

# trailNEWS

WORKING TO CONNECT PITTSBURGH TO WASHINGTON—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 4, NUMBER 2

FALL 2004

## Hot Metal Bridge To Forge Key Connection on Great Allegheny Passage

Photo by Ned Williams



Mayor Murphy and Linda M. Boxx lead Hike the Gap participants across Hot Metal Street, formerly the Mon Conn Railroad Bridge. May 21, 2004.

**C**onverting the Hot Metal Bridge for trail use will provide the single most important cycling connection in Pittsburgh," said Dave Hoffman of Bike Pittsburgh at the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Public Meeting on the Hot Metal Bridge on August 18. "The highest concentrations of bicycle riders in Pittsburgh live in Squirrel Hill, Oakland, and the South Side. They need this connection and it will provide the best possible way for the Great Allegheny Passage to connect to the Point." The public meeting was well attended and there was overwhelming enthusiasm to move forward with this major reconstruction project as quickly as possible.

ATA Board Member Chris Davis's firm, Christine Davis Consulting (CDC) was engaged to document the bridge and the adjacent Monongahela Connecting Railroad Bridge before their conversions, and we asked her to provide historic information. Below is an overview and timeline. More information is available at Chris's website: <http://www.chrisdavis.net/>

In the midst of a city of constant change, the J&L Hot Metal Bridge and the Monongahela Connecting Railroad Bridge (Mon Conn) are powerful and lasting symbols of Pittsburgh's great steel era. This pair of near-twin bridges built on a shared set of piers is approximately three miles up river from the Point. They integrated the J&L works on the north and south side of the Monongahela River, linking blast furnaces, Bessemer converters, open hearth furnaces, and finishing mills.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

## Trail Construction Well Underway

PA Construction from Salisbury Viaduct to Mason-Dixon Line

**T**he Salisbury Viaduct to Sand Patch section of the trail contractor, Charles J. Merlo, Inc., was awarded a contract and began construction in early May. Much of the work on this project centers on the construction of the new structure under High Street in Meyersdale. The contractor has poured the footing for the arch culvert structure and expects to have the precast sections delivered by mid-September. The project is expected to be completed by the spring of 2005.

A contract for the 5.5 mile Sand Patch section was awarded on July 27 to Straw Construction Co. of Boswell, PA and construction has begun. This project also involves the installation of a new concrete arch culvert that will allow the trail to pass underneath McKenzie Hollow Road, near Deal. The bulk of the project will be completed this year but there will be some items that need to be completed early in the spring of 2005. Somerset County is currently getting bids for the construction of the last 1.2 miles of trail that will connect the Big Savage Tunnel to the Mason-Dixon Line.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

## INSIDE

Tour the Montour.....	page 3
Letter from the Prez.....	page 3
Trail Mix.....	page 3
Group Rides.....	page 4
Maryland Trail Opening.....	page 4
Railcar Education Center.....	page 5



## Trail Construction

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Dixon Line. The construction of this section will take place this fall.

### MD Construction from Mason-Dixon Line South

On April 5, 2004, Excavating Associates, Inc. of Ellerslie, began construction on the 5.2 mile mainline section of trail from Frostburg's New Hope Road Trailhead to the Mason-Dixon Line. As of mid-August the construction crew had completed roughly three miles of the trail from the Mason-Dixon Line to the Borden Tunnel. The northern portal of the tunnel has been repaired and the southern portal is in the process of being repaired. The interior repairs for the tunnel have not yet begun. The clearing and grubbing for the remaining two miles between the tunnel and Frostburg's New Hope Road Trailhead are currently underway.

Frostburg's New Hope Road Trailhead to the Woodcock Hollow Road Trailhead has been bid and construction is expected to begin in the fall. Allegany County is focusing on completing the design and acquisition for the Trail from the Woodcock Hollow Trailhead to Baltimore Street and Western Maryland Station.

**Please remember that any access to the Allegheny Highlands Trail mainline is strictly prohibited.**

### Montour Update

The Montour Trail Council has two volunteer projects underway: 1.) construction of 1.4 miles of trail east from the Arrowhead Trail at Library Junction in Peters Township to the Washington/Allegheny County Line just west of the future trail bridge over Rt.88; 2.) The rehabilitation of a 60' three-span bridge on the future segment of trail connecting the Montour and Panhandle Trails west of the McDonald Viaduct. Volunteers are always needed. Contact Mark Imgrund at mcimgrund@adelphia.net.

