



MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume XI Issue I

January/February 2000

Continuing efforts from Large to Clairton

by Paul McKeown

MTC Web Address

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

Mantra of the Month

- Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way.

— Abraham Lincoln

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Trailblazing efforts have continued on the Large to Clairton trail segment, which was abandoned by the Pennsylvania Railroad more than twenty years ago, and thus it is moderately overgrown. On October 30, volunteers cut down trees where the trail crosses under the Ravensburg Bridge, leaving the immediate trail right-of-way completely cleared of trees with the exception of about 100 yards at the Clairton end. If you would like to help out on this segment (no specific skills are required), please call Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692.

Because our grant from The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for construction of this trail segment covers only 50% of the cost, we must find 50% in matching resources elsewhere. The value of the work of the

volunteers counts towards this 50%, and as such it is a vital part of the trail-building effort. Other parts of this matching 50% include grading the trail right-of-way and installation of drainage culvert pipe by Clairton and Jefferson Hills public works departments, a complete survey of the right-of-way paid for by Montour Trail Council, engineering design work provided by Allegheny County Department of Public Works, and pavement millings for use as a trail subsurface donated by Allegheny County. Trail volunteers also will be building at least two ten foot long bridges of concrete and steel designed to allow "gully-washer" runoff from the adjacent hillside to flow under the trail.

The 50% DCNR funding will enable purchase of trail construction materials. If all goes as planned, the Clairton to Large trail segment

could be completed as early as Fall of the year 2000 but probably no later than the summer of 2001. This completion date for the Large to Clairton trail segment comes with one important caveat. The City of Clairton is finalizing plans to rehabilitate the Ravensburg Bridge which crosses our trail overhead about a mile in from the Clairton end. To do this rehabilitation, construction vehicles will use this one mile of our trail right-of-way as a construction access. Because of this, final grading and installation of a standard crushed limestone trail surface on the Clairton to Ravensburg section will not take place until the bridge rehabilitation is complete, which will likely be in 2002. MTC does expect to provide a passable surface before then. MTC will be compensated for the use of our land in this way, and will use this money to finish the trail segment to MTC standards.

Panhandle trail opens in Allegheny County

By Ned Williams

On Friday, October 29, Collier Township officially opened the first mile of the Panhandle Trail in Allegheny County, from Walker's Mill to Rennerdale. During the unusual evening event, two ribbon

cuttings were held at the first bridge over Robinson Run. Trail volunteers, who had cut brush and cleared debris from the right of way snipped one ribbon, while township supervisors and some business persons

who had donated materials to the trail parted the other one. Everyone then walked a mile down the trail, which was lit up with over 100 pumpkins, carved

Continued on page 4...



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MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL PHONE NUMBERS:

For information: 412-831-2030

For administration and
business: 412-257-2328

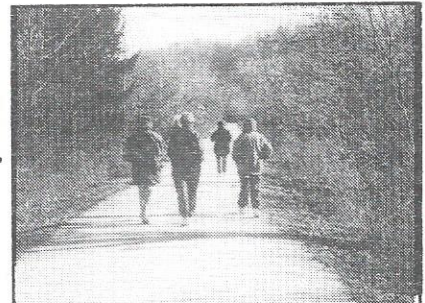
Newsletter Editor	Deborah Hoerster
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Trail Talk

from the Editor's Desk

Hi All!

I sincerely hope your holidays were happy ones. Thanks to our Moon/Rob. Friend of the Trail, Angie Lake, I have some glad tidings to add, in keeping with the spirit of the season.



Here are some of the members of the Walk and Talk Club walking a section of the Montour Trail in Imperial during the Fall of 1999.

There is a program called the Walk and Talk Club sponsored by Adult Resources, Inc. (ARI) of Coraopolis. It's a community wellness program for men and women age 50 and over. The Walk and Talk Club celebrated its eighth year and offers healthy 2-mile walks not only on different segments of the Trail, but also at different areas, such as parks and other interesting sites. Membership dues are \$5 per year. All other events take place at The Program Center on State Ave. & Broadway in Coraopolis. More information can be obtained by calling 412-264-0870, or logging onto ARI's website at <http://trfn.clpgh.org/ari>. It's a great way to "gain" new friends and "lose" a few of those unwanted "holiday pounds!"

