



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 4, Number 3

Fall 2003

PASSAGE NAMED PART OF POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

"The Great Allegheny Passage has been included in the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail," announced Terry Carlstrom, Regional Director of the National Park Service's National Capital Region.

"The Great Allegheny Passage between Cumberland and Ohiopyle has been designated a segment and the trail between Pittsburgh and Ohiopyle has been designated a connecting trail," said Carlstrom. "National Scenic Trails are long-distance, over 100 miles, trails which link superb resources in a continuous corridor for non-motorized recreation. Only eight trails have met those criteria."

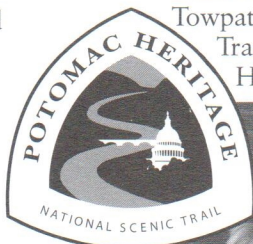
"In addition to the historical significance of the trail corridor and the outstanding recreational and educational opportunities, the Passage is notable as an extraordinary example of partnerships and volunteer contributions," he continued.

The request for designation was jointly

made by Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources. The Potomac Trail Council recently recognized both agencies for their efforts by naming them Agencies of the Year.

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail was created in 1983 by an amendment to the National Trails System Act.

It includes the 184.5-mile C & O Canal Towpath, the 17-mile Mount Vernon Trail, and the 70-mile Laurel Highlands Trail.



From left: Don Briggs, Superintendent of the PHNST; Linda M. Boxx, president, ATA; Terry Carlstrom, Regional Director of the National Park Service Capital Region.

"The Great Allegheny Passage continues the corridor to the Ohio River," said Don Briggs, Superintendent of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. "The Allegheny Trail Alliance members are to be commended for working together on this magnificent addition."

"The Great Allegheny Passage provides many benefits to our region," said Congressman John P. Murtha, "and we are very pleased with the designation which will help heighten awareness throughout America of this important resource."

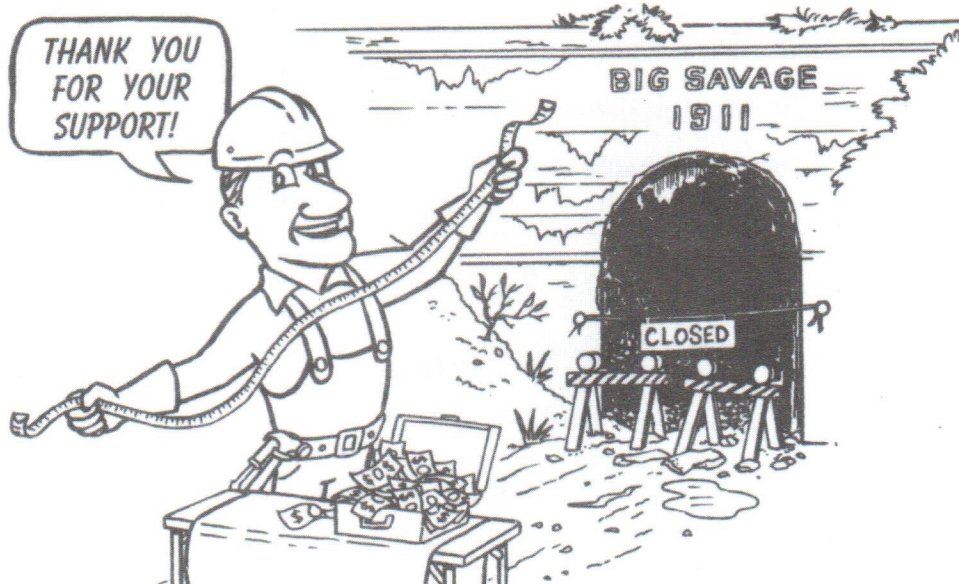
In addition to Congressman Murtha, the application was endorsed by Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy, and the Boards of Commissioners of Somerset, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties.

The other seven National Scenic Trails are:

- Appalachian Trail
- Continental Divide Trail
- Florida Trail
- Ice Age Trail
- Natchez Trace
- North Country Trail
- Pacific Coast Trail

HURRICANE ISABEL CANCELS TUNNEL CELEBRATION

The hurricane blew in and cancelled the Big Savage Tunnel Restoration Celebration scheduled for September 19th. Thanks to all who planned to attend. As trail construction at both ends of the tunnel will begin in early 2004, we anticipate a celebration when trail and tunnel are completed. In the meantime, the tunnel is closed. To allow the contractors to do their jobs on the tunnel and the trail and to protect the safety of all, passage through the tunnel is prohibited. Check the ATA website for on-road detours and construction updates.



MONTOUR OPENS THOUSAND-FOOT BRIDGE DECK AND FIVE MILES OF TRAIL



Jeff LeJeune teaches his son Tony, 5, to ride a bike on the new trestle deck.

