



MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 14 Issue 1

January / February 2003

For your consideration

Setting a goal is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan.

Tom Landry

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MTC Web Address

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

Montour Trail Design and Construction Continues

In the 13 years since the Montour Trail Council was founded, portions of their 55-mile long trail network have been built one segment at a time, starting with the simplest and most affordable segments. The more complex and expensive portions in South Park Township and Washington County were deferred until federal funding became available for engineering and construction.

Trail users and activists attending a ceremony on October 18 were pleased to see ground broken for 1.8 million dollars of construction work in between McDonald and Cecil. A special thanks to Bill Sweterlitsch of Coraopolis True Value Hardware for donating the use of their old-time popcorn machine for the ground breaking. It is anticipated that another construction effort will start in South Park Township in 2003.

In 2000, Mackin Engineering started designing all remaining "main line" trail in Washington County. Using part of Mackin's designs, the McDonald to Cecil construction will close a

4.5-mile missing link between two existing trail segments, resulting in 28 miles of continuous trail between Coraopolis and Cecil, missing only a few bridges over roads.

The construction work includes installation of a concrete deck and railings on the 1000-foot long McDonald Trestle, and work on a half dozen smaller bridges. Work is expected to conclude in 2003.

A & A Consultants has been hired to design most of the remaining Montour Trail in South Park Township, and will probably complete design of the township's most western trail segment in early 2003. This segment extends from the county line across the 500-foot Library Trestle spanning Route 88 and will continue to Pleasant Street. The Library Trestle will have a concrete deck and railings similar to the McDonald Trestle. It is hoped that construction of this segment can begin in 2003.

Paul McKeown, a member of the Montour

Trail Council's Engineering and Construction Committee, expects the trestles to be signature structures of the

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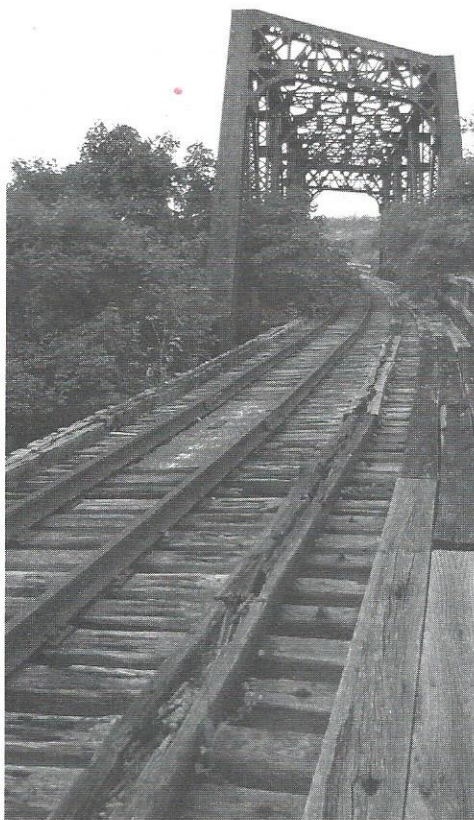


Photo by Ronna Delitto

The 1000-foot-long McDonald Trestle will see extensive construction work over the next few months.



MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Trail Talk

from the Editor's Desk

A new year beckons and with it comes that American annual tradition of making resolutions: lose weight, spend more time with the family, volunteer with a civic organization, beautify the planet...

How amazing it is that all these resolutions and more can be kept just by getting active with the Montour Trail Council and its projects! Despite the weather outside being frightful, plenty of volunteer opportunities are available throughout the winter months. Friends groups continue to meet for work parties; the board forges ahead on new matters each third Monday of the month; construction crews work diligently to try to meet late-spring deadlines.

And, of course, there is the Trail itself. While it may be snow-covered or slushy in some spots, most of the path is easily accessible even in the coldest of temperatures. Just remember to wear proper attire, especially footgear. And a nice thermos of herbal tea will both hydrate and keep you warm on your treks. Take along the whole family and make the most of the crisp winter days (not to mention burning off those extra pounds consumed between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day).

Of course, since this is the time of year when we remember to count our blessings, don't forget about your favorite bit of Trail when you contemplate all there is to be thankful for. So many communities around the country are losing their green spaces to urban sprawl and development. We are so fortunate to have the Trail, along with our beautiful parks and outdoor recreation areas, to get away from the constant throng of "civilization."

Happy New Year and Happy Trails!

Astrid

January 2003

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 2003

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

MTC Board Meeting – Jan. 20

MTC Board Meeting – Feb. 17

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.

IKEA Tree Sale Success Again

The Christmas Tree Sale at IKEA was a success again this year because of the efforts of the volunteers of the Montour Trail. This year's event was organized by John Wasco and myself.