Happy trails, *Debby*



Newsletter Deadline

All articles for the Mar./Apr. Trail-Letter will be due **no later than** February 4, 2000. Please see Page 2 for submitting correspondence. Thank you.

COMMENTS/NEWS

Your opinion means a lot to us. Send your Comments or news info. to: Montour Trail-Letter 33 Sterling Dr. Coraopolis, PA 15108 Or e-mail to: debho@juno.com

Thanks!

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 fifty-five mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.

January 2000

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Calendar of Events**February 2000**

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20	21	22	23	24	25	26				
27	28									

* Happy New Year! — **January 1, 2000**



* Happy Birthday! — **February 29, 2000.**
(to all Leap Year babies)

**Friends' Meetings and Work Parties**

- ◆ **MTC Board Meeting**, every third Monday of the month - 6:00 pm at Chartiers Valley High School, in the faculty lounge. Turn left off of the- Kirwan Heights exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go under the Interstate, and the school is on your left. Call Dick at 412- 859-6864 for more information or to get on the agenda.
- ◆ **Cecil Events:**
 - Friends of the Trail meeting**, every fourth Tuesday of the month - at the Cecil American Legion, Rt. 50, at 7:30 pm. Call 412-257-2553 for more information.
 - Work & Clean-up party**, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Storage shed at Hendersonville. Call 412-257-2553 for more information.
- ◆ **Moon/Robinson Events:**
 - Friends of the Trail meeting**, every Thursday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 pm., at the All Occasion Catering party room near the intersection of Silver Lane and Clever Rd. in Robinson Twp. Anyone from the communities near Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 412-859-3020 for more information.
 - Work & Clean-up party**, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at North Star Petroleum (formerly Robinson Petroleum). Call 412-262-3748 for more information.
- ◆ **Findlay/North Fayette Events:**
 - Friends of the Trail**, call Don at 724-899-3695 or Pete at 412-788-4136 for more information.
 - Work & Clean-up party**, every fourth Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Enlow Ballfield. Call 412-788-4136 for more information.
- ◆ **Bethel Park Events:**
 - Friends of the Trail meeting**, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. For various committee meetings (such as fundraising) contact Peter Kohnke at 412-854-1835 for more information.
 - Work & Clean-up party**, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 am. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.
- ◆ **South Hills Events:**
 - Friends of the Trail Work & Clean-up party**, last Saturday of every month. For more information call Dr. Joe Rudolph at 412-653-4900.
- ◆ **MacDonald Events:**
 - Friends of the Trail Work & Clean-up party**, tentatively held on the first Saturday of every month. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

...and the *PREZ* sez...

by Dick Quasey

Trail construction planned for 1999 has not progressed as anticipated. The current status of those projects is as follows:

BOGGS RUN THROUGH CHAMPION

Section A - Boggs Run to Champion (approx. 1 mile); coal mining is complete, subgrade is in place, base coarse material is delivered, final grading and compaction is scheduled for January and February, surfacing scheduled for March.

Section B - Champion (Property owned by Bologna. MTC has easement through the property, approx. 1 mile); owner in process of placing subgrade and base coarse material. Anticipate final grading and

placement of surface material to be done before April.

CHAMPION TO QUICKSILVER (SR 980) (approx. 1 mile) - Subgrade and base coarse already in place, final grading and surfacing planned for March.

QUICKSILVER BRIDGE (OVER SR 980) - Negotiations are under way with the Construction Squadron, 911 Airlift Group, to construct the bridge abutments which may be scheduled for completion in August. A formal request is being prepared for bids covering the transport of the bridge from Ambridge and its erection. Completion of all work anticipated by mid-August.

VENICE TO CECIL (approx. 1 mile) - The bridge over Glass Road has been decked and is open for traffic. Final grading is planned for January, surfacing in March.

LARGE (PA 51) TO CLAIRTON (PA 837) (approx. 2 miles) - Some clearing and grubbing has been done west of the Ravensburg Bridge. For more details on this, see the article on page 1.

