



# MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 13 Issue 1

January/February 2002

## MTC Web Address

Visit the Montour Trail  
web-site at:  
[www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)

## Mantra of the Month

- A meeting is an event at which the minutes are kept and the hours are lost.

— Salada tag line

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## Groundbreaking case allows MTC to break ground

by Ned Williams

"Finally!" In one word, MTC President Peter Kohnke summed up the collective sigh of relief at the long-awaited conclusion of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) proceedings governing Montour's Washington County bridges. A multitude of tortuous legal paths had been masterfully navigated by MTC legal counsel Richard Wilson, in a series of actions whose roots stretch back to the time of the founding of the Trail Council itself. The November decision comes just in time to break a roadblock that had stymied trail development for years.

A concrete manifestation of a consequence of the deci-

sion emerged on October 20, 2001, as the removal of the former Montour span over State Routes 50 and 980 created a flurry of activity in Venice. Since then, the abutments have been removed in preparation for a 2003 realignment of the intersection. Afterward, a new bridge will carry pedestrians and cyclists high overhead. Abutments are now being removed at Georgetown and Morganza Roads also, to set the stage for new trail spans soaring above. These demolitions are just the visible results of a lengthy series of behind-the-scenes negotiations, aimed to determine an optimal outcome



(Top photo) Montour Railroad bridge over RT 980/50 looking west on RT 50. Munk's Lunch is the building on the right.

(Below photo) Montour Railroad RT 980/50 bridge removal by PennDOT & Insanna on Saturday 10-20-01.



Continued on page 4...

## Trail Engineering & Construction activities – 2001

by Dennis Pfeiffer

The Montour Trail Council has been very busy with engineering and construction activities in the year 2001. So it seemed appropriate to provide a high level summary of these activities at this time. The MTC thanks you the members, and all of the organizations mentioned below for your support in these efforts, and looks forward

to an exciting year in 2002.

Montour Trail Engineering & Construction Activities - 2001:

- Robinson Township, Allegheny County resurfaced from mile 1.4 (Hassam) to 4.1 (Park Manor) with crushed limestone purchased by the MTC.
- Completed Mile 11.5

(Boggs) to mile 14.6 (Quicksilver) using RAD & DCNR funds and a Byham Foundation grant for surface material. Findlay and North Fayette Townships (Allegheny County), and Robinson Township (Washington County) performed the work on this section.

Continued on page 5...



# THE MONTOUR TRAIL

## MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Kohnke	President
Bruce Barron	Vice President
	Secretary
	Treasurer

*Note: New Officers not yet elected at press time.*

Bill Capp	Mike Pucci
Jesse Forquer	Amy Riechman
Hoyt Hall	Stan Sattinger
John Hooton	Joe Seibel
Robert Johnston	John Wasco
Frank Keppel	Ned Williams
Dennis Pfeiffer	Andy Yingling



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CORAOPOLIS, PA 15108

Or E-mail to: Trailtalk@aol.com

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

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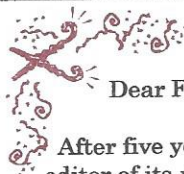
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## Trail Talk

*from the Editor's Desk*



Dear Friends,

After five years with the Montour Trail Council as editor of its newsletter, I have come to know many wonderful people and learn many things about which I never knew. Who would have thought words like "millings" and "ballast" would become part of my everyday vocabulary? It's been so much fun and it's all thanks to each and every one of you. I owe a special debt of gratitude to anyone who took the time throughout the years to write very knowledgeable articles for this newsletter. To you, I offer my heartfelt thanks, and want you to know that I could not have done it without your help.

You allowed me to experiment with your newsletter, to make a few changes — new looks, new ideas — while learning from your feedback. These changes as all others, are like growing pains; they are the beginnings of growth and maturity, and always a good sign of continuity. Your new editor starting in March, will be the Trail-Letter's continuity. Let's all extend our best Trail welcome.

Until then, I wish all of you happiness, good health, God's blessings, and as always...