ON SEPTEMBER 6, A BEAUTIFUL SATURDAY AFTERNOON, THE MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL OPENED THE McDONALD TRESTLE AND 4.7 MILES OF NEW TRAIL. THEY CALLED THE EVENT TRESTLEFEST.

With the new section, 22 continuous miles of trail are now open from Coraopolis to the Route 50/980 intersection at Venice, PA.

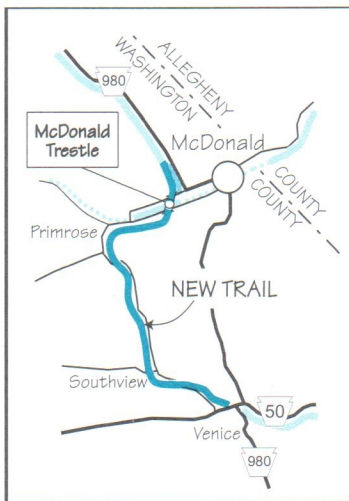
Ground was broken on October 18, 2002 for the project. "It feels good to see it finished," said Montour Trail President Peter Kohnke.

The otherwise joyful celebration was marred by the sudden death, three days prior to the opening, of Dick Quasey, who was the trail's overseer for the job.

The new bridge deck consists of 68 pre-cast concrete panels, 15 feet wide and 25 feet long, each weighing 10 tons. Each panel had to be individually engineered, according to Bill Stout of Atlas Railroad Construction, contractor for the job. The new deck is "over specs for capacity - it could hold a train," Stout said proudly.

The project also involved raising clearances on two bridges at Glass Hill and Papp Roads and removing the bridge at Cowden Road and converting it to an at-grade crossing.

The MTC already has three projects scheduled for next year. "We're not resting on our laurels," Kohnke promised.



RICHARD LEE "Dick" QUASEY 1924-2003

Dick Quasey, 79, former president of the Montour Trail Council, passed away suddenly while fishing in Canada with his three sons.

The "Volunteer Bridge" in Moon and Robinson Townships, the Quicksilver Bridge and the McDonald Trestle were among the projects Quasey supervised for the Montour.

On behalf of the Council, Frank Keppel said, "Dick's ability and dedication to get the job done endeared him to all those he worked with. His advice and friendship will always be treasured."

Quasey is survived by his wife Mary, four children and seven grandchildren.



Columbia Gas inserts draw huge response

ATA Marketing Committee Member Rob Boulware, manager of communications for Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, worked with ATA to prepare a bill insert on the Great Allegheny Passage. The inserts were included in the Columbia Gas bills of 358,000 residential customers in 27 Pennsylvania counties and three western Maryland counties. The insert told a little about the trail system and offered a free map to callers. ATA received over 600 map requests in response to the inserts. Thanks to Columbia Gas and Rob for their help in this effort.

Primitive Campground opens on Yough River Trail North

A much-needed primitive camping area has been built by the Regional Trail Corporation along the Yough River Trail North (YRT) section of the Great Allegheny Passage. The Round-bottom Campground at Slush Run is 2.5 miles south of Whitsett and about ten miles north of Connellsville in a remote section of the YRT known as the "Out-back." It's accessible for both trail and river users.

Boy Scout Troops 207 and 208 from

Murrysville, PA removed underbrush, fallen and dead trees and other debris from the approximately six acres as a service project that began in 2000 and was completed in 2003. They also refinished picnic tables, painted the benches that surround the fire pit, and built steps to the river.

Major construction and final development was done in 2002 and 2003 with a grant from the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation.

Volunteer labor was from the Boy Scouts, the Yough River Trail Council, the Whitsett Trail Chapter and the Mon/Yough Trail Council.

Ron Rittenberger, a retired Westinghouse project engineer, designed and coordinated construction of this charming improvement.

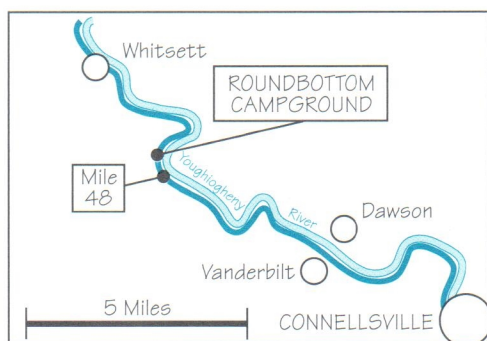
The site has six designated campsites; however, there is plenty of room for more tents. Two primitive shelters are



Boy Scouts survey the fire ring they helped construct at the campground.

being constructed.

