



For your consideration

Walking is the best possible exercise.
Habituate yourself to walk very far.

Thomas Jefferson

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Construction Has Commenced!

The contractor for Phase 16, Mingo Creek Construction of Eighty-Four, Pennsylvania moved on-site in November to begin construction of the section between Chartiers Creek and Valleybrook Road. This is the one of the most involved construction project yet in the 18 year history of the Trail involving three bridges and one tunnel. Volunteers have been working on the “easy-stuff” such as drainage and grading and they will be placing the surface material and installing fence once the big stuff is complete. More pictures on page 7.



Photo courtesy of Glenn Blum

A little bit of snow is not getting in the way. The first phase of the project is to clear the debris that has collected in Kamps Cut since this section of the railroad was abandoned in the early 80s.

The second phase of the project will be the reconstruction of the bridge over Valleybrook Road and Brush Run.

Photo courtesy of Troy Bogdan



Airport Area Eagle Scout Project by John Shaver

In early November, stretching stations including a pull-up bar and a separate stretching bar were installed at both Hassam Road and Old Beaver Grade Road. This equipment was designed and its installation coordinated by T. J. Owens as an Eagle Scout project. TJ is a member of Troop 905 and a resident of Moon Township.

TJ coordinated the efforts of 24 scouts, parents and friends one Saturday in order to install the stretching stations. Installation at Hassam Road went pretty much as expected but efforts at Old Beaver Grade Road were prolonged by large buried boulders which were part of the fill used in the reclamation effort after hurricane Ivan. This is not the first nor the last time that volunteers projects have become unexpectedly difficult in the reclaimed areas.



All of the materials and digging equipment used in the project were either donated or purchased from donations secured by TJ with the excess being given to the Montour Trail. Many thanks to the following individuals and businesses that made this project possible: Lowe’s, Prudential Realty of Moon Township, Knickerbocker-Russell, AdvaCare Home Services, Attorney Mark Aletto , Dr. Leo Colarossi, Dr. John Pagasky, and Dr. Morton Wintner.

MTC Web Address
Visit the Montour Trail web-site at:
www.montourtrail.org



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NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM

Dennis Sims, managing editor

Troy Bogdan	Tim Killmeyer
John Hooton	Dennis Pfeiffer
Mark Imgrund	

The Prez Sez

I'd like to begin this column with a thank you to our three outgoing MTC board members, John Hooton, Frank Ludwin, and Dennis Pfeiffer. Their combined contributions to the Trail's objectives over the last several years would be hard to overstate. From John's never-ending ideas, energy and enthusiasm and Frank's tireless work in trail construction and equipment management, to Dennis' contributions over the spectrum of Trail concerns from grants to office manager duties and his tenure as past president, several thousand hours of important volunteer work have been donated to our cause. The good news about their "departure" is that I feel certain that their involvement with the MTC and positive contributions will continue.

It is also fitting to welcome our three newest board members to their three-year terms. None are strangers to the trail. Sue Headley, a Bethel Park resident and secretary of the Peters Friends group, brings her years of accounting experience and numerous successful event coordinator positions (Peters Friends' five Twilight Trail Walks and several Penny Days) to the table. Dennis Sims, whom you will recognize as the managing editor of this fine publication, is also the Cecil Friends' president and an original MTC board member from 1989 to 1993. Ned Williams, current chairman of our Engineering and Construction Committee, is also a recent MTC board member and has many affiliations with trail groups, transportation planning bodies, and bicycling organization such as the West Penn Wheelmen, the Panhandle Trail Association, the Southwest Pennsylvania Planning Commission and the Pennsylvania Pedalcycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. to name a few. These three are great additions to our board.

At the December board meeting, elections of officers were held. With past treasurer Judy Thompson's retirement from that office after eleven years, there were some changes. Bill Orr, vice president of the Council in 2007, was elected as our new treasurer. Gil McGurl, a retired U.S. Department of Energy engineer with experience in environmental policy, was elected as our new vice president. Phyllis McChesney was re-elected as MTC secretary, and the board would not let me off the hook with only one year as MTC president, so I was re-elected as well. I look forward to working with this year's board and its newly-elected officers, and once again I thank outgoing treasurer Judy Thompson for her many years of service as treasurer. Judy is still on the Board, and will be working with Bill to make the transition as treasurer go smoothly.