*Happy trails,  
Debby*

*Happy New Year!*



### Newsletter Deadline

All articles for the  
March/April Trail-Letter  
will be due **no later than**  
February 1, 2002.  
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:  
Trailtalk@aol.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 2002

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## February 2002

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

## Calendar of Events

- \* Happy New Year! - January 1, 2002.
- \* Martin Luther King Day! - January 21, 2002.
- \* Happy Valentine's Day! — February 14, 2002.
- \* President's Day! — February 18, 2002.
- \* The Allegheny Trail Alliance World Wide Conference — March 1-2, 2002 will again be held at St. Joseph's Center, Greensburg, PA, starting on Friday evening (about 5:00 p.m.). See page 7.
- \* Burgh's Pizza & Wing Pub 10K Run — April 21, 2002. More information in next issue.

## Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

- ◆ **MTC Board Meeting**, every third Monday of the month - 6:00 pm 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 Peter at 412-854-1835 for more information or to get on the agenda.
- ◆ **Cecil Events:**
  - Friends of the Trail meeting**, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the new Cecil Township Municipal Building located beside Cecil Park on Rt. 50. 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**, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 pm., at the Forest Grove Fire Department. Anyone from the communities of 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. Call 412-262-3748 for more information and location.
- ◆ **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 Clifton Road Bridge Committee meetings, 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 Trailblazing:**
  - Friends of the Trail Work & Clean-up party**, last Saturday of every month. All volunteers are welcome. For more information call Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692.
- ◆ **Fort Cherry Events:**
  - Friends of the Trail Meeting**, first Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 pm. **Work & Clean-up parties**, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact John Wasko at 724-796-3781, or Joe Seibel at 724-693-2523.



## Groundbreaking case...

...continued from page 1

for the public good.

The complex legalities that govern railroad abandonments are overseen by the federal Surface Transportation Board. In Pennsylvania, the fate of railroad structures over public roads is in the hands of the PUC. For many years, general feeling of the PUC, with support by PennDOT, was to tear out all abandoned railroad bridges, the sole focus being on highway motor traffic. But then came along Governor Tom Ridge, one of the most ardent (and certainly the most powerful) friend of bicycling that PA has ever seen. He declared in the mid-90s that a hard second look at old RR bridges must be taken by both PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), to determine their suitability for trail use. Undesirable grade crossings of trails with roads could thereby be avoided.

Ridge's energies ignited a wholesale change in transportation thinking. The focus on road-building began to widen into a more holistic view of a transportation system of many components, including regional networks of long-distance trails. Ways began to be found to revamp some of the old bridges for pedestrian and bicycle use, speeding trail development. The historical preservation of these structures gained a widespread new respect. Volunteer trail organizations started to get some relief from the

enormous costs of replacing torn-out structures, and were aided by newly-minted federal Transportation Enhancements funding, as well as from PA departments, agencies, and other help from Harrisburg.

Of central importance was the adoption by the Federal Highway Administration of the recently hatched principles of "context sensitive design," which allowed PennDOT to consider each structure within the context of its surrounding environment. This exhaustive evaluation involved: Washington County; the townships of Cecil, Mt. Pleasant, and Robinson; the MTC as represented by Mr. Wilson; as well as the DCNR and PennDOT in addition to the PUC. A critical milestone was Washington County agreeing to take over secondary ownership of the structures that were allowed to remain in place. The spirit of cooperation and great patience of all of these bodies is

to be highly commended. These proceedings were one of the first test cases for context sensitive design, boldly breaking significant new legal and regulatory ground, and providing a solid case on which other rails-to-trails projects could build.

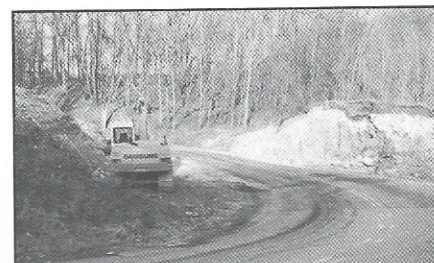
Best of all, the decision allows the Montour to build new trail, too! Bridges from the McDonald Viaduct to Venice to Hendersonville to Valley Brook Road couldn't be converted or built until the PUC's final Disposition Order was issued. With design work now completed, the issuance of the Order allows MTC to put that section of the trail out to bid in December, with construction due to start next summer. Finally!