John contacted many of the area schools and was very successful in recruiting volunteers. Students volunteered from Fort Cherry, Montour and West Allegheny High Schools. The students provided a significant contribution to the event. Helping to by selling trees, tagging, trimming and wrapping.

The proceeds from the trimming and wrapping operation are considered donations to the Montour Trail. We have had an arrangement with IKEA for several years to provide this service. This year in addition to the proceeds from trimming and wrapping trees IKEA is donating \$300. Volunteers were also treated to complimentary meals at the IKEA restaurant, a free tree and a chance to win an Ikea padded chair in a special volunteer's raffle.

The diverse backgrounds of our volunteers never cease to amaze me. We had a retired surgeon, an airline pilot, a marketing manager from Coca-Cola and a manager of the plastics division of Bayer unwrapping and selling trees along with our services to cut and wrap. I had the distinct impression that they were thoroughly enjoying themselves. One of our best and most unusual volunteers alternates her time between here and California. In addition to working for US Airways Lois Betts volunteers for the Montour Trail while in the Pittsburgh Area. Lois helped out by volunteering two days for the tree sale in the morning, a difficult time slot to fill.

Perhaps, the real story is that the Montour Trail volunteers completed another successful event with strong support from all of the friends groups. I don't even know the final number of volunteers who worked the event. People just showed up and started to work. I would estimate however that we had close to 80 volunteers working over the four-day period.

The proceeds from the tree sale totaled around \$1,700.00. Along with the Ikea's donation of \$300 that will net the trail just over \$2,000.

Sincere thanks to all of the special people who came out in cold weather to support the event.

Jesse Forquer

Newsletter Deadline

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

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 MTC Offices, 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. 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.

Volunteer News

New Webmasters Onboard

We are pleased to introduce the new webmasters for the Montour Trail website at www.montourtrail.org. They are Deb Thompson and Dave Hajnik, a married couple from Scott Township.

Deb and Dave have been avid cyclists for about two years now, logged 1800 trail miles this summer, and maintain a personal website with trail information (www.theneonweb.com).

Both are web professionals, by round-about paths. Deb is a registered Professional Geologist, has been a hydrogeologist in environmental consulting for 21 years, and got involved in Web site design when she volunteered to build an intranet for her company.

Dave was a chemical engineer for 18 years, and then got a Master's degree in information systems from Robert Morris University before moving into programming about two years ago.

Deb and Dave are in the process of updating the Montour Trail Web site. Be sure to check out their good work and drop them an e-mail with your comments.

Super Community Volunteer

Much has been said recently about the importance of volunteerism in our communities. Jerry Bates' involvement with the Montour Trail is such an example. A long time resident in Coraopolis Heights, he recognized the significance of the Montour Trail at its outset.



Photo by Ronna Delitto

Jerry Bates, hard at work at Mile 0, tends the area of the Trail dubbed "Bates' Park."

He has been a good Friend of the Trail ever since, always under the Moon/Rob Friends banner. Consistent and persistent best describes his manner. Two or more times a week, weather permitting. Mr. Bates has tended the Trail, especially the Moon/Rob section—

inspecting, repairing, mowing, cutting brush, planting and maintaining plants, and joined the monthly (and sometimes weekly) work parties, including those of local student and community groups.

Of all of Jerry's accomplishments on the Trail, the most notable is "BATES' PARK," that neat area at Mile 0 for which he has been largely responsible, converting it from an overgrown brush land to a comfortable and attractive Trailhead.

Thanks Jerry.

Help Wanted: Race Registrar

We are in need of a volunteer to fill a crucial position: Registrar for the IKEA-Montour Trail Half Marathon.

The main responsibility is to oversee the process of registering runners and walkers for the annual IKEA Half Marathon. The race takes place in September, but we need to identify a candidate soon.

In the spring you'll be helping to design the race flyer, set up a post office box, and set up on-line registration. During the summer, race applications will be processed as they come in. (You may have a data-entry clerk to help with this part.) As race week approaches, you'll be procuring and labeling race numbers, supervising the stuffing of packets, and supervising packet pickup. Race morning you will be in charge of post-registration.

The main job requirements are organizational skills to keep track of a lot of details, and people skills to train and supervise a crew of helpers. It would be helpful to have some computer skills as well.

The time requirements are not huge, at least not at first. In the spring, you'll need a few hours a month. As the entries start coming in, you or your data entry clerk will need several hours a week. But the week before the race, expect to be very busy.

There's a lot of flexibility as to how we make the transition to ease you into your new responsibility. You'll have plenty of support from the other members of the race committee, including the former registrar.

If you're interested in the position, or even just curious, call Jerry Agin at 412-343-1425, or email JerryAgin@mindspring.com.

Welcome New Members

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.

