

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 2, Number 3

Summer 2001

You are cordially invited...

COME CELEBRATE 100 MILES!

Webster's defines "confluence" as "a coming together." That's exactly what's going to happen on **August 24 and 25** when two sections of the trail are joined at **Confluence, PA**. The Fort Hill to Confluence section of the **Allegheny Highlands Trail** will be finished and the **Great Allegheny Passage** will be open for 100 continuous miles from **McKeesport** to **Meyersdale**.

And we're going to celebrate with a 100 mile party!

100 MILES OF FESTIVITIES

There's going to be a ribbon cutting on Friday afternoon the 24th with lots of dignitaries. WQED's Rick Sebak will be the emcee. Check atatrail.org for the time.

And on Saturday the 25th all sorts of fun is happening along the trail:

Riders will start out from Meyersdale and McKeesport and join up in Confluence.

The **McKeesport** group will leave at 7:00 from the **McKees Point Marina** and the **Meyersdale** gang will leave at noon from the trail head at the train station. They'll meet at Confluence at 3:00. You're all welcome to come along. You can join them anywhere along the way you don't have to do the whole route.

(Continued on Page 2)

JOIN THE PARTY!

Ride anywhere on the **Great Allegheny Passage** between **Meyersdale** and **McKeesport** on **August 24, 25 and 26** and **log your miles**.

We'll give you a free sticker for telling us how far you rode.

Either turn in your mileage to an **ATA representative on the trail** or fill in the form on the back page.

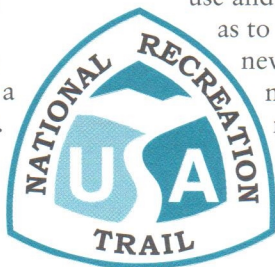
Letter from the Prez

We're Now a National Recreation Trail

June 2 was National Trails Day. We didn't have a big event this year because we were holding off until our major celebration on August 24 and 25 for our 100 Mile Event.

Instead we made an important announcement: The **Great Allegheny Passage** is now a **National Recreation Trail**! U.S. Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, recognizing exemplary trails of local and regional significance, bestowed this prestigious honor on our trail. Fifteen other trails were added to the system this year.

The National Recreation Trail



Program supports designated NRTs with an array of benefits, including promotion, technical assistance, networking and access to funding. Its goal is to promote the use and care of existing trails as well as to stimulate the development of new trails in the creation of a national trail network so as to realize the vision of "Trails for All Americans."

We're excited about the honor and the best part is it's only the beginning. We already have visitors from all over the country and the world. Recognition as a National Recreation Trail is just one more great way of spreading the word.

Linda McKenna Boxx

214 YEARS OF TRAIL HISTORY TIMELINE

We've come a long way in the past 214 years, from trail to railroad and canal back to a trail system unmatched by anything in the eastern United States.

It's hard to believe that the trail from Ohiopyle to Ramcat is 15 years old already and those original 9.5 miles have grown tenfold to be the nucleus of a much greater system.

We can step back for a bit and celebrate our accomplishments on these first hundred miles but we still have a long way to go before the job's done.

1784 George Washington sets out on a journey to find the "nearest communication between the eastern and western rivers."

1828 Construction begins on the C&O Canal, following the route of the Potomac River.

Original plan was to go to the Ohio River in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and on to Lake Erie.

1850 C&O Canal construction stopped at Cumberland, MD, 184.5 miles from Washington, D.C.

1879 Montour Railroad open Coraopolis to Imperial.

1883 Pittsburgh & Lake Erie (P&LE) opens railroad between Connellsville and McKeesport.

1890s Pennsylvania Railroad Peters Creek Branch built in sections.

1912 Western Maryland Railway opens 86-mile Connellsville Extension from Cumberland to Connellsville.

1914 Montour Railroad extended from North Star Junction near Imperial to Snowden and West Mifflin.

1924 C & O Canal closed.

1938 C&O corridor acquired by the Federal Government for \$2 million. Plans for super highway proposed.

1950s Justice William O. Douglas opposed plans to use the C&O Canal corridor to construct a super highway into Maryland.

(Continued on Page 2)

TIMELINE

1954 Justice Douglas leads the first of a series of walks and gains support which resulted in the formation of the C & O Canal National Park.

1962 Peters Creek Branch abandoned Snowden to Large.

1971 Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Historical Park designated.

1975 Chessie System, owner of Western Maryland, invites government and conservation officials to ride special train and view the soon-to-be abandoned corridor.

