



Allegheny Trail Alliance

TRAIL NEWS

Through the mountains - not over them!

THREE RIVERS HERITAGE TRAIL • MONTOUR TRAIL • STEEL VALLEY TRAIL
YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER TRAIL NORTH • YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER TRAIL SOUTH
ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL (PA) • ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL of MD

Volume 1, Number 4

Spring, 2000

LETTER FROM THE PREZ

It's Unanimous!

MILE 0 IS AT CUMBERLAND

Big News! We may not have a name for our trail system yet, but we have agreed on how we will number the miles.

As trail has been built, every trail organization marked the miles with their own unique system.

As Maryland's funding began to materialize and trail construction was finally on the horizon, they asked whether they were at the beginning or the end of the system.

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Feds Grant \$50K to Promote Trail

A \$50,000 grant to the ATA to develop and begin to implement a marketing plan for the entire trail system has been approved by the U.S. Forest Service. The grant was announced by U.S. Rep. John Murtha.

"This trail is already having substantial economic impact," Murtha said, "but we'll need a marketing plan that enables people to easily get information and plan trail-oriented vacations."

A marketing firm will be hired to plan and begin to promote the opening of the 100-mile continuous section, anticipated in October.

Some of the funds will be used to support the development of an "inn-to-inn" package that will enable people to make reservations for a multi-day trip at several bed-and-breakfast establishments through one internet transaction or one toll-free call.

June 16 Opening Planned

TWO INNOVATIVE BRIDGES OPENING AT CONFLUENCE

The old Route 281 bridge at Confluence was shot. It was about 100 years old and had outlived its usefulness as a highway bridge. Its superstructure was seriously deteriorated, its open grate steel deck terrified trail users and it was too narrow for automobile traffic.

A new bridge was in the offing and, as such things go, the old bridge and piers would normally have been demolished. But due to heavy trail traffic, Confluence Borough wanted to keep it open.

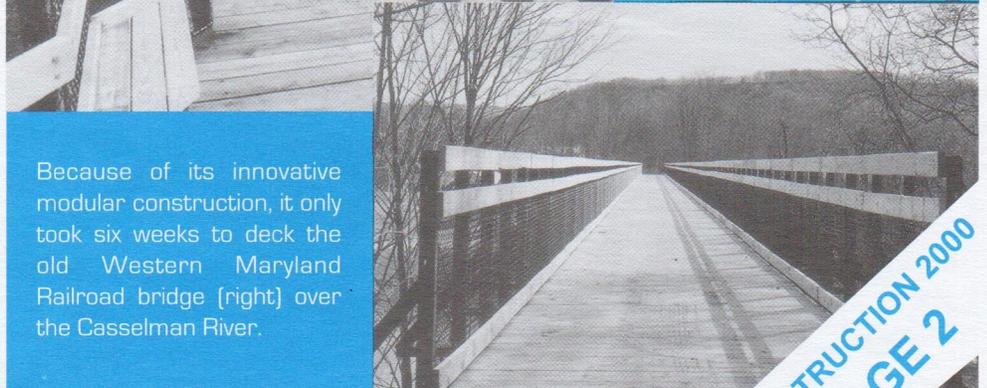
PennDOT did a safety analysis. It turned out to be cheaper to save the bridge than to tear it down. The superstructure and deck had to be removed, but the girders that had been placed under the bridge in the 1930s were in fine shape and they supported most of the load anyway. All they needed was repainting.

A \$200,000 TEA 21 grant paid for the job which includes a new timber deck of what PennDOT's Rich Glass calls "good Allegheny Mountain hardwood." Confluence Borough will own the structure and the local business association will do flower and shrub plantings.

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It was more cost effective to redeck the old Route 281 Youghiogheny River bridge (left) than it was to tear it down. The new design features strategically placed observation decks.



Because of its innovative modular construction, it only took six weeks to deck the old Western Maryland Railroad bridge (right) over the Casselman River.

