



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 3, Number 2

Summer 2002

Ridin' along the new prairie

José Taracido, a Wildlife Conservation Specialist for California University, often rides the trail near the Dravo Cemetery and campground.

He noticed what he calls the "good piece of bottomland" called Stringtown Meadow for the nearby ghost town that existed here from the 1850s to the 1930s.

Taracido reasoned that this may have been an original piece of small prairie that thrived here before Europeans arrived and that this would be a great candidate to plant back into native "warm season grasses."

He went about finding who owned the 20-acre site. First phone call was to trail manager Bob McKinley, who informed him that the Regional Trail Corporation was the owner.

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NEW ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY NOW UNDERWAY

So you take your family for a walk or ride on The Great Allegheny Passage. You park at one of the popular trail heads. You enjoy the trail experience and come back to the car and find a paper on your windshield.

Don't worry. You're not getting a ticket. The paper is a survey form, part of this year's trail economic impact study, the second to be sponsored by the ATA.

"Four years have transpired since our last study in 1998, which was considered our benchmark," said Jim Linaberger, chairman of the ATA's development committee. "A second study is appropriate."

The study, which will be conducted by Prof. Steve Farber of the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), is taking place from April 15 to November 15, the prime trail season. Weekly surveys will be taken at seven major trail heads along the completed portions of the trail from Meyersdale to McKeesport, including the Montour Trail.

The 1998 study, which was also done by Farber, showed that almost \$14 million dollars were spent as a direct result of the trail, ranging from bicycles and equipment to food, gas and lodging.

Funding for the study is coming from a U.S. Forest Service grant.

Volunteers are still needed to conduct the survey. You can contact the Allegheny Trail Alliance at atamail@atatrail.org, or call 724-853-BIKE (2453).

Letter from the Prez

New ATA Initiative

Come tour a "TRAIL TOWN"

The Allegheny Trail Alliance is kicking off a new initiative, called "Trail Towns." With a recent grant from Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, we will be working with communities along the Great Allegheny Passage to test and refine the "Trail Town" model. Mini-grants will be available for community improvements geared toward trail visitors. Items such as bike racks, brochures of the downtown, signage, street crossing improvements and other ideas will be considered.

Come visit a Trail Town with me. It's a sunny day. You're biking along the trail and suddenly you hear music, coming from across the river from the nearby town. You and your companions - intrigued - decide to take a break and investigate...

You discover the local high school's jazz and rock ensemble performing on a street corner, part of the grand opening celebration for the town's newest business, The Kick Stand Café. You notice how easy it is for cyclists and pedestrians to maneuver around town, with well-marked crossings, calm motor traffic, and well-kept sidewalks. You notice the cheerful attitude in town, the banners, the flower baskets, and the bike racks.

As you wander through town, you see a display in the drug

(Continued on Page 2)

FIRST INTERPRETIVE SIGN UNVEILED



Photo by Bill Metzger

The first of a series of wayside interpretive signs was unveiled at the Meyersdale Train Station on National Trails Day, June 1. The Meyersdale sign tells the story of the Western Maryland Railway; others in the first series are located at Salisbury Viaduct and Confluence.

Other signs telling the stories of geology, trailside towns, and industries are forthcoming as well as an interpretive booklet and a guidebook. The project was funded by a grant from the National Park Service.

The committee who helped put the project together: (L.) Sandra Finley, Roy Weil, Mary Shaw, Bob Gangewere, and Linda McKenna Boxx. Committee member Jim Shaulis wasn't present for the photo and committee member Bill Metzger was otherwise occupied.

NEW PRAIRIE

(Continued from Page 1)

Taracido made the pitch to plant the site back into its original state, noting that a flat undeveloped area like this along the trail was extremely rare, especially so close to a metropolitan area. He got the trail management, wildlife groups and government agencies on board with the project, a plan was agreed to and the site was prepared.