■ The Western Maryland Railway abandoned from Cumberland to Connellsville.

1982 Peters Creek Branch abandoned Large to Clairton.

1984 Montour Railroad abandoned.

1985 Western Pennsylvania Conservancy acquires the Western Maryland right of way for Ohiopyle State Park.

■ Peters Township in Washington County acquires 6 miles of abandoned Montour Railroad and builds 3.5 mile trail.

1986 Ohiopyle State Park completes 9.5 miles of trail from Ramcat to Ohiopyle. Immediate success of this first stretch of the Youghiogheny River Trail South.

1987 Somerset County Rails to Trails Association incorporated.

1989 Ohiopyle State Park acquires Western Maryland right of way from Connellsville to Ohiopyle.

■ Montour Trail Council organized.

1990 P&LE files to abandon McKeesport to Connellsville corridor. Youghiogheny River Trail Task Force formed to study the feasibility of converting the P&LE Railroad right of way into a recreational trail.

■ Ohiopyle State Park opens 5.6 miles of trail from Ferncliff to Bruner Run.

1991 Regional Trail Corporation formed to purchase right of way from P&LE Railroad and build Youghiogheny River Trail North.

■ Montour Trail Council acquires Montour Railroad right of way.

(Continued on Page 3)

Join the party

(Continued from Page 1)

In the meantime in Confluence, there'll be a DJ, a chicken barbecue, an old-time baseball game, with vintage uniforms and 1860s rules and plenty of other fun stuff. The citizens of Confluence call this a "major celebration."

There'll be an open house at the **Regional Trail Corporation** office in **West Newton** - free refreshments - and the restrooms will be open.

In **Rockwood**, there's going to be a geologic hay ride up the Casselman Gorge.

But here's the big thing: we want **EVERYBODY** to come out and ride the trail on August 25 and log your miles. Record your mileage at the major trail heads OR you can email your miles to us on the website atamail@atatrail.org. We'll list your name on the website.

Check the website atatrail.org for schedule additions and details as they come available.

THREE RIVERS HERITAGE

TWO NEW SECTIONS OPEN ALONG MONONGAHELA

The City of Pittsburgh has completed a new 1.5-mile section of trail on the north shore of the Monongahela River between the Glenwood Bridge and Nine Mile Run, also known as Duck Hollow. The crushed limestone trail is built on a "paper street" which the city owned but never used. Access is at Duck Hollow only.

Construction of this section solves a big problem since this area has been a notorious dumping ground. All the trash has been cleaned up and the area will be gated and closed to motorized vehicles.

City crews have also added a section to the trail on the south side of the Mon from 9th to 18th Streets. This trail is asphalt. The South Side trail is now two and a quarter miles long with more to come.

One of the highlights of the new 6.5-mile Confluence to Ft. Hill section of the Allegheny Highlands Trail (PA) is the pedestrian underpass at Harnedsville.

The old bridge carrying Route 523 over the railroad had been removed and the cut filled in.

Now trail users can cross under the busy highway without interference from traffic and vice versa.



Photo by Bill Metzger

MONTOUR

Having a great year

So far this year, the **Montour Trail Council** has:

◆ Opened a half mile section of trail from Cecil Park to Route 980 at Venice.

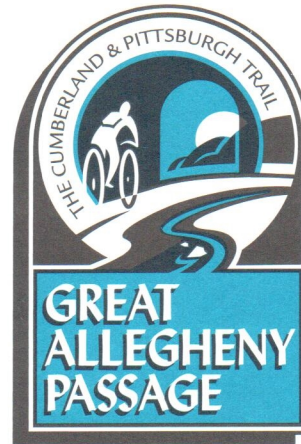
◆ Resurfaced three miles of trail from Hassam Road to Park Manor Drive. The job was completed with the help of the Robinson Township Public Works Department.

◆ Dumped riprap at 12 different locations along Montour Run where the stream impacts the trail. A total of 1300 linear feet of limestone will stabilize the stream bank and help neutralize acid mine drainage. The Montour Run Watershed Association aided in this effort.

◆ Opened a new office in Bridgeville. The new address is:

304 Hickman Street
Bridgeville, PA 15017

BRANDED!



In case you haven't seen it yet, here's the new logo for the **Great Allegheny Passage**. It will appear in either a two- or four-color version on all trail literature and promotional materials.