Construction 2000

FIRST 100 MILES TO BE FINISHED BY FALL

THE BIG NEWS FOR 2000 is the fall completion of 100 continuous miles between **McKeesport and Meyersdale**. Engineering is proceeding nicely and construction will begin on the three remaining segments. But there's plenty of other construction going on all the way from Pittsburgh to Cumberland.

The **Montour Trail** has two segments under construction this year: **Boggs to Quicksilver** and **Large to Clairton**. The big challenge on the **Boggs - Quicksilver** section is the new bridge over Route 980, but the ever-resourceful Dave Wright procured a never used, three-year-old pedestrian bridge for the site.

Robinson Township of Washington County is doing the trail surfacing with the **Montour** volunteers doing the rest of the work. Opening this section will give happy **Montour Trail** users a continuous ride of more than 17 miles from Groveton to McDonald.

The **Montour's** two-mile **Large to Clairton** section will be under construction most of the summer. Three small bridges need to be replaced due to last year's flood damage and the trail is needed for a service road for rebuilding the Ravensburg Bridge, but it will be ready for final trail surface and opening in Spring 2001.

The **Friends of the Riverfront** won't be idle on the **Three Rivers Heritage Trail**, either. A temporary trail is being built from current end of the **18th Street** segment up to the **J&L Hot Metal Bridge** and permanent trail from there to the end of the LTV property. There is some hope that construction may even get to Beck's Run this year.

Steel Valley Trail is building a 1-mile section in conjunction with **The Waterfront** development in Homestead and another 1-mile section in Clairton. Both are slated to be finished early this summer.

Yough River North is finishing the "Dura-Bond Bypass" this summer from the **15th Street Bridge to Dead Man's Hollow**. This section departs from the old railroad grade and forges a new trail along the hillside.

Pennsylvania's **Allegheny Highlands Trail** has two vital segments being completed this summer: **Confluence to Ft. Hill** and **Salisbury Viaduct to Meyersdale**. Construction will take place on both segments throughout the summer and includes a new highway overpass in Meyersdale.

The other big **Allegheny Highlands** project - **Big Savage Tunnel** - is being engineered this summer. Design work should be finished in time for construction to begin in Spring 2001.

Allegheny Highlands of Maryland has engineering completed on their first section of trail and construction will begin in October of this year. The work will involve moving the tracks of the Western Maryland Scenic Railway and will begin when the railroad's tourist season is over. Five and a half miles should be open by Spring 2001.

CONSTRUCTION 2000 PITTSBURGH TO CUMBERLAND

THREE RIVERS HERITAGE TRAIL

Washington's Landing to Clemente Park	3+ miles	OPEN!
Clemente Park to Station Square	CLOSED	
Station Square to 18th St.	CLOSED	
18th St. to LTV Site	1 mile	OPEN!
LTV Site to Glenwood Bridge	CLOSED	

STEEL VALLEY TRAIL

Glenwood Bridge to The Waterfront	CLOSED	
Waterfront to the Pumphouse	UNDER CONSTRUCTION	
Pumphouse to McKeesport	CLOSED	

YOUGHIOGHENY TRAIL NORTH/SOUTH

McKeesport to Confluence	70 miles *	OPEN!
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ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL (PA)

Confluence to Ft. Hill	CLOSED FOR CONSTRUCTION	
Ft. Hill to Salisbury Viaduct	23 miles	OPEN!
Salisbury Viaduct to Meyersdale	PASSABLE ON MT. BIKE	
Meyersdale to PA 2021	PASSABLE ON MT. BIKE	
Big Savage Tunnel	CLOSED	
Big Savage Tunnel to Mason Dixon Line	PASSABLE ON MT. BIKE	

ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL of MD

Mason Dixon Line to Cumberland	CLOSED	
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GROVETON TO McKEESPORT