### Summary of the PUC Order

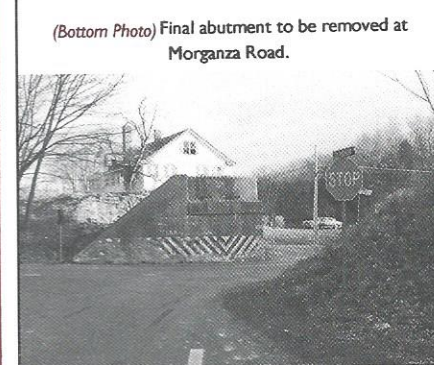
Structures which will remain in place for Trail use:  
McDonald Viaduct over Nobletown Road and Front St.  
Steel bridge over Southview Road  
Concrete arch over Southview Road  
Concrete arch over Primrose Road  
Concrete arch over Beagle Club Road  
Concrete arch over Donaldson Road  
Steel bridge over Papp Road to be raised higher  
Steel bridge over Glass Hill Road to be raised higher

Structures now being removed, clearing the way for new Trail bridges:  
Bridge and abutments over Route 50 / Route 980 in Venice  
Both abutments at Georgetown Road  
Abutment at Morganza Road in Hendersonville

Structures to be removed in the future:  
Abutments at Galati Road near Venice  
Bridge and abutments over Cowden Road  
Concrete arch over Muse-Bishop Road  
Bridge and abutments over Burnside Road, on the Muse spur



(Top Photo) Georgetown bridge abutments already removed.



(Bottom Photo) Final abutment to be removed at Morganza Road.

## Pittsburgh Connect is our new website host

by Jerry Agin

Because of network changes in The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, we are no longer able to rely on the Three Rivers Free-Net for hosting our website and email under the domain name montourtrail.org.

Our new web site hosting service provider is Pittsburgh Connect. They have offered sponsorship in the form of free web site hosting, in exchange

for a banner ad at the bottom of our web page.

Pittsburgh Connect is a local computer services company that offers residential and business internet connections, web site hosting, and consulting and design services, all at competitive prices. For more information, click on the banner ad at the bottom of any page on the Montour Trail

website.

Jeff Tapolci, Vice President of Operations says, "Pittsburgh Connect is proud to be the host of the Montour Trail Website. The employees of Pittsburgh Connect understand the benefit of outdoor recreation and are happy to provide free website hosting for Montour Trail."



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Membership Chairman

Jerry Agin

Advance Auto Parts  
Elmer & Ann Beardshall  
Gordon Bennett  
Glenn Child  
Julie Chinchar  
Dino Ciabattoni  
Nancy Denny  
Peter Diulis  
Edward & Julie Donnelly  
Glenn Gerney  
Milton D. Griffin  
Mr. & Mrs. T. J. Killmeyer  
John Lafferty  
A. C. Lardieri, DMD  
Keith Lawrence  
Dennis J. Lesko  
Simon & Erica Manses  
Mark Maxwell  
McDonald Pharmacy

McMahon, Kenneth, and  
Associates  
Bruce E. Neeley  
Northwest Savings Bank  
Bill & Laura Orr  
Tamara Polidor  
Amy Riechman  
Terence Stay  
Tru-Colour  
James J. White

*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.*

## BENEFACTORS

J. Michael Gillen  
Kurt J. Lesker C  
Donna M. Panazzi  
Robert Randolph

Thank You!