The new color of the newsletter - teal - is the shade of blue used in the logo.

You can see a four-color version at:
www.atatrail.org

The eyes and ears of the Yough Trail South

TALES OF THE THOUSAND MILE CLUB



Photo by Bill Metzger

Thousand Mile Club members and their all-time trail miles

From left:

*Ed Wallace, 65
5,800 miles
Carol Sweigard, 56
8,000 miles
Don Lewis, 66
9,500 miles on the trail
Elroy Bowers, 71
15,000 miles
Ray Hulton, 66
"At least as many miles as Elroy."*

It all started four years ago

with a notice on the Ohiopyle State Park bulletin board: "Wanted: Members to Join the Thousand Mile Club." It was posted by Barb Drbal, now Barb Wallace, the Environmental Education Specialist for the park. She saw similar programs in other parks and wanted to try it out. Club members would spend at least a thousand miles on the trail a year as volunteer trail monitors.

At first she envisioned the club as being not only for the trails, but also for the river, but as it's worked out, most of the members of the club are bike riders.

We met several of them on a recent Saturday morning and they are as fine looking a group as you would want to be ambassadors for your trail. They're tanned, fit, amicable and none of them is younger than 56. In fact, all but one of them are retired, but these are NOT your average senior citizens.

They all ride at least 1,000 miles a year - most of them well over a thousand - and they're the park's eyes and ears on the trail. Not only do they report maintenance problems like washouts and downed trees, but they're ready to render assistance to anyone who needs it, whatever it may be.

Assistance comes in the form of first aid - each one carries a first aid kit and most carry radios - or minor mechanical repairs.

Ed Wallace, one of the monitors, came across an elderly lady pushing a bike with a flat tire. He fixed the tire, then told her she should carry tools. She said she didn't because "there's always someone like you who comes along."

But the biggest part of the job is answering questions. Most asked: "Where's the bathroom?" "Am I heading toward Connellsville?" "How far is it to Confluence?" "What's there when I get there?"

The questioners come from all over the world and once the connection is made, the monitors often act as unofficial tour guides. They're proud of their trail and welcome the opportunity to show it off.

With 200,000-plus users on the Ohiopyle to Confluence section, there's precious little time for peace and quiet, but there are surprises. Among the wildlife

the monitors have seen are three bucks fighting, a doe nursing a fawn, a bear, and a bobcat that Carol Sweigard tried to offer a peanut butter sandwich. The cat refused.

The downside to the job? The monitors agree that trail users are about 85% good and 15% bad. Pet peeves: People who litter, people who walk four abreast and people who stop in the middle of the trail. Offenders get a copy of the trail rules handed to them.

At the end of the season, members of the Thousand Mile Club - and there are

about 30 - get a t-shirt and a volunteer dinner, but this is only a formality. One quickly gets the impression that all of them would be riding whether there was a trail monitor program or not.

Ray Hulton and Elroy Bowers, both in their seventies, are partners who ride together 3-4 times a week. "We ride weather permitting. It's not fun riding with water in your shoes. Rain suits don't help a bit." And in the rain, there's not much to monitor anyway.

Both men look at biking as a lifetime activity and have no intention of stopping because of their age. "We're going to get a tandem when we get older," said Elroy.

But judging from the shape they're in now, that tandem will be a long time coming. Maybe when they're in their nineties.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A TRAIL AMBASSADOR

OHIOPYLE STATE PARK

You can contact Barb Wallace either in person at the park or by calling 724-329-8591.

YOUGH RIVER TRAIL NORTH

Bob McKinley says to be a trail ambassador you have to attend "charm school" which is held once or twice a year. You'll learn public relations, the rules of the trail, basic first aid and minor bike repair. Contact him at 724-872-5586.

MONTOUR TRAIL

Jess Forquer is looking for "a few good people" for trail ambassadors who have a clean record and good people skills. He says you have to wear your t-shirts and armbands. Phone him at 412-859-3737.

TIMELINE

1992 Montour Trail Council opens 4.5 miles in Cecil Township, Washington County.

1993 Yough River Trail North opens 7.7 miles: Adelaide to Dawson and Greenock to Buena Vista.

■ Ohiopyle State Park completes 9.3 miles of trail from Bruner Run to Bowest Junction.

■ Allegheny Highlands Trail (PA) opens trail from Rockwood to Markleton.

1994 Yough River Trail North opens 9 miles: Cedar Creek to West Newton, Boston to Greenock and West Newton to Allegheny County.