NEW MEMBERS

George Blishak
Robert Bolding
Kevin Cecotti
Bob Connolly
Bill Dimitroff
Daniel J. Fix
Patricia A. Gotch
J. D. Hohman
Jeffrey W. Kertis
Charles Krepp
Lawrence G. Lovejoy
Diane Mancini
Ted and Joan Marstiller
Lynda & Craig McKay
Dr. William B. McLaughlin
Diane M. Redington
William Santel
Donald Urban

Stephanie Urchick
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas P. Woolaway

LEADER'S CIRCLE

Blaine F. Aikin & family
Bob Gambone
Mr. & Mrs. Jeffery M. Kessel
National City Bank
Peter Stangert
Judy & Tom Thompson

BENEFACTORS

David & Carol Eibling
Jeffrey W. Kertis
Dennis Pfeiffer

Membership Co-Chairs - Stefni and Jerry Agin

Trot for Tots Nets Toys for Kids, Funds for Trail

December first was awfully cold and windy to go for a run along the Findlay Township section of the trail. But 150 runners braved the cold to compete in the second annual "Trot for Tots" that benefited both the Marine Corp Toys for Tots and the Montour Trail.

In fact, there were actually two events that day: a 5K and a 10K run. Each participant was asked to bring a toy along with them to donate at the sign in. The event went well, and there were no medical problems or disruptions to trail users.



Kevin Smith, the owner of Elite Runner's and Walkers on route 60 in Robinson Township, was the promoter and director of the event. In addition to collecting a couple of vans full of toys, the event raised \$1,000 for the Montour Trail. Congratulations to Kevin and all the runners who came out to brave the cold for this charitable event!

Jesse Forquer

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.

<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

- ☐ I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council. (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.

Construction Report: Large-Clairton Trail Section Paved

At 10:00 a.m. on Thursday November 14th, our paving subcontractor, Russell Standard Corp., reached N. State Street (SR 837) to complete paving the 2.44-mile section of trail between Large (Jefferson Hills Borough) and the City of Clairton. The western end of this trail segment connects to a 0.3-mile long Montour Trail bike lane constructed last year by the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission. Building of the bike lane was part of the Turnpike's relocation of Peters Creek Road and construction of the park-and-ride lot under their Mon-Fayette Expressway interchange at Route 51. The newly paved trail was built on land with a long history as railroad property.

RAILROAD HISTORY

In 1893, the Pittsburgh, Virginia and Charleston Railway Company acquired land for a branch along the north side of Peters Creek. The branch ended at the Bertha Consumers Coal Co. mine that was located across Piney Fork Road from the Bethel Park Sewage Treatment Plant in South Park Township. The Pennsylvania Railroad took over the railroad that served coal mines along the western side of the Monongahela River. The branch also served the Old Overholt Distillery in Large, maker of Monongahela Rye Whiskey. Westinghouse Electric later used these distillery buildings that are now owned by the Turnpike Commission.

In 1929, the Montour Railroad used a portion of the upper end of Pennsylvania Railroad branch to extend its Library Branch to connect with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at Snowden. The Montour Railroad purchased the part it used in 1962. In 1984, the Dick Corporation purchased the corridor between Large and Clairton when it needed railroad property to build a parking lot next to its headquarters office building on Route 51.

TRAIL ACQUISITION

Allegheny County provided property acquisition and engineering services under a Public-Private Partnership Agreement with the Montour Trail Council. On November 14, 1997, Montour Trail Council acquired 2.0 miles of the corridor from the Dick Corporation between SR 837 and the recently paved portion of Peters Creek Road. Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) provided half of the \$24,000 purchase price. By that time, the relatively cheaply built railroad branch had largely reverted back to nature.

The first few hundred feet of trail near SR 837 is built on a paper road called Ostermayer Avenue. This road had paralleled the railroad to provide access to some houses that were demolished when the Ravensburg Bridge was built. At our request, the City of Clairton vacated Ostermayer Avenue. We obtained possession of the northerly half because we are the adjacent property owner. Clair-

ton Sanitary Authority granted us a license to use their southerly half. U.S. Steel Clairton Works donated their portion by deed. The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission donated a 2334-foot trail easement to us for their portion along Peters Creek Road on August 7th of this year.

DEVELOPMENT

DCNR approved \$100,000 for 50% trail development funding. The City of Clairton and the Borough of Jefferson Hills showed an early interest in providing local match by grading some trail right of way. However, Allegheny County provided the substantial portion of the required local match by donating an estimated 7,000 tons of milled asphalt material. The County trucked it to our site from nearby County road resurfacing projects. We have had very good experience using this material as base for the Panhandle Trail.

Volunteers led by Paul McKeown prepared for the construction work by removing trees that had grown up in the years since the railroad was removed. Volunteer turnout was a little thin initially because this trail segment is far from previous volunteer work sites, but larger numbers of workers helped out as time passed.