The next major construction, slated for 2005, will be the PA Public Utilities  
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

## Hot Metal Bridge (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Molten iron from the Eliza furnaces on the North Side was poured into torpedo-shaped railroad cars to cross the river on the downstream Hot Metal Bridge. On the South Side the molten iron was emptied into the ladle which transported the iron to the open hearth furnaces. At the end of the open hearth process, molten steel was poured into ingot molds and allowed to cool. The ingots went back across the river by rail on the upstream Mon Conn Railroad Bridge to be rolled and fabricated into sheets, wire, rails, and other products in J&L's finishing mill.



c.1960 Courtesy Christine Davis

*Torpedo-shaped rail cars carry hot metal across the Monongahela.*

In 1928 a train crossed the bridge every hour and 4,300 tons of molten iron was hauled between the two J&L facilities each day. By the late '80s, the mills were closed, as was Hot Metal Bridge. The last cars crossed the Mon Conn Railroad Bridge in June of 1993.

The URA rehabilitated the Mon Conn Bridge for vehicle use and is now working to rehabilitate and convert the Hot Metal Bridge for bicycle and pedestrian use. To preserve the important history and technology of the structures, the URA and project engineers, Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas, with funding from ATA, worked together to ensure that the rehabilitation efforts were consistent with good practices for transportation and preservation.

## Bridge Timeline

**1850** Benjamin Franklin Jones established the American Iron Works on the south bank of the Monongahela River at Birmingham.

**1854** Pittsburgh banker, James Laughlin joined Jones to form a partnership that would become J & L Steel Corporation.

**1860** J & L constructed Eliza blast furnaces on the north shore of the Monongahela. Puddling furnaces and rolling mills were on the south shore of the Monongahela making it necessary to reheat the metal before it was worked.

**1882** J&L formed the East End Bridge Company to build a railroad bridge across the Monongahela River.

**1887** Bridge constructed with two tracks, one for through traffic and one specifically designed to transport hot metal, to link the two sides of the operation.

**1887** J&L expanded the East End Bridge Company into a short-line railroad known as the Monongahela Connecting Railroad. Eventually, the Mon Conn became a multi-million dollar subsidiary of J&L, and provided transportation for many industries along the Monongahela River.

**1900** J&L shifted its operation exclusively to steel production. A second bridge was added down river on the same piers, designed exclusively for transporting hot metal. The Mon Conn was upgraded.

**1993** The last cars and the last crew crossed the Mon Conn Railroad Bridge.

**2000** Mon Conn Railroad Bridge opened as a two-lane bridge for vehicular traffic linking Pittsburgh Technology Center along 2nd Avenue and the University of Pittsburgh's Sports Medicine Center on the South Side. It's now known as Hot Metal Street.



# trailMIX

**B**est wishes to **Gerry and Bob Eddy of Pensacola, Florida**, who celebrated their Golden Anniversary on the Great Allegheny Passage in June, riding from McKeesport to Washington. The Eddys very much appreciated the many kindnesses that made the trip even more memorable. Gerry recently emailed that they have biked 700 more miles since their anniversary trip! An all-time high number of riders—150—took part in the **Regional Trail Corporation's M & M Century** Meyersdale to McKeesport in July and a good time was had by all. The **2005 M&M** is tentatively scheduled for July 16 & 17. If you would like to be on the mailing list, call RTC at 724-872-5586. Congratulations to **Duane Wolley**—American Hiking Society's Volunteer of the Year 2004 for Pennsylvania. Duane volunteers primarily for the Five Star Trail but also helps with many others including the Great Allegheny Passage. John Pfau reports that the 3rd annual **Penn State Century Ride** was held on the Great Allegheny Passage in June. This year's ride included 55 riders, the majority of whom were students. The Century Ride is the culminating experience in a course taught by the Department of Kinesiology at University Park which focuses on human endurance. The riders chose to attempt either a one day 100 mile ride or a two day ride which covers 40 miles on day one and 60 miles on day two. One of the objectives of the course is to confront human endurance problems at a personal level. Penn State will be returning to the trail with a new group of riders June 25 & 26, 2005. **Ed Talone** of the American Hiking Society, researching a trail guide for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, highly recommends a trip up the Monongehela Incline (they take bikes if it's not rush hour), walking (or riding) down Grandview Avenue to the Duquesne Incline to go back to Carson. "Fantastic," says Ed. **Kathy Bisko**, Main Street Manager of the Meyersdale Renaissance reports that there has been a steady stream of trail users this year, even with the construction detour. Meyersdale boasts a new business: **Main Street Inn & Restaurant** recently opened at 322 Main Street. **Lucky Dog Café** opened this summer on the River Road in Confluence. Another new business is the **Yough Shore Inn** in Boston (PA). Close to the trail, it provides good, basic accommodations.