## LEADERS CIRCLE

David & Carol Eibling  
Mackin Engineering Company

## Trail Engineering...

...continued from page 1

- Engineering complete by Mackin on mile 17.8 ( McDonald Trestle ) to 22.3 ( RT980 & 50). Construction bids to be let December, 2001! (TEA21 Project)
- Mile 22.3 -PennDOT has removed the old Montour Railroad Bridge and abutments. PennDOT is designing a new intersection for RT980 & 50, which will include two new bridges and abutments for the Montour Trail.
- Engineering underway by Mackin on mile 31.0 (Chartiers Creek) to mile 33.0 (RT19). Also mile 37.0 (Peters Twp.) to 37.5 (County Line) (TEA21 Project)

...continued on page 8

## 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.



## Montour Trail construction efforts continue in the South Hills

by Paul McKeown

Construction of a new 1.9-mile long Montour Trail segment has been underway for a few months in Jefferson Hills. This new segment starts from behind the new Port Authority Park and Ride lot near Route 51 in Large and follows Peters Creek to Route 837 in Clairton near the wastewater treatment plant. By the time construction is suspended in December for the winter, work will be about two thirds complete and should include the following items:

- 1) Finish preliminary grading and install drainage culvert pipes to eliminate all muddy spots on the trail right of way.
- 2) Complete grading of a trailhead parking lot subsurface at Clairton.
- 3) Complete installation of stream bank stabilization.
- 4) Install as much trail subsurface as possible by using up all remaining asphalt millings previously supplied by Allegheny County.
- 5) Re-install gates and fence posts at the trailheads to block vehicle access to trail property.

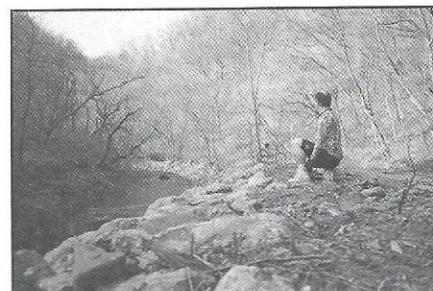
Come springtime, our contractor, BKG, Inc., will receive more asphalt millings from Allegheny County and finish installation of the trail subsurface. The last step will be installation of an erosion resistant

asphalt surface. An asphalt surface was specified for this two mile segment to withstand flooding of Peters Creek. This work is funded by a DCNR grant, with thanks to State Representative David Levdansky for helping to get the grant increased to finish the work. The Montour Trail Council expects that their contractor will complete construction in the spring of 2002.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission has also built trail this fall for the Montour Trail Council. As part of their efforts constructing the new Park and Ride lot in Large, they constructed a quarter mile of trail along one side of the lot. Previously, the Turnpike constructed a 0.9-mile long Montour Trail segment alongside the new Piney Fork Extension in South Park and Jefferson Hills.

Additional Montour Trail mileage in South Park Township is currently being designed by one of the Trail Council's engineering contractors, A & A Consultants. One 1.5-mile long segment starts at Pleasant Street and will cross a 500-foot long trestle over Route 88 on its way to Peters Township. Another segment will extend existing trail about a mile eastward from Triphammer Road. Construction and maintenance of the 55-mile long

Montour Trail is coordinated by the all-volunteer Montour Trail Council. Trail Council activists have a collection of skills similar to a medium sized business. There are engineers, fundraisers, manual laborers, groundskeepers, attorneys, and marketing people. New volunteers are always welcomed.



(Above) Paul McKeown inspects stream bank erosion protection along future trail in Jefferson Hills.  
(Below) Trail under construction between Clairton and Large (Jefferson Hills).



## Donations help to complete 18-mile section of Montour Trail

by Bruce Barron and John Wasco

Development Dimensions International, a worldwide training and consulting firm with its headquarters located in Collier Township, has given the Montour Trail Council a \$2,500 contribution to assist with completion of the trail near Route 22, on the Allegheny-Washington County border.

As we went to press, final surfacing of this segment was anticipated in December, creating an uninterrupted 18-mile section of the Montour Trail from Coraopolis to McDonald.

DDI and its president, longtime rails-to-trails backer Bill Byham, will be recognized next spring when the trail is formally opened.

