

trailNEWS

THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS—NOT OVER THEM!

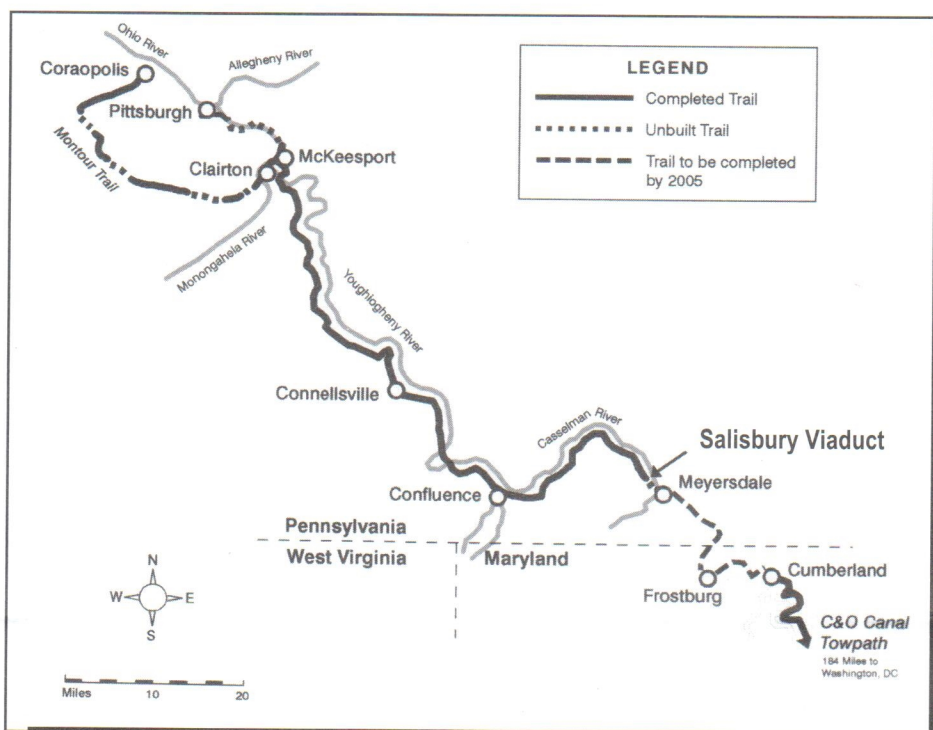


THREE RIVERS HERITAGE TRAIL • MONTOUR TRAIL • STEEL VALLEY TRAIL
YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER TRAIL NORTH • YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER TRAIL SOUTH
ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL (PA) • ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL of MD

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

SPRING 2004

Trail Construction Updates for 2004 Great Allegheny Passage South of Salisbury Viaduct: CLOSED



The trail from the Salisbury Viaduct near Meyersdale, PA to Frostburg, MD will be under construction in 2004 and **OFF LIMITS** to all users because of the danger involved during construction. The construction contract for the section from the **Salisbury Viaduct to Sand Patch** has been awarded to Charles J. Merlo, Inc., of Mineral Point, PA. This section is scheduled to be opened in Spring 2005.

Construction is underway on the 5.2 mile section of the Great Allegheny Passage from **Frostburg's New Hope Road trailhead to the Mason Dixon Line**. Excavating Associates of Ellerslie, MD began work the first week in April and the work is expected to be completed by this fall. Included in this project will be the spot renovation of the Borden Tunnel, which was constructed in 1911 by the Western Maryland Railroad.

Hike the GAP

May 21—Southside to Point State Park

Join us for a 5-mile hike to celebrate National Trails Day and progress made on the Great Allegheny Passage. On Friday, May 21, starting at 11:30 under the Glenwood Bridge on the southside of Pittsburgh, we'll walk along built and unbuilt sections as we head downtown. You're invited to do the whole hike or sections and we would encourage bringing food and drinks along with you.

Leading the hike will be Ed Talone from the American Hiking Society. Ed is an avid long-distance hiker, having logged over 40,000 miles. He has hiked all 15,850 miles of the National Scenic Trail system and has hiked the entire Passage three times. Ed was an early, and perhaps the first, person to have through-hiked the entire length from Cumberland to Pittsburgh.

To register, or for details on the schedule and parking, contact the ATA at 888-ATA-BIKE (282-2453) or via e-mail at www.atatrail.org.