As I write this column early on New Years Eve, with the Montour Trail Council soon approaching its 19th anniversary, I've done some year-end thinking about what the Council's priorities and challenges will be in the coming year. Our executive committee will soon be putting together a draft 2008 plan for the Board's consideration which I plan to share with you in a later column, but for now, let me say only that it should be an exciting year ahead. I plan to start it right with a bike ride tomorrow – the annual New Years Day Icicle Bicycle Ride.

Here's to a great 2008!

Mark

The Montour Trail Council is an all-volunteer organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a 55 mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.

Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

MTC Board Meeting,

every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off of the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Mark at 724-941-6351 for more information or to get on the agenda.

Cecil Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road; other months meet at the MTC Offices. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information.

Airport Area Friends

Friends of the Trail meeting, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Forest Grove Fire Department. Anyone from the communities of Moon, Robinson, North Fayette, and Findlay is encouraged to attend. Call 412-859-3020 for more information.

Work and cleanup party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Call 412-262-3748 for more information and location.

Bethel Park Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park

Trail segment is encouraged to come. For Clifton Road Bridge Committee meetings, contact Peter Kohnke at 412-854-1835 for more information.

Work and cleanup party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

South Hills Friends of the Trail

Meeting second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Hills Borough Building. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

Fort Cherry Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, second Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

Peters Township Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@comcast.net.

Trail Dust from the Editor's Desk: Helping to support the Trail

The Montour Trail Council is assisted by several local Friends groups, who are listed above, to support and maintain the trail on a grass roots levels. As each section of Trail is completed, a Friends group forms in that community or communities to support that section allowing the Council to continue with its mission of completing the Trail. Interactive events have been scheduled by both the Council and the Friends groups to raise funds to support their respective missions. A schedule of the events for 2008 is printed below. Details for each event will be printed as the date nears. Please support these events by taking part.

Sunday, April 20, 2008: Burgh's Pizza & Wing Pub 10K Run & 2 Mile Fun walk

Saturday, May 10, 2008: Airport Area Friends Penny Day

Saturday, June 7, 2008, National Trails Day

Airport Area Friends: Information booth at the Gazebo

Bethel Park Friends: Party on the Trail

Cecil Friends: Tails for the Montour Trail IV

Friday, July 25, 2008: Peters Township Friends Twilight Walk.

Saturday, September 6, 2008: The Montour Trail/Ikea 1/2 Marathon and 5K Run and Walk.

Saturday, September 20, 2008: The Montour Trail Tour the Montour

October 2008: South Hills Penny Day. Date to be Announced

The deadline for submitting articles for the March-April Newsletter will be Saturday, March 8, 2008.

Dennis

New Interactive Map on Montour Trail Website by Deb Thompson

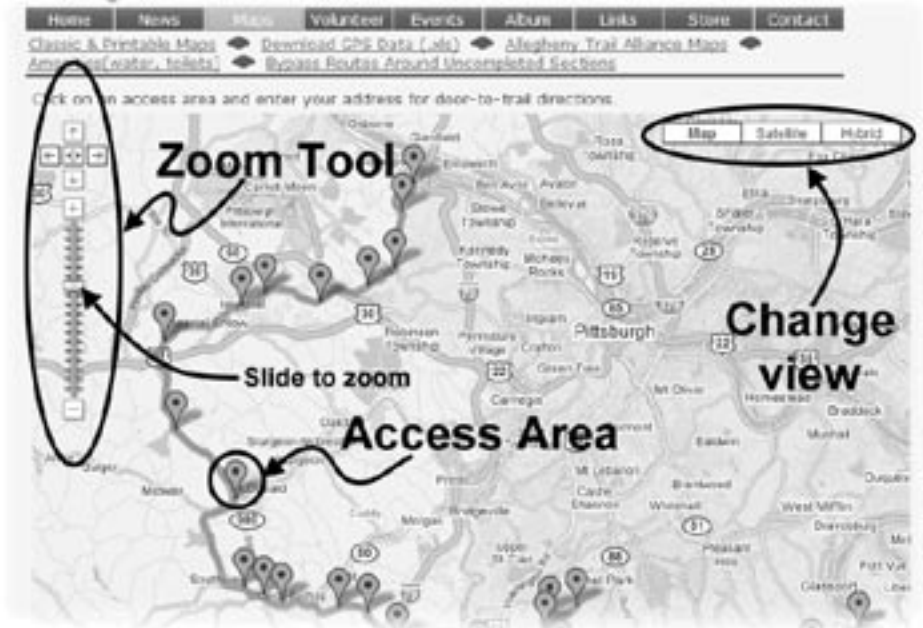
Thanks to Google maps, a handheld GPS unit, and a couple days of vacation time that I needed to burn off before the end of 2007, we have a new map tool on the trail website (www.montourtrail.org). To find it, click “Maps” on the website menu bar.