In addition, the Fort Cherry Friends Group has also been given donations for the completion of this section of the trail in amounts of \$100 (except where noted) from each of the following businesses:

Advance Auto Parts (Imperial), Tru-Colour Auto Appearance Specialists (Bellevue), Northwest Savings Bank

(McDonald), McMahon-Kenneth Insurance Agency (McDonald), and A.C. Lardieri, DMD (McDonald dentist); a \$35 donation was received from McDonald Pharmacy. Businesses donating \$100 or more will be acknowledged on a permanent sign to be erected on the Trail. Grateful acknowledgement also goes to the Route 980 Tastee-Freez for donating the notice board erected at the Noblestown Road entrance to the trail in October.

Many thanks to all our donors!



## Annual Dinner highlights progress

by Bruce Barron

There was plenty to talk about as Montour Trail Council President Peter Kohnke presented his "State of the Trail" address at the MTC's annual meeting on November 11.

In reviewing the year's activity, Kohnke noted several significant milestones, including:

—The opening of a new trail section in Cecil Township

—The new trail construction between Boggs and Quicksilver, which is creating an uninterrupted 18-mile section of completed trail from Coraopolis to McDonald

—The beginning of construction activity between Clairton and Large

—Two state grants that will permit construction of the Brush Run section between Bethel Park and the Arrowhead Trail

—Final approval of an agreement with the Public Utility Commission that will preserve most of the MTC's bridges in Washington County

—Purchase (in conjunction with the Allegheny Land Trust) of a seven-mile corridor, protecting the trail against adverse impacts from neighboring development

—The most successful IKEA/Montour Trail race so far, raising about \$10,000 for the trail

—A 5 percent increase in MTC memberships.

As usual, the dinner also featured a few humorous awards to key volunteers.

Frank Ludwin of Cecil received the "Rookie of the Year" award for his superb work in operating heavy equipment and in preparing the trail for the Burgh's Run in April. Dennis Pfeiffer was named the MTC's "utility man" for doing excellent work in his quiet, unassuming way on a great number of tasks.

Two departing board members were recognized: Judy Thompson, who has served for nearly five years as treasurer, and Debby Hoerster, editor of this newsletter for the last five years. Three other longtime MTC stalwarts also completed their terms on the board in 2001: Bob Boyce, Paul McKeown, and Bill Morphy.

The 80 members in attendance enjoyed a colorful presentation by Bob McKinley, the mastermind behind construction of the Yough Trail from McKeesport to Ohionyle State Park. McKinley shared some of his ingenious ways of making available resources go farther — such as using rubble from a demolished public housing project and sediment from McKeesport's water treatment plant as fill material for the trail.

(Right)  
Robert G. McKinley,  
Manager  
of the  
Regional Trail  
Corporation delights  
listeners with his  
ingenious ways of  
making available  
resources go farther.



(Above left to right) - MTC President Peter Kohnke, is presented a \$59,000 grants check by State Senator Tim Murphy, & State Representative John Maher, as Peters Township Councilperson Mike Neville, and Bethel Park Councilperson Jim Hannan look on. The money will be used for trail construction in Peters Township.

(Below) John Hooton (2nd from right), presents plaques of recognition to volunteers (left to right) Judy Thompson, Frank Ludwin, Debby Hoerster, and Dennis Pfeiffer.)



## Third Allegheny Trail Alliance Worldwide Conference

Please mark your calendars now for the third Allegheny Trail Alliance Worldwide Conference. This year's conference will be held at the St. Joseph's Center in Greensburg, starting on Friday evening, March 1, 2002 around 5:00 p.m., and continuing through Saturday, March 2. The theme for this year's conference will be, "Sharing Best Ideas."

In order to make this another successful event, your attendance is of the utmost importance. Keep these dates open to assure your availability and plan to attend. Details of the event are still being worked out by the Conference Planning Committee. Until then, check the ATA website, call, or write for updated information.

Allegheny Trail Alliance  
419 College Avenue  
Greensburg PA 15601  
724-853-2453

email: [atamail@atatrail.org](mailto:atamail@atatrail.org)  
website: [www.atatrail.org](http://www.atatrail.org)

Hope to see you there!