## 2nd Annual Tour the Montour

**C**ome and enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Montour Trail in September. If you and your family enjoy the trail for relaxation, or you consider yourself a long distance cyclist, come join us for a fun filled day on the Montour Trail. The 2nd Annual Fisher Scientific Tour the Montour Trail Ride is taking place on **Saturday, September 25th, 2004**, rain or shine.

The Tour the Montour Trail Ride is not a race, but a leisurely trail ride that offers four different ride distances entirely on the Montour Trail. You will be able to choose from a distance ride of 44 miles, intermediate rides of 12 or 24 miles, or a family ride of 6 miles. All distances are out and back ride lengths and all courses begin at Mile "0". All proceeds benefit the maintenance and expansion of the Montour Trail. We hope to see everyone on Saturday, September 25th for a great day of fun.

Registration forms and more information are available at [www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org), by calling 412-257-3011, by email at [tourthemontour@yahoo.com](mailto:tourthemontour@yahoo.com), or you can register online at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com).

## LETTER FROM THE PREZ

**A**t the risk of opening Pandora's box, we'd like to ask your opinion of our trail and the trail experience we are providing. Our volunteer corps' primary mission is to build and maintain the trail, but there are many other things besides a good trail surface needed to make an enjoyable experience.

We know we need a uniform mile-marking system and we may install an interim system until our Maryland section is completed. But what else? More interpretive signs? Guided tours? A happier toilet experience? More camping opportunities? Better signage to the access areas? B&B packages? More merchandise? If so, what type? More volunteer opportunities? Things we haven't even thought of?

You, who use the trail, can help us establish some priorities to direct our time and dollars to the enhancements that you feel are the most important. Please log on to our website where you will find a survey link on our home page. Let us know what you think. The risk in asking is the responsibility to fulfill your expectations. We will keep you posted on progress and invite you always to comment. We want our trail users to have a great visit and your ideas will help us. So log onto [www.atatrail.org](http://www.atatrail.org) and click Trail Survey 2004, or email [atamail.org](mailto:atamail.org), or write us at 419 College Avenue, Greensburg, PA; or phone us at 888-ATA-BIKE and talk to us or leave a message.

**Farewell...** ATA is experiencing empty nest syndrome! Our well-seasoned circuit rider Brett Hollern has taken the job of Trail Manager for Somerset County. ATA board member Doug Hoehn has retired as Ohiopyle State Park manager after  
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



**(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)**

30 years with DCNR. John Hallas, the new park manager, will be joining the ATA board in his stead. Bob McKinley, Trail Manager for the Regional Trail Corporation, has moved on and is Director of Project Development for Fulton County. Trail Town project manager Michael Finley has finished up his work and we are pushing him to go to graduate school. Summer intern Allison Rich did a fabulous job as sleuth, scouring all kinds of records to put together a master trail funding report. And it was wonderful having Heather Mommyer back with us to do some odds and ends before she heads back to graduate school in Louisiana. Good luck to all of you!

—Linda McKenna Boxx

**Join the Great Allegheny Passage Yahoo Group.** Share stories and photos with other trail users. Get up to date information on trail events and construction. To join the GAP Yahoo group, go to the site:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Great\\_Allegheny\\_Passage/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Great_Allegheny_Passage/) and you'll be given directions on how to join.

### **Eighth Potomac Heritage Trail Annual Caucus**

Join other trail advocates at the National Conservation Training Center near Shepherdstown, WV, October 14–15. You'll learn more about the trail corridor, meet with others involved in trail building, and have the opportunity to express your ideas and opinions. Suggestions welcome. Contact: [don\\_briggs@nps.gov](mailto:don_briggs@nps.gov) or 304-535-4016.