This hike kicks off the final week-end of the Great Outdoors Week.

Coincidentally, May 21 is the anniversary of the last passenger ride on the Western Maryland. The Western

(CONTINUED—SEE BOX ON PAGE 4)

National Trails Day®



www.atatrail.org

Trail Creates Economic Opportunities

BY HANK PARKE, Executive Director of the Somerset County Chamber of Commerce

Trail users are pedaling prosperity into Somerset County. When the first miles of trail opened, **Riversport** in Confluence, now owned by Bob Ruppel, responded to customer requests and began offering bike rental and repair. Around that time, a couple from Pittsburgh came for a day to enjoy the trail and fell in love with a Victorian fixer-upper in Confluence. Within a year, **River's Edge Café** opened, now a trail landmark. Anna-Marie Yakubisin continues to run it since her husband's death. Mary Ackerman converted a turn of the century house into **Parker House Guest House** and, in 2002, added four more rooms to keep up with demand.

As more trail was built, Rockwood became a hub. Local residents started bed & breakfasts to meet the demand for guest rooms. The **In Town Inn** was the first, followed by the **Rockwood Trail House**. **Lynn Sanner** became so enthusiastic about bicycling that he opened a bike shop next to the Trail House to sell, rent and repair bicycles.

The Rockwood Mill Shoppes and Opera House complex serves the many cyclists who come in for lunch or an ice cream cone and who often make purchases from the shops.

Other trail entrepreneurs include Frank Frieri, renovating the **Casselman Lodge** in Markleton, and **Ron Bruner** who shuttles guests to and from his bed & breakfast on Trent Road, near Bakersville.

Somerset County is developing a comprehensive plan. Many of those interviewed in the planning process identified the trail as an important asset. These are just a few of many businesses benefiting from the trail, and there are many more opportunities. If you are interested in learning more, contact me at 814-445-6431.



Rockwood Mill Shoppes and Opera House

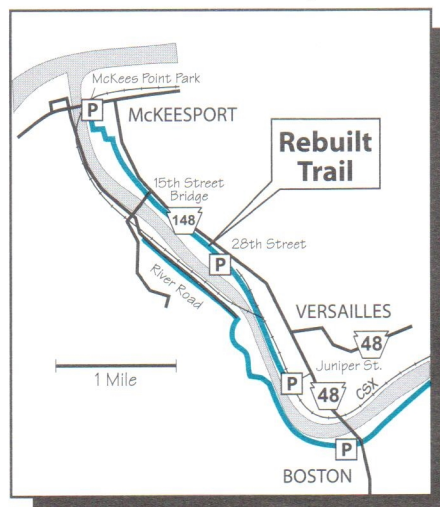
East Loop Ready to Ride

BY BOB MCKINLEY, RTC Trail Manager

Check out the new "East Loop" in McKeesport. Using an Enhancement grant through PennDOT, the City of McKeesport has completely rebuilt the "East Loop" of the Yough River Trail between the 15th Street (Port Vue) Bridge and Will Street, and added two new access areas. This 1.5 miles of trail has a new asphalt surface and bollards to deter use by motorized

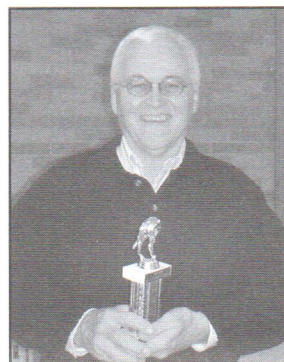
vehicles. Built on a CSX line into McKeesport, the first half mile is trail with rail, since CSX considers the parallel siding still active. There is a fence separating the trail and the railroad.

Access areas are located at 28th Street and Will Street. CSX has requested the crossing of their siding at Will Street be closed, so you must use Juniper Street in Versailles Borough to reach this access area. Both access areas are well designed with spaces for several cars and reserved parking for handicapped trail users.



trailMIX

The ATA Board of Directors recently recognized three of its founding members—**Marshall Fausold, Hank Parke, and Larry Ridenour**—with its *Pillars of the Trail* award. “Marshall, Hank, and Larry have been working toward the vision of the Great Allegheny Passage for so many years,” said ATA Board President, Linda McKenna Boxx. “They’ve believed and put in so much hard work for so long. They are truly pillars of the trail.” The three men were instrumental in the founding of the ATA in 1995 and have had long service on the board. All three are leaving the board but two will remain committee chairs. Fausold of the Montour Trail Council is chair of the ATA Construction Committee. Parke of Somerset Rails-to-Trails is co-chair of the ATA Marketing Committee. Ridenour is retiring and moving out of state.