On a more positive note contracts for the design and engineering of the uncompleted Trail in both Allegheny and Washington County are being negotiated and should be awarded this month. Bethel Park Friends expects the completion of the second mile of the Bethel Spur early next year.

Note: MTC's got a new web address! Check it out at www.montourtrail.org

Panhandle trail

...continued from page 1

by a local youth group.

A well-organized trailside Halloween gala awaited us at the Rennerdale trailhead, at the foot of Sunnyside Avenue. Volunteers served cookies, punch and hot cider, while others handed out bags of prizes and toys to the children. An immense bonfire lit up the scene, and warmed those who might be little cool despite the evening being unseasonably warm. The outdoor party was attended by an estimated 700 residents, elected officials, business people, and trail lovers of all sorts. Quite a few of the more active Montour Trail folks were there, marveling at such an immense outpouring of local enthusiasm for the trail.

A gift from Conrail, the right of way runs twenty nine miles from Collier to, interestingly, Colliers, WV. in broad strokes, from Carnegie to Weirton. And broad it is, stretching over

forty feet wide in most places. Its expansive openness, with no tunnels, conveys the feeling of having been an extremely busy thoroughfare when it was a railroad. Cycling the Panhandle is kind of like riding along an empty wooded interstate.

MTC's Dave Wright arranged for Allegheny County to deliver several thousand tons of asphalt pavement millings along the trail. The Collier Township road crew has spread and rolled this as base material on most of the 2.7 miles in Collier. Nearby South Fayette Township has done the same over most of their 2.6 miles, nearly to the doorstep of McDonald. It is hoped that the intervening North Fayette Township, Oakdale Borough and McDonald Borough will join in and spread the millings on the trail in their areas as well.

The surface of the rolled asphalt millings is a little soft, but easily ridden on a fat-tire bike. It's perfect for walk-

ing and for kids. Eventually, a topcoat of fine crushed limestone is planned.

Volunteer work will also come into play, of the sorts familiar to us all. Brush and debris clearing, spreading of trailside woodchips, and general cleanup of the right of way is needed. Bridge railings, fences, and trailhead barriers will need to be constructed, as well as other amenities for the trail users. It's all just started.

By connecting Walker's Mill to the Primrose section opened by Washington County this past June, over eight miles of continuous trail is being created. A junction with the Montour Trail just west of McDonald is soon to follow. The Panhandle is a great Saturday afternoon ride, even as it is now with some stretches still in rough ballast. The Collier section saw a lot of use over recent weekends: joggers, people walking their dogs, kids on bikes, families exploring in the sunshine. Just wait 'til all the other communities along there share in the treasure as well. We may need all that width when it's done!



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Membership Chairman	Jerry Agin
Samuel K. & Barbara E. Cushey Fawcett United Methodist Church Scott & Rosamound Fergus Paul E. Harris Tristram & Susan Hill Michael A. Houlis Thomas Hraposky Robert Johnson Mr. & Mrs. Jeffry M. Kessel Bob Kribs Giovanni Lanieri	Janet Necessary Anthony Ricci Veronica M. Schacter <i>The Montour Trail Council would like to welcome these new members and thank them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have renewed their membership and remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.</i>

BENEFACTORS

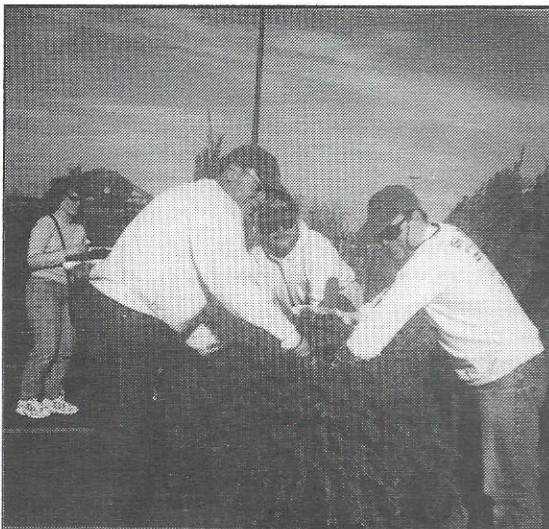
Kurt J. Lesker Co.
Mackin Engineering Company
Paul T. McKeown
Dennis Pfeiffer
Peter Stangert
Frank & Elizabeth Suatoni, Jr.