## **Great Little Facts Top Ten Geological Sites on the Trail**

**FROM JIM SHAULIS, GEOLOGIST, DCNR**

- 1. Port Royal Tufa:** A "tu" fabulous, living, growing geological exhibit that runs on water, decaying vegetation, and limestone. Near Cedar Creek Park.
- 2. Fossil Quarry:** School students on field trips often fill their backpacks with more fossiliferous rocks than they can carry or ride a bike with. Near Rockwood.
- 3. Pittsburgh Coal and Coke Ovens:** Once called "the most important mineral resource in the history of the world." Near Dawson.
- 4. Boxwork Structures:** A textbook example of differential weathering that gets the most "What is it?" comments from trail users. Near West Newton.
- 5. Loyalhanna Crossbeds:** The surface of the trail is made of crushed Loyalhanna limestone. Near Garrett.
- 6. Red River Falls:** The red color is from the iron oxide precipitate that coats the side of the hill under the falls. Near Sutersville.
- 7. Geologic Wayside Exhibit Area:** Layers of rocks formed 300 million years ago from sediments shed from mountains 300 miles to the east. Near Bruner Run.
- 8. Furnace Run Alluvial Fan/Bar:** Mostly meek and mild; can morph into an angry torrent carrying large boulders controlling the shape and course of the comparably giant Youghiogheny River that it flows into. Near Ohiopyle.
- 9. Debris Avalanche Chutes:** Bowl-shaped catch basins hundreds of feet above, funnel water and rocks into narrow chutes and on to the trail below at high velocities. Watch out! Near Ohiopyle.
- 10. Ohiopyle Meander:** "Currently" confusing. Depending on which side of the meander loop you are standing, the water could be flowing north or south!



*BJ Nicholas at Wymps Gap*

Courtesy, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

## **First Five Miles in Maryland Finished!**

**Come to Grand Opening October 8th**

**A**llegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland (AHTM) invites you to a Grand Opening/Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the trail segment from the Frostburg New Hope Road Trailhead to the Pennsylvania line, Friday, October 8th at 2 pm at the trailhead. This long-awaited work on the Maryland section of the Great Allegheny Passage is going well and we want to celebrate! Check for celebration updates at [ahtmtrail.org](http://ahtmtrail.org) or [atatrail.org](http://atatrail.org).

**Ride the New Trail**—In conjunction with the Grand Opening, AHTM is coordinating a ride on the finished section. At this time, the ride is planned for around 4 pm. Details and directions will be posted on the web site at [ahtmtrail.org](http://ahtmtrail.org).

## **Join a Group Ride**

Below are some group rides planned for 2004 and 2005.

Please check the ATA and individual trail websites for details and updates.

- **That Dam Ride, Sept. 10–11.** Boston Riverfront Park to Confluence Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area and Mon Yough Trail Council Info at [www.thatdamride.org](http://www.thatdamride.org) or by calling 412-462-5328.
- **2nd Annual Tour the Montour, September 25**  
Trail ride that offers four different ride distances entirely on the Montour Trail. Info at [www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org) or 412-257-3011. More on page 3.
- **YRTC Fall Foliage Ride, October 1, Riverfront Park – Connellsville**  
Yough River Trail Council, <http://www.atatrail.org>.
- **Allegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland Annual Ride, October 8th**  
Frostburg to state line. <http://www.ahtmtrail.org>. More above.
- **Yockatomac Trek, June 2005, Washington D.C. to McKeesport.** Itinerary available 1/2005. If you want more information, send email to [join-yoktrek@listserver.atatrail.org](mailto:join-yoktrek@listserver.atatrail.org) or call 888-ATA-Bike or [atamail@atatrail.org](mailto:atamail@atatrail.org)



# P&LE Combo Car Becomes Education Center

## Blazing New Trails and RTC work Magic on The Great Allegheny Passage



Ready for Class 2004

For a decade, dedicated volunteers of the Regional Trail Corporation's Westmoreland Yough Trail Chapter envisioned this rusting railcar as an education center. Happily, the volunteers recruited partners including an innovative program called *Blazing New Trails*, and together they have made it happen.

Yough Middle School students got involved in 1998. Renovation of the interior and the painting of the exterior were completed by volunteers and Belle Vernon's *Blazing New Trails* program in 2004. The Yough School District is currently taking the lead to organize the environmental program and is helping to provide guidance and equipment for the lab and classroom.

The Pittsburgh and Lake Erie (P&LE) railroad combo car—half passenger/half baggage—was built by the Standard Car Company in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania in 1928 and is one of only three remaining in the world. Now completely restored, it remains a combination car—the passenger side seats 40 and the baggage side houses the laboratories.