The interactive map allows you to pan and zoom in the trail to get a boatload of detail. And when you get in good and close, click the “Satellite” button to switch to an aerial photograph view. But there’s more – click on any of the red icons marking the access areas, type in your address, and click “Get Directions” for door-to-trail routing. For those who aren’t familiar with using Google maps, here is some guidance:

1. Use the zoom tool in the upper left corner of the map to zoom in and out.

Click on “+” and “-“, or slide the bar up and down.

2. Pan (slide around) the map by clicking and dragging anywhere in the map, or by clicking the directional arrows above the zoom tool.
3. Use the buttons in the upper right corner to switch between a map, aerial photograph, and combination view.
4. To get directions:
 - a. Click on any access area icon.
 - b. Type in an address. You can enter a street address and zip code; or street, city, state; or just a town and state.
 - c. Click “Get Directions.”
 - d. The directions will appear below the map.



A handheld GPS has some margin of error, and you can see that the track doesn’t line up exactly in some locations if you really zoom in, but it’s close enough to be helpful to most people.

The old reliable maps and directions are still there. Just click on “Classic Maps” to find them.

Funding Our Trail- A Mosaic of Federal and State Grants and Private Donations compiled by John Hooton

The year 2007 was a financial success for the Montour Trail by any measure, but “it ain’t easy” to put all the necessary pieces together.

1. Work has begun in west Peters Township to rehab three bridges and a tunnel in the Valley Brook Road area. The contract let in 2007 for \$1,006,000, is fully funded and also involves significant volunteer hours. Hopefully work will be completed and the two-mile link open for use by late 2008.
2. A \$90,000 Pennsylvania DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) grant was applied for in September 2006 and approved in December 2007. Its terms require a 50/50 match, so private donations of dollars and volunteer hours are imperative. Here we will be replacing and repairing drains, base and surface material in the mile 14 to 17 area as well as some other trouble spots near Boggs and mile 9. Some volunteer input is required with work to begin in late 2008 or 2009.
3. We have a federal grant (80/20 match) for construction of new bridges over Morganza and Georgetown Roads in Cecil Township. To supply the 20% federal requirement, another recent DCNR grant (50/50 match) of \$173,400 was approved for bridge design work that nicely fits into the mosaic referred to above. Work is to begin here in 2009 as well.
4. Finally, but vital, is recent anonymous donation of \$10,000 that came from a client of Kim Fleming, President of the financial planning firm of Hefren-Tillotson, Inc. Kim and her client both have a mutual interest in developing our Trail, so this was a natural way to offer significant help. You may also know the Trail set up an Endowment Fund through the Pittsburgh Foundation with Hefren-Tillotson, the accredited investment manager of these funds.

We are very grateful for unrestricted donations like this, since there are many expenses that only such private gifts can cover. While we will continue to apply for and use all the grant opportunities available to us, private donations like this recent one, represent the fastest and least restrictive way to put money to work completing and maintaining your Trail. Our thanks go out to “Anonymous” and all our donors!

Panhandle Trail Repairs Underway by Dave Wright

Three years after Hurricane Ivan, flood damage repairs are now underway. BKG Industries of Imperial owned by Bill, Ken and Gary Kisow were the successful bidders. Because they own a nearby quarry with good quality stone, they can afford to bid low prices. They have already placed thousands of tons of rock-lining stream bank protection along the Montour Trail both before and after Ivan. BKG constructed the 2-mile section of Montour Trail between Large and Clairton. Ivan did not damage their quality work. Ken lives next to the trail in Groveton.

One contract calls for placing rock-lining stream bank protection at three locations along Robinson Run: the bridge just west of Greg Station Road, near Sunnyside Ave. and at the bridge just west of Walker's Mill. The Kisows will obtain an extra-long excavator boom so they can reach down into the 22' deep stream channel. They will place 1000 tons of stone at a 1 ½ to 1 slope about 5 or 6 feet high above the stream level. This will protect the bank from erosion for most storms. The placing of the rock for stream bank protection was to get underway as this newsletter was going to press.

Glimcher Group gave us a \$20,000 check for this contract as a condition to their Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection permit. It partly mitigates their filling wetland in the old Chartiers Creek stream-bed behind the recently completed Lowe's store in Collier Township. Their engineer, Rodd Seifarth, had done some environmental consulting for us, and had been a project manager for the section of trail under design in South Park Township. When he asked if we could provide a mitigation project, we said, "Of course." The Montour Trail thanks you Rodd, Glimcher Group and the DEP.