Thank You!

LEADERS CIRCLE

Bill Campbell
Mr. & Mrs. Jeffry M. Kessel
Lou Steinmiller

The IKEA Christmas tree sale event began on Dec. 2 thru Dec. 5 and again on Saturday, Dec. 11 in the IKEA parking lot. Thanks to MTC's dedicated volunteers, this year's profit was approximately \$2800. Customers paid \$3 to have their tree wrapped in netting, ready for travel. Some volunteers (those pictured to the right), even sawed off the trunks and attached trees to the cars.



Spending a Sunday afternoon tree wrapping at the IKEA Christmas tree sale are MTC volunteers: (L to R), John Wasco, Dennis Sims, and Paul McKeown. Proceeds from the wrapping were pure profit for the MTC.

Yes, I want to help build the Montour Trail!

- I want to spread the word. Please send me additional flyers.
 - I have written my Legislator and County Commissioners asking them to support the trail.
 - My organization would like to provide a letter of endorsement.
 - I know a group interested in a presentation.
 - I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council.
- | | |
|--|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT/SENIORS | \$15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORTING | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SUSTAINING | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BENEFACTOR | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LEADERS CIRCLE | \$500 + up |

(Membership is tax deductible)

- I wish to make an additional tax deductible contribution of \$ _____ to the Montour Trail Council to help make the Montour Trail a reality.
(Make your check payable to the Montour Trail Council)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (daytime) _____ (evening) _____

E-MAIL _____

By applying for membership in the Montour Trail Council, I indicate my support of its goals.

SIGNATURE _____

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling tollfree, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:
MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

DON'T FORGET! The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice option #3308, or Combined Federal Campaign Contributor Choice option #9308, where you work.

MTC's Annual Dinner Meeting

On Saturday evening, November 6, the Montour Trail Council held its annual dinner meeting at the Findlay Township Activities Center in Imperial, Pa. In addition to the election of board members, the MTC celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a live banjo band for some rousing entertainment as well as a bike raffle and plenty of door prizes.

Tim Killmeyer was the evening's Master of Ceremonies and commenced the festivities with a prayer, followed by a short story of the Trail's beginnings. Then MTC's president, Dick Quasey, was introduced. Dick gave the crowd of 91 attendees a short update on Trail progress, followed by Bruce Barron's announcement of the newly elected board members and those elected to serve a consecutive term. The newly elected were: Robert Johnson, Hoyt Hall and Jesse Forquer. Those elected to a consecutive term were: Frank Kappel, and Stan Sattinger. The MTC thanks Pete Merther, Ford Shankle, and Stan Siranovich for their faithful service as they complete their terms on the board.

Prior to the band's musical entertainment, which included several sing-a-longs as well as a Trail song (words

written by Nancy Reed), sung to the tune "I've Been Working on the Railroad," Dick gave recognition to many members (founding fathers included), who were instrumental in the Trail's inception. The remaining events of the night unfolded with the announcement of the winner of the bike raffle – Dianne Forquer. "Ride in good health, Dianne!"

Dinner was served, music played, and high celebratory spirits gave way to singing and dancing. It was a great way to spend an evening, sharing lots of fun and laughter with folks having a common thread – the Trail, the "fruit" of our labors!

(Picture middle right) Some of the more vocal participants of the sing-a-longs are: (l to r) John Hooton, Marshall Fausold, Sharon Fausold, Judy Thompson, and Dick Quasey.



Members of the Pittsburgh Banjo Club provide rousing renditions of many known songs as well as sing-a-longs for the evening's entertainment.



Several of the early Directors and/or Charter members of the MTC are pictured here: (l to r) Bill Metzger, Dave Wright, Dick Wilson, Doug Mahrer, Stan Sattinger, Jerry Agin, Tim Killmeyer, Peter Kohnke, Larry Ridenour, and George Schmidt. Hats off to all the many frontrunners, who never let go of their dream – Rails to Trails!