Until the well has been dug at the campground, campers must bring their own water. A chemical toilet will be at the site from May to October. There is no fee to camp here, but groups of ten or more must make reservations by contacting the Regional Trail Corporation at 724-872-5586.



Letter from the Prez

THE CELEBRATION THAT WASN'T

This was the plan: Sunny day. Excitement in the air. Volunteers, signs and balloons paving the way from Frostburg to Big Savage Tunnel.

Banners, commemorative books, and sweets greeting the 500 well-wishers. The happy ceremony begins, to thank all the hands who made the huge restoration project reach this moment of celebration.

But Hurricane Isabel loomed and by Wednesday before our Friday celebration, weather trackers showed the front of the storm would be centered right over the tunnel on Friday afternoon. Disappointed and with great regret, we had to call the festivities off.

Had I have been able to stand on the podium and thank the supporters of this project, this is what I would have said.

Thanks to Congressman Jack Murtha for his long-standing support and welcome Congressman Bill Shuster who, with redistricting, now represents much of the trail.

Big thanks to Representative Rick Geist from Altoona who sponsored the line item in the State Capital Budget that funded most of the reconstruction. His counsel and guiding hand were invaluable. Eileen Melvin, our secret weapon, was deployed several times to make sure this stayed on Governor Ridge's radar screen.

The project landed in DCNR and first Secretary John Oliver's strong and steady commitment kept the project on line. His successor, Mike DiBerardinis, picked up the project without missing a beat.

Staff support came from Dick Sprenkle, Gene Comoss, Larry Williamson, and especially Jim Eppley, who oversaw the technical side and his battles to keep the project moving will not be forgotten. Project manager Roland Rhodomoyer, retired from DCNR and now located in Somerset County, applied his considerable experience to watch over and advocate for the trail's long term interests.

Thanks to the Somerset County Board of Commissioners which will have the responsibility of maintaining and operating the tunnel upon its completion.

The contractor, Advanced Construction Techniques, with their well-worn crew, capably aided by engineering expertise from Gannett-Fleming, gave us a superb end product. Thank you Jim, Victor, Pete, Jan, Dave, Mitch, Paul, Miro and many others who spent so much time working on the tunnel. Our own Brett Hollen should qualify to build tunnels after all the O-J-T he received.

We cheer our many donors, from the significant contribution of NPS's Land & Water Conservation Fund and private foundations to our 563 "Foot Sponsors." We thank Delta Development and Teeter Associates for helping us accomplish this significant fund-raising challenge.

Linda McKenna Boxx

After 9 Years with Park and 30 with NPS C & O Superintendent Faris Retires

DOUG FARIS HAS RETIRED after nine years as Superintendent of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and 30 years with the National Park Service. He has been a friend, partner and supporter of the Allegheny Trail Alliance from our earliest days.

According to Don Briggs, Superintendent of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, Faris early "saw the value of the Great Allegheny Passage and how it helps tell the story of the C&O."

Faris, 57, became Superintendent of the C&O in 1994 and was on the job less than two years when two disastrous floods practically destroyed the old canal in 1996. He led 20,000 volunteers to repair the estimated \$68 million in damage. Because of the volunteers and contributions, the cleanup cost less than \$24 million. "Doug mounted an incredible effort," Briggs recalls.



Faris

"We can expect a major flood on the Potomac every 12 or 13 years," Faris explained, "it's a continual reality of what we have to live with." He has worked to make the canal more sustainable: "We're fighting a continual battle to stabilize the canal. It's often in the river's floodplain."

For all its rustic appearance, the Park is a massive operation with an annual budget of \$6.5 million and 130 staff members. "Our talented staff can do everything from masonry and woodwork to cutting the grass," Faris said proudly. "They're responsible for maintaining 1,375 historic structures and features" along the 184.5-mile trail.

In addition to the full-time staff, 2,100 volunteers do everything from manning bike patrols to giving interpretive talks to cleaning up trash.

Currently, 4.2 million visitors use some portion of the park. "Already, we're seeing a lot more activity on the western two thirds of the trail because of the Great Allegheny Passage," he said, "and as the trail becomes more well known, we'll see an ever-increasing number of DC to Pittsburgh trail users. This will become one of the great trail opportunities in the United States."

On his retirement, he says, "I have been very fortunate to work here at the C&O Canal. The future is very bright."

SPONSOR A FOOT CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS

THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to help rehabilitate the Big Savage Tunnel for trail use.

Gifts came from California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Maryland, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington DC, Washington State, West Virginia, and Canada.

Over 550 separate contributions have been received ranging from \$10 to \$5,000 and over \$114,000 was raised by the "Foot Sponsors." The permanent commemorative monument is being designed at this time and contributors can check out our website to confirm their listings.