The prime contractor for this project was BKG Industries, Inc., owned by Bill, Gary and Ken Kisow. BKG previously completed a trailside stream bank protection project for us through the Montour Watershed Association.

BKG submitted the low bid of \$109,243. Their work included installing trail drainage ditches, piping and culverts and placing 1530 tons of broken concrete for stream bank protection along Peters Creek. They spread milled asphalt pavement material on the large parking area at Route 837 and applied the millings up to 12" thick along the trail to provide a stable base where some soil conditions were poor. Some portions of the trail deviate from the original railroad alignment to permit the trail to be built on higher, drier ground.

SURFACING

Much of the trail is 10' below the 100-year design storm flood elevation. To prevent floods from washing away a crushed limestone surface, we obtained a \$60,000 grant in 2001 from the Allegheny Regional Asset District for an asphalt surface. We chose a mix designed for low traffic volume roads. Its softness reduces cracking under light traffic. This asphalt will not reach its final hardness until the weather warms up in the springtime. Until then, it will not be suitable for roller blading.

(Continued on page 7)

Construction Report, Large to Clairton, cont.

(Continued from page 6)

COMPLETION

Volunteers have installed most of the barrier posts and a gate at Clairton to keep cars off of the trail. In September, over 60 Bombardier Transportation volunteers did some post-construction tree trimming and trash pickup



Volunteers from Bombardier Transportation help clear trees prior to construction work near Clairton during United Way's annual Day of Caring this past September.

as part of the United Way Day of Caring. BKG will return to grade the trail edges. Concrete wheel stops, donated by BKG to separate the parking area from the trail, need to be anchored into place by volunteers. They will

also install safety fencing next to Peters Creek to complete the trail this spring. If you would like to help with any of these volunteer tasks, contact Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692 or mckeownp@libcom.com.

An opening ceremony has not yet been planned.

Dave Wright

Proven Quantities Join Board

The five persons elected to three-year terms on the Montour Trail Council board at November's annual meeting are all familiar names to the MTC and its supporters.

Three of the five—Bill Capp of Bethel Park, Hoyt Hall of Cecil, and Jesse Forquer of Robinson Township, Allegheny County—will be serving their second successive three-year term. Capp is active with the Bethel Park Friends of the Montour Trail and on various construction projects; Hall has been a stalwart with the Cecil Friends for a decade; and Forquer has directed the MTC trail monitor program and the Montour Trail/IKEA race.

Rejoining the board is Judy Thompson, former MTC treasurer who took a one-year hiatus in 2002 as required by the organization's by-laws. Thompson has served on Thornburg Borough's council for 10 years and is also board president of the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh. She and her husband, Tom, have four grown children. "I have continued with the Montour Trail Council because it is a wonderful group of selfless, devoted, and determined people," she says.

The one truly new face on the MTC board is not a new name for readers of this publication: Astrid Cook, our newsletter editor. Cook is currently on leave from a marketing communications position while awaiting the birth of her second child (due at press time). Cook and her husband, tax attorney Alex Loshilov, live in Bethel Park and also have an 8-year-old daughter.

Peter Kohnke has agreed to serve as MTC president for a third year during 2003.

Bruce Barron

McDonald to Cecil Construction Underway

(Continued from page 1)

trail. "Trail users will really enjoy traveling across these trestles," said McKeown. "The Library Trestle will be part of a first of a kind connection for cyclists and pedestrians between the communities of South Park, Peters, and Bethel Park, free of motor vehicle traffic."

The two other remaining pieces of this tri-community trail network are also in the works. Construction of trail connecting the Arrowhead Trail in Peters Township to the Bethel Park Branch of the Montour Trail is expected to be complete in early 2003. Design work has been completed for trail connecting the Arrowhead Trail to the county line, and construction may be underway in 2003. With any luck, trail users may be enjoying nine miles of continuous trail in South Park, Peters Township, and Bethel Park by 2004.

In a final piece of Montour Trail construction news, work is nearly complete on a 2.5-mile segment linking Route 837 in Clairton to the park and ride lot near Route 51 in Large. Asphalt paving of this segment will occur within a few weeks, weather permitting.

More information about the Montour Trail can be found on www.montourtrail.org. Anyone who would like to perform volunteer work for the Montour Trail Council is urged to contact Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692 or at mckeownp@libcom.com. In addition to physical labor, other volunteer jobs include fundraising, staffing informational booths at events, writing newsletter articles, marketing, engineering and legal work.

Paul McKeown



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New 2003 Montour Trail Maps

The ever popular Montour Trail maps are once again in short supply.

However, for the third year in a row, our good friends at National City have agreed to cover the printing costs for 25,000 new "2003" trail maps.

Thank you National City for the generous donation. Thanks, also, to Mr. James Steigerwald, Vice President at National City Bank in Moon Township for supporting our request for funds. The new maps should be available in January of 2003.

Dennis Pfeiffer

