

Letter from the Prez

Physical Health = Fiscal Fitness

THERE IS MORE TO HEALTH than doctors," says Ed Hutchinson, 80, Greensburg's Fire Chief for years and an advocate for health and fitness. Hutch is a trail user and supporter and part of an ever-growing number of people who use the trail for daily exercise.

When trail building took off 10 or so years ago, we looked strongly at the economic benefit of the trails as a way to justify the expenditure. This continues to be very important and we're updating our Economic Impact Analysis this year. We can fairly easily quantify direct spending because of the trail and its return of investment.

But the health benefits may become an equally notable hallmark of our trail.

(Continued on Page 2)

10 Years in the Making

Montour Trail wins big precedent-setting PUC bridge decision

AFTER 10 YEARS of nerve wracking litigation with the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) over the Montour Trail bridges in Washington County, a decision has been reached that will save most of the structures.

"Finally!" exclaimed Montour Trail Council President Peter Kohnke.

"I'm glad it's over," agreed attorney Dick Wilson, who negotiated the deal for the council.

The problem goes back almost to the founding of the trail itself, when the PUC ordered all the bridges in Washington County removed since they didn't belong to a railroad or a governmental body.

Worse, the bridges, all of which are approaching 100 years old, were held against design standards for new bridges.

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BIG NEWS!

BIG SAVAGE TUNNEL REBUILDING BEGINS

THE CONTRACT HAS BEEN AWARDED for the rehabilitation of Big Savage Tunnel, a vital link in the Great Allegheny Passage between Pittsburgh and Cumberland, MD. Work on the 3,300 foot-long former railroad tunnel should begin in early February. The project is expected to take a year to complete.

Located in southeastern Somerset County, just a mile north of the Maryland border, Big Savage will be the longest rail-trail tunnel in the state of Pennsylvania.

Contractors who originally dug the bore between 1910 and 1912 for the Western Maryland Railway had to overcome problems with groundwater and quicksand buried deep in the mountain. "Sandhogs," skilled tunnel builders from New York City, had to be brought in to finish the job.

Freezing and thawing conditions have caused damage to the structure since it was abandoned in 1975. Plans call for the installation of an insulated tunnel liner that will allow for proper drainage and eliminate damaging temperature fluctuations.

The new 10" thick liner will include a drainage layer, a closed cell foam insulating liner, a binding layer of expanded metal mesh, reinforcing bars and pneumatically-applied shotcrete, a form of concrete, to finish the surface.

According to Jerome Valenti, design engineer for the job, the concrete portals (Continued on Page 2)

2002 ATA Worldwide Conference

Tool Time for Trail Builders

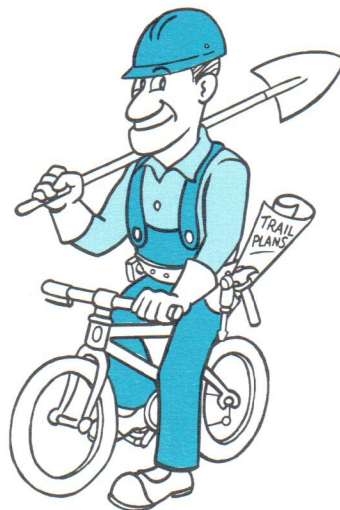
HITCH UP YOUR TOOL BELTS and button up your plaid shirts. That's right, happy trail builders. It's *Tool Time for Trail Builders*, this year's ATA Worldwide Conference, March 1 and 2.

The focus will be on improving and enhancing our trails by providing tools—information, expertise, and techniques—to help in our jobs as trail builders and maintainers.

There will also be plenty of time to network, socialize and learn about the progress being made on the trails in our region.

Only charge for the conference is for food and a room if you stay overnight.

Registration forms and detailed costs are available for downloading at www.atatrail.org or can be faxed or mailed to you. Call 888-ATA-Bike.



**PHOTO CONTEST
AND MORE NEW
CONSTRUCTION
INSIDE!**

Trail Stars in A to Z Video

RIS FOR RAIL TRAIL is the Great Allegheny Passage's section in Rick Sebak's latest video, *Pittsburgh A to Z*, which includes such alphabetical amusements as Fish sandwiches and Grant Street, the History Center and our Interesting Islands.

The video features appearances by ATA President Linda McKenna Boxx, Circuit Rider Brett Hollern, who did some stellar riding sequences, your newsletter editor and several other volunteers and happy trail users.

It's available at www.wqed.org for \$19.95.

ATA Photo Contest

The hills are alive with the sounds of shutters clicking, or they will be when everybody gets word of this contest.