Parking lot, new use for old power poles

By Peter Kohnke

The Trail construction in Bethel Park for this season is partially complete, giving the volunteers there a chance to build the barrier between the new parking area along Irishtown Road and the Road itself. This area has been recently purchased by the Montour Trail Council. It has been used as a turn-around for many years (including a holding area for school buses!). Now the local people have had to make a few adjustments as we have claimed it for our own.

The barrier was constructed from recycled power poles found dumped years ago behind the other Trail parking lot in Bethel Park, the one along Limestone Drive. The people from Burns Construction pulled them up with their backhoe, and then they were transported over to Irishtown Road in appropriate sized pieces in the back of Bob O'Connell's sturdy pickup truck. The design is similar to the one used in South Park for barriers, and it's looking real nice!



Sitting on old telephone pole newly recycled into guard rail are: (l to r) Tom Prezel, Bill Capp, Rob Frost, Jay Wells, Mike Pucci, Peter Kohnke, Clayton Olson, & Stan Olenn.

History of the Montour Trail

By Dino Angelici

It's hard to say exactly where it all began but you'd have to start with Larry Ridenour who mapped all these trails out in the 60's. Not much happened until around 1981 when all the steel mills left and took the coal mines with them, leaving the Montour with some newly refurbished track and structures but nothing to haul. So they closed up and sold all the line in Peters to the Township in 1984, and a lady by the name of Joanne Nelson, Parks Director in Peters, convinced the supervisors and residents to build a trail. If that trail hadn't been there to point to...well let's not think about that.

About 1987, Hank Parke, referred to by George Schmidt as the granddaddy of the trail movement in Western Pennsylvania, started a group in Somerset Country to build what was then called the Connellsville to Cumberland Trail and later became the Allegheny Highlands Trail.

The value of such trails in our area was not lost on the Pittsburgh Council of the American Youth Hostels' President Larry Laude. AYH member Jack Peth surveyed the trail photographically some time in 1988, by hiking, biking, walking and driving where indicated.

Around that time unknown to each other some independent individuals had also concluded that this abandoned right-of-way (ROW) had serious trail potential. Tim Killmeyer had been

scouting the ROW and contacting Joanne Nelson and the supervisors of his own Robinson Township. Stan Sattinger, a rail-fan and rails-to-trails member had been making inquiries of his own.

In 1986, I moved to the Lindenbrooke apartments with my wife and active 5-year-old son, Adam. We lived on the lower level and I was forever chasing after Adam who wandered to the upper level and sometimes down this "dirt path" that happened to be there. One day, he got down that path pretty far and as I was following the path, planning how I was going to bring about his demise, it dawned on me that this path would be perfect for running, walking and bicycling. Since the boy's life was miraculously spared, I took he, his bike and the dog for an exploratory outing. We eventually made it all the way to what is now the Brush Run parking lot in Peters. On another excursion, we crossed Brush Run Road and made it to the present day Bethel Park Trail at Limestone Road. It always amazed me that the trail seemed to be wilderness even though the area immediately adjacent was rather heavily populated. We picked blackberries, later on apples, and watched the seasons change. We encountered all sorts of wildlife, most notably a thick 5 foot long Black snake that hissed at the dog and a deer that leaped out of the blackberry bushes about 3 feet away, startling the hell out of us at first.

We had a lot of fun on the path that summer and fall and when we moved away in 1987, I still didn't know how far that path actually went. Later on, I found out that the path was actually an old railroad line that was something like 50 miles long. Larry Laude and some AYH'ers gave me some more details and in late '88, suggested that they needed someone to look into getting this thing developed into a trail. Larry put me in touch with George Schmidt who suggested some additional contacts, among them Hank Parke, Joanne Nelson Herb Higginbotham who led me to Dave Wright, and the Rails-to-trails organization. I believe I called Joanne first and she put me in touch with Tim Killmeyer.

I wrote a short article about some of my early findings trying to sell the idea that this could be an excellent trail for our area. It appeared in the AYH newsletter during early 1989. A short while later, this guy called me and suggested we meet at the next AYH meeting and talk about the Montour. On a dark Thursday night in the middle of the winter in the crowded equipment shed where AYH meetings were held, this professorial fellow complete with glasses and a goatee introduced himself to me as Stan Sattinger. I had no idea what we were about to get into.