MONTOUR TRAIL

Groveton to Boggs	11.5 miles	OPEN!
Boggs to Quicksilver	UNDER CONSTRUCTION	
Quicksilver to McDonald	3 miles	OPEN!
McDonald Trestle	CLOSED	
McDonald Trestle to Venice	PASSABLE ON MT. BIKE	
Venice to Chartiers Creek	5 miles	OPEN!
Chartiers Creek to Route 19	CLOSED	
Route 19 to Library Junction	4 miles	OPEN!
Library Junction to Brownsville-Library Rd.	CLOSED	
Brownsville-Library Rd. to Triphammer Rd.	1.5 miles	OPEN!
Triphammer Rd. to Snowden Rd.	CLOSED	
Snowden Rd. to Gill Hall Rd.	1 Mile	OPEN!
Gill Hall Rd. to Large	PASSABLE ON MT. BIKE	
Large to Clairton	UNDER CONSTRUCTION	

STEEL VALLEY TRAIL

Clairton to Glassport	UNDER CONSTRUCTION	
Glassport to McKeesport	3+ Miles	OPEN!

* The north leg of the trail through Versailles is open - the south leg will be open later this summer. (See story)

NEW! TRAIL MAP and GUIDE

THE NEW *Allegheny Trail Alliance Map and Guide* is finished, just in time for the summer biking and hiking season. New features of the four-color map include a table of services and a mileage chart.

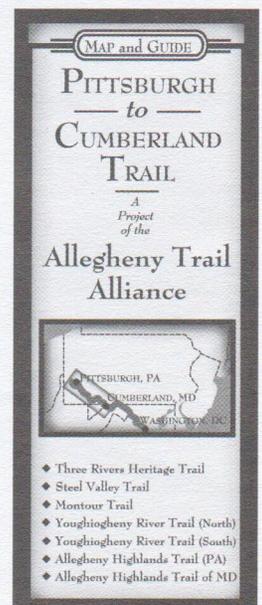
20,000 copies have been printed and will be distributed through the region.

"With all the information we're giving you from this map, the *Linking Up Guidebook* and our website, you have no excuse not to ride our trail," says Linda McKenna Boxx, president of the ATA.

You can order a copy by writing to **Allegheny Trail Alliance**
419 College Ave.,
Greensburg, PA 15601

or dropping us an email at:
atamail@atatrail.org.

If you send us a \$10.00 donation (see the coupon on Page 4), we'll send you a map along with *Linking Up*.



ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS of MD

PACE reception nets trail \$325K

Allegany Highlands of Maryland trail volunteers, along with 400 business people, concerned citizens from Allegany County, MD and representatives of the ATA met in Annapolis, MD with key state delegates and cabinet level officers at the annual PACE reception. PACE (Positive Attitudes Change Everything) is a Cumberland, MD - based volunteer organization dedicated to promoting economic development in western Maryland.

One of the focus points of this year's event was the trail, which was rewarded with a \$325,000 state grant as a result of presentations made at the reception.

Rails to Trails Conservancy President David Burwell was on hand to help with the presentations.

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LETTER FROM THE PREZ

Circuit Rider Brett Hollern, took on the responsibility to identify options and assess the pros and cons. His analysis led to a logical conclusion which each member organization subsequently approved.

First decision was to number in the same direction as the C & O Canal Towpath. Through-trekkers would numerically ascend or descend during their entire trip. And, if the trail extends further than Pittsburgh, "0" at Pittsburgh could pose a problem in the future.