Installation is projected for 2004.

Cost for the tunnel restoration, including the lighting, is close to \$12 million. Major funding came from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources through PA State Capital Budget, Land and Water Conservation Fund of the National Park Service, and several private foundations.

WARNING

The Durabond Bypass on the Yough River Trail North between McKeesport and Boston is still closed.

Support the Great Allegheny Passage

Volunteering

From shovel to bulldozer, trail volunteers give their time and skills to make the Passage happen. You can help us with...

- **Building Trail:** getting out and dig, or joining a committee to share ideas.
- **Maintaining:** picking up trash, planting flowers, removing graffiti
- **Monitoring:** traveling the trail to make sure all of the trail users are happy
- **Behind the Scenes:** helping with newsletters, memberships, mailings, etc
- **Taking Photos:** helping to build our collection of photos by taking shots of people hiking, biking, walking, boating, fishing, playing, etc.
- **Events:** helping to organize or staff trail events

How Do I Become a Volunteer or a Member?

The Allegheny Trail Alliance's partner organizations welcome volunteers to help in a number of ways. Request information on a specific trail by checking the box below or log onto www.atatrail.org.

- ☐ **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**

How Do I Make a Financial Contribution?

Your gift can make a difference. Please consider making a financial contribution.

- ☐ I want to help build the Great Allegheny Passage. My tax-deductible donation of _____ is enclosed. (Please make checks payable to RTC/ATA). Donors of \$15 or more may choose a thank you gift from the following (check your choice):

- ☐ Great Allegheny Passage logo pin
- ☐ Logo Patch
- ☐ Great Allegheny Passage log book
- ☐ *Passage Through Time and the Mountains*, an overview of the history of the trail corridor.

Name _____

Address _____



Clip and send to:

Allegheny Trail Alliance
419 College Ave.
Greensburg, PA 15601
Fax: 724-832-8519

TRAIL MIX

Brad Clemenson, ATA board member and former Marketing Committee chairman, has been promoted to District Director of the 12th Congressional District, managing local operations for Congressman John Murtha. Hank Parke has assumed the chairmanship of the Marketing Committee.

The Great Allegheny Passengers mountain bike team finished second in their class (5 person co-ed, 200+ miles) at the Seven Springs 24-Hours of Champion Challenge Mountain Bike Race. Team members were Brett Hollern, Craig Hollern, Brian Hollern, Al Milevac and Joanne Chilcott.

ATA alternate board member Dan Bickel, has been having quite a year. His first child was born in June and he's been promoted from assistant superintendent of Ohiopyle State Park to superintendent of Oil Creek State Park in Crawford County. At Ohiopyle, Bickel worked to promote the trail as a classroom for environmental education and oversaw trail maintenance and safety. He's already working to extend the Oil Creek Trail, one of the oldest rail-trails in the state. Best wishes to Dan in his new job.

TRAIL USERS TELL US

From the *Oil City Derrick*: Columnists Bob & Linda Steiner, after nearly 10 years of bicycle riding, passed the 6,000 mile mark, mostly on bike trails. After riding trails in Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania, they noted best and worst bike trails. "Finally, although we found it outstanding

in some categories, but lacking in others, the Best Overall Trail we have pedaled in 6,000 miles is the Great Allegheny Passage--the Youghiogheny River/Allegheny Highlands sections."

David Roger of Murrysburg is an avid Passage user. "I ride the trail as often as possible on weekends. In August, a group of us completed a century from Cedar Creek to Confluence and back with a few added miles at the end for good measure. We had a great day and finished in under 7 hours--not including lunch at the Rivers Edge. All of us had been on the trail in its early days and couldn't help but remark what a positive impact it's had on the communities along the way." Roger completed the trip with fellow cyclists Ned Renzi, Louis Piconi, Andy Kuzneski, Rajiv Enand and Sean Sebastian.

Roy and Brenda Camarillo and their daughter Noa, 3, flew to Pittsburgh from Santa Rosa, California, to ride the trail from Boston to Washington, DC. Noa rode in a trailer pulled by Brenda. Roy relates, "We had such a great time, and what an adventure! Yes, there were bike repairs needed and yes, the weather was fitful, but anything we needed was readily available all along the trail. Our many thanks for the efforts of all those that helped make this adventure possible. We will be back, and we'll bring others, as well. When completed, this will truly be a sensible and exciting vacation for parents with kids."

ATA Trail News © November 2003

Trail News is published 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.

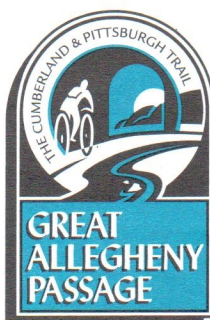
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