Larry Ridenour

A banker, an anthropologist, a software developer, and an engineer recently joined the ATA Board of Directors. George Cook, retired CEO of Somerset Trust Company; Chris Davis, President of Christine Davis Consultants; Mark Imgrund, software executive; and Karl Thomas, Executive Director of Friends of the Riverfront were recently appointed by their trail groups to serve on the ATA Board of Directors. Six years ago, **George Cook**, representing Somerset

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

Join a Group Ride

Below are some group rides planned for 2004. Check the ATA and individual trail websites for more.

- **6th Annual Yockatomac Trek, June 20–27, Washington D.C. to McKeesport**
Join the Trekkers on Saturday, June 26th, Confluence to West Newton. Bring your lunch and meet the Trekkers at Yough River Park in Connellsville at noon. Then ride with them towards West Newton. For more information, contact ATA at 888-ATA-Bike or atamail@atatrail.org
- **Yough River Sojourn, June 20 – 26, Confluence to McKeesport**
Paddle/pedal trip. Regional Trail Corporation. 724-872-5586, or yrt@westol.com
- **M & M Century, July 17–18 Meyersdale to McKeesport**
Regional Trail Corporation. 724-872-5586 or yrt@westol.com
- **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 or by calling 412-462-5328.
- **2nd Annual Tour the Montour Bike Ride, September 25**
Rides for all. Courses from 6 to 44 miles. 412-257-3011 or tourthemontour@yahoo.com
- **Allegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland Annual Ride, Sept. 25**
Route is traditionally Frostburg to Big Savage Tunnel. This year it will depend upon construction. <http://www.ahtmtrail.org/>
- **YRTC Fall Foliage Ride, October 1, Riverfront Park, Connellsville**
Yough River Trail Council 724-628-5500

LETTER FROM THE PREZ

It's a spectacular view, as you emerge from the south end of Big Savage Tunnel—completed, but unfortunately not yet open for trail use. We travel along the trail almost always at water level, following beside our various rivers and streams. But as we pass through this ridge, we are suddenly high in the landscape. Haystack Mountain, the “narrows” cut, and Mt. Savage are visible off in the distance. Nowhere else on our trail do you get to see these mountaintop vistas.

So struck was I by this magnificent view that we are rethinking just where we will place the monument to Big Savage Tunnel donors. This area near the tunnel's east portal is very special and we don't want to infringe upon the scenic nature of the trail.

Our plan is to finish construction between Meyersdale and Frostburg, construct the access area near McKenzie Hollow Road (SR 2011) and determine what makes the most sense for locating the monument. We will keep the donors' names on our website until then.

—Linda McKenna Boxx

Columbia Gas Makes Grant to ATA

Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania has donated \$10,000 to the Allegheny Trail Alliance in support of its marketing efforts and trail construction. Part of the grant will be used to help develop and print *Great Little Rides*, a companion book to ATA's popular *Great Little Walks*. “Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania's support is helping us create and market a regional resource and national attraction,” said Linda McKenna Boxx, ATA President. “We appreciate Columbia's enthusiasm for the trail and the financial support.”

Need a Ride?

Whether you need to move your car, your bike, or yourself, there are a growing number of shuttlers providing a variety of services. Some will even help organize your trip. Check out their websites or call them for rates and details.

Allegheny Touring & Trail Services, Confluence, PA 888-395-BIKE(2453), www.alleghenytouring.com

Jackie's Shuttle Service, Frostburg, MD 301-707-6097, jackiesonline2004@yahoo.com

Korber's Bicycle Shop, West Newton, PA 724-872-2185, www.pabikes.com

Majestic Transport & Shuttle Service, Baltimore and Cumberland, MD 410-258-5818, majestictransportmd@yahoo.com

Red Rooster, Paw Paw, WV 304-947-7591, www.redroosterhostel.com/transportation.htm

Wilderness Voyageurs, Ohiopyle PA 724-329-8336, 800-272-4141, www.wilderness-voyageurs.com

Yough River Transport, Dunbar, PA 724-277-0550, tressler3@winbeam.com

Hike the GAP (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Pennsylvania Conservancy organized a special trip to garner support for the idea of converting the soon-to-be abandoned railroad into a trail. Now, 29 years later, we're hiking the corridor to make the final push into Pittsburgh.