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

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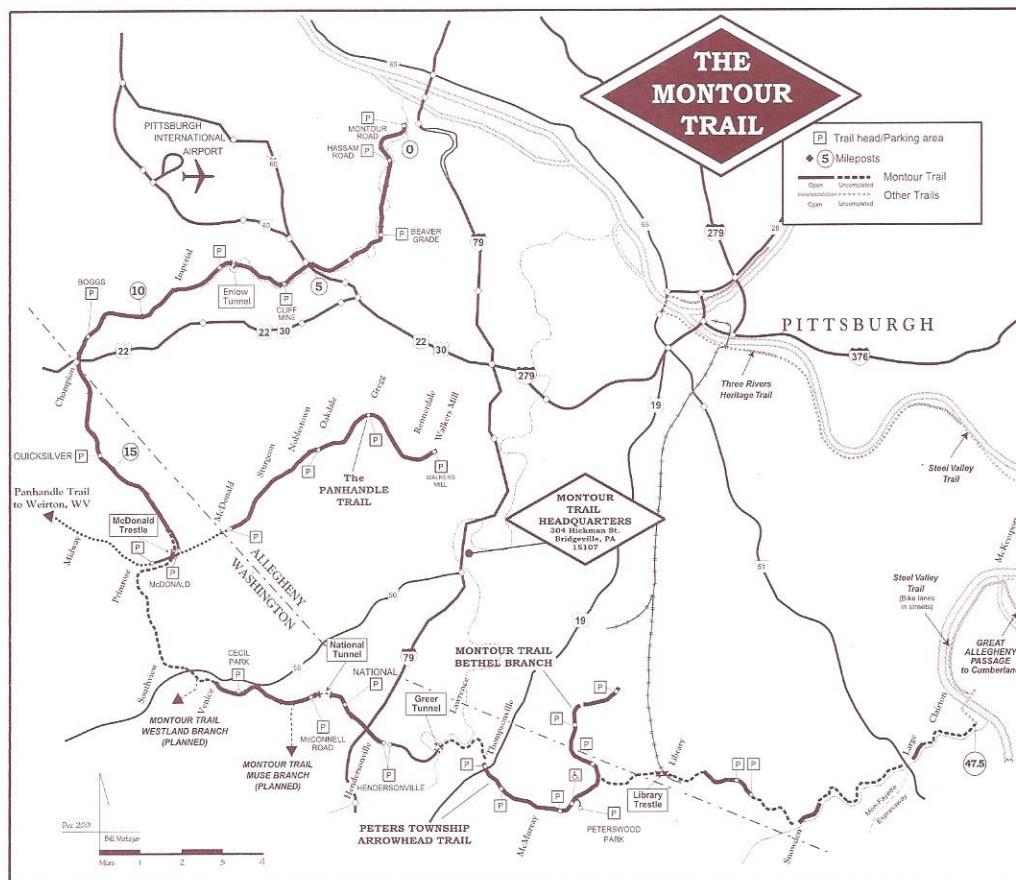
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*Happy New Year!*



Dave Murphy (left), Pete Merther (on tractor) and Dennis Pfeiffer (not shown) took advantage of November's good weather to do some much needed Trail resurfacing near mile 7.0 in Findlay Township.

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## Trail Engineering...

...continued from page 5

- Engineering underway by A&A Consultants from mile 37.5 (County Line) to 39.5 (Snowden Road). (ISTEA Project)
- From mile 45.5 (RT51) to 45.9 the PA Turnpike Commission completed trail paralleling Peters Creek Rd. and the PAT Park & Ride lot.
- Mile 45.9 (RT51 PAT Park & Ride) to 47.5 (Clairton-RT837) is under construction by BKG Industries. The base surface is 80% complete. Remaining base and final surface to be completed in the Spring of 2002. (DCNR & RAD Project)
- Engineering underway for 7/10 mile to connect Peters Township at Brush Run Road to Bethel Park Branch. Spring 2002 is targeted for the construction start. (DCNR & DCED Project)