The second contract, for drainage improvements totaling \$23,000, is funded by Allegheny Regional Asset District (ARAD). Each year, local trail groups may apply for this funding through the Allegheny Land Trust. All ARAD trail funding in the next award will go to the Steel Valley Trail to close the gap in the Great Allegheny Passage.

BKG will clean ditches just west of the former Joy Dog Food plant in Oakdale. They will install rock ditch lining to reduce erosion from storm water coming down to the trail from a pipe culvert under Spring Street and Oakdale Borough has offered to assist. The contractor will also clean the ditch along the trail through the long cut west of the Nike Road bridge. Several inlets and the subsurface drain pipe also need to be cleaned. This part of the project is nearly complete.

Work also includes cleaning the 36 inch pipe culvert at the end of Old Noblestown Road. Hugh McHugh gave permission to clean 40 feet of ditch on his property leading into this pipe. The Kisow brothers must be very careful here not to damage the AT&T fiber-optic telecommunications line that crosses this culvert. They will also direct water into an inlet on Old Noblestown Road before it flows down across the trail.



Photo courtesy of Dave Wright

Ken Kisow moved his equipment Wednesday, November 28 to the first site just west of the former Joy Dog Food factory in Oakdale. He planned to work toward Walker's Mill. We request trail users to be careful when detouring around the active construction sites. This work was scheduled to be completed by December 31 before ARAD funds expire.

ARAD also funded \$4,000 for South Fayette Township's contractor to improve drainage at the Sturgeon Fire Department. They diverted stormwater into a ditch flowing directly to an inlet next to the trail. They also installed a subsurface drain to eliminate puddles in the ditch along the trail. Thank you to the South Fayette Commissioners, and to Jerry Males, Parks Director, and Michael Hoy, Township Manager.



Photo courtesy of Dave Wright

The Panhandle Trail is open 14.5 miles between Walker's Mill, just west of Carnegie, and Joffre. After a 1.5 mile section of original ballast, the improved trail starts again at Burgettstown and runs 13 miles to Weirton, WV. It uses the former Panhandle Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad that ran from Pittsburgh to Columbus, Cincinnati, St. Louis and Chicago. Consolidated Rail Corporation donated the property as a rail-banked corridor, with the new owners taking responsibility for the bridges. The Montour Trail Council, through the Panhandle Trail Association and Collier Friends of the Panhandle Trail, with cooperation of the municipalities, maintain the Allegheny County owned portion from Walkers Mill to McDonald. Washington County maintains the section it owns. The Weirton Parks Board maintains the West Virginia portion that is owned by the State Railroad Authority.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY BY BOB CIMINEL

Keeping Trains Apart on the Montour

The laws of physics state that two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. This certainly applied to the Montour Railroad as it moved thousands of tons of Pittsburgh Seam coal from the mines to the coal washer at Champion, and to interchanges with other railroads in the area. As drivers, some of us have probably tested this law - with predictable results. For the drivers who challenged the Montour's trains at its many grade crossings, at 10 mph it took only 1.5 seconds for the locomotive to pass over a two-lane road crossing, whether a car was in it or not. However, this article discusses how the Montour made sure that two trains were not in the same location at the same time, something the railroad struggled with throughout its existence. The solution was simple. Implementation was a bit more difficult.

The Montour Railroad was a single-track, "dark," i.e., non-signaled railroad. That means it had only one main track and did not use signal lights or semaphores blades to control trains. There were colored light signals at Montour Junction and Mifflin Junction, but they were for yard operations. To complicate matters even more, Montour trains operated in both directions (east and west) and could enter or leave the main track at various sidings, spurs, and branches. With over 40 miles of main track and more than 20 mines spread out along its right-of-way (in the 1940s), controlling trains on the Montour was a lot like herding cats.

