



2007 Annual Report

Special to the MTC Newsletter

July 2008

Good, but still improving

“The state of the trail is very good,” said Montour Trail Council president Mark Imgrund in his message at the Council’s fall 2007 annual dinner. But it could still be better. We are fulfilling our mission of providing a safe, attractive recreational facility for hundreds of thousands of users. At the same time, we continue to strive for further improvements, some of which our clientele have been anxiously awaiting for more than a decade.

Closing the unpopular gaps

Some day soon the trail section from Route 19 in Peters Township west across Chartiers Creek and into Cecil Township, which winds through a wooded landscape south of Valleybrook Road, will be one of the most popular on the Montour Trail. Up to now it has been our most unpopular gap, thanks to the less-than-ideal bicycling conditions on Valleybrook and the winding steep grade heading west into the community of Lawrence.

In 2007, the Council took major steps toward filling this gap by completing the clearing, the rough grading and the drainage improvement parts of construction of 1.65 miles of trail and by awarding a contract for rehabilitation of two bridges, installation of one new bridge span and renovation of the Greer Tunnel. These steps set the stage for one of the most picturesque trail photos in years, the placement of girders for the bridge crossing Valleybrook Road (which actually happened in February 2008).

Less dramatic action took place on several other fronts. Preconstruction work continued for an important span in South Park Township, a bridge over Piney Fork Creek. Preconstruction and engineering work also moved along for the J. R. Taylor Memorial Bridge, which will close the gap along the Bethel Park branch by crossing Clifton Road.

Our own “interchange”

We don’t have the fancy ramps, signage, or multimillion-dollar costs of highway interchanges, but we now have our own four-way trail intersection. The “Function at the Junction” festival in June 2007, well attended by Washington County dignitaries, formally opened the connector between the Montour and Panhandle Trails west of McDonald. Not only can bikers and hikers travel a ramp—along the path of the Montour Railroad’s transfer track—between trails, but the Panhandle now offers 16 miles of trail from this interchange. The Panhandle is completed going east from McDonald to Collier Township and west to Joffre, with only a scant one-plus mile section missing on the way to its ultimate destination of Weirton, W.Va.

Solid support from special events and members

The Montour Trail’s three annual signature events continued to prosper. The Burgh’s Run, ably guided by the Daily brothers of Burgh’s Pizza and Wing Pub, drew 350 runners and walkers and raised \$26,000 in event fees and sponsorships for the trail. The IKEA half-marathon, 5K run and walk welcomed more than 900 participants and netted \$18,025 in revenue. And the Tour the Montour group bicycle ride registered 244 riders and raised \$9,000.

The new guard

In another sign of the Council’s organizational maturity at age 18, longtime volunteers handed over the reins to competent newcomers—for the most part. Laura Orr took over as IKEA race director, Angela Cubbison as race registrar, Sam Hvitfelt replaced Tour the Montour director Bill Orr, who in turn filled the shoes of retiring treasurer Judy Thompson as 2007 ended. And Jerry Agin completed 18 years of service as membership chairman, turning that task over to—well, to no one person in particular. Jerry’s encyclopedic knowledge of the Council database has proved too great to transfer to any single individual, and several volunteers are sharing what was once Jerry’s job while Stan Sattinger and his Membership, Volunteer and Donor committee develop a more permanent solution.

No lost members

Happily, the shift of membership database responsibilities has not significantly “misplaced” any members, although the responsibility transfer at the membership chair position has made it necessary to estimate the exact number of members on December 31, 2007. We’ve also struggled a bit reconciling our members who give through the United Way or the Combined Federal Campaign, but now have a better handle on accounting for their donations. Our membership at the end of 2007, which has remained stable or grown slightly over the last several years, is estimated to be 1059. Members’ financial contributions during 2007 exceeded \$73,500 (about \$2000 more than in 2006), providing indispensable support for ongoing trail operation and maintenance activities.

Volunteers – our organization’s lifeblood

With no paid staff, we rely solely on the willingness of our members to donate their time to our cause, and many do so in large doses. As Table 1 indicates, about \$50,000 worth of donated volunteer time was invested in trail construction projects in 2007, and with the additional time spent by our members managing the trail, maintaining the trail, and fundraising or organizing trail events, the total number of volunteer hours spent in 2007 exceeded 8,000. A special note of appreciation is extended to our volunteers who give of their time in so many ways.

Financial wellness

The MTC board’s continued fiscal prudence has kept the organization in strong financial health. Table 1 shows that our operational inflows exceeded our outflows in 2007, and that our largest expense once again was for trail maintenance. You can also see that our construction funding from various grant sources was more than sufficient to meet the needs of our ongoing trail building projects.

As few of our grant sources cover maintenance needs, the Council continues to pursue development of our endowment fund. As of the end of 2007, the fund balance stood at \$54,108. Our ultimate goal is to reach an endowment exceeding \$1 million so that interest proceeds can substantially fund ongoing maintenance.

And challenges continue

You know how Interstate 79 is always under construction; a recreational trail is no different. Maintenance efforts are needed, for example, to improve safety at Cliff Mine Road in Findlay Township (where the trail has a dangerous at-grade crossing) and for reconstruction along trail sections in Cecil and (both) Robinson Townships. State funds will assist with the Cliff Mine project, but most maintenance needs are funded solely from donations.

So we remain grateful for the faithfulness of our members. We attempt to recognize in this report all who have donated to the Montour Trail Council this year. Please let us know if we have omitted you or someone you know. Thank you, and see you on the trail!

Table 1. Montour Trail Council 2007 Financial Overview (All amounts unaudited)

Montour Trail Council 2007 Operations		Montour Trail Council 2007 Trail Construction	
Inflows:		Inflows:	\$151,077
MTC Memberships	\$73,503	Outflows:	\$82,036
Net Fundraising Events	\$52,925		
Miscellaneous	\$13,529	Other:	
Total Inflows	\$139,957	In Kind Material Donation	\$7,800
		In Kind Labor Donation	\$47,978
Outflows:			
Trail Maintenance	\$17,795		
Rent & Utilities	\$10,832		
Insurance	\$10,227		
PUC Payment	\$10,000		
Portajohns	\$8,736		
Postage & Printing	\$7,467		
Professional Fees	\$7,231		
Newsletter	\$5,235		
All Other*	\$10,499		
Total Outflows	\$88,022		

* includes 15 misc. categories

Membership Contributions for 2007

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Sam Hvitfelt
Louis & Vida
Komer
John & Sandy
Newman
Dennis Pfeiffer
Judy & Tom
Thompson
Roy Weil & Mary
Shaw
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