Non-native invasive species were treated and killed and the field was seeded with at least 20 different native species including the gray-headed cornflower, lance-leaved coraeopsis, and Aldous little bluestem, to name just a few. A word to you gardeners: some of these seeds cost \$350 a pound.

"These plants are beneficial for nesting grassland species of birds and animals that are in decline in Pennsylvania like meadowlarks, bobolinks and quail," said Taracido. It will also attract butterflies, and birds such as the rare henslow sparrow and the vesper sparrow. The root structure will eventually reach 5 to 6 feet deep, preventing erosion.

"But we're also planting for esthetic value," he continued, "it will be a greenish blue in summer and will turn orange and red in the late summer and fall. Flowers will bloom from early spring to last frost."

It'll be awhile before you can start yodeling "yippie io ki ay" along the new prairie.

"This is a slow process," Taracido cautioned, "it'll take two to three years for everything to be fully established." A nature trail will run through the whole site and 20 bird nesting boxes have been placed.

"We want people to enjoy it and use it," Taracido said. "Just don't pick the flowers."

TRAIL TOWN

(Continued from Page 1)

store for a compact first aid kit - which no cyclist should be without. Just the size you've been looking for. You duck in quickly to make your purchase. Your friends opt for the ice cream shop and continue their tour of town munching on their double-scooped cones with the flavor of the day "Casselman Crunch." You notice lots of children on bikes. This town has made itself inviting and safe for the tourists, but also for their most cherished residents. This is a good place. You know you will return often.

This is a Trail Town at its finest: a place for people; where the Great Allegheny Passage has been a catalyst for positive change in the community; where once forgotten old industrial towns have been reborn as safe, friendly, happy places to visit and live.

For more information call: 888-ATA-BIKE (888-282-2453).

Linda McKenna Boxx

Montour volunteers repave 2.5 miles in Cecil Township

The first section of the Montour Trail to be built was resurfaced this spring in Cecil Township by a group of volunteers. What makes this particular project notable is that all the participants, including the machinery, are retired.

Key to the project was Frank Ludwin, 69, who "has every kind of equipment you could possibly need," according to John Hooton, 73, also a volunteer.

The new surface runs from Cecil Park to National Tunnel. Funding for the project came from the 'Burgh Run, a 10K run and one mile walking event sponsored by Burgh's Pizza and Wing Pub of Bridgeville.

The Run, which was held especially for the benefit of the Montour Trail Council, was the second annual and netted \$12,000.

CONNECTIONS

Another 9.5-mile section of the Western Maryland Rail Trail is now open near Hancock. The trail is now a nifty 20-mile paved alternative to the C&O Canal Towpath, starting from near Dam Number 6 (Woodmont) and running to Big Pool, MD, near Ft. Frederick.

Phase 3, the final \$500,000 phase of the project, will extend the trail another 2.5 miles west to the Wildlife Management Area at Pearre. This next phase has already been planned and funded and is slated to be completed by 2004.

Pittsburgh Trails Get Grants, Kudos

The City of Pittsburgh has been awarded a \$500,000 PennDOT enhancement grant for design and engineering of the pedestrian side of the Hot Metal Bridge which will connect the South Side Trail with the Eliza Furnace Trail (a.k.a. the Jail Trail). The project will include a new bridge across Second Ave.

The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources also granted the City \$200,000 to complete trail construction through Station Square.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors has awarded its Outstanding Achievement Award in the City Livability category to Pittsburgh for its Riverfront Trail Development Program which includes the western end of the Great Allegheny Passage.

5 New Restrooms!

OHIOPLYE STATION COMPLETED

The new interior of the visitors center at Ohioplye is completed on budget and on schedule. "It's fantastic!" said Barb Wallace, Environmental Education Specialist for the park.

Five new bathrooms were built, including one that's ADA-compliant, a new loft office and a conference room with a state-of-the-art sound system. The whole interior is air conditioned with an authentic pot-bellied stove from an old railroad shanty.

