

## Beaver County Trail Route Description

### **Road Walk – Scott Wallace Rd. Trailhead to Darlington**

From the Scott Wallace Rd. trailhead cross the bridge over the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek, then follow Scott Wallace Rd. 1 mile to its intersection with Huston Rd. Turn left onto Huston and follow it a short distance to PA Route 351 where the hiker should turn left and cross the highway bridge over the railroad tracks. Follow Route 351 to its intersection with Echo Valley Rd. and turn right, following the blue blazes.

Follow Echo Valley Rd. for 2 miles to its intersection with PA Route 551, then turn left onto 551. The distance from this intersection to the Trail Town of Darlington is 1.5 miles and this road walk provides some great views of the Pennsylvania countryside.

In Darlington, proceed straight through the intersection onto PA168/551 for .2 miles to the North Country Trail parking area on the north side of the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek. Parking is available here for many vehicles.

The Trail Town of Darlington offers two convenience stores offering limited resupply for long-distance hikers. There is also a bakery in town.

### **Off Road Section From Darlington, PA to Louthan Rd.**

Parking is available at the former Kathy's Country Kitchen/Farmers Insurance on the north side of the bridge for multiple vehicles. The NCT turns to the right at the south end of the concrete bridge, taking you down along the bank of the creek and into the woods. Follow the creek walk for approximately .3 of a mile. The trail reaches a pipeline and turns left across a small bridge to follow that and to switch back up the hillside for approximately .4 of a mile until PA Route 168 is reached beside Crescent Supply.

**High Water Detour – In the late winter and early spring the Little Beaver Creek will flood, obscuring parts of the NCT that run alongside it. In the event of high water, instead of turning beside the bridge to go into the woods and down along the creek, follow PA Route 168 south out of town until Crescent Supply is reached.**

The North Country Trail crosses PA Route 168 and reenters the woods directly across PA 168 from Crescent Supply, the next half mile of trail gradually climbing through the woods to

the Seceder Cemetery on Georgetown Rd. The trail passes through the woods behind the cemetery and uses the driveway at the south end to reach Georgetown Rd. itself, where the road bridge is used to cross PA Route 51.

After crossing the bridge over Route 51 the trail cuts up a steep bank to a very pleasant double track that runs parallel to the highway. The landowner asks that hikers do not deviate from the blue-blazed route – please stay strictly on the pathway as marked. Upon leaving the double track the NCT curves to the left away from the highway and enters an area that was logged in late 2014. A mile from Georgetown Rd. a small bridge is encountered, and from there the trail travels another .6 of a mile through the woods to Louthan Rd.

## **Louthan Rd. Road Walk**

Upon reaching Louthan Rd. turn right and follow the blue blazes for .6 of a mile until PA Route 168 is reached. Turn right on 168 and the North Country Trail will cut to the left into the woods about 35 yards from the intersection.

## **First Energy/McGaffick/Crawford Properties**

Start this .6 of a mile of trail by turning off of PA Route 168 and walking up an old, abandoned ATV access two-track – following the blue blazes. The pathway goes up the hillside through the woods and then crosses a cleared power line right-of-way. The trail reenters the woods and works its way westward through former stripmined areas on the McGaffick and Crawford properties. Near the end of this section the trail shares the route with an informal nature trail on the Crawford Family Campground property where there is a bench, which provides a nice place to take a break. This very pleasant off-road woods walk finishes upon reaching Hodgson Rd.

**CAMPING NOTE** A private campground (Crawford's) is located on the left-hand side of Hodgson Road below the trail crossing. The Crawfords are very welcoming towards backpackers hiking through the area. The Campground opens in mid April and its season runs until late October.

## **Kirkwood Farm/PA Gamelands 285/Garrett Property – Hodgson Road to PA Route 251 – PA/OH Border**

This 6.3 mile segment of the North Country Trail is on property owned by Carol Kirkwood, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Dennis and Cathy Garrett.

There is parking room for three or four cars at the Hodgson Rd. trailhead. The space is generously maintained by Mr. Crawford of Crawford's Camping park and is located on his property.



Begin this off-road section by following a gas pipeline onto the Kirkwood Farm and then follow the blazes to the right into the woods. The trail ascends a low hill, descends into a dip and crosses an old logging road, then ascends slightly again until the top of a ridge that parallels the North Fork of the Little Beaver Creek is reached. The trail turns westward at this point and follows the ridgetop. At .6 of a mile from Hodgson Rd. the trail begins to descend via switchbacks, crossing into PA Gamelands 285 (boundary is denoted by a line of white circle blazes painted on trees) until at approximately .75 of a mile from the road the bottom of the hill and Painter Run is reached. Cross over the run via the two bridges in place and upon ascending the next hillside the hiker will notice yellow, rectangular blazes on a trail coming in from the left. This half-mile access trail leads to the Game Commission parking area at Sterling Rd. where there is room to park at least ten vehicles. Passing this access trail and continuing on the NCT a Game Commission double track is reached a short distance further along.