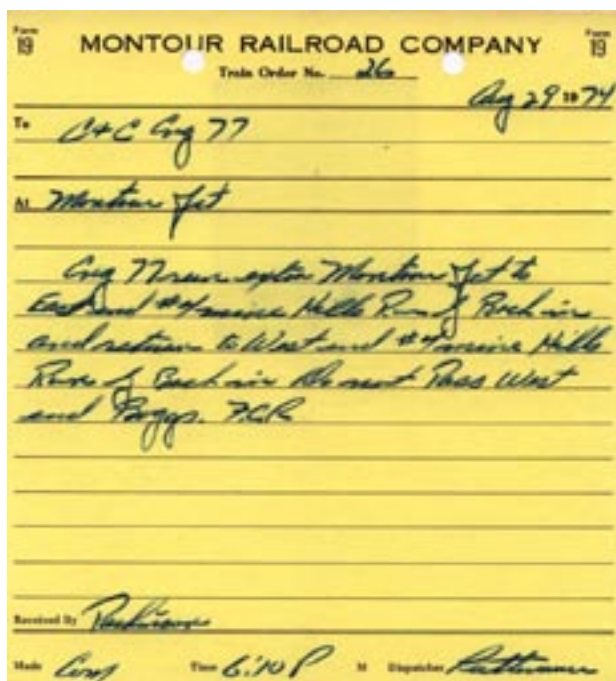
However, as I said earlier, the solution was simple. All it took was a rule that prevented any train from operating on the Montour's main track without written authority. For locations other than the main track, another rule said to operate trains at speeds that allowed them to stop within half the distance to another train, obstruction, or misaligned switch. Those were simple rules and they worked well throughout the Montour's lifetime. The written authority for trains entering the main track was a Train Order. (A sample Montour train order is shown below.)

A Train Order conferred "rights" to a train when written in the correct format and marked "Complete" by the Dispatcher. These rights authorized the train to move along the main track between two points and told train crews what to do with respect to other trains operating on the main track. The format of the train order required that it have the date, time, locomotive number (The Montour uniquely identified its freight trains by the number of the lead locomotive and the direction the train was going.). The train order also contained specific information regarding the movement of the train between stations. A "station" was not necessarily a building, but any physical location identified in the employee timetable (For example, a switch at a siding).

A train crew could receive its orders in writing from the dispatcher at Montour Junction or at manned stations, such as the yard office at Champion. For trains already en route, the Dispatcher could use the railroad's private telephone system or, later, two-way radio. Montour track charts from the Forties show telephone boxes at each end of sidings on the main track and at the entrances to branches and spurs.

One thing about the Montour's train orders that deviated from accepted industry practices was use of the term, "Run by. Back in. Not protecting." This meant that a typical Montour 40-car coal train with orders to the east switch at Montour No. 4 could continue almost one-half mile beyond the switch without sending a flagman ahead to warn any approaching westbound trains. I hope that any westbound trains would have train orders telling them not to proceed beyond the west switch at Thompsonville Siding.

This concludes our discussion of the Montour's train order system. In our next article, we will go back to the turn of the century and discuss how the Montour kept its passenger trains from running into one another in the days before telephones and two-way radio.



Engine 77 run extra Montour Junction to east end of #4 mine Hills. Run by. Back in and return to west end of #4 Mine Hills. Run by. Back in. Do not pass west end Boggs.

Bob Ciminel is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group (http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/). There are currently 203 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from whom you are sure to get an answer.

Membership Coordinators Needed

Due to our membership coordinator's recent employment change coupled with her move down the Ohio River, we are again in need of volunteer help in managing our memberships.

Previously one chairperson took care of all functions required to keep track of the MTC's members and other supporters. We are currently planning to subdivide the necessary tasks among a small team of coordinators so that these important needs can be fulfilled with reduced levels of volunteer effort per person.

These tasks include processing and acknowledging new-member donations; taking care of renewals; and supplying mailing lists and address labels for the newsletter and other purposes. We expect that with a team approach, the duties of each coordinator can be handled in four to six hours per month. Familiarity with Microsoft Access or Excel is desirable for all.

This is a great opportunity to contribute your time and effort to the effective functioning of the MTC without "getting your hands dirty." To learn more about these positions or to express your interest, please contact Stan Sattinger at sattinss@aol.com or 412-835-4033.

Construction pictures continued from page 1.



Photo courtesy of Troy Bogdan

The contractor is placing re-bar in order to modify the west abutment at the Valleybrook Road bridge.



Photo courtesy of Troy Bogdan

The truss span over the Pittsburgh and Ohio Railroad will be the next structure on Mingo's to-do list.

I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

- Student/Senior** \$15
- Individual** \$25
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- Leader's Circle** \$500+

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Don't Forget

The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice as option #3308, or Combined Federal Campaign Contributor Choice option #9308 where you work.



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 10K Run & 2 Mile Fun
 walk

Saturday
September 6, 2008
 The Montour Trail/Ikea 1/2
 Marathon and 5K Run and
 Walk.

Saturday
September 20, 2008
 The Montour Trail Tour the
 Montour

more dates inside!