An Open House on September 12th celebrated the great work done by the *Blazing New Trails* group to complete the interior of the Railcar. The railroad car was sand blasted, primed, and painted on the outside. The inside of the railroad car was restored from scraping the walls, to insulating, wiring, painting,

lighting, installing new flooring, to hanging new window treatments. All of the iron work was done by Leonard Sapko of Belle Vernon Ironworks. The Open House also featured work done by Belle Vernon Area High School students, Ringgold, Yough, and Monessen students.

In addition to the many hours donated by the *Blazing New Trails*

group, the Yough Middle School, and trail volunteers, the project was made possible with financial support from *Blazing New Trails*, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and in-kind donations from area businesses and corporations.

Thanks to the hundreds who helped with special thanks to Caz Liszewski, Cheryl Lewis, Terry Evans, Bob McKinley, Diane Koneffko, Don Paradise, Nancy Avolesse, Gregg Kretchum, Scott Kenell, and Dave Hamilton. *Blazing New Trails* is a program through the Pennsylvania Department of Education administered by the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit 7 in Greensburg. For more information, contact the Regional Trail Corporation at 724-872-5586 or *Blazing New Trails*, [diane@blazingnewtrails.org](mailto:diane@blazingnewtrails.org) or [don@blazingnewtrails.org](mailto:don@blazingnewtrails.org).

There are currently 31 schools in Pennsylvania doing projects through the *Blazing New Trails* program along the various trails in their communities.



Before



After



Railcar during process with Don Paradise and Diane Koneffko of Blazing New Trails





## ATA TRAIL NEWS

FALL 2004

### (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

mandated removal of the Muse-Bishop Road tunnel under the trail in Cecil Township, Washington County. The tunnel will be removed, together with a large portion of the overlying fill, and replaced with a steel bridge.

Another major project is the extension of the trail into Allegheny County at Library, which will begin at the County Line (where the volunteer segment described above stops) and run northeast for 0.9 mile to Pleasant Street. The centerpiece will be the rehabilitation and decking of the Library Trestle, a 506' span over Rt. 88, the PAT Light Rail and a branch of Peters Creek. Advertising for construction bids on this project is expected early in 2005.

#### ATA TRAIL NEWS © SEPTEMBER 2004

*Trail News is published two times a year by the Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA). The ATA 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 will join the C&O Canal Towpath to Washington, DC. To subscribe or unsubscribe, contact ATA: Phone: 724-853-2453 Fax: 724-832-8519 Email: [atamail@atatrail.org](mailto:atamail@atatrail.org) Website: [www.atatrail.org](http://www.atatrail.org)*

- ☐ **Friends of the Riverfront**  
Three Rivers Heritage Trail—Point State Park to the Glenwood Bridge,
- ☐ **Steel Valley Trail Council**  
Steel Valley—Glenwood Bridge, through McKeesport, and on to Clairton,
- ☐ **Regional Trail Corporation**  
Youghiogheny River Trail—McKeesport to Connellsville,
- ☐ **Ohioyle State Park, PA DCNR and Yough Trail Council**  
Youghiogheny River Trail—Connellsville to Confluence,
- ☐ **Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association**  
Allegheny Highlands Trail—Confluence to Maryland State Line,
- ☐ **Allegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland**  
Allegheny Highlands Trail, Mason Dixon Line to Cumberland,
- ☐ **Montour Trail Council**  
Montour Trail, Clairton to Groveton
- ☐ **Great Allegheny Passage**

## Support the Trail!

**Join a trail group, volunteer, and/or make a donation**—The Allegheny Trail Alliance's partner organizations welcome volunteers. Request information on the Great Allegheny Passage and/or specific trails by checking the boxes on the left, filling in the form below, and mailing to ATA.

### How Do I Make a Financial Contribution?

Your gift can make a difference. To make a donation, please fill in the form below and mail to ATA, 419 College Avenue, Greensburg, PA 15601

- ☐ I want to help build the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP.) My tax-deductible donation of \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. (Please make check payable to RTC/ATA) Donors of \$20 or more may choose a thank you gift from the following (please check your choice.)
- ☐ GAP logo pin
- ☐ GAP logo patch
- ☐ GAP blue/white logo decal and postcards of Bill Price's black and white railroad photos—5 each of Big Savage Tunnel and Keystone Viaduct.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_