Up to the "minute".... *Board Briefs*

It takes more to build a trail than meets the eye. Here are a few highlights of actions taken by the Montour Trail Council board at its October and November meetings:

- * Completed the purchase of property from St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Church which will serve as a parking facility along the new trail in Bethel Park.
- * Will investigate reports that a pro-

- posed coal mining activity in Washington County will cross the trail.
- * Selected a site in Cecil Township as the intended location of a new, permanent MTC equipment garage.
- * Reviewed four bids and selected Mackin Engineering as the preferred bidder to design the remaining portions of trail in Washington County.
- * Reviewed a map, presented by



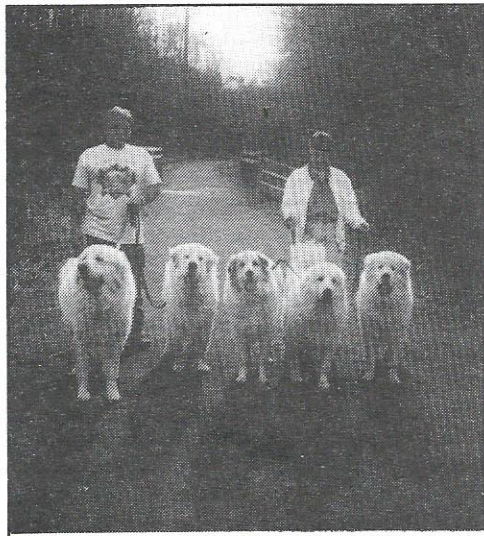
- board member Bill Morphy, showing landmarks and municipal boundaries along the trail. The map is intended to assist 911 dispatchers in Washington and Allegheny Counties in responding to emergency situations along or near the trail.
- * Continued to pursue friendly negotiations with various parties whose business activities encroach on MTC property.



MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA 15228-0866

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Enjoying a mild December afternoon, the Pilarski's walk their dogs, a family of Great Pyrenees, on the Montour Trail.

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PA Turnpike Commission opens 0.8 mile section of trail

by Dave Wright

On November 22, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission completed construction of the 0.8 mile Montour Trail section between Snowden Road and Gill Hall Road in South Park Township and Jefferson Hills Borough. The trail was built next to Piney Fork Road Extension. It is a 10 foot-wide asphalt-paved trail just outside and parallel to the new roadway shoulder.

Rather than build an expensive bridge for the Mon-Fayette Expressway over Snowden Road, the Turnpike closed the road to build a fill. They built the extension road over the former Pennsylvania Railroad corridor to outlet the closed Snowden Road to Gill Hall Road.

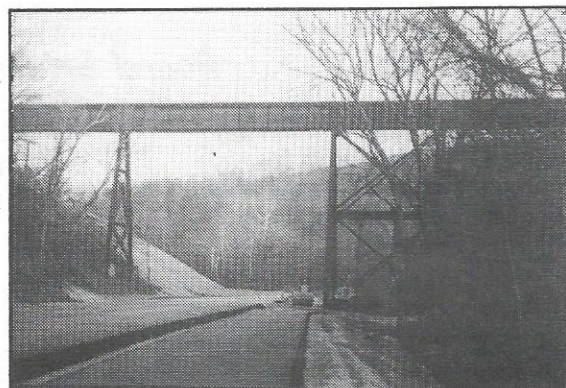
The Turnpike built us this trail for two reasons. First, we had previously planned to place our trail

along their route. Second, the public may use the trail to view the wetland mitigation area built by the Turnpike along Peters Creek. The Turnpike will also provide a paved parking lot at Snowden Road where Piney Fork Road was relocated to intersect with the new extension road.

The Turnpike Commission will convey the trail to Allegheny County. Montour Trail Council will then maintain the trail under its Management Contract with the County.

We are now meeting with Jefferson Hills officials to discuss extending the trail eastward along Peters Creek Road. The Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad,

which is out of service, may also become available in the future for a 3 mile extension to Route 51. We are also meeting with South Park Township Supervisors to discuss alternate ways to connect the Turnpike's section with the completed South Park section.



New Piney Fork Road Extension with new asphalt paved Montour Trail crosses under the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railroad.