Stone Trail Club believes hosting a blazing workshop was a good use of resources that helps ensure that trail continues to be well marked. As an old saying goes, "Just because you're following a well marked trail, don't mean that whoever made it knew where they were going." And to this I would offer that at least you know you're on the right path!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

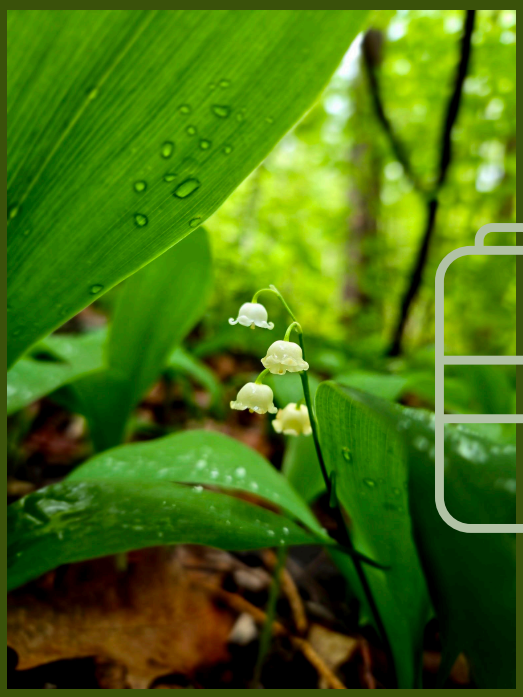
SST FALL MEETING

Saturday, Nov. 7
9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Main Office at Greenwood Furnace State Park
15795 Greenwood Rd
Huntingdon, PA 16652

SST SPRING MEETING

Saturday, April 3, 2027
9 a.m. - noon
DCNR Rothrock State Forest Headquarters
181 Rothrock Ln
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Trail Gallery







NEW SHELTER AT THREE SPRINGS

The Standing Stone Trail has a new sturdy overnight shelter this year in Three Springs Borough as part of an Eagle Scout project by Nathaniel "Nate" Heller of Troop 28 in Huntingdon.

As hikers of the SST know, the valley crossing from Locke Valley Road to Butler Knob is over 16 miles with no legal camping sites. Over the years, many hikers would make it to Three Springs to resupply and end up searching for a suitable place to spend the night as the daylight hours waned. However, residents would be concerned with people camping in the baseball field or taking refuge in other public spaces. We knew that this area was a concern but it also had a lot of outstanding potential. A shelter in the vicinity of Three Springs Borough is about in the middle of this difficult stretch and allows hikers more time to visit the town's restaurants and shops.

In August 2025, Nate approached our club to ask if we had a need that could fulfill the requirements for his Eagle Scout project and we were quick to make the suggestion of a shelter in this area. During several meetings with the Borough Council of Three Springs, we were approved to construct a shelter on a parcel of property owned by the borough along Quarry Road that adjoins State Game Lands 099. After a brief inspection, it seemed like the perfect location as it is not far from the main trail and located in a wooded area along a gated road. Plus it may allow for a future reroute to move the trail away from Route 829 and directly onto the game lands.





NEW SHELTER AT THREE SPRINGS CONT.

Once the site was selected and approvals received, Nate took over the project in earnest by first receiving a grant from the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau to pay for all materials. Then in May 2026, work occurred over a few weekends with Nate enlisting the help of his fellow Scouts, friends, and family, along with our own Tom McMath, to construct a top notch, Adirondack shelter. Upon completion of the shelter, Burgess Smith, Jim Savory, and Tom McMath blazed a yellow trail from the main SST to the shelter and installed some signage too.

This is the third shelter along the trail in addition to the ones at Butler Knob in Rothrock State Forest and Riverside Park in Mapleton Borough. Many thanks to Nate Heller, Scout Troop 28, Three Springs Borough Council, the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau, and members of the Standing Stone Trail Club for making this fantastic project possible.





OTHER NEWS

Meeting with the Huntingdon County Commissioners

Standing Stone Trail Club president George Conrad met with the Huntingdon County Commissioners at their regular weekly meeting on June 9 to familiarize them with the trail in general with focus on the Thousand Steps.

After a brief overview of the club's membership, they discussed the Standing Stone Trail and its contribution to outdoor recreation in the county. It was mentioned that the Standing Stone Trail Club currently has 121 members with 67 being annual members and 54 being lifetime members, but only 28% of membership is from Huntingdon County. Also noted was that the club holds two meetings per year on the first Saturday of April and the first Saturday in November. Lastly, the Commissioners learned that the trail club hosts community hikes, produces a regular newsletter, and has been included in a variety of publications.

When speaking about Thousand Steps, the objective was really to emphasize that our club is solely responsible for this major tourism destination which hosts close to 30,000 annual visitors. With the support of the community, we have been able to get some major projects completed in recent years, like rehabilitation of the parking lot, improvements to the entrance, reinforcement of Ledge Quarry Vista, and many small fixes along the steps. Still we face the constant need for litter pick-up and general maintenance given the amount of use the steps receive.

The Commissioners were very interested in all the club does and expressed their appreciation for our efforts.

OTHER NEWS

Visit from Team RWB

The Standing Stone Trail Club hosted Team RWB for a workday to do general trail maintenance at the Thousand Steps on July 3. The group presented us with a certificate of appreciation to recognize the trail club for providing unique outdoor recreational opportunities to the public.

Many thanks to Scott Lemmon for connecting our organizations and coordinating the workday.

Team RWB supports veterans through fitness, events, and community programs that promote health and camaraderie.