Photo Contest Winners Announced



Photo by Bill Metzger

Winners of the first Allegheny Trail Alliance Photo Contest were also announced in Meyersdale on National Trails Day. From left are the contest winners and their winning entries: Larry Adams, who won in the Happy Trail Users category; Kathy Kruger, Landscapes; Mary Shaw, Structures; Tony Marich, Wild Card and Best in Show; and John Motto, Honorable Mention. Not shown were Patrick Bursch, the Under 12 winner and Louis Farkos, Flora and Fauna.

Winning photos are posted on the ATA website atatrail.org. Thanks to everyone who entered the contest.

Rx FOR OLDER ADULTS: WALK OR BIKE THE TRAIL

A \$50,000 grant from the Jewish Healthcare Foundation is helping the Allegheny Trail Alliance spread the word that walking or biking the trail regularly can help maintain physical and mental fitness as we age.

"We want people to take charge of their own health," emphasizes the Foundation's Nancy Zions, "and the trail is a simple way to do that."

To tell people about the trail, Yvonne Merrill, a grandmother herself, has been hired as the ATA's Older Adult

Project Coordinator. She has put together a presentation that introduces the trail, profiles trail users, shows some of its historical aspects and describes trailside vendors.

She's been talking to senior centers all around the region. "My show takes a look at the trail in all seasons. I let folks know that it can be used year round." She also shows the wide variety of trail activities that are possible.



Yvonne Merrill

Merrill and the ATA are also working on a "Easy Trips Along the Trail" booklet that will introduce the trail by mapping and describing a series of walks, rides and overnight trips that can be taken on the Passage. It'll be out sometime mid-summer.

Zions is especially concerned about women's health. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women and she and the Foundation want to remedy that. "We want to give women a sense of need to take care of themselves," she says, "and we want them to feel good about what they're doing. Exercising on the trail is a great way to do that."

Chuck Durkas, 68, of Versailles is a great example of an older trail user. "I hurt my knee in a bad fall in 1995 and I figured I'd try riding my bike on the trail for exercise. It's been the thing for me. I credit my recovery to the trail."

Durkas rides every day, usually starting at 6:00 a.m. His trips are often 80 miles or better. "We don't know how lucky we are to have something like the trail here."

Lee Bovey, 71 and his wife Della, 63, of Clairton heard about the trail from taking Peggy Krall's class at the Community College of Allegheny County (see story at right). The Boveys joined the Cycle Paths that formed as a result of the class. "We ride every Monday with them," said Lee, "then Thursdays we go out on our own. We're doing the trail a section at a time."

"Doing this has given me more stamina," Lee relates, "I can go a lot farther than I did last year." When they're not biking, both Lee and Della exercise regularly. "Exercise keeps both your body and your brain in tune and the trail is a spectacular place to do it."

Merrill sums it up: "Trails will take you to successful aging no matter what you do on them, whether it's walking, biking, fishing or bird watching."

For more information on the trail, presentations to older adult groups and Elderhostel events, call Yvonne Merrill at 888-ATA-BIKE or check the website at www.atatrail.org.

Cycle Paths. Is this a great name or what? They're a bike club that grew out of a class and that grew out of an idea for a trail-related business.

Peggy Krall had started a small bike rental business in 1999 on a sidewalk in downtown Pittsburgh. People kept asking for more information about the trail and Peggy, who already



Photo courtesy of Peggy Krall

Ann Gladden, Peggy Krall, and Barb Green show off their Cycle Paths t-shirts on a recent ride to Confluence.

taught at the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), decided to start a bike class called Senior Bike Rides just for older adults based on the trails in the area.

"Some were afraid to start biking again," said Peggy, "so we started from scratch. We re-introduced them to the basics of bike riding, and biking etiquette, then took them for rides on the trails."

A 20 minute walk on the trail three or four times a week will help you stay healthier as you age. There's a trail section near you and some sections are accessible by public transit.

Classes were held in the morning during the week to especially accommodate older riders.