Grand Prize \$100

PLUS lots of nifty ATA stuff

Individual Categories - \$50 prize for each
PLUS an ATA shirt or books

CATEGORIES:

Flora and Fauna

Deer or dogwood, deer in the dogwood - whatever

Scenic View/Landscapes

Show off our gorgeous gorges

Structures

The view from the bridge or a view of the bridge

Happy Trail Users

Doing happy trail user things - wearing helmets

Young Photographers (under 12)

No photos of kneecaps, please

Wild Card

Use your imagination - dazzle us

- o **Deadline for entries: April 15, 2002.**
- o Winners to be announced on National Trail Day, June 1, 2002.
- o Prints, slides or high resolution (600+ dpi) electronic images are eligible, including black and white.
- o **BIKE RIDERS MUST BE WEARING HELMETS!**
- o ATA reserves the first right of publication for all photos.
- o Photos taken on trails other than those of the ATA are not eligible.
- o People employed by or contracting with the ATA, no matter how piddling the money involved, are not eligible to submit photos.

Send your entries to:

ATA Photo Contest
419 College Avenue
Greensburg, PA 15601

BIG SAVAGE TUNNEL

(Continued from Page 1)

will be rebuilt at each end and the floor will be surfaced with the same crushed limestone surface as the rest of the trail. The light-colored shotcrete and trail surface will vastly improve visibility inside the structure.

The tunnel will not be lighted initially, but provision has been made for lighting should funding become available.

Even though the tunnel is being adapted for pedestrian use, "we don't want it to look like something it's not," said Valenti. "We want it to end up looking like a railroad tunnel by preserving as much of the existing appearance and environment as possible."

The \$7 million project is funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and by The Hillman Foundation.

The job was engineered by AWK Consulting Engineers of Turtle Creek, PA and Advanced Construction Techniques of Maple, Ontario will do the construction.

Fiscal Fitness

(Continued from Page 1)

Because trail miles continue to increase and more and more people are discovering them, our corner of the world is gradually becoming healthier. No documentation on that yet, just speculation. Besides becoming healthier and happier, our region becomes a more attractive place for businesses to locate and people to move to.

Often the mention of rail trails brings to mind the young, hip Spandex crowd, and while that's true to a certain extent, the majority of trail users, especially on weekdays, are closer to retirement age. They know that the trails provide a safe, attractive natural environment for exercise that didn't exist before. For them, the trails are truly the road to health.

And the more trails we build, the healthier our people - and our region - will be, both physically and economically.

Linda McKenna Boxx

MONTOUR BRIDGES

(Continued from Page 1)

It was a no-win situation for the MTC, which was faced with a total of 15 bridges that would have to be torn down before the trail even began.

Under PennDOT's new approach using "context-sensitive design standards," which takes trail use into account and with the help of county and local governments, most of the bridges have been saved.

Wilson said, "This is the first major bridge preserving action using the new design standards in the state. One other trail group has used them, but nobody has applied this policy to as many crossings as the MTC has. We set the precedent."

In all, 8 bridges will be saved intact and 7 will be torn down, 3 of which are already gone. All will be replaced.

18 Continuous Miles Open

In new construction for 2001, the three-mile gap from Boggs to Quicksilver was finished this fall, giving the Montour an 18-mile continuous trail from the Groveton trail head to the McDonald Trestle.

Partners in the construction were Findlay and North Fayette Townships in Allegheny County and Robinson Township of Washington County. Funding came from the Allegheny County Regional Asset District (ARAD), DCNR and a grant from the Byham Foundation.

The Turnpike Commission built .4 miles of trail from the Port Authority Park and Ride lot at Route 51 down Peters Creek. This is a paved 10-foot-wide berm added to Peters Creek Road. The remainder of the east end of the trail to Clairton is about 80% done and will be finished in the spring.

Engineering continues for the rest of the uncompleted sections of the Montour in Washington County, with some construction beginning early this year.

Happy Trail Users

Last weekend I rode the new section of the trail near route 281, (Confluence) while visiting the area with a friend of mine who owns property near the trail. It was a beautiful experience and I was amazed how well the trail was built. I'm from Lansdale, PA area. It's a shame I can't ride this trail on a daily basis (5 hours away). You folks are so lucky.

Regards,
John

At the end of August I completed a through trip from Pittsburgh to Washington by bike ..., and I want to extend my thanks for the resources you offer... It's an extraordinary accomplishment. I started the trip on the Monday after your 100-mile party. Worse luck, I didn't know about the link-up until I had made the travel plans. Great fun to travel day after day on a country lane.

Dave

YOUGH RIVER TRAIL NORTH

DURA-BOND BYPASS OPENS, MOST COSTLY ATA TRAIL SECTION

AT \$225,000, the Dura-Bond Bypass on the Yough River Trail North between Boston and McKeesport is the most expensive 5,600 feet ever built on the Allegheny Passage that doesn't include a structure.

It is the last section of the 43-mile Yough River Trail North to be finished and was also the toughest, taking about 6 months to complete, but this is no ordinary piece of rail trail.

As befits its name, the Bypass was built to run around a tight spot created by the industry and a section of still-active railroad. It had to go up the hill, across a gully and back down the hillside.

The gully was filled with the mortal remains of McKeesport Public Housing's Building No. 16 which was imploded about three years ago.