■ Allegheny Highlands Trail (PA) opens trail from Rockwood to Garrett.

1995 Two bridges at Wheeler Bottom and Bowest Junction rehabbed by Ohiopyle State Park. Yough River Trail South opened into Connellsville.

■ Montour Trail Council opens 11.5 miles Groveton to Boggs.

■ Yough River Trail North opens 7 miles: Allegheny County to Buena Vista and Cedar Creek to Smithton.

■ Allegheny Trail Alliance formed as a unique alliance of the seven groups building trails from Pittsburgh to Cumberland Maryland.

1996 Yough River Trail North opens 3 miles Adelaide to Connellsville, includes ramp to Connellsville Riverfront Park.

1997 Last section of right of way for the Allegheny Highlands Trail (PA) acquired by Somerset County.

■ Montour Trail Council opens 3 miles McDonald to Quicksilver.

■ Yough River Trail North opens 1 mile Boston to Dead Man's Hollow.

1998 Governor's Keystone Ride uses ATA Trail from Smithton to Boston. Governor Ridge opens Smithton to Dawson 13.5-mile section of the Yough River Trail North. 66 miles of continuous trail completed.

■ City of McKeesport opens trail from 5th Street to 15th Street.

1999 Allegheny Highlands Trail completed Pinkerton to Fort Hill.

■ Salisbury Viaduct is rehabbed and opened.

(Continued on Page 4)

OUR FIRST HUNDRED MILES!

We're celebrating the opening of the first hundred miles of continuous trail. This is a great accomplishment, but there's still more to do.

We need you to keep the project growing by joining one (or more) of our trail member groups. Just check the appropriate boxes and we'll send you all the information you need.

- ☐ **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 **Great Allegheny Passage**. My tax-deductible donation of _____ is enclosed. (Please make checks payable to **RTC/ATA**) We'll send a four-color **Great Allegheny Passage** logo pin to anyone donating \$15 or more.

ALSO

- ☐ I/we took part in the
100 MILE CELEBRATION
by riding or walking
_____ miles of the
Great Allegheny Passage
on
August 24, 25 and 26!

Name _____

Address _____

Clip and send to:

Allegheny Trail Alliance
419 College Ave.
Greensburg, PA 15601

You can also fax this to
724-832-8519,
OR email your miles to
atamail@atatrail.org

Remembering our Heritage

As we celebrate the joy of opening our first hundred miles of trail, we can't forget the memory of those who came before us; the men and women whose backbreaking labor dug the coal, fired the coke ovens and ran the trains when this valley was one of the most industrialized places on earth.

I was doing research for the Meyersdale to McKeesport Trail Guidebook when I came across a reference to the Port Royal Mine disaster which occurred on June 10, 1901. Nineteen miners were killed in a series of explosions; most of those who died were rescuers.

The Port Royal mine was located about a mile from the present location of Cedar Creek Park on the Yough River Trail North.

It occurred to me that this happened a exactly a century ago and I looked at the calendar. June 10 was on a Sunday this year. At a Regional Trail Corporation Board meeting, I found out that it was also Trail Appreciation Day. It was just too much of a coincidence. We had to commemorate this event.

Dave Hamilton, a retired coal miner and active trail volunteer, agreed to handle the arrangements and recruited the Rev. Chip Norton to officiate at the service. Jim Smith from the United Mine Workers, local historian Lloyd Thompson and I also spoke. Hamilton's son Scott played the bagpipes. About 60 people attended the service.

Trees a foot and a half thick now stand guard in front of the old mine entrance. The town of Port Royal is gone and the railroad that served the mine is now our trail.

Through a series of interpretive signs, guidebooks and educational programs, the ATA is insuring that those who come after us will also appreciate our trail's rich heritage.

Bill Metzger

TIMELINE

2000 Two trail bridges opened at Confluence: the rebuilt old Route 281 bridge and the Allegheny Highlands Casselman River bridge.

■ **Ohiopyle State Park** opens new bridge from Ferncliff to Ohiopyle.

■ **Yough River Trail North** rebuilds 5.2 miles of trail from Greenock to Buena Vista.

2001 Trail system named Great Allegheny Passage and logo introduced.

**AUGUST
24,
2001**

Completion of Confluence to Fort Hill section of Allegheny Highlands Trail opens 100 continuous miles of trail - McKeesport to Meyersdale.

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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MILLENNIUM
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