Hike the GAP Schedule for Friday, May 21, 2004

11:00 am - Gather at the Caruso property near the Glenwood Bridge.

11:30 am - Begin Hike.

12:30 pm - Hikers arrive at UPMC South Side Sports Complex for lunch.

1:30 pm - Short program at UPMC Sport Complex.

2:15 pm - Gather to cross Hot Metal Bridge.

2:30 pm - Cross Hot Metal Bridge.

3:00 pm - Hike or bike the Eliza Furnace Trail to First Avenue. Take sidewalks or streets to the Point

Great Outdoors Week May 13-23

Come on outside! Outdoor community groups make a special effort this week to bring new folks in to their activities. Don't miss Venture Outdoors Festival, the largest festival of its kind in the region. For details: www.wpfi.org

4th Edition *FreeWheeling Easy in Western Pennsylvania* by Mary Shaw and Roy Weil

FreeWheeling Easy describes trails for short family outings and trails for multi-day touring. It provides information about trails and routes that are easy to ride or walk, off-limits to automobile traffic and reasonably level. It provides detailed driving directions to each of the trailheads.

Trail volunteers have been hard at work building new trails since the third edition came out, and they have created many more miles and several new trails. The authors, in turn, have been busy trying to ride these new trails and add them to the book.

The new fourth edition of *FreeWheeling Easy* will be available this summer. It will be bigger, it will describe more trails, and it will still cover the motor-free bicycle and walking paths in the area. For current information on availability and price, check the web site <http://shaw-weil.com>.

Editor's note: Mary and Roy are longtime volunteers and they donate the profits from *FreeWheeling Easy* to area trail groups.

Great Little Facts

BY BILL METZGER

11— Number of Bridges over 100 feet long on the Passage:

Keystone Viaduct, Salisbury Viaduct, Upper Pinkerton, Lower Pinkerton, Hamedsville, Confluence, Ohiopyle Low Bridge, Ohiopyle High Bridge, Bowest, Greenwood, Hot Metal Bridge

4— Number of Bridges over 100 feet on the Montour:

Library Trestle, Greer, Chartiers Creek, McDonald Trestle

1,908 feet long— Longest Bridge
Salisbury Viaduct

4— Number of Tunnels on the Passage:

Brush, Borden, Big Savage, Pinkerton

3— Number of Tunnels on the Montour:

Greer, National, Enlow

3,294 feet long— Longest Tunnel:
Big Savage

2,375 feet— PA Highest Altitude:
at Deal

625 feet— Lowest Altitude:
at Cumberland, MD

0.8 percent— Steepest grade eastbound:
Hamedsville to Markelton, and Garrett to Deal

1.75 percent— Steepest grade westbound: Cumberland to Deal

Railroads of the Passage, from south to north:

Western Maryland

Baltimore & Ohio

Pinkerton bypass

Confluence and Oakland Branch

Pittsburgh and Lake Erie

Union R R

Tracks through the Waterfront

Monongahela Connecting Railroad

B & O

Pittsburgh Terminal Branch (Eliza Furnace)

Railroads of the Montour Trail:

Montour Railroad

Pennsylvania Railroad Peters

Creek Branch

Thanks, Bill!

Trail historian/reporter/mapmaker/storyteller Bill Metzger has stepped down from serving as our newsletter editor. We will miss his sparkling prose but he promises to write an article for us from time to time.

Wildflowers Attract Biking Botanists

BY PAUL g. WIEGMAN

Getting your gear together for an outing on the Great Allegheny Passage should include one piece of equipment you may or may not have—a wildflower guide. Botanically rich areas in the Casselman and Youghiogheny corridors have been added to the top of nature enthusiasts “to see” lists. Along the northern Yough, new wildflower haunts have been found as biking botanists now can visit in minutes, places that before were long walks away.

One of the reasons that the Great Allegheny Passage is such a rich environment for native plants is the meandering path of the rivers. The Casselman and especially the Yough

trillium, and yellow violets. Cedar Creek Gorge just south of West Newton and in Cedar Creek Park is one of the prime spots for wildflowers, parading an array of yellow trout lily, large-flowered trillium, and bellworts right through the middle of May and into early summer.