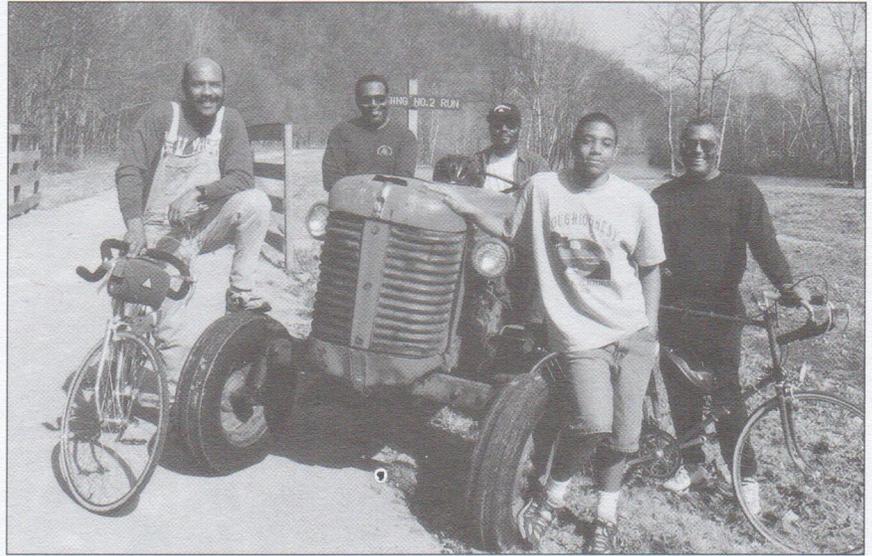
Next, does ATA continue with the Towpath numbers or do we reset the counter? This was a more difficult decision. After extremely congenial deliberation, the group decided that Cumberland should be MP 0, the beginning of a new trail system.

Our trail is not the Towpath; ATA is about railroads, not canals. We wanted to make sure that even the most historically-disinterested trail user understood that something significant happens in Cumberland -- that the Canal got no further!

We'll have occasional signs that clue the users in as to how many miles to D.C. or Pittsburgh, but ATA will be designing a mile-marker monument which trail users will start seeing next year.

Linda McKenna Boxx

The Johnsons of Whitsett A FAMILY OF TRAIL VOLUNTEERS



The Johnsons of Whitsett: from left, Jimmie, Clarence, Leon, Chris, and Ernie. The tractor was purchased with a grant from "Freewheeling Easy in Western Pennsylvania."

There's a section of the Youghiogheny River Trail around Whitsett, PA that trail manager Bob McKinley never has to worry about. There's a problem? Call the Johnsons. Problem solved. That's the way it is in Whitsett. The Johnsons live there and they help out on the trail.

The Johnsons are brothers Clarence (Clu), 55, Ernie, 51, Jimmie, 48, nephew Leon, 46, nephew Chris, 15, and any other nephews, cousins and grandkids who might be pressed into service.

Together, they've cleaned up the right of way prior to construction, decked 5 bridges ("we had tons of kids there") and have performed all sorts of maintenance on the trail, including regularly cutting the grass on the 10 miles between Whitsett and Dawson. (Cutting both sides makes it 20 miles.)

Of the 14 sons and daughters of Clarence and Viola Johnson, seven still live in the town where they grew up. Altogether, ten households in town belong to direct relatives. "Ours was one of three families in town that had 14 kids. We had a lot of playmates," laughed Ernie.

Whitsett was a railroad junction and coal mining town that became just another forgotten western Pennsylvania patch when the mines played out. Unless you lived there or fished in the river, there was absolutely no reason to go there.

Then the trail came through in 1998. "We found out about it at a meeting that Larry Ridenour held at the church," related Clarence, "Ernie and I have been bicycling for about 25 years, so we welcomed it."

The rest of the community's reaction to the trail was "mixed" at first, but now, continued Clarence, "everybody just loves it. It sure put us on the map."

"The town is cleaner now," Ernie said, "the railroad had become a dumping ground."

Passing trail users are grateful for the year-round portable toilet at the town park - the only one for miles. Its \$62.50 monthly cost is shared jointly by the community and the trail group.

The big annual fundraising activity for the group is parking cars at Westmoreland County's Twin Lakes Park on the 4th of July. "The Johnsons show up with the best behaved bunch of teenagers I've ever seen, and I know about teenagers. I raised several myself," says McKinley.