The class was a "huge hit" – 80 people signed up for the first class, but after some great rides and the class ended, people asked themselves, "now what?" The Cycle Paths bike club was born. From an initial 6 members, the group has grown to over 60 with about 20 participating in any given ride.

Rides are held every Monday during the season on different trails around the area.

According to Peggy, members have reported that their blood pressure and weight are down because of the regular rides. Other than that, folks enjoy the social aspect of the club – they even get together during the winter.

There's now even an offshoot group forming to ride on Thursdays.

For more information about the classes or the Cycle Paths, call Peggy at 412-600-0675.

LOG YOUR MILES AND YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS

Riding the trail is great fun and now the ATA is offering a logbook for you to record and remember that fun. But there's another section in the logbook: volunteer hours. Without the work put in by our thousands of volunteers working untold thousands of hours, there would be no trail.

So enjoy logging your hours, but don't forget to join and help the trail group near you.

- ☐ **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**) Anyone donating \$25 or more will receive a color logo pin, a logbook or a copy of **Linking Up**.

Name _____

Address _____

Please send me a:

- ☐ Logo pin ☐ Logbook ☐ Linking Up



Clip and send to:

Allegheny Trail Alliance
419 College Ave.
Greensburg, PA 15601

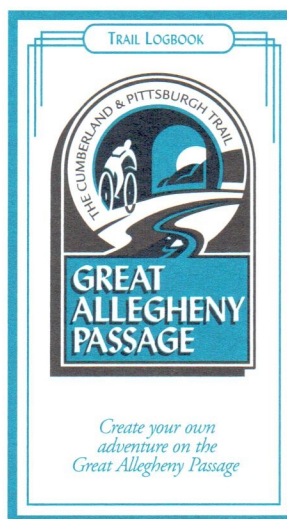
FALL ATA-Sponsored Elderhostel Events

- Geologic Hayride/Phantom Of The Rockwood Opera
Thurs. October 26, 2002
9:00am - 3:30pm
- French & Indian War/Civil War History and Pedal/Paddle
October 2 & 3, 2002
2:00pm Wed. - 7:00pm Thurs.

For Info: 412-422-2060

TRAIL MARKETPLACE

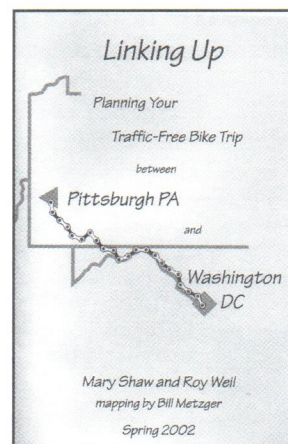
NEW LINKING UP, LOGBOOK HOT OFF THE PRESSES



Relive all those happy days riding, running or working on the trail with your own personal logbook. The ATA is offering this useful little logbook, 3 1/2" by 6", which is designed to fit in your bike bag. It comes with a waterproof plastic cover and includes space for trips, volunteer hours and notes. The logbook costs \$3.00.

You can order the Logbook or Linking Up at:

atamail@atatrail.org OR ATA, 419 College Ave., Greensburg, PA 15601 OR 888-ATA-BIKE



The new **Linking Up**, the guide to the trails from Washington, DC to Pittsburgh, is hot off the presses. According to co-author Mary Shaw, "the previous edition was so successful, we updated it to show new trail construction and current busi-

nesses. We also added new material, including itineraries, excursions, places to get food, and mileages between towns."

The new edition is \$4.50.

SHOP AT iGive.com, DONATE TO THE TRAIL

iGive.com is an internet shopping service that lets you shop online and give to the trail while you're doing it. A percentage of each purchase made from igive.com's member stores, which include Amazon, Dell, Land's End and about 250 others,

is donated to the Allegheny Trail Alliance. "It's just like shopping at a mall with all the different stores, but it's on the internet," explains ATA's Anne E. Richardson. Start by logging on to www.iGive.com/ATARTC.

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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