Cross the double track and skirt the west side of the bottom of Indian Rock Hill (also known as Painter's Knob) for three hundred yards until a T in the trail is reached. Straight ahead is the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek, and to the right is a yellow-blazed access trail that leads to the top of Indian Rock Hill and Indian Rock. The reason for the carving on this rock is unknown, as well as the identity of the carver. Local historians suggest it was a farmer or farmhand creating a bird feeder. Others suggest it was an Indian, or even someone working in the area when it was stripmined years ago. The course of the North Country Trail is to the left at the T at the bottom of the hill, following the blue blazes and following the creek westward.

Follow the blue blazes westward for .25 of a mile until the old bridge (Hippie Bridge) is reached. This bridge was rehabilitated by the PA Game Commission in 2013 and now provides a safe crossing of the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek. At this point a left turn onto the Game Commission double track will take the hiker .6 of a mile to the Sterling Rd. parking area, and a right turn (across the bridge) leads to the Game Commission parking area .4 of a mile away along Cannelton Rd. There is a trailhead parking area sign along Cannelton Rd., designating access to the North Country Trail. Thanks to the crew with the PGC for the hard work they put in on this project which allows easier access to the North Country Trail.

Following the blue blazes and continuing westward, the next mile of North Country Trail traces through this old clay strip mine area in Game Lands 285, crossing numerous spring-fed streams, skirting private-property inholdings, bypassing numerous beaver dams (both abandoned and active) and winding through two separate groves of very pleasant hemlock trees. The trail courses up and down the hillside to avoid the swampy patches near Little Beaver Creek and the ones created by the beavers. At the 2 mile mark (from Hodgson Rd.) the trail crosses a small stream just below a beautiful five-foot waterfall. The trail rejoins the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek shortly after the waterfall area and runs parallel for a distance. At the 2.1 mile mark the North Country Trail crosses out of the Gamelands and is routed onto the Garrett property.

**Camping information** – Right before crossing the property line there is an access trail to the Watt's Mill hiking shelter, which cuts off to the left. This Adirondack style shelter overlooks the creek and is available for hikers to use as an overnight spot. All other uses of this shelter and

area require the express consent of the property owner. At the shelter there is a picnic table and fire ring, and there is some level ground up behind the shelter structure that can be used to pitch a tent. There is no potable water nearby so if water from the creek is used it should be treated.



The trail reaches Watts Mill Rd. at the 2.2 mile mark from Hodgson Rd. At Watt's Mill Road the remains (stonework) of the old mill and the mill keepers house, built in the early 19th century are in evidence, particularly in the winter time when the leaves are off the trees and the weeds have died off. Mrs. Garrett's father maintained a summer cottage in this area in more-recent years.

The North Country Trail crosses over Watt's Mill Rd. and is blue-blazed and certified for the remaining 4.1 miles of the hike. The trail goes through the Garrett's old camp property along Little Beaver Creek until reaching PA Game Commission Gamelands 285 at about the .25 mile mark (from Watt's Mill – 2.45 miles from Hodgson Rd).

Upon reaching the Gamelands boundary the trail ascends a hillside on a series of switchbacks and heads generally southwest, skirting feed plots and going through a pleasant area of hemlock trees and (relatively, for this area) large rocks, climbing gradually and in stages. At the two mile mark (from Watt's Mill Rd.) a vista with a view westward along the creek valley, toward Negley, OH is encountered and is very pleasant. This vista is located in a recent logging clearcut area.

After leaving the clear-cut area the trail generally trends southwestward on a very easy-to-walk, evenly contoured bench along the hillside far above Little Beaver Creek. Evidence of the area's former role as a strip mine is abundant as grown-over tailing piles define the landscape, with tree covered mounds and parallel ridges predominating. At the three-mile mark (from Watt's Mill, 5 miles from Hodgson Rd) the trail breaks out of the woods along a gas pipeline right-of-way and ascends Booth Hill, a large, grassy area with expansive views of the surrounding countryside. The trail follows the maintained Game Commission two-track up and around the edge of Booth Hill. When the two-track ends follow the blaze posts across the remainder of the hill to the top.

The trail reenters the woods as it leaves the top of Booth Hill, and by a series of gradual descents and switchbacks over the last mile, traversing both single and double-track, reaches PA Rt 251 (Blackhawk Road) and the Pennsylvania/Ohio border. There is room for three vehicles to park alongside Rt. 251 at the trailhead.

**State Line Trailhead Parking: The Wampum Chapter and the PA Game Commission teamed up and built a parking area along PA Route 251 approximately .25 miles east of the state line. There is an access trail from the parking lot to the main trail that runs approximately .4 of a mile through the woods and is marked with yellow, rectangular paint blazes, and is signed with Carsonite posts at either end. Please do not park in the driveway on the property directly across from the trailhead as it is posted. Thank you!**

This is the southern and western-most extent of the North Country Trail in Pennsylvania. Blue blazes westward along the road lead the hiker into Ohio and on to Sheepskin Hollow and Beaver Creek State Park.