And it's those teenagers who are the hope of the trail. Fifteen-year-old Chris, a sophomore at Frazier High School, said with pride that he rides his bike on the trail "constantly." Then he smiled and said, "I'll be in charge of the trail in the future."

Of course he will. He's from Whitsett. His last name is Johnson.

Be a "They"

Who are "They?"

"They" are the volunteers - people like you who give their time to do the dozens of jobs seen and unseen that make our trail possible.

"They" are also the people who join our trail groups and make a financial contribution. Bottom line: no "theys," no trail. We need you to be a "they."

Just check the appropriate boxes and we'll send you all the information you need to join.

- Friends of the Riverfront**
(Three Rivers Heritage Trail)
- Montour Trail Council**
(Montour Trail)
- Steel Valley Trail Council**
(Steel Valley Trail)
- Regional Trail Corporation**
(Youghiogheny River Trail)
- Somerset Rails to Trails**
(Allegheny Highlands Trail in PA)
- Allegheny Highlands Trail of MD**

AND/OR

I want to help build the build the **Pittsburgh to Cumberland Trail**. My tax-deductible donation of _____ is enclosed. (Please make checks payable to **RTC/ATA**). We'll send a copy of **Linking Up** guidebook to anyone donating \$10 or more.

Name _____

Address _____



Clip and send to:

Allegheny Trail Alliance
419 College Ave.
Greensburg, PA 15601

HELP LAUNCH THE Y2K TREK!

Group Ride and Lunch
Saturday, June 17, 9:30 am
McKees Point Park
to
Cedar Creek or Connellsville
Self Shuttle

\$5.00 per person, includes lunch
For information:
724-853-2453 or atamail@atatrail.org

YOUGH RIVER TRAIL NORTH

OLDEST TRAIL SECTION DUE FOR RESURFACING

The oldest section of the **Yough Trail North** - 5.2 miles from **Buena Vista to Boston** - is due for resurfacing.

"This is a high use trail and it's worn out," says trail manager Bob McKinley, "and we've learned a lot since we built it in 1993."

"We can now do it better and cheaper and can make the surface last a lot longer. The good news is we got six years out of the surface. Asphalt doesn't last that long."

McKinley and his contractors are experimenting with 3 types of additives to mix with the traditional crushed limestone surface to stabilize it, make it waterproof and make it last longer.

The work should begin in late May and last about five days. Trail users will experience "minor inconvenience."

Other construction news

Another one-mile section of the **Montour Trail's Bethel Park Branch** has been finished from Clifton Road to Logan Road. The new construction includes improved trail heads and ramps to Clifton Road. Grand opening will be June 3.

TWO BRIDGES

(Continued from Page 1)

The old Western Maryland Railway bridge over the Casselman River at Confluence presented a different set of problems. It's a typical railroad deck girder bridge that retained its original ties. It's one of eight just like it on the **Allegheny Highlands** and **Youghiogheny River North Trails**.

This typical bridge has a very atypical deck - a deck that only took six weeks to install due to its innovative modular design. The deck is a series of 10' by 10' modules that were prefabricated at a blacksmith shop in Somerset and bolted in place on the site. Because of the modules, the job only took 6 weeks.

Funding for the \$170,000 project came from the U.S. Forest Service Timber Bridge Initiative, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the ATA and the National Park Service Challenge Cost Share Program.

Overlooked in the hoopla about the new bridge at **Ohiopele State Park** was the replacement of the 12-year-old deck and railing on the high bridge on the other side of Fern Cliff Peninsula. The job, which lasted 3 weeks, was done by park personnel last fall.

THE FINE PRINT

The **ATA Trail News** is produced and distributed quarterly by the **Allegheny Trail Alliance** for the members and friends of its supporting organizations.

The **Allegheny Trail Alliance** is a coalition of seven trail-building organizations whose purpose is to assure the construction, maintenance and use of the multi-purpose trail from **Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD**, where the trail joins the **C&O Canal Towpath** to Washington, DC.

Officers of the Allegheny Trail Alliance

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