So remember, while you’re getting your gear together to get out on the trail, include a wildflower guide and add to your outing pleasure. A guide I like is *Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide* by Lawrence Newcomb, ISBN 0-316-60442-9.



Hillside blanketed by Snow Trillium, and above, close-up of Red Trillium at Cedar Creek Park. Photos by author.

have carved deep valleys in the Allegheny Mountains between Meyersdale and Connellsville and into the ancient uplifted Pittsburgh Plateau from Connellsville north. As the rivers change direction, the surrounding valley walls face the sun differently. Southern exposures are baked by a direct sun and the forests are dry oak and hickory with a sparse understory.

The north facing slopes are sheltered, away from direct sun. These well-watered rich soils are the perfect place for a multiplicity of spring wildflowers. Hillsides near Deeter east of Confluence are rich with Dutchman’s breeches, red

Touring Service Opens

If your idea of the perfect bike tour is just to pedal and leave the details to someone else, you might contact Allegheny Touring & Trail Services in Confluence. New this year and owned and operated by Pam Metzger, AT&TS offers pre-planned touring packages of accommodations and baggage transport.

“We think of this as the trail concierge service,” said Metzger. “With more visitors coming from farther away, many may not have the intimate familiarity with the trail.” Travelers can take a few days and ride the entire Great Allegheny Passage, enjoy a long weekend on the trail, or add a day or two on the C&O Canal Towpath. AT&TS will make the necessary reservations, see that your belongings are waiting for you at the end of each day, and take you back to your car at trip’s end. For more information, call 888-395-BIKE (2453) or visit the website at www.alleghenytouring.com.

You Can Help!

Join a trail group, volunteer, or make a donation—Contact the ATA or the ATA organization nearest you:

Allegheny Trail Alliance
atamail@atatrail.org www.atatrail.org
888-ATA-BIKE

Friends of the Riverfront
Three Rivers Heritage Trail—Point State Park to the Glenwood Bridge
412-488-0212

Steel Valley Trail Council
Steel Valley—Glenwood Bridge, through McKeesport, and on to Clairton
info@steelvalleytrail.org

Regional Trail Corporation
Youghiogheny River Trail—McKeesport to Connellsville 724-872-5586

Ohiopyle State Park
Youghiogheny River Trail—Connellsville to Confluence
724-329-8591

Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association
Allegheny Highlands Trail—Confluence to state line 814-445-6431

Allegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland
Allegheny Highlands Trail—state line to Cumberland
<http://www.ahttrail.org/index.htm>

Montour Trail Council
Montour Trail—Clairton to Groveton
412-831-2030

trailMIX (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

County Rails to Trails Association, celebrated his birthday by riding the C&O Towpath from Cumberland to Washington with his six sons. He has biked every foot of the Great Allegheny Passage from McKeesport to Frostburg.

Chris Davis represents the Friends of the Riverfront. Rivers and Trails are an important facet of Ms. Davis' work and interest. Her firm has completed cultural resource studies for the Montour Trail, Panhandle Trail, Oil Creek State Park Trails, the Chartiers Watershed, and the Three Rivers Conservation Plan. **Mark Imgrund**, a recently-retired software development executive from Ansys, Inc., Vice President of the Montour Trail Council is an avid cyclist. He has bicycled the entire Great Allegheny Passage twice with his teenaged sons. **Karl Thomas** has experience in many aspects of trail development. Before joining Friends of the Riverfront, he worked in project management, environmental engineering and geographic information systems with Michael Baker Corporation. He enjoys the challenges of making our region a better place to work and live.

The Keystone Viaduct project was awarded an engineering excellence award on February 5, 2004 by American Council of Engineering Companies of Pennsylvania. DMJM Harris, Somerset County and Hatch Mott MacDonald received the Diamond Award Certificate for Engineering Excellence for the project. The award recognizes Pennsylvania engineering firms for their outstanding contributions to enhance the social and economic welfare of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau announces photo contest. Your prize photo taken in Fayette, Somerset, or Westmoreland counties, Pennsylvania could win cash in the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau photo contest. The contest is open to all amateur photographers 18 years and older. Winning photos will be awarded cash prizes: 1st Place—\$300; 2nd Place—\$200; 3rd Place—\$100. Plus fun local prizes! Deadline for submission is September 3, 2004. For more information, contact LHVB, 888-333-5661, ext. 18.

ATA TRAIL NEWS © MAY 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:
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