



STANDING STONE TRAIL CLUB

THE ROCK HOPPER

SPRING 2026 EDITION



What's inside?

- Message from the President
- Trail History
- End-to-End Report
- Introducing new End-to-End Program Manager
- Calendar of Events
- Trail Notes
- Trail Alerts

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



Welcome to another edition of The Rock Hopper and another wonderful hiking season to come on the Standing Stone Trail.

The trail club has long valued having a newsletter as this is a great way to reach our members and also those interested in the trail. The Rock Hopper highlights upcoming events, trail alerts, history of the trail, and provides other pertinent information. This year we are partnering with the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau to assist with the newsletter and our hope is to release a new edition each Spring and Fall.

Given the importance of having a newsletter, it has always been a concern of mine that it is not being created on a regular basis. Our members know that their membership dues go to support the trail, but a newsletter is a way to provide something more in return. The issue has always been finding the time and resources to pull it all together and by partnering with the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau, we are putting a structure in place to make it possible going forward.

So given the fresh start, now is the time for you as a member to think about what we should include in The Rock Hopper. Perhaps you would like to see photos from the trail or hear a good story. Others may want highlights from certain sections or interviews from hikers who know the trail in detail. Still others may enjoy hearing how the trail came to be, current challenges, and what the future may hold. All of these things are possible but we can't do it without you! So as you read through this edition, think about what you enjoy seeing and how we can make it better next time.

Thank you for supporting the Standing Stone Trail and thank you for being a member of the Standing Stone Trail Club!



TRAIL HISTORY : SMOKE UMS SPRING

The very first feature to earn a name on the Link Trail, former name of the Standing Stone Trail, was Smoke Ums Spring on the northern side of Jacks Mountain.

The initial exploration of the area was completed by Mike Sausser and his dog named Smokey as they planned the future route of the trail. Of course, there was minimal flagging given Mike and Smokey would explore the area, find the best route, and then lightly mark it before making it official.

Smokey was a large Labrador Retriever who sort of zig-zagged around the woods to get a feel for the area and see what he could find. On one particular day, Mike and Smokey did not find much but Smokey did stumble on to a very weak flowing and sandy spring. Mike believed that Smokey led him there to show him the water source and so credit was given to the dog by naming the small oasis on Jacks Mountain, Smoke Ums Spring. The area also had a nearby charcoal flat that became a favorite campsite for Mike and Smokey and is a designated campsite for hikers today.

After Smokey found the spring, it was soon time for Mike and his dog to make their way back home. However he was struggling to find the way which he came. Mike's flagging was designed to be minimal and most of it could only be seen from the direction that he came. After about 45 minutes or so of wondering what to do, Mike began to realize that Smokey was walking to each ribbon and waiting for him to catch up. So Smokey not only found a watering hole and a great campsite, but he also got Mike safely out of the woods. That was one good dog!



STANDING STONE TRAIL END TO END REPORT 2025

A SST End to End Hiker is someone who has hiked every single mile of the SST—over 80 miles in all! This can be accomplished in one trip or in many trips, either as a section hike or thru hike, during this year or in previous years...as long as every single mile of the SST is hiked...including the “Valley Crossing!”

- Program started in 2021 & just wrapped up the 5th year of the program.
- Total of 45 SST End to End Hikers!
 - 20 thru hikers
 - 25 section hikers
- to be acknowledged as a SST End to End Hiker there are two things needed—an application and some kind of documentation such as a written journal, photo journal, or video journal.
- Key aspects of our SST End to End Hiker Program
 - Applicant is emailed a short note when application and documentation received
 - awardee receives items as an acknowledgement of their accomplishment
 - letter, certificate, patch and sticker
 - awardee is added to the website list

- **Statistics on End to End Hikers**
 - Most from PA, one from MD and even one from WI, Sabrina Deed, who section hiked the entirety of the trail with her father, Roger Deed
 - Usually takes between 4-8 days to complete as a thru hike
 - Has taken up to 6 years to complete as a section hike
 - SST’s Fastest Known Time—Keith Query in 1 day, 3 hours, 22 minutes, 13 seconds
 - 5 children are End to End Hikers, from the Hale family, between ages of 9 & 14, who section hiked the entirety of the trail with their parents Dawn & Christopher Hale.
- 1 canine hiker, a pet dog who thru hiked with Lisa Lilly and Christopher Russell



Quotes from End to End Hikers

Hardship on the trail from Kevin Morgan, *“I placed my hammock above a large cluster of rocks and hoped for the best. The rains came and caused my straps along with my weight to stretch. I ended up splitting my hammock on the rocks below me as I shuffled around in my hammock. Bummer.”*

Scenery on the trail from Cole Amsden, *“Views were beautiful, passing through an awesome hemlock grove as the sun rose over the mountain.”*

Introduction of our new End-to-End Program Manager, Kevin Morgan!

My name is Kevin Morgan with a trail name of Goose. I live in Mifflin County but have explored many of the main trails in Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Colorado, and the US Virgin Islands. I got back into backpacking over the last 6 years. I consider exploring the wilderness as my gym membership. It's a much better deal because you get exercise while also getting to experience so many stories. When you enter the unknown, there will always be an adventure that needs to be told, and I look forward to hearing your wonderful tales of the trail. Thanks for the opportunity and let the adventures begin! the "Valley Crossing!"

End to End Number	Hiker's Name	Trail Name	Section or Thru Hike
#1	Mike Sausser	---	S
#2	Sabrina Deed	Trip	S
#3	Roger Deed	Mule	S
#4	Caleb Fisher	---	T
#5	Wanda Shirk	Survivor Wanda	S
#6	Jim Fitzgerald	---	S
#7	Jodi Fitzgerald	---	S
#8	Lisa Lilly	---	T
#9	Christopher Russell <small>A1 Jabhah (Canine End to End Hiker #1)</small>	---	T
#10	Jessica Imes	---	T
#11	Bryson Peterman	Neon Gator	T
#12	Lisa Myers	One of A Kind	S
#13	Daniel Kovalik	Danimal	T
#14	Georgetta Fredrick	Trail Mama	T
#15	Chuck Wolfe	Chuckles	S
#16	James Rowland	Mechanical Man	T
#17	Cindy Radich	---	S

End to End Number	Hiker's Name	Trail Name	Section or Thru Hike
#18	Gail Brossman	---	S
#19	Andrea Viazanko	---	S
#20	Kristin Joivell	Little Engine	T
#21	Kevin Busko	---	T
#22	Dawn Hale	---	S
#23	Christopher Hale	---	S
#24	Chloe Hale	---	S
#25	Cara Hale	---	S
#26	Lucas Hale	---	S
#27	Leah Hale	---	S
#28	Faith Hale	---	S
#29	David Smith	---	T
#30	Michael Ruhl	Toesock	T
#31	Lisa Stephens	---	S
#32	Tim Wilderoder	---	T
#33	Justin Funck	---	S
#34	Daniel Smith	---	T
#35	Robert Stewart	Just Bob	T
#36	Sharon Yohn	---	S
#37	Jared Kauffman	Almost There	S
#38	Rebecca ConnerMiller	---	T
#39	Cole Amsden	Door Dash	T
#40	Alex McCafferty	Yeti	T
#41	Chris Seaman	---	T
#42	Tim Seaman	---	T
#43	Scott Lemmon	---	S
#44	Rick Stahl	---	S
#45	Kevin Morgan	Goose	S

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SST SPRING MEETING

Saturday, April 4
9 a.m. - noon
**DCNR Rothrock State
Forest Headquarters**
181 Rothrock Ln
Huntingdon, PA 16652

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 2026 Community Hikes

Winter(ish) Hike at Cowans Gap State Park

Date: Saturday, March 28 **Start Time:** 10 a.m. **Distance:** 4.3 Miles
Location: Cowans Gap State Park, Parking Lot # 1 (39.99934161977615, -77.92169995453018)

Details: This hike starts at the southern terminus on the SST at Cowans Gap State Park and uses Horseshoe Trail and Fox Trail to make a loop as we take the Tuscarora Trail back to the park. Recent improvements to Horseshoe Trail and Fox Trail make the ascent and descent a little easier but each trail has about 800 feet in elevation change in just a few tenths of a mile. Highlights along this route are views from the top of Cove Mountain and then following the famous Forbes Road back to the park. Hikers should be sure to wear sturdy shoes, bring their own water and snacks, and some may find hiking poles to be useful given the change in elevation. This hike is about 4.3 miles and is a loop route.

Spring Hike for Young Families and Young at Heart

Date: Sunday, May 17 **Start Time:** 1 p.m. **Distance:** 0.75 Miles
Location: Old Seeger Picnic Area (40.69556390809111, -77.75801410320972)

Details: This hike is for those with young families or those who are just young at heart but want a short and easy stroll through the forest. Hikers will take in the old growth forests of Alan Seeger Natural Area and follow the trail as it crosses several bridges over the Standing Stone Creek and meanders under tunnels of Rhododendron. At just under a mile, there is no rush and so feel free to bring a pair of binoculars or your favorite guidebook to take in the area. Hikers should be comfortable getting a little dirty as the trail can be wet in the Spring. For those wanting to pass a little more time before or after the hike, there are a couple pavilions and picnic tables to have lunch or relax. This hike is a loop route using the Alan Seeger Loop Trail.

SST 2026 Community Hikes Cont.

Summer Hike for Stargazing at Night

Date: Saturday, August 29. **Start Time:** 7 p.m. **Distance:** 5 Miles

Location: Butlers Knob Shelter (40.278947515428804, -77.97107567629179)

Details: This is one hike that keeps growing in popularity and so the Standing Stone Trail Club is excited to do the night hike from the shelter at Butlers Knob again. The hike starts in the daylight, but it won't be long until you need a headlamp. The hike leaders will be sure to keep everyone together as we make our way to the Hall of the Mountain King to see the stars. Anyone who wants to spend the night is welcome to camp in the shelter too! Meet at the Butlers Knob shelter and be sure to give yourself plenty of time as the drive from Rt. 747 can be very slow. Hikers should be sure to wear sturdy shoes, bring plenty of water and snacks, and some may find hiking poles to be useful given the rocky terrain in the dark. This hike is about 5 miles and is an out-and-back route.

Fall Hike on Jacks Mountain and the Charcoal Trail

Date: Saturday, October 17 **Start Time:** 10 a.m. **Distance:** 5 Miles

Location: Top of Jacks Mountain (40.435161571425056, -77.88079197745216)

Details: This hike has something to offer for everyone who loves trails, views, and local history! This hike starts on top of Jacks Mountain by following the gated road behind Lucy Furnace until it ends in the parking area which is 5.5 miles from Rt. 22. (Consider carpooling from the highway if you don't want to drive this far on the primitive road.) The hike then follows the SST to Smoke Ums Spring to visit the SST's newest permanent campsite and then continues on the proposed Charcoal Trail to see former charcoal hearths and collier huts. As we join the main trail once again, we will push a little farther to the edge of Jacks Mountain to take in a wonderful hidden vista. The return trip is along the SST to the beginning where we will also pass Shorb's Summit and hike across the top of Jacks Mountain. Hikers should be sure to wear sturdy shoes, bring their own water and snacks, and some may find hiking poles to be useful given the rocky terrain. This hike is about 5 miles and is an out-and-back/loop route.

Bonus Hike to Celebrate the Country's 250th Anniversary

Date: July 11. **Time:** 10 a.m. **Distance:** 7.2 Miles

Location: Mapleton Riverside Park (40.394268689042434, -77.93716003250206)

Details: This hike is being led by the Standing Stone Trail Club as part of Mapleton's celebration of the country's 250th anniversary. The hike starts at Riverside Park, continues through the borough of Mapleton, and then enters State Game Lands 071 as we climb Jacks Mountain to Windy Vista. Along the way, we will see the industrial history of the area, take in the beauty of Scrub Gap, and take a rest at Windy Vista before returning back the way that we came. This hike does gradually ascend about 1500 feet over 3 miles but will follow a recent re-route of the SST that makes the climb a little easier. Hikers should be sure to wear sturdy shoes, bring their own water and snacks, and some may find hiking poles to be useful given the rocky terrain and long climb.

SST TRAIL WORK

Blazing Team Training

Pre-registration is required by emailing trailinfo.sstc@gmail.com.

The trail club will host a workshop on proper blazing techniques with the goal of establishing a team of people to blaze the trail as needed. The workshop is tentatively planned on Sunday, March 29 at 1:00. We will meet at the main office building for Greenwood Furnace State Park.

Thousand Steps

A workday at the Thousand Steps is scheduled for Friday, July 3 from 9 AM to 3 PM. The focus is to improve the trail from the top of the steps toward the inclines by building up the tread. Other projects are also available such as litter pick-up, clearing debris from the steps, opening drainage areas, etc.

Improvements on Stone Mountain

PA Outdoor Corps is scheduled to assist the trail club by improving the trail on Stone Mountain from August 3 to 6 and August 10 to 13.

Charcoal Trail

Upon approval from DCNR, approximately one mile of trail will be established between Smoke Ums Spring and the SST to create a loop on top of Jacks Mountain. Date is to be determined.

Shelter at Three Springs

As part of an Eagle Scout project, a shelter has been approved to be constructed in Three Spring Borough and the trail club is offering assistance. Date to be determined.



TRAIL NOTES

Respecting our Private Landowners

Like most long distance hiking trails, the Standing Stone Trail crosses properties that are managed by a variety of distinct interests. In just our 84 miles of trail, the SST meanders through two state forests, four state game lands, two boroughs, and several tracts of private property. Each of these properties has its own set of rules to follow and so it is important to know what is allowed and prohibited as you hike.

In regard to private landowners, we must be especially respectful of their requests, and the SST is only allowed to cross these properties through handshake agreements. As properties change ownership or new concerns arise, the trail club is responsible for alerting hikers to any new requirements and we do this by updating our website, posting information to our Facebook group, and emailing our membership. It is this arrangement that gives hikers the information that they need to avoid conflicts and allows the trail to continue to use these properties.

In general, hikers should adhere to a few general recommendations when crossing private property. The main thing to keep in mind is that the private landowners expect hikers to stay on the trail and to leave no trace of their passage. This means that no camping is allowed, human waste should be buried, littering is not tolerated, and anything on the property should not be bothered. Of course, we encourage hikers to greet and thank private landowners for allowing the trail to pass through their property, but these folks are not there to support your adventure or provide assistance by any means.

Below are some current highlights to the sections of trail that cross private property.

- On Cove Mountain, there are two small sections of trail that are not in use during the two weeks of rifle season for deer and hikers can use Fox and Sharpe Trails to avoid these areas.
- The property between Buchanan State Forest and Sheepskin Hollow Road was recently purchased and after speaking with the landowner, it has been agreed that this property is no longer restricted from October to the end of December. The landowner wants to see how things go before limiting use but does plan to use the property for hunting.
- As you come onto Sheepskin Hollow Road, it is important to use the parking area by the underpass of the PA Turnpike. This parking space was established as part of an agreement with the property owner who owns the farm along Rt. 522. Also, as part of the agreement, hikers are required to wear hunter orange from November 15 to December 15 and follow the rules and regulations of the PA Game Commission.
- Further north, a popular spot along the trail is the Throne Room but this is also on private property that has had issues over the years. The main thing to note here is that parking for anyone using Jacks Mountain Road is in the designated lot for State Game Lands 071 about a mile past the Silver Mine Hunting Camp.
- The last section to note is the property as you descend Jack Mountain toward Route 655. The trail enters a field before coming in directly behind the house of the landowner and so the main concern here is not to disturb them by hiking at some odd hour or to at least be discreet.

In closing, the Standing Stone Trail Club has not had many incidents over the years, and we have always found a path forward. However, it only takes one problem to have a private landowner reconsider the trail and so just keep in mind that it is a privilege to access these private properties.



TRAIL ALERTS



Sweet Sixteen Trail Challenge

The Sweet Sixteen Trail Challenge program officially ends in 2025 but the activity remains as something for trail users to pursue by discovering the 16 locations along the trail. For more information, please find the challenge questions on our website at <https://www.standingstonetrail.org/sweet-16-trail-challenge>.

Martin Road into Rothrock State Forest

DCNR is continuing to monitor a deteriorating culvert on Martin Road and seeking to secure the needed permissions to fix it before the road may be closed. The trail club received a letter from DCNR about the situation in November 2025 and continues to stay abreast of the situation. Martin Road is most often used in accessing Rocky Ridge Natural Area or as a means of reaching Allensville Road.

State Game Land 112 above Mill Creek Hollow Road

Recent logging activity on SGL 112 has made maintaining the trail more challenging given the lack of trees to blaze and initial regrowth of vegetation. The trail club has been given permission to install posts to better mark the trail and the game commission is planning to spray the stilt grass in 2026. The trail club does our best to control this section, but hikers are advised to use alternative methods for following the trail aside from locating the blazes.

Bridge Replacement on Meadow Gap Road

A small bridge on Meadow Gap Road is set to be replaced by Penn DOT starting in July of 2026 and continuing into August. The road will be closed during this time, and a detour will be established for motorists. Hikers are urged to avoid the area during the construction and especially while workers are active on the job.

PA Outdoor Corps Project on Stone Mountain

A crew from PA Outdoor Corps is scheduled to assist the trail club by improving the trail on Stone Mountain from August 3 to 6 and again from August 10 to 13. The trail will be disrupted during this time as the crew does rock work and general maintenance.