Construction difficulties included the land slipping and application problems with the erosion-resistant material which had to be applied due to the handicapped-accessible 5% grades.

Trail Group of the Year

The Potomac Trail Council, of which the ATA is a member, recognized us as the **Trail Group of the Year** in honor of "the completion of one hundred miles of continuous trail on the Great Allegheny Passage." Circuit Rider Brett Hollern accepted the award at the group's annual meeting.

PRSA Renaissance Award

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the Public Relations Association of America (PRSA) recognized the 100 Mile Event with the Renaissance Award Certificate of Merit.

Krakoff Communications of Pittsburgh, who did the campaign for the ATA, was the winner of the award.

16,000 Miles!

Over 500 riders logged a total of 16,000 miles the weekend of the August 24 and 25 trail opening. Thanks to everyone who participated in this historic event!

WEST NEWTON STATION RISES AGAIN



Photo by Jim Nirella

Exterior work on the new West Newton "station" is almost complete. This building is on the exact location and is the same size as the original 1883 Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad depot which was torn down in the late 1970s and was built using the original plans.

Uses for the structure will include offices for the Regional Trail Corp., a visitors center with restrooms, the maintenance shop for the Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter, and an environmental education center in the old P&LE passenger car in the rear. Interior work should be finished by the end of this year. All facilities will be handicapped-accessible.

New well, landscaping also in place

SST Lands at Dravo Cemetery Campground



Photo by Bill Metzger

SST MEANS SWEET SMELLING

Toilet, technology developed by the US Forestry Service. Trail Manager Bob McKinley chose this design after extensive research. "After three years of smelling over 50 outhouses, I'm a connoisseur," he said, flushed with excitement.

The SST is built even better than a brick outhouse. To the casual observer, the structure looks like it's made of wood

and shingles, but everything: walls, floors and roof and underfloor tank, is constructed of reinforced concrete with the color cast in.

The concrete construction makes the SST easy to clean and maintain and it's highly vandal resistant.

The sweet? smell is due to the large black-painted stacks that get warm from the sun, create a draft and carry offensive odors away. "This is a Cadillac and a Lincoln put together," said the Mon Yough Trail Council's Charlie Smith.

Trail volunteers prepared the site installation which went perfectly. "It took about an hour to install," said Smith. "The hole we dug was perfectly level."

Smith added that a well has been dug at Dravo, a hand pump has been installed, the area has been landscaped with new shrubbery and several new benches are in place.

Plans call for another SST to be installed in the isolated section of trail between Whitsett and Dawson next year.

THIS TRAIL'S FOR EVERYBODY!

There's been a lot of new construction and renovation going on along the trail and every bit of it is accessible for persons with disabilities. Anybody, regardless of physical ability, can use the trail and all its facilities. We need you to join one of our trail groups and keep the trail open for all. 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 **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.

Name _____

Address _____

Clip and send to:

Allegheny Trail Alliance
419 College Ave.
Greensburg, PA 15601

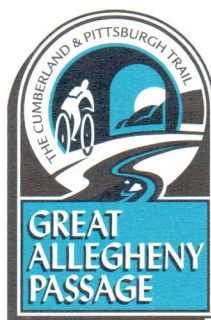
ALLEGHENY TRAIL ALLIANCE

**WORLDWIDE
CONFERENCE**

**"Tool Time for
Trail Builders"**

March 1 & 2
St. Joseph Center
Greensburg, PA

Register at www.atatrail.org



Yough River Trail South

Station Gets New Interior

THE OLD WESTERN MARYLAND RAILROAD STATION at Ohiopyle State Park is undergoing a major interior renovation this winter.

Desperately needed trailside restroom facilities will double to two each for males and females and a new unisex handicapped-accessible toilet.

The former passenger side of the station, which now houses the Laurel Highlands Visitor Center, will be rearranged so that all visitors enter on this side for one source of information.

The old freight side, the side with the double doors, will be converted to a modern visitor auditorium/meeting room with an upstairs loft office. A short interpretive video will be developed and shown throughout the day.

All this is being done on a limited budget of \$35,000 with much of the work being done by park maintenance staff. The project includes central heating and air conditioning, insulation, new lighting, and state of the art audio-visual equipment. Handicapped accessibility will be improved.

The historical character of the building will be maintained as much as possible. Completion is slated for late spring or early summer.

From the Crimestopper's Textbook

Two criminal masterminds from Uniontown struck Ohiopyle in December, "tagging" the new pedestrian bridge piers, several CSX railroad maintenance vehicles and the pop machines at the Falls Market with spray paint.

The young artists left their empty paint cans, complete with the receipt from a local auto parts store. The store had a video security camera and the time on the receipt

was matched to the time on the video, catching the lads red-handed, so to speak. The pictures were shown to the Uniontown police, who showed them to the local high school officials, who, no surprise, knew exactly who the perpetrators were.

Park managers noted that the first restitution checks recently arrived with many more to come.

The Fine Print

The **ATA Trail News** is